

# BAHRAIN

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

## Deeper political crisis in Bahrain & Saudi Arabia under young princes

The people of Bahrain have been subjected to enormous political and economic pressures for the past two centuries. Their fate is certainly linked to that of the whole region which suffers from dictatorship, despotism and occupation. To aspire for better life, free from coercion and repression is not only legitimate but necessary. God created the people to live free and enjoy their spiritual attachment to the Almighty, not to be subjugated by others. Our people, like many others on this planet will always aspire for a better life. They have never submitted to the tribal rule imposed on them by forces from outside the region. They have also hoped to help create a world free from injustice. It is true these hopes may appear far-fetched, but they are legitimate and require greater efforts to make them happen. In a world that is ruled by powers which have linked their interests to dictators and despots, there will always be those who rise up in defence of the oppressed and in defiance of the oppressors. No wonder then that the jails of those regimes are overcrowded with the freedom fighters and those who reject subjugation.

As the month of December looms, the Bahraini people have embraced themselves to more repression by the khalifi rulers. Since independence following the British withdrawal from the region in 1971 they have been intensifying their struggle that reaches its climax in December. This is because the khalifi dictator designated 17th of the month as the "National Day" to mark the grasping of power by the father of the present ruler in 1971. The people have always called for that day to be made on 14th August when the British forces completed their withdrawal. When Bahrainis protested on that day thirty years ago the khalifi forces opened fire killing two innocent natives; Hani Khamis and Hani Al Wasti. Since then the Bahrainis have been marking the day with anti-regime protests. In the past three decades thousands of people were detained, tortured and sentenced to long prison terms. The situation has thus been polarised as never before.

This year, once again, the people will escalate their civil resistance movement against the tyrannical regime hoping to gradually

weaken its structure and convince the world that it is not capable of maintaining the peace in Bahrain or the region. The other Gulf countries, which are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have openly supported the khalifi regime, but they could not grant it the political or popular legitimacy that it lacks. Their annual summits sought to provide political and logistical support to the khalifi regime but they failed to change the balance of power on the ground. Year after year the protests have continued with slogans calling for regime change. The natives cannot accept to be ruled by a tribe that used force to occupy the country. They have always aspired to achieve a degree of freedom and democracy, free their country from foreign intervention and establish a political system based on consensus, constitutional grounds and the rule of law. Their efforts have been challenged by the regime's supporters in Washington, London, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. These countries may be able to grant it financial or security protection but they cannot defeat the demands of the people to establish a democratic regime to replace the present tribal dictatorship.

The volatile situation in the Middle East may have played in the hands of the khalifi junta, but not for much longer. In recent years they have established formal relations with Israel to the annoyance of the natives and other people in the region. They believe this is a source of strength to their fledgling regime. They have exchanged ambassadors with Tel Aviv and received political and business leaders. This could only lead to more anger among the people who have always linked their fate with that of the Arab and Muslim people. The regime has invested heavily in its pro-Israel policies with the hope that it would pay in terms of provision of security, political legitimacy in the eyes of the pro-Israel Western governments and inflict psychological defeat on the native people of Bahrain. Yet the past four years have witnessed an escalation of pro-Palestine protests. In the past two months many Bahrainis were detained after they had taken part in pro-Palestine protests. These arrests could have derailed the regime's attempts to present itself in new

styles and that it is breaking with its recent past by releasing the political prisoners. It was hoping that these releases would grant it a degree of popularity and legitimacy. But the neither the released political prisoners nor their families extended appreciation or thanks to the khalifi dictator. On the contrary the tails of torture and ill-treatment that these prisoners had suffered have come to haunt the regime which suddenly halted its programme of releases when the former prisoners started to speak about their horrific ordeals and experiences.

It is widely accepted that the core of the crisis in Bahrain is not the political detentions. These are symptoms of deeper crisis. For the past fifty years the country has lived under absolute dictatorship after the khalifi rulers reneged on the promises they had given to the people prior to the British withdrawal in 1971. The country has lived in a quagmire ever since. It has been the worst political period in the history of the country. At the beginning it was linked to the former prime minister, khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa who died four years ago. But the situation became more dire after his death. Under the present ruler, Hamad Al Khalifa the country has experienced the most horrific policies. His son, Salman, had been widely marketed as a man of change and modernisation. But since he became prime minister four years ago he has shown little regard to the issues of democracy and human rights. The political detentions have increased and the policies of cronyism, corruption and dictatorship have intensified. Only recently, his government has banned the Friday prayers at the largest mosque in the country. The Imam of the mosque, Sheikh Ali Al Sadadi was arrested and the people have been threatened with serious consequences if they insisted on the religious congregation in the town of Duraz. This is happening under the premiership of the man hailed by the West as a "reformer" in a similar way that Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman had been marketed. The dire situation is likely to continue especially after Israel had been admitted to the club of Middle Eastern powers. The future thus appears more bleak and under new dictators.

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## Bahraini youths detained, Saudi PIF implicated in HR abuses

On Sunday 24th November three native youths were arrested. Sadeq Jaffar Sharaf, Ammar Sadeq Al Mulla and Hadi Saeed (from Nuwaidrat town) were summoned by the regime's torturers and were subsequently detained.

Bahraini citizens have continued their protests against the banning of the Friday prayers at Imam Sadeq Mosque in Duraz. For nine weeks the ban has continued to punish the worshippers for showing support for the people of Palestine and Lebanon. The regime's reaction was to besiege the mosque, arrest the prayers leader (Imam) Sheikh Ali Al Sadadi and besiege the area to stop worshippers reaching the mosque.

The persecution of elderly activist, Hajji Sumood has continued. He has been summoned to appear at a police station for questioning about his peaceful protests. His real name is Abdul Majeed Abdulla and has shown great courage to appear at almost every protest in the country. So far he was summoned five times this year.

Persecution of the young political prisoners is escalating. The management of the Dry Dock prison is adopting repressive measures against the under-aged children detainees. Five of them who are awaiting trial at Cell No 10 of Bloc 17 have been subjected to severe punishment. Hadi Younus, Hassan Hamid, Mohammed Shawqi, Abdulla Abbas and Sayed Hussain Jawad were told on Thursday 21st November that they would receive punishment including; Denial of daily outing from their cells, they would not have meals and their phone calls to their families would be stopped.

Since their detention on 28th July two Bahrainis have been subjected to horrific treatment and several extensions of their detention. Mohammed Abdulla Mohammed Ah-

med, 21 and Mohammed Jaffar Mohammed Abdulla Mohammed, 17 are being denied the right to continue their university studies.

Several reports have confirmed that former political prisoners in Bahrain are being denied their civil rights after leaving jail such as housing and social allowances. Abdulla Hassan Al Hamad whose detention and ill-treatment were documented by the Bissiouni report in 2011 had already served 12 of his 15 years prison sentence when he was released in 2023. He is now serving the remaining three years within the "alternative sentencing" scheme. In 2000 he had applied for social housing. In 2018 his application was frozen. The housing allowance that was paid to his family was also stopped causing them severe hardship. This is seen as a punishment not for the person but his family as well. The predicaments of the political prisoners thus continue, sowing the seeds for future uprisings against the inhumane dictatorial khalifi regime.

The political prisoners at the notorious Dry Dock prison have issued a statement to express solidarity with those on death row. They re-iterated their support of their struggle to achieve their legal rights. They also expressed support to their daily protests at which they wear their death dress (white shroud) to show their determination to pursue the people's aims of freedom, rights and dignity. The statement also urged the activists, scholars and writers outside prison to take the case of the death row prisoners seriously.

New directives from the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) have led the media outlets to promote normalisation with Israel and criticise the Palestinian movements. Simultaneously, sym-

pathetic voices to Palestine and Palestinians are criminalised. These directives are applicable to the native Saudis as well as the residents and pilgrims.

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund (PIF), has facilitated and benefited from human rights abuses, Human Rights Watch said in a report released on 20th November. The 95-page report, "The Man Who Bought the World: Rights Abuses Linked to Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund and Its Chairman, Mohammad bin Salman," found that Saudi Arabia's vast fossil fuel-derived state wealth is effectively controlled by one person, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Human Rights Watch found that the crown prince wields this enormous economic power in a largely arbitrary and highly personalized manner rather than for the Saudi people's benefit and that the PIF is used to whitewash the Saudi government's abuses. "Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has unchecked control over the country's nearly trillion dollar Public Investment Fund," said Joey Shea, Saudi Arabia researcher at Human Rights Watch. "The crown prince has used the Saudi sovereign wealth fund's economic power to commit serious human rights violations and whitewash the reputational harm from these abuses."

The Saudi human rights body (Alqst) has documented the first death of a migrant worker on a Neom site, highlighting human rights and environmental concerns. Woman human rights activist and former political prisoner, Lina Alhathloul described Neom as being "built on the blood of Saudis",

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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## Anti-regime protests continue in Bahrain, more Saudis beheaded

Arbitrary detentions have continued unabated in Bahrain. Salman Ali, a young native was arrested in the early hours of Tuesday 12th November after his home in Karzakan was raided. Also, Ali Jaffar Khalil was remanded in custody for 15 days for taking part in a protest in support of Palestine. On 13th November native Bahraini citizen Abdul Aziz Shakir was arrested at the regime's court and dragged to spend one month at his torture cell.

The trial of four political prisoners from Sitra town has been postponed until 15th December. Hassan Jaffar, 16 from Sitra Sfalah, Hassan Mohammed Al Abbood, 18 from Sitra Kharjiya, Ali Saeed Sdaif, 16 from Sitra Kharjiyah and Fadel Abbas, 18 from Ma'amir were detained on 5th July after being pursued by regime's security officers in a police car who attempted to hit them.

Protests and demonstrations have continued in several areas of Bahrain. Last Friday there were protests in Karbabad town in

support of the people of Gaza and Lebanon and against the ban on the Friday prayers at Imam Sadiq Mosque in Duraz. A similar demonstration took place in Samaheej, near the airport. There were similar protest at various other places. The political demands have remained central to these protests despite the attempts by the regime to confuse the situation through arrests, detentions, spreading of corruption and raising the bar with regards to foreign alliances including those with Israel.

In its monthly report for October, Al Wefaq Islamic Society recorded 348 human rights violations including arbitrary detentions, house raids and attacks on peaceful protests. There were 106 arrests including 4 scholars, 4 children and 92 summons. Most were linked to peaceful protests in support of Palestine and Lebanon. There were 104 raids in 34 areas like Duraz, Shakhoura and Abu Saiba. There were 11 cases of ill-treatment and denial of medical care. Also, there were attacks on prisoners at blocs 7, 8,

9 and 10 of Jau prison. There were 103 peaceful protests including 63 pro-Palestine solidarity rallies.

After the end of the punishments of death row prisoners Hussain Marzooq, Hussain Mahdi, Mohammed Ramadan and Zuhair Ibrahim Jassim they were transferred to share cells with common law criminals. They were kept in isolation cells for several weeks after protesting against their ill-treatment. Human rights activist, Ali Hajee called for a review of their original conviction. Her argued that it was based on "confessions" drawn under torture. When they protested against denying one of them contact with his seriously ill father, they were punished. Riot police were sent in to crush the protest. Then they were placed in isolation cells.

The health of a senior opposition figure has sharply deteriorated in recent days. Earlier this week, Sheikh Mirza Al Mahroos, 65 who has spent almost 14 years behind bars was rushed from his

## Bahrain's ban on Friday prayers continues, Saudis execute four

Anger is mounting among the native Bahrainis against the khalifi tribal rulers for banning the main Friday prayers in the country. For a month now, the weekly congregation on Friday at Imam Sadeq Mosque in Duraz has not taken place. Police cars cordoned off the mosque and prevented people from outside the area reaching the mosque. The prayer leader, Sheikh Ali Al Sadadi has been in detention for the past few weeks. This is an outrageous attack on the religious rights of the overwhelming majority of the population by the ruling junta. On 11th November the senior religious scholars in the country signed a statement condemning this act saying that no one has the right to ban the prayers. "No one has the religious or common law mandate to issue orders to stop it", they said. The statement was signed by Sayed Abdulla Al Ghuraifi, Sheikh Mohammed Saleh Al Rabi'ei, Sheikh Mohammed Sangoor, Sheikh Mahmood Al Aali and Sheikh Ali Al Sadadi.

A former Bahraini exile has been arrested. On Monday 11th November, Mohammed Hassan Al Hamar, from Dair town, returned home from abroad, but he was stopped at the airport, interrogated and detained. Two Bahraini former exiles were also detained upon their return on 7th November: Jassim Mohammed Saleh and Hassan Al-Shaikh. Regime's prosecutors have extended the detention Sayed Hadi Mohsin, from Bilad Al Qadeem for 15 more days. He was detained on 21st October after he had been summoned by the CID department. Also Sajjad Mohammed from Duraz as well as Ahmed Mirza from Bilad Al Qadeem have had their detention extended for 15 more days. Fadel Abbas, a prominent opponent was detained yesterday.

Another political prisoner "disappeared"

from Bloc 6 of Jau Prison. On Monday 4th November Jassim Mohammed Salman Ayyad, from Barbar town, was taken to the prison's clinic but was not brought back to his cell. This is a practice by the prison officials to punish those who participate in actions by the prisoners. On Sunday 10th November, a political prisoner was transferred to hospital after his health rapidly deteriorated. Sayed Hameed Ali Yousuf Al Qadami has been suffering heart problems and needed a procedure to deal blocked veins but it has not been done. He was detained on 14th October on Bahrain-Saudi causeway. He did not have any medical problem before. Despite their predicaments, Bahraini political prisoners continue their support of the oppressed people outside. On Friday 8th November the prisoners at Bloc 9 of the notorious Jau prison demonstrated outside their cells in solidarity with the people of Palestine and Lebanon. They were also protesting the khalifi normalisation with Israel. The following day, the prisoners at Bloc 7 also demonstrated for the same cause.

On Sunday 10th November, more than 250 political prisoners at Blocs 6,7,8 and 9 of Jau prison refused to receive their meals in solidarity with those on death row. Mohammed Ramadan, who is on death row said that tension is rising in the wing of the death row prisoners some of whom have worn the death shroud (kafan). These prisoners have recently been targeted for serious abuse including being moved to isolation cells, denial of food rations, drinking water and stopping family contacts. On Monday a big banner was displayed at the top of Bloc 9 saying: "Prisoners on the way of Quds". Another one said: "Victory is coming". A third one said: "The right is taken (not given)".

On 11 November 2024, Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa met with King

Charles III in Windsor. The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Reprieve sent a letter to King Charles urging him to raise pressing human rights concerns. Bahraini activists staged a protest in Windsor, holding signs stating "Bahrain Tyrant: NOT Welcome in the UK" and "King Charles don't Host Bahrain Torturers." Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Advocacy Director for the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, commenting stated: "Inviting Bahrain's dictator is a grave error of judgment, as his victims continue to languish unjustly behind bars in Bahraini prisons. Disregarding human rights only emboldens further abuses and will send a clear signal that impunity prevails. We urge King Charles to raise the issue of political prisoners with King Hamad."

Yesterday, Saudi Interior Ministry confirmed the execution of four more people: two Saudis and two Jordanians in two separate cases. They accused the two natives, Faisal bin Mesfer Al Masood and Moayyad bin Sulaiman AlShwaiman of dealing in Amphetamine drugs. They were tried, convicted and sentenced to death. The Specialised Criminal Court confirmed the sentence which was carried out yesterday. The two were beheaded. The two Jordanians, Mohammed Zaidan Al-Nawasra and Sa'ad Mlaihah Al-Nawasra were also convicted of dealing with the same drugs. They were also beheaded.

This week woman human rights activist Salma Al Shehab from Qatif, Eastern Arabia, celebrated her birthday, but behind bars. She is serving a 27-year sentence for her human rights activism. Her supporters including Alqst for human rights wrote: Happy Birthday, dear Salma. We celebrate you today and every day, and we won't stop fighting for you until you're free. #FreeSalma

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
13th November 2024

torture cell to the hospital for immediate treatment. No details of his condition have been revealed. He suffers severe abdominal pain, bleeding and serious headaches. He also suffers from irregular heart beats. His family has expressed serious concerns for his health.

The regime's ban on Friday prayers at the largest mosque in the country has continued for the 7th week running. Worshipers were not allowed to enter the town of Duraz to attend the weekly congregation. This is part of the regime's religious persecution of the overwhelming majority population. Feelings among worshippers are running high as the khalifi policies become more repressive, exclusive and dictatorial. On 15th November the most senior religious scholar, Sheikh Isa Qasim said from his exile that the regime's decision is a cruel war on religion and the religious freedoms. He added that this policy serves the Zionist plans and is imposed to impress the Israeli interests and politicians.

On Sunday 17th November Jau Central Prison witnessed an escalation of protests

by the political prisoners. The inmates protested the medical negligence, power cuts, switching off hot water heaters and imposing strict rules on meals distribution. The same pattern was repeated the following day when the security forces intervened using force against the prisoners.

On Thursday 14th November the Saudi ministry of the interior said that two citizens had been executed for alleged "terrorist acts". It accused Ali bin Abdulla Al Sai'ari and Abdul Aziz bin Muslih Al Omari of involvement in criminal acts that "amount to betrayal of the country", communicating with terrorist elements, helping and financing terrorism, adopting terrorist doctrines that allow blood-letting and violating people's rights and associating with a terrorist organisation. The regime's Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), as usual, rubber-stamped the sentence which led the beheading of the two innocent men. Saudi Arabia has executed more than 100 foreigners this year so far – the highest number ever, according to human rights groups. The latest execution, on Saturday in the southwestern region of

Najran, was of a Yemeni national convicted of alleged drug smuggling, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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# Exiles ask King Charles to rescind honour awarded to king of Bahrain



Ben Quinn, Wed 13 Nov 2024

Buckingham Palace accused of ‘burying’ news of GCVO bestowed on King Hamad, whose regime is accused of torturing opponents

King Charles has been asked by exiles from Bahrain to rescind an honour he bestowed this week on the ruler of the Gulf kingdom.

Charles was told in a letter by the exiles: “It is personally difficult for us to view this honour as anything other than a betrayal of victims who have suffered at the hands of King Hamad and his brutal regime.”

Buckingham Palace had been accused of “burying” the news that Charles had bestowed the Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order (GCVO) on King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

It was the Gulf state’s official news agency that announced on Tuesday that Charles had made the award, which was covered on the front pages of Bahrain’s newspapers.

However, Bahraini exiles in the UK and supporters have questioned why no mention was made of the award in Buckingham Palace’s own announcement that Charles had hosted Bahrain’s king at Windsor Castle.

The awarding of the honour was announced by Buckingham Palace in a press release issued on Wednesday evening.

The Bahraini government has in effect silenced political opposition, banned independent media and subjected internal opponents to brutal treatment including torture and denial of medical care, according to Human Rights Watch.

One of the signatories to the letter to Charles was Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, who was granted refugee status in the UK in 2012 and described himself in it as a “victim of King Hamad’s regime” and a survivor of torture.

“We sincerely hope that the extent and gravity of our suffering is conveyed through this letter and provides sufficient reason for Your Majesty to urgently reconsider the decision and rescind the award to Bahrain’s king,” Charles was

told in the letter.

Bahraini newspapers have covered the award prominently on their front pages, including with pictures of Charles and King Hamad.

Alastair Long, the British ambassador to Bahrain, said in a post on Instagram that Charles held a dinner in honour of King Hamad’s silver jubilee and “appreciated that King Hamad’s rule has been guided by concern and care for his people”.

However, Brian Dooley, a senior adviser to the activist group Human Rights First, said: “It’s startling to see King Hamad

being rewarded with social honours when his unelected government has been guilty of so many crimes, including the torture of human rights activists, for so many years.

“He is not a figurehead, he is in charge of – and responsible for – his government’s actions. Why any self-respecting country would want to associate with him is baffling.”

The UK has deep trade and defence ties to Bahrain, which gained independence from Britain in 1971 and has served as a base for British naval operations.

## NGO calls for better living conditions in Busmantsi migrant camp, release of Saudi activist

Valentin Evstatiev, Desislava Peeva  
Busmantsi, near Sofia, 17.11.2024

On Sunday 17th November, an organization named Solidarity with Migrants in Bulgaria (SMB) called for improving the living conditions in the Special Home for Temporary Accommodation of Foreigners in the Sofia suburb of Busmantsi. The SMB held a protest outside the Home demanding that members of the organization should not be barred from accessing Home residents and should be given more opportunities to bring food and medicines to the migrants. They insisted that the camp residents, who currently number 26, should not be treated violently and insulted with racist remarks, and should be allowed to go out or be “released”.

“The authorities take away the foreigners’ smartphones and they cannot contact their families and lawyers,” the SMB’s Georgi Spasov told journalists. He said visits to the camp are only allowed within a period of two hours on two working days of the week, Spasov said.

According to him, one of the residents in particular, Saudi activist Abdulrahman al-Khalidi, should be “released” because he is in his third year of living in the camp, which is “like a prison” to him.

The case of al-Khalidi is an instance of transnational repression, said another SMB member, Galina Lalcheva. “In Bulgaria, migrant detention has become a

form of criminal detention and people are presumed to be guilty until proven otherwise,” she said.

On January 9, the Sofia City Administrative Court ruled against a refusal by the State Agency for Refugees (SAR) to grant al-Khalidi refugee status and humanitarian status. After an appeal, the reversal of the Agency’s refusal was upheld by the Supreme Administrative Court in April. According to the court, the case file must be returned to the SAR for a review in accordance with the court’s reasoning and for consideration of the evidence provided by the applicant.

On February 12, after considering al-Khalidi’s case, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee urged in an open letter: “Stop the forced return of Abdulrahman al-Khalidi to Saudi Arabia.” On March 13, Human Rights Watch appealed to the Bulgarian authorities: “Don’t deport Saudi activist.”

