

BAHRAIN

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

Ashura; the annual encounter between the oppressed & the oppressors

As the Ashura season was underway, the khalifi regime started its annual practices of repression, pre-emptive detentions and threats of reprisals against the native majority Shia Muslim population. Scores of activists were arrested, heads of the Hussaini congregation halls summoned and verbal abuse were hurled by senior figures of the khalifi dictatorial tribal junta. The most notorious of them is their minister of interior who has ruled over a torture regime that led to the death of many natives. The regime has always been infuriated by the annual commemorations of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed who was slain in Karbala by Yazid, the second ruler of the Umayyad dynasty which was responsible for the launching one of most violent phase in the early Islamic history. Fifty years prior to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain on 12th October 680 AD (10th Muharram of the year 61 AH), the prophet had passed away leaving behind his household, led by Imam Ali whom he had appointed as his successor. But that did not happen as some of Mohammed's companions staged what amounted to a political coup that eventually led to the emergence of the Umayyad rule in the year 40 AH, less than 30 years after the demise of Mohammed. Imam Hussain revolted against the new political order that was devoid of the Islamic spirit, morality or political structure. He was swiftly killed along with at least 72 family members and supporters.

That historical event had been marked by the native Bahrainis for centuries. From Imam Hussain's revolt and sacrifice, they learnt how to resist tribal rule and its corrupt policies. They have always been enthusiastic about marking the occasion in their own styles. The khalifi regime, which is styled on the Umayyad's rule, full of hate to religion and enmity to Mohammed's household has always faced a crisis as the Hussaini season approached. They know that they simply could not stop the natives from marking the occasion and that if they did try to stop them a bloodbath could ensure and could lead to the obliteration of the khalifi rule. Realising the fragility of their position, the khalifis adopted a policy of intimidation to ensure the subjugation of the natives. But they have always failed. The natives have, over the centuries and well before the khalifi bloody occupa-

tion of their country, shown unwavering faith in Mohammed's household. From the first decades of Islam which they had embraced wholeheartedly, they had become loyal to Imam Ali and the rest of the Imams. The khalifis who had come from central Arabia are known for their barbaric approach to religion, life and politics. They view Yazid, the killer of Imam Hussain, as a role model in dealing with the followers of the true Islam of Mohammed. In recent years, they attempted to force the preachers and lamenters to stop accusing Yazid of the murder of Imam Hussain. Many of them were summoned, some detained. Yet the khalifis failed to impose their own view of the early Islamic history. The native Bahrainis have a fundamentally different views on that history, links and loyalties.

This year's commemorations took new dimensions, with open challenge of the khalifi dictators. Tens of thousands took to the street almost from the first day of Muharram, creating extra challenge to the ruling clique. Their chanting resonates of deep feelings of repression and injustice. They have marked these events in a spirit of pride, love, freedom and faith. No power on earth can deter them from marking the events that speak of honour and freedom. To them, Imam Hussain epitomized all values of faith, good and honour. For him ten days of non-stop glorification often seem not enough. When they chant in the name of Hussain they remember their leaders who are either killed, jailed or banished. Ashura to them is the Spring of Revolt, the Cry of Freedom and the Voice of Humanity. Throughout the year the voices of preachers, orators and lamenters do not cease; in every town and village there has always been daily congregations to remember Hussain and the rest of the martyrs. Even on the Day of Eid, the first activity of the day is a session to remember Imam Hussain whose presence is felt in every corner of Bahrain. In addition to being a confirmation of love of God and His prophet, they see in Hussain a source of inspiration to challenge the tribal hereditary dictatorship who has turned the country into private ownership and opened its gates to the foreigners. It was ironic that the khalifi interior minister would preempt the advent of Muharram by banning other GCC citizens from entering the

country during the first ten days of Muharram. They are allowed to enter every day of the year except for those ten days. Isn't this a clear evidence of the enmity of the khalifi regime towards Mohammed's household? Isn't this a confirmation of the wide ocean separating the natives of the land from the occupiers who had used brutal force to suppress the natives.

Last month a senior figure in one of the emirates composing the United Arab Emirates published a book about the history of the region. He wrote that the khalifis used brutal force to suppress the resistance against their invasion. That account infuriated the khalifi dictators who rushed to rebuke Sheikh Sultan Al Qassermi of the Emirates of Sharqah. This time the testimony came from one of the allies of the khalifi dictators. It did not come from Iran or Iraq which the regime accuse of bias towards the native Shia Muslim population. These are the facts of history that the khalifis prefer to dump. Their brutality during their aggression in 1783 has continued unabated. They are weak, but are supported by foreign powers who see their interests closely linked to the fate of the khalifis, despite their involvement in atrocities against the natives, past and present.

Such events; Ashura, history and local politics often push the dictator and his clique, especially the notorious minister of the interior to expose their real nature of brutality, aggression, immorality and treachery. The natives have long ago given up any hope of co-habiting with the khalifis on the soil of their country. They want the rule to be given to the natives who are capable of running their affairs themselves and ensuring the peace, stability and prosperity of their country. They make use of religious occasions to display their power base that cannot fathom the khalifi absolute hereditary dictatorship. The world has watched as the khalifis targeted the religious rights of the native population as part of their attack on the history, culture and religion of Bahrain. Their supporters in Washington and London are well-advised to end their unequivocal support to those ruining the country without an international mandate. It is time to end this political imposition and allow the native population to determine their own future.

UN calls for release of 6 Bahrainis, MP calls for Saudi woman release

UN experts have called for the release of six imprisoned Bahraini students who had been held arbitrarily after “confessing” to crimes under torture and undergoing unfair trials. The students - Ahmed Yusuf, Alaa Ansaif, Husain Matar, Husain Abdulla, Mohamed Baddaw and Sayed al-Khabbaz - were arrested separately, in unrelated cases, between 2013 and 2020. At the time of their arrests, three were minors. While in custody, a rights group said four the students were subjected to enforced disappearance, including one for 40 days, and five were tortured into confessions. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, in a document released on 14 July, said it found the group's claims of ill-treatment credible. “These cases follow the pattern of numerous other cases brought before the Working Group in recent years concerning the arbitrary deprivation of liberty in Bahrain,” the group said.

On Monday 24th July young native citizen, Mohammed Baqer (from Al Zahraa Town) was arbitrarily detained for taking part in a religious procession. He had been summoned for interrogation and was remanded in custody.

As the day of Ashura approaches, the native Bahraini majority is preparing massive processions in all areas of the country. The capital, Manama is attracting thousands of mourners to attend the processions that will reach their climax by the weekend. It is yet another test for both sides, the khalifi tribal chiefs and the native Bahrainis. The two sides are taking stand to support one of the two sides. The Shia Muslims identify themselves with Imam Hussain and take firm stands against the Umayyad ruler, Yazid who had committed most heinous crime in the Islamic history, executing the grandson

of Mohammed, together with 72 of his family members and supporters. It is a tense situation as the religious function has deep political connotations in Bahrain. No sooner had the UK's annual report praised Bahrain for "its long tradition of respecting and enabling FoRB" (Freedom of Religious Belief) than the khalifa regime waged massive attacks against the native majority Shia Muslim population. The khalifi Interior Minister targeted the commemoration of Ashura, the most important event for this majority. He said: "Bahrain is not a destination for religious tourism" regarding gatherings for Ashura/Muharram attended by Shia Muslims from overseas, mainly from neighbouring Gulf states. He added “We do not need preachers and reciters coming from abroad” claiming that Bahrain has enough preachers of its own. The UK's misleading statement on religious freedom in Bahrain has no basis in reality and further encourages the Bahraini regime to continue to attack the religious rights of its Shia population. Moreover, the commemorations were specifically targeted in several towns. Flags and banners were removed from the streets of several towns including Al Markh, Aali, Hamad town and Al-Ghuraifa.

In Aali several young men protested the removal of the Ashura banners and were detained by the khalifi police. The regime forces could not arrest the young protesters fearing a serious flare up of the situation. They told their families: Give us your children and we will give back the banners.

A senior political prisoner has been rushed to hospital after his health deteriorated sharply. Cleric and opposition lead-

er, Sheikh Mirza Al-Mahrous, was hospitalised on Monday. There are no details about his condition but he has been complaining of several ailments for which he had not received adequate treatment. He has been in jail since March 2011 for taking part in the protests.

On Sunday 23rd July, Saudi security forces detained a scholar for his religious activities among the Shia Muslims in the Eastern Province. Sheikh Saleh Al Gharib, from the town of Safwa had been summoned to the interrogation centre of Dammam city. He was detained at the gate and was not allowed to contact his family.

On 22nd July, Hilary Benn, MP commented on the case of human rights activist, Salma al-Shehab who had been given 34 years sentence by the Saudi regime. He said: It is shocking that Salma al-Shehab and Noura al-Qahtani are still detained by the Saudi authorities for what they said on Twitter. The UN has now spoken out about the treatment of both these women. They should be freed immediately. Her crime is following and retweeting human rights activists in Saudi Arabia on Twitter.

The diplomatic editor at the Guardian, Patrick Wintour has commented on the invitation of the Saudi Crown Prince to a London visit. He tweeted: UK inviting MbS to London. Doubtless business to be done. But Riyadh's legal system is an unsportswashable horror show. Here UN this month on the jailing of Salma al-Shehab for 27 years & Noura al-Qahtani for 45 years for tweeting about women's rights.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
26th July 2023

MP's trial for racist remarks against Bahraini activist, Saudi-UAE crisis

Today, Conservative MP Bob Stewart pleaded not guilty to racially abusing a man after he told him to “go back to Bahrain”. He appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court this morning to plead not guilty to the charge. The Metropolitan Police launched an investigation after a complaint was made by activist Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, who lives in exile after being tortured in the Gulf state. The MP for Beckenham in south-east London told Mr Alwadaei during an angry confrontation on December 14 last year to “get stuffed” and that he is “taking money off my country”. The Met charged the 74-year-old politician with a racially aggravated public order offence over the incident outside the Foreign Office's Lancaster House.

Native Bahraini citizen, Hassan Jaffar Al Usfoor has been arrested. He was summoned to one of the torture chambers for interrogation but never came out. Bahraini activist Abdul Majeed Abdulla Hasan (also known as hajji Sumood for his bravery in

his political stands) had to be rushed to hospital just days after being jailed for attending the funeral procession of former political prisoner Muhammad Al-Aali. Elderly political prisoner Muhammad Hassan Al-Raml has been cut off from the outside world by the khalifi prison authorities as he enters his second month on hunger strike. His family is extremely worried as his health deteriorates further. Political prisoner, Ibrahim Al Samahiji has complained about the policies of revenge and inhumane treatment in Bahrain's prisons. He criticized the role of the regime's “oversight” bodies that have been whitewashing the khalifi crimes against humanity. Also, Jau Prison administration is being accused of ignoring pleas for medical treatment by the sick detainee Hussein Al-Saadi. According to Al-Saadi's family, he submitted a complaint about his inadequate access to health care.

Scholars at Risk joined 18 organizations in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace. Dr. Al-

Singace has now been on a hunger strike for over two years to protest the confiscation of his research documents. The signatories include Amnesty International, CIVICUS, Front Line Defenders, IFEX, PEN International, Redress and Reporters Without Borders.

A young Bahraini youth who was arrested as a juvenile remains behind bars. Ahmed Al Ghasra was only 17 when he was detained in the early hours of 14th February 2015. He was falsely accused of offences including taking part in peaceful protests. His total prison sentences are now 402 years.

After pledging \$1.3 billion for Britain's crumbling economy, the khalifi regime is celebrating Bahrain's removal from the UK's Foreign Office's list of human rights priority countries. Human rights activists have protested this move arguing that there are at least 1300 political prisoners, the vast majority of whom were jailed for their political opinion. Principles and val-

Bahrainis detained for attending funeral, two Saudi women arbitrarily jailed

Yesterday, Bahrain's public prosecution ordered the detention of two leading activists, Ali Muhanna and Majeed Abdullah, known as Haji Sumood, pending investigation on charges of illegal gathering. They had attended the funeral of former political prisoner Mohamed Abdulla Hassan Ya'qoob Al-Aali, 32, who died on 5th July after contracting cancer and was denied healthcare in prison.

In the past week several native Bahrainis were detained by the khalifi regime in another attack at public freedoms. Several of them are fathers of martyrs. On Monday, July 9, Muneer Mushaima, brother of Sami Mushaima who was executed in 2017, was detained for one week on charges related to attending the funeral. Two other known activists were also detained including Ali Muhanna whose son, Hussain is serving life sentence and Majeed Abdulla (Hajji Sumood). The detentions included Hussain Hani Abdul Hassan from Karbabad. He was returning from a visit to the holy shrines in Iraq. Another detainee is Yousuf Nabeel from Sanabis, Hussain Munir from Sanabis and Mohammed Abbas Mohammed from Aali. The only offence they had committed is participating in the funeral of a young man who died last week. Mohammed Al Aali lost his life from cancer which he had developed while in the prison two years ago. He was released to die outside the prison.

Meanwhile reports of the health deterioration of several political prisoners have shocked their families. The medical condition of Habib Ali Habib Jassim Al Fardan, 37, is causing alarm to his family. He suffers a brain tumour for which the khalifi regime has refused to provide medical treatment. He was detained on 12th May upon his return from Germany where he had a major operation. He had received

several prison sentences totaling 75 years. Another Bahraini political prisoner being held in 'isolation' is experiencing serious health problems. Muhammad Al-Toblani's family has confirmed that he suffered a sharp drop in blood sugar and is becoming frail with unstable health.

Following the death of native Bahraini former prisoner Mohammed Al Aali, families of sick political detainees are extremely worried about them. There is great concern for the life of Mohammed Hassan Al Raml, 63, who has developed serious illnesses inside the prison. He is losing consciousness repeatedly and has fallen twice. He is seriously de-hydrated as a result of his hunger strike. He also suffers internal bleeding for which he has not received adequate medication. His life is seriously in danger but the regime insists on keeping him behind bars. Several political prisoners had developed serious illnesses in prison and died after they were released. They include Sayed Kadem Abbas Al Sahlawi, Hamid Khatam, Ali Qambar and Mohammed Al Aali. Habib Al Fardan could be the next.

In a statement this week, the family of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace has expressed alarm at the lack of news about him. He has not called them for several days. He has completed two years on hunger strike to protest the lack of medical care and the confiscation of a literary book that he completed after several years of research. The family said the khalifi regime would be fully responsible for any harm that may befall him. Front-line Defenders, along with 18 other organisations, are again calling on the Bahraini authorities to free Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace who is serving a life sentence for his peaceful work as a human rights defender, he has been on hunger strike that he had started on 8th July 2021.

The US-based Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission has called for the immediate

and unconditional release of two senior Bahraini political prisoners. It said: Abulhadi Al-Khawaja and Abduljalil Al-Singace are human rights activists that have been subjected to torture and medical neglect since they were detained over 12 years ago. Bahrain must release them immediately and without conditions. Their case has been taken up by Rohit Khanna, an American politician and lawyer serving as the U.S. representative from California's 17th congressional district since 2017.

On 7th July the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD) released a decision on the cases of two Saudi women activists: Salma al-Shehab and Nourah al-Qahtani. It finds their detention to be arbitrary and calls for their immediate release. Last year, five organisations representing the two women — ALQST for Human Rights, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), Freedom Initiative, Human Rights Foundation, and MENA Rights Group — submitted a complaint the UNWGAD and requested the group of experts to issue an Opinion on their cases. In its Opinion, the UNWGAD found that the Saudi government had failed to establish a legal basis for the arrest and detention of al-Shehab and al-Qahtani. Salam al-Shehab carries a prison sentence of 34 years on her head, while Nourah al-Qahtani was given 45 years, both for their human rights activism.

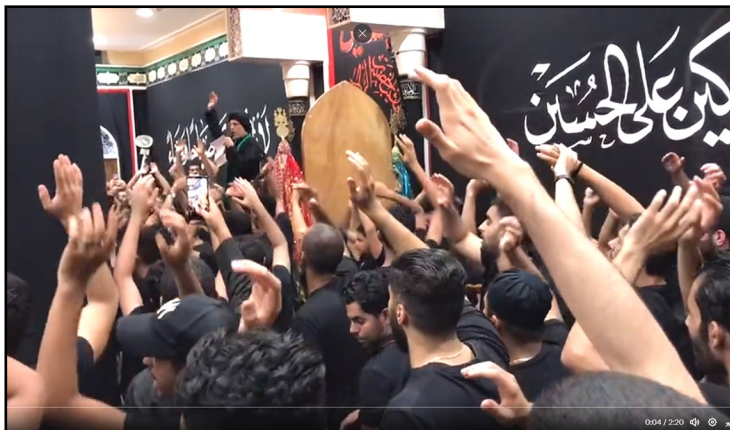
Several human rights bodies have called for the release of a religious scholar from the Eastern Peninsula. On 8th July the Saudi NGO Alqst said: Seven years ago, cleric Mohammad al-Habib was arrested at the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. He is currently serving two prison sentences totalling 12 years, on charges linked to his defence of the rights of Saudi Arabia's minority Shi'a community. We call for his immediate release.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
12th July 2023

ues must not be bartered for looted wealth of native Bahrainis. This is immoral.

Saudi Arabia has announced the execution of two more men, Ali al-Jumaa and Muslim Shaheen, who had been convicted on alleged 'terrorism' charges. Both men were from the Eastern Province and — like many of those recently executed for similar alleged offences — are members of the marginalised Shi'a Muslim minority. This follows a spate of executions carried out by Saudi Arabia in recent weeks. Two Bahrainis (also Shi'a and accused of terrorism) were among those put to death. Both had been tortured and convicted in what Amnesty International described as a 'grossly unfair' trial.

In the wake of the UK's invitation to MBS calls have been made for the British Government not to receive him. Reprieve, the international NGO that campaigns against



capital punishment, said: The UK government should not be hosting Mohammed bin Salman for an official visit while Saudi Arabia's execution rate soars and those who speak out against the ruling family are murdered. It makes a mockery of Rishi Sunak and James Cleverly's stated commitment to human rights. The Saudi security forces have detained another scholar. Sheikh Badr Nader Al-Mashari;

was arrested without disclosing the reasons for the arrest. He is a known preacher who had studied at the Mohammed bin Saud University in Riyadh with a degree, Masters and PhD. Today is the birthday of Abdullah AlHuwaiti one of Saudi Arabia's youngest detainees on death row. He was arrested at 14 and brutally tortured to extract confessions.

A new political crisis is looming in the Gulf, this time between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) said he had sent the U.A.E. a list of demands (...) If the smaller Gulf nation didn't fall in line, MBS warned, Saudi Arabia was prepared to take punitive steps, much like it did against Qatar in 2017 "It will be worse than what I did with Qatar".

Bahrain Freedom Movement
19th July 2023

Joint Letter: Free Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace after Two Years of Hunger Strike

July 11, 2023

Scholars at Risk joined 18 organizations in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace. Dr. Al-Singace has now been on a hunger strike for over two years to protest the confiscation of his research documents.

You can support Dr. Al-Singace by signing this letter.

King of Bahrain, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa,
Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa,
8 July 2023

Your Majesties,

We, the undersigned, write to you again to express grave concern for the well-being of Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, an academic, award-winning human rights defender and blogger serving a life sentence in Bahrain solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

We previously wrote to you on January 15, 2023, and August 13, 2022, urging you to secure Dr. Al-Singace's immediate and unconditional release and, in the meantime, ensure that he receives adequate health care, is protected from torture and other ill-treatment, and that his academic work be transferred to his family. Our requests have neither been met nor acknowledged, and Dr. Al-Singace's deteriorating health is one of increasing concern.

July 8, 2023, marks an astounding two years since Dr. Al-Singace began his hunger strike in response to the prison authorities' confiscation of his book on Bahraini dialects of Arabic that he spent four years researching and writing by hand. During his hunger strike, he has been sustaining himself only on multi-vitamin liquid supplements, tea with milk and sugar, water, and salts.

Dr. Al-Singace has been held in what effectively amounts to solitary confinement within his room in Kanoo Medical Centre, where he has been prohibited from going outside, exposure to direct sunlight, and receiving the physiotherapy he requires for his disability. He has also been deprived of necessary examinations, including MRI scans of the shoulder and head, physiotherapy, and treatment for

joints, vision, prostate, and tremors. Authorities have refused to provide Dr. Al-Singace with necessity items, such as medical slippers to prevent slipping in the bathroom and a hot water bottle to relieve pain.

The deliberate denial of healthcare has placed Dr. Al-Singace's life in grave danger and amounts to a failure to provide healthcare in line with Bahrain's obligations under international human rights law.

As of Friday, June 23, 2023, Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace decided to suspend family visits and telephone calls, the only ways to communicate with his family, in protest of continued medical negligence and prevention of treatment in light of his declining medical condition. Additionally, authorities continue to limit his access to information by banning English and Arabic newspapers and reducing the number of accessible TV channels.

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) adopted an opinion on Dr. Al-Singace's case during its ninety-sixth session on 27 March–5 April 2023. The ruling confirms repeated allegations of torture at the hands of the Bahraini government, states that his arrest was unlawful, and finds that he was "subjected to enforced disappearance" (Para 80).

According to the findings of the WGAD, Bahrain is violating Dr. Al-Singace's rights in four out of five categories of violations attributed to arbitrarily detained individuals, representing the highest level of classification an individual not seeking asylum in a foreign country can receive. Dr. Al-Singace's case "follow[s] a familiar pattern of arrest without a warrant, pretrial detention with limited access to judicial review, denial of access to lawyers, forced confessions, 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" (Para 112). These damning findings illustrate clear breaches of international law and necessitate the immediate release of Dr. Al-Singace.

In light of the above, we renew our call for you to release Dr. Al-Singace immediately and unconditionally, and in the meantime, ensure he is held in conditions that meet international standards, receives his medication without delay and has access to adequate healthcare, in compliance with medical ethics, and ensure that his arbitrarily confiscated research is immediately transferred to his family members.

Sincerely,
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
ALQST for Human Rights

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
Amnesty International
British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES)
CIVICUS
English PEN
European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR)
Front Line Defenders
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
Human Rights First
IFEX
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
PEN America
PEN International
Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED)
REDRESS
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Scholars at Risk

Britain accused of putting principles 'up for auction'

By Abbie Cheeseman, 19 July 2023

Britain has been accused of putting its principles "up for auction" for removing Bahrain from its list of human rights priority countries after sealing a billion-pound investment deal with the Gulf state.

The decision, revealed last Friday in the Government's 2022 Human Rights and Democracy report, marks a rare instance of a country being removed from the list since it was introduced in 2015.

The Maldives and Burundi were taken off the list in 2020, marking the only removals before now, though no reasons were given for those moves.

The latest instance came 10 days after oil-rich Bahrain announced on Jul 3 that its private sector would invest £1 billion in Britain.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) told The Telegraph the decision reflected Bahrain's "consistent progress" on human rights "over a number of years".

The Telegraph has seen a letter written by Lord Ahmad, the minister of state for the Middle East, in which he confirmed Mr Cleverly had discussed Bahrain's human rights situation with its crown prince and prime minister the day after they signed the investment deal with Rishi Sunak.

A Downing Street readout of the meeting claimed the £1bn round of investments from Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund will drive co-operation in clean technology, business services and manufacturing.

But Bahraini opposition group Al Wefaq claimed that London had been "bribed" into a decision that amounted to a "cheap lie".

After the Telegraph published, the FCDO said that any suggestion the two decisions were correlated would be "wrong" and claimed that the decision was made prior to the Bahraini crown prince's visit.

