

BAHRAIN

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

The reverberation of Gaza crisis in Bahrain: unwavering solidarity

The predicament of Gaza has, once again, dominated the political scene in Bahrain with deeper polarisation. The daily news of Zionist bombing of innocent Palestinian people causing hundreds of deaths every day has shocked the human conscience the world over. Protests have erupted in the capitals of the world as the scenes of rubble of towers and houses are reduced to rubble killing all their occupants. It has been an unprecedented experience that has wreaked havoc on the hearts of decent people. Almost all human rights bodies in the Western world have been calling for a ceasefire and serious investigation of the war crimes being committed by the Zionists. The world's political opinion has shifted dramatically since the beginning of the ongoing crisis. As the Zionists became more savage even their own supporters in the West have shifted their positions.

The Bahraini people have reacted in a positive way towards the Palestinians for several reasons. The first is they see striking similarities between the cases of Bahrain and Palestine. Both are occupied by outside powers who used overwhelming power to subdue the natives. The people of both Bahrain and Palestine have been subjected to demographic engineering. Foreigners were brought from the outside, settled, naturalised and granted citizenship. At the same time both people are systematically denied citizenship of their native countries. These facts are unique to Bahrain and Palestine which are ruled by foreign groups while the natives are considered second class citizens. In both countries the rulers have never integrated with the natives.

These are some of the factors that have pushed the Bahrainis to feel special affinity to Palestine. When the Zionists started their all-out bombing of Gaza the native Bahrainis went out in force to declare their unwavering support to their brothers and sisters in Palestine. The regime went the other way. From the onset of the crisis the khalifis launched attacks on the Palestinian resistance movement and justified the Israeli bombing of Gaza. Throughout the recent crisis, the people of Bahrain have extended their supporting hand to the people of Palestine. In 2009 they joined other groups to sail to Gaza to break the sanctions. In earlier conflicts Bahrainis were martyred as they stood for Palestine. In

1982 a young Bahraini student (Muzahim Al Shatar) was martyred in Beirut by the Israelis during the invasion of Lebanon. In April 2002 another Bahraini was martyred while pursuing the same cause. Mohammed Jum'a Al Shakhouri was killed by regime's bullets outside the American embassy in Manama. He had joined other Bahrainis protesting the killing of Mohammed Al Durra whose killing by the Zionist troops led to a worldwide uproar.

When the "Manama dialogue" annual conference was held in the second half of last month it was dedicated to the support of Israel. The khalifi crown prince inaugurated the conference lashing out at the Palestinian resistance groups. He repeated his position in the media, thus setting the stage for the anti-Palestine conference to become even more hostile against Gaza and its occupants. The spirit of the conference was hostile to anything linked to Palestine while pretending to call for cessation of hostilities. The guests of the conference adopted similar stands, thus turning it into a launching pad of attacks on the people of Palestine and supporting the heartless Israelis. This event has stained the face of Bahrain in a way that no other event did. One thing that emerged is the assertion of the ever-deepening polarisation in the country between the native inhabitants and the khalifi occupiers. In this instance all Bahrainis (Shia and Sunni) were unanimous in their stands, supporting the Palestinians and opposing Israel.

These events have caused more troubles to the native Bahrainis. The regime forces pursued those who had joined the pro-Palestine protests in Manama and other towns and villages. Over one hundred young natives were detained, abused and given lengthy prison sentences. The reverberations of those events have rattled the political situation in the country. The fragile stalemate was broken by the daily raids on homes, the snatching of under-aged children and their abuse in the torture chambers. This ongoing saga is likely to intensify as time passes. The Gaza situation is unlikely to be settled in the near future as the Israelis become more frustrated at the lack of political or military progress. The fallouts will be felt by Bahrainis who are on their toes as they watch events unfold in the occupied territories.

The Israelis are encouraged by the silence of the international and regional communities. Those communities have been on "business as usual" with the occupiers of Palestine. The US, UK and the EU have not taken serious stands to warn them of severe consequences if they continue their assault on Gaza. On the contrary, they repeated their support to the Israelis, while the Americans sent their warships to the Eastern Mediterranean. Instead of targeting the aggressors, they have been bombing targets in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. They have also threatened Iran against supporting the Palestinian resistance groups. The UN has been calling for a ceasefire but lacks the means to enforce it. Some Arab regimes like those of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have supported the Israeli war and sent supplies to Tel Aviv. The Arab League has been largely passive, while the Islamic meeting in Riyadh was largely ineffective. This is how the Saudis wanted it. Riyadh is anxious to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. Its crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is known for his enthusiasm for these relations.

While the above is a true description of the status quo, the Israeli war on Gaza has not been going the way Tel Aviv had wanted. While inflicting incalculable losses on Gaza, Israel itself is losing politically and militarily. It has lost senior military figures while it has been bogged down by an unwinnable conflict. Gaza has remained defiant while the resistance groups have vowed to continue their struggle against the occupiers of Palestine. While there are talks about a temporary (extendable) ceasefire, the conflict is far from over. The case of Palestine has so far lasted three quarters of a century and its resolution has defied all attempts. The native people of the land want their country liberated and have remained steadfast since 1948. The Arab regimes which have betrayed the cause have not achieved much. On the contrary their people are pursuing them for political reforms that may lead to their end. The khalifi rulers of Bahrain have chosen to take the wrong side of history, while the native Bahrainis have continued their struggle for freedom and liberation both in Bahrain and Palestine.

Bahraini Pro-Palestine activists held, Saudis unfit to host internet meeting

Young Bahrainis have continued to pay with their freedom for supporting the people of Gaza. Four young men have been arrested for taking part in protests against Israel's attacks on Gaza. Hussein Al-Jaziri, Mohammad Abdul Rida Buhamid, Hussein Abd Ali Marhoon, and Murtada Al-Samahiji were detained during a police raid in Karzakan. Also, regime courts have extended the imprisonment of six native Bahraini political prisoners for two more weeks; Hassan Rabi' (from Sitra), Abbas Aqeel Hani (Duraz), Mohammed Hussain Ahmed (Sanabis), Sayed Hussain Abbas Al-Alawi (Karbabad), Ali Hassan El Ekri (from Daih) and Abdul Rahman Al Hussaini (from Manama). They were detained on 26th October after the regime forces attacked a pro-Palestine demonstration in Sitra. A 15 years old boy, Sayed Mohammed Al Alawi has had his detention extended by 15 days. Mohammed Yousuf (from Sanad) also had his detention extended by 15 days. Two other young citizens were detained and charged with supporting the Palestinians. On Saturday 11th November Mohammed Hussain Jassim Al Sawlah, 17 (from Sanad) was arrested and detained for 15 days. On 15th November Ali Al Baqqali, 17 (from Jid Hafs) and Ali Hamida, 16 (from Sanabis) were also detained and remanded in custody. Two other young native Bahrainis have been detained for supporting the people of Palestine. On 19th November the khalifi prosecutors ordered the detention of Hussain Al Jaziri (from Sitra) and Mahmood Abd Ali Marhoon (from Malikiyah) for seven days which are likely to be extended. Throughout the week there protests were held in various parts of Bahrain in support of Gaza. The towns of Duraz, Sanabis, Aali and Sitra joined in these protests. Danish human rights activists have, once again, raised the case of a senior Bahraini political prisoner. Abdulhadi al-Khawaja is

an internationally recognized, award-winning human rights defender. He co-founded both the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), of which he is also the former president. In 2013, a member of the European Parliament nominated al-Khawaja for the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in calling for the Bahraini government to respect human rights and pursue peaceful political reform. The authors said: The time for strong, public action to secure his release is now. The Danish government should seize the fleeting momentum that has been created by recent developments. A former Tory MP has said he will step down at the next general election after being found guilty of racially abusing a Bahraini activist. Bob Stewart, who surrendered the Tory whip and now sits as an independent in Beckenham, south London, was found guilty of telling Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei to "go back to Bahrain" during a confrontation in central London in December last year. Yesterday, websites belonging to Bahrain's foreign and information ministries were hacked by a group calling itself Al-Toufan (The Flood). The group said it targeted the government sites in response to "abnormal statements" by members of the kingdom's ruling Al-Khalifa clan on the Gaza genocide. Al-Toufan carried out other cyberattacks in recent months. In February, it marked the 12-year anniversary of Bahrain's pro-democracy uprising by hacking websites belonging to Manama's international airport, the state news agency, and the chamber of commerce. Speaking ahead of an annual security summit in Manama last Friday, Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa condemned Hamas for its October 7 attack on Israel and called on the group to release Israeli captives. Al

Khalifa was echoing similar condemnation from Bahrain's foreign ministry, which had previously described Hamas' operation as "a dangerous escalation". Detained Saudi fitness trainer Manahel al-Otaibi has been denied any family contact since 5 November. This raises further concerns about her wellbeing. Al-Otaibi has faced abuse in prison and has been placed in solitary confinement. At the Alternative Human Rights Expo II held ahead of COP28 in UAE the UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders Michel Forst spoke about the urgent need to better support those who are at the forefront to protect the future of our planet. Several speakers from the GCC countries addressed the virtual "Alternative Human Rights Expo 2) which was held on 15th November. Lina Alhathloul called for the release of the Saudi women human rights defenders Salma Al-Shehab, Manahel Al-Otaibi and others imprisoned in violation of their basic rights. These include Dr. Mohammed Al-Qahtani and NEOM activists. Hamad Alshamsi spoke about Emirati prisoners of conscience and called for their release. More than 70 digital and human rights organisations wrote to the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, urging him to reverse the decision to allow Saudi Arabia to host the next Internet Governance Forum annual meeting. The organisations expressed concern that Saudi Arabia's deeply troubling human rights record would effectively make it unviable for civil society bodies to freely and safely participate in the meeting, given the serious physical and digital security risks facing those attempting to peacefully voice dissent in the country.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22nd November 2023

Bahrainis pay the price for supporting Palestinians, more Saudis detained

As the Gaza war intensifies, the Bahraini people have become more concerned about the plight of their brothers and sisters in the occupied territories. In addition to the humanitarian aid they contribute to the injured, the hungry and the homeless, they have engaged in daily protests in many areas. In the past seven days scores of protests were held in Sanabis, Abu Saiba', Sitra, Duraz and elsewhere. They were, once again, targeted by the regime's forces which deploy various kinds of repressive measures including chemical and tear gases. Helped by foreign agents, they also pursue the protesters especially the organisers for detention. Meanwhile a petition calling on the regime to sever its links with the Zionist entity has been signed by 145 senior figures including religious scholars, academics, thinkers and journalists. Also eight Bahraini political societies have called on the khalifi regime to stop its relations with the occupiers of Palestine and abrogate its nor-

malization agreement with it. They also called for an end to any political or economic relations with Israel. Also, 134 Palestinian bodies including organisations, trade unions and professional groups have called on Bahrain's pseudo-parliament to "exert pressure on the government of Bahrain to heed the calls to end its relations and agreements with the colonial occupiers". The Bahraini "National Committee Against Normalisation" has called for boycotting a trade event organized by the regime for hosting Israeli companies. The "Arab Jewellery Exhibition" which started yesterday 14th November and will continue for five days has allowed several Zionist exhibitors to take part, contrary to the wishes of the people. The Committee has also called for the cancellation of an event by Maroon 5 group that was scheduled to be held on 13th November at Al Dana Theatre in Manama. The American pop rock band has Israeli leaning.

In the past week scores of native Bahrainis were arrested. Among them are: Hashim Munir Ahmed Ali Sheikh Hussein, Muhammad Hussein Jassim Al-Sawla, and Mahmood Abdul Ali Al Aboud. Regime forces have detained a known activist for protesting outside the ministry of the interior. Ali Hajji, 39, had protested in Manama calling for his personal rights that had been frozen since he was freed jailed after he had completed his prison sentence. An academic and researcher has also been arrested by the khalifi dictators. Jassim Al Abbas was detained after being summoned for interrogation. He runs a website on the history of Bahrain that presents different facts and perspectives to the false claims of the regime. He is one of a new generation with modern outlook who have researched the recent history of the country to challenge the falsification of history undertaken by the khalifis.

MP guilty of racially abusing Bahraini activist, fear for 2 Saudis on death row

A Conservative MP has been found guilty of racially abusing an activist by telling him to “go back to Bahrain” during a confrontation in central London. Bob Stewart, the MP for Beckenham in south-east London, also told Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei “you’re taking money off my country, go away” during an argument outside the Foreign Office’s Lancaster House in Westminster. The 74-year-old had been attending an event hosted by the Bahraini embassy when Alwadaei shouted: “Bob Stewart, for how much did you sell yourself to the Bahraini regime?” During a fractious exchange, Stewart replied: “Go away, I hate you. You make a lot of fuss. Go back to Bahrain.” In footage of the incident on 14 December 2022 played during a trial at Westminster magistrates court on Friday 3rd November, the MP is heard telling Alwadaei: “Now shut up, you stupid man.” The chief magistrate Paul Goldspring found the MP guilty of a racially aggravated public order offence. He said Stewart would not be jailed and fined the MP £600, with additional legal costs bringing the total to £1,435.

One of the most senior political prisoners has been awarded a prestigious international award. Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace who has spent almost 13 years behind bars for his peaceful opposition to the khalifi hereditary dictatorship has been awarded the MESA Academic Freedom Award. The award was established in 2001. It is presented on appropriate occasions in recognition of sustained contributions in support of academic freedom in the Middle East and North Africa, and/or in North America.

At least four #Bahrain-i youths have been arrested since the start of the week, according to the country’s opposition Al-

Wefaq group. The four have been identified as Ali Naji Marhoun, Ali Yasser, Haidar Sayyed Abbas, Muhammad Jaamas Al-Qattan. As the regime continues the detention of activists, it has emerged that their treatment has been horrific. Hajji Ahmed Al Nahham was arrested for participating peacefully to call for the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador in Bahrain. He was subjected to abuse including severe beating. He sustained injuries to his hand and knee. He also suffered serious injuries to all of his left side. A mother who was detained during a visit to her jailed son has also been ill-treated. Maryam Al Asfoor was detained twice and calls have been made for her immediate and unconditional release. Manama’s security services detained several Bahrainis for participating in pro-Palestine protests. Murtaja Ali Fardan, Muhammad Yousif and Hussain Issa are among dozens of people arrested in the Gulf kingdom in recent weeks after taking part in rallies denouncing Israeli atrocities in Gaza and showing support for Palestinians.

At least 23 native Bahrainis were detained in the past month for participating in anti-Israeli protests. Among them are: Mohammed Hassan Al Qallaf (Al-Na’aim), Sayed Ayman Mustafa Alawi (Al-Ghuraifa), Yasser Saeed (Salmabad), Ali Jum’a (Samaheej), Abdul Aziz Shakir Ali (Sanad), Sayed Mahdi Maitham (Al-Markh), Sayed Mohammed Mahood Mahfood (Al Markh), Sayed Mohammed Hashim (Al Markh), Hussain Rabi’ (Sitra), Reda Abbas Al Janabi (Duraz), Abbas Aqeel Hani (Duraz), Mohammed Hussain Ahmed (Sanais), Sayed Hussain Abbas Al Alawi (Karbaabad), Haidar Qassim (Kazakkkan), Ali Hassan Al Ekri, Al Daih), Mohammed Abdul Hadi Al Sakran (Samaheej), Abdul Rahma Al-Husaini (Kazakkkan), Hussain Hassan Al Asfoor

(Duraz), Mohammed Yousuf (Sanad), Murada Ali Al Fardan (Saar).

A petition has circulated in Bahrain calling on the khalifi rulers to end their relations with the Israelis and expel their ambassador from the country. People have been urged to sign it as a sign of support to Palestine. Few days ago the regime claimed to have “frozen the economic ties with Israel” and to have “expelled the Israeli ambassador”. Within hours the Israelis issued a statement denying that any of these actions had happened.

#Bahrain-i political prisoner Abd Ali Al-Singace is back on hunger strike in protest over his unfair trial and other abuses in detention. Al-Singace launched numerous hunger strikes in recent years demanding his right to a free and fair trial and for his allegations of torture to be investigated.

Saudi Arabia has been criticized by pro-Palestinian activists for its role in the war on Gaza. While not helping the Palestinian cause, the Saudis have allowed the Israelis to use their airspace. Saudis have also helped to shoot down the missiles that were fired by Yemen against Israel.

Human rights groups have expressed anguish at the prospect of the imminent execution of two Saudi nationals. The Supreme Court recently upheld the death sentences against Abdullah Al-Derazi and Jalal Al-Labbad, which means they are one step away from their execution. International efforts are being made to prevent the execution especially that the charges against the two men were trumped up and their trial was grossly unfair.

Human rights activists have launched a petition calling for the release of Saudi human rights defender Mohammad al-Qahtani. They urge the public to sign it in order to put pressure on the Saudis to release him.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
8th November 2023

The regime security service has arrested the wife of political prisoner Abbas Abd Ali while she was visiting her husband in the country’s Jau Prison. Husain was detained, tortured, and convicted on trumped-up charges in 2012 after he had taken part in pro-democracy protests. Last month another mother, Maryam Al Asfoor was detained for three weeks during a visit to her jailed son.

Regime court has sentenced a young native Bahraini youth to a long prison sentence. Ahmed Ali Hubail, from Sitra Al Kharijiyah has been given two years for harbouring anti-regime views. He was summoned by the secret service on 19th September to Al Qudaibiya police station and has remained in custody ever since.

Bahraini youths who were picked up during a wave of arrests at the end of last month had their detention extended by 15 more days. Reda Abbas Al-Janabi and Abbass Aqeel have been

remanded in custody 'pending an investigation'. Al-Janabi was detained after taking part in mass pro-Palestine protests condemning Israeli atrocities in Gaza. The charges against Aqeel are unknown.

Senior religious and political figure, Sheikh Mirza Al Mahroos has been transferred to hospital after his health deteriorated sharply. He has been in prison for almost 13 years during which he was tortured and abused. Sheikh Al Mahroos has

suffered several ailments for which he had received little medical care.

The Special Criminal Court (SSC) in Saudi Arabia has sentenced medical student Sara al-Jaar to 27 years in prison and a travel ban of the same length for exercising her right to free speech. This is the same sentence the same court had given to PhD student and HR activist Salma al-Shehab in March over her use of social media. Calls have been made to the Saudi authorities to drop the charges and release the two women immediately.

The Saudi authorities arrested the Turkish sheikh, Mustafa Evi, in Mecca, while he was performing Umrah rituals. Due to his prayers for Gaza and Palestine, he was taken into custody and could face serious charges. “They arrested me now in Mecca because mentioning Gaza and Palestine (in my prayers)”, the sheikh said.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th November 2023



Tory MP Bob Stewart guilty of racially abusing activist

Fri 3 Nov 2023

A Conservative MP has been found guilty of racially abusing an activist by telling him to “go back to Bahrain” during a confrontation in central London.

Bob Stewart, the MP for Beckenham in south-east London, also told Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei “you’re taking money off my country, go away” during an argument outside the Foreign Office’s Lancaster House in Westminster.

The 74-year-old had been attending an event hosted by the Bahraini embassy when Alwadaei shouted: “Bob Stewart, for how much did you sell yourself to the Bahraini regime?”

During a fractious exchange, Stewart replied: “Go away, I hate you. You make a lot of fuss. Go back to Bahrain.”

In footage of the incident on 14 December 2022 played during a trial at Westminster magistrates court on Friday, the MP is heard telling Alwadaei: “Now shut up, you stupid man.”

The chief magistrate Paul Goldspring found the MP guilty of a racially aggravated public order offence. He said Stewart would not be jailed and fined the MP £600, with additional legal costs bringing the total to £1,435.

During the hearing, Stewart was asked for his thoughts on the allegations of racial hostility and told the court: “That’s absurd. It’s totally unfair. My life has been ... I don’t want to say destroyed, but I am deeply hurt at having to appear in a court like this.”

The MP, a former British army officer who was stationed in Bahrain in 1969, said: “I am not a racist. He was saying that I was corrupt and that I had taken money. My honour was at stake in front of a large number of ambassadors. It upset me and I thought it was extremely offensive.”

Stewart told the court he had “no idea” who Alwadaei was and said he used the word “hate” because of what the protester was saying.

Asked if he accused Alwadaei of taking money from the UK, the MP said: “I made the assumption he too was living in this country and was benefiting from living in this country. I certainly didn’t mean he was a freeloader.”

The MP used the phrase “my country” because he “assumed” Alwadaei was from Bahrain, but accepted that the words “this country” would “perhaps have been better”, the court heard.

Last December, the Guardian revealed that Alwadaei complained to the Conservative party about the confrontation outside the reception.

The Metropolitan police launched an investigation after a complaint was lodged by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy activist, who has



said he is living in exile after being tortured in the Gulf state.

Speaking about the row, Alwadaei said: “I feel that I was dehumanised, like I was someone who is not welcomed in the UK. Because of my skin colour, because of where I came from, he feels I am taking

money from his country.”

The Conservative party is facing calls to remove the Tory whip from Stewart.

The Liberal Democrat chief whip, Wendy Chamberlain MP, said: “It’s time [Rishi] Sunak finally acted with integrity. This should start with immediately removing the whip from Bob Stewart. Failing to remove the whip sends a dangerous message that behaviour like this is acceptable. “Rishi Sunak has allowed his first year as prime minister to be dogged [by] sleaze and scandal. The very least he could do now is to finally crack down on it.”

The Conservatives have been contacted for comment.

Bob Stewart surrendered the Tory whip and now sits as an independent in Beckenham, south London. He said he will step down at the next general election. His political life appears to have abruptly come to an unglorious end.

More than 70 NGOs call for Saudi Arabia not to host 2024 Internet Governance Forum

17/11/2023

On 12 October 2023, ALQST and more than 70 digital and human rights organisations [wrote](#) to the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, urging him to reverse the decision to allow Saudi Arabia to host the next Internet Governance Forum annual meeting. The organisations expressed concern that Saudi Arabia’s deeply troubling human rights record would effectively make it unviable for civil society to freely and safely participate in the meeting, given the serious physical and digital security risks that face those attempting to peacefully voice dissent in the country.

In their [letter](#), the organisations draw attention to Saudi Arabia’s deteriorating human rights record, in particular highlighting the ongoing violations in relation to freedom of expression and Saudi Arabia’s extensive use of spyware against journalists. The letter addressed emblematic cases of such violations, included the lack of justice and accountability for the murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, the extraordinarily long prison sentence passed against Leeds University PhD student Salma al-Shehab (27 years) for her peaceful tweets in support of women’s rights, as well as the [death sentence](#) issued to 54-year old retired teacher, Mohammed al-Ghamdi, for his peaceful expression on social media.

The main demands contained in the letter are: As a global network of civil society organizations, we the undersigned urge you to:

Not grant Saudi Arabia host country status for the global IGF annual meeting, and immediately review the decision to do so; Incorporate a robust, thorough human rights due diligence process in the review of this and future decisions about host locations;

Commit to hosting the IGF in contexts where civil society can freely and safely participate;

Take the necessary steps to identify a host location for 2024 in alignment with these commitments, and explore all available alternatives in both location and format that may be available to ensure civil society and other actors facing heightened risk have meaningful pathways for engagement; and Ensure sustainable funding and renewal of the IGF mandate with safeguards for robust civil society participation.

Saudi Arabia meaningfully demonstrating its respect for human rights through consistent actions is the only path forward for earning the trust of this multistakeholder community, and we urge UN and IGF leadership to make that message clear. Hosting a robust and inclusive gathering like the IGF is incompatible with forcible disappearance, arbitrary detention, and reprisals against those peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and Saudi authorities must make urgent as well as long-term reforms, starting with unconditional release of those unjustly detained, before meriting consideration.

