

BAHRAIN

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

A new year with few hopes and a plenty of caution

A New Year has just dawned on the world with varying degrees of hopes and expectations. It will be a different period in light of several developments globally and regionally. The world is awaiting new realities in the world under the presidency of Donald Trump in America. He has vowed to stop wars, end American support for Ukraine, concentrate on American economy and re-assess the US policies towards China. At the same time, the world is retracting from its fundamental stands on several issues such as democratic transformation, human rights and even climate change. It is expected that the last issue will attract more attention in the following months, but the experience has shown that the West has been indifferent to the climate changes that have affected the globe. There is a great worry among environment activists that the world powers are unwilling to sacrifice their limited interests for the sake of improved the global environment. The Western powers have been reduced to monitoring roles without the power to influence either political changes or stop the climate degradation. It will be a great challenge for activists to attract the attention back to the various challenges facing the world including the political alliances, re-alignment or change.

The first major concern is the democratic transformation -in the Arab world that the people have hoped to achieve when they rose against their tyrants in 2011. This is a crucial matter that has remained central to global and regional rivalry in the region. It is true that the Western powers have reduced their attention to the Middle East. It is also true that the political realignment is shifting to further places. But it is also correct to suggest that the long - awaited changes have not happened yet. When they rose up against tyranny in 2011 the Arab people had hoped to achieve the ability to form modern statehoods in their countries. This has not happened yet in most Arab countries. Even in Tunisia the limited change appears to have been washed away by the counter-revolution forces. Yemen has been targeted by those forces under different pretexts. Now Syria has seen a seismic change by the removal of Bashar Al Assad from power. While the Syrian people have given massive sacrifices in

this process, it is clear that Israel is striving to claim a role in the political change. In the past few years, Syria has been subjected to most ferocious attacks by Israel which targeted all aspects of its infrastructure especially its military power. The Israelis have bombed almost all military facilities in the country, destroying almost all its military aircrafts, tanks, missiles, production and storage facilities and military bases. It was a catastrophic episode that the new leaders in Damascus was incapable of challenging or stopping. Whatever happens in Damascus now, the country has lost its military significance and become an easy prey to Israel which has occupied new Syrian territories. The world has been largely silent and ineffective.

The second area is the democratisation process in other countries. The Syrian experience shows two sides. First, the political change is possible even if it is delayed. The second the new leaders need a stable and secure environment to be able to introduce real changes in the country. The new leaders in Damascus will be challenged by the lack of deterrent military capabilities after the illegal and criminal acts by Israel. The world has stood in silence as the Israelis wreaked havoc in Syria. The Arab people want to see political transformation in several other countries, especially Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. It is too early to determine if the change in Syria is constructive to its people. Is this what they wanted? Is the political change worth it given the destruction of the country's military capabilities? Is the country now secure from outside influence and attacks especially from Turkey and Israel? And what about the inter-factional disputes among the groups that the HTS (Hay'at Tahrir AlSham) dominate at the moment? These are legitimate questions that will determine the future of the pro-democracy movements in the Arab World. The people of Bahrain have, all along, been aspiring to achieve democratic transformation. They sacrificed many of their youths in the process. There are now hundreds of political prisoners languishing in the khalifi prisons, some of whom have been incarcerated for up to 14 years. They insist on achieving a democratic change to

end the country's human and political ailments. There are several powers at work to prevent that happening. But their influence is gradually waning in the face of determined people intent on enhancing the quality of their lives. The Syrian experience must not be used to gauge the viability of change in other countries. The Gulf region is rife with challenges and expectations. The oil wealth may have retarded the pro-democracy movement, but the zeal among the youth to achieve this change has never waned. The leaders of the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain are adamant to achieve change for their people. The New Year provides a new opportunity to assess the political trajectories in the country. What is certain is that the generational struggle cannot be eliminated with the whim of a pen. It has become part of the culture of the country. Bahrain stands out among other GCC states as a country with never-ending social and political crisis and often overcrowded jails full of political activists.

It is said that time is a healer. That is true in most cases. But in the political context, it often proves the opposite. The longer the crisis lasts, the deeper it becomes. In 2002 the dictator was facing a much milder crisis when the people rejected his constitution. He could have placated the people's anger, but he chose to challenge the people. No tyrant can defeat determined people who want change. He may become more despotic and dictatorial but he cannot win. The past two decades have shown the people's resilience and power. They were able to bring the tyrant and his rule to their knees in 2011 when they raised the slogan: People want regime change. The khalifis reacted angrily and used lethal force to kill and maim many people in the following years. That episode will be repeated until change has been achieved. The khalifis are destined to failure as they insist on challenging the natives and rely more on foreign support. That policy is unsustainable in the long run. This is why the people of Bahrain have been patient, resilient and steadfast all along, knowing that eventual victory will be theirs. The enemies of the people will, undoubtedly, be defeated and destined to the dustbin of history.

As the year ends, Bahrainis and Saudis languish under dictatorship

The family of political prisoner Mohammed Radhi (from Sitra) who is on death row is extremely worried for his well-being. They have not heard from him for over two months and have appealed for information from the official channels. They also want to contact him urgently. Also, the relatives of death row political prisoner, Hussain Ali Moosa have not heard from him for two months and are extremely worried.

Political prisoner, Rajaei Ali Mohsin Bad-dao, 31 (from Duraz town) is suffering serious health condition but is not receiving adequate medical treatment. He experiences low blood sugar, pains in the chest and serious pain in the heart. He is not able to breathe normally. He was taken to the prison clinic where he was told of the seriousness of his condition, but did not do much to help. He needs proper treatment at a specialised hospital. He has been behind bars since 15th September 2015

On Monday 23rd December a khalifi court postponed the trial of three children until 30th December. Abbas Muslim Abd Ali, 17, Ali Hussain Nasser Al Matrook, 15 and Abdul Aziz Hussain Jaffar Al Hamadi, 15 (all from Karranah town) are accused of illegal gathering and protest. The children were detained in August and October. The postponement has been condemned by human rights activists who also called for immediate and unconditional discharge of all the political prisoners.

Scores of political prisoners at the notorious Jau prison have refused to communicate with their families and friends in protest at the ill-treatment and abuse by the prison officers. Often the prisoners are moved from their cells to another room to make the call and in the process they face extensive and humiliating abuse. With their latest action the political prisoners hope to send a message that they are not in a good situation

which has been deteriorating since the martyrdom of Hussain Amaan several weeks ago.

The protests against the khalifi regime have continued. On Friday 20th December there were protests in several towns and villages. The people of Abu Saiba town responded to the call to highlight the plight of the political prisoners. Also, the people of Sanabis held a rally attended by scores of angry citizens. In Duraz, many people participated in a protest after the Friday prayers. The people of Saar town also took part in a protest calling for the release of the political prisoners.

Native Bahraini citizen, Hamed Al Mahfood is facing yet another basket of false charges without a shred of evidence. He was released in April after completing 10 years behind bars on trumped up charges. Despite the attempts by his lawyer to prove his innocence, the regime had taken the decision to jail him. He faces a similar fate this time. He has lost confidence in the khalifi judicial system and he recently refused to see an officer of the prosecution office. He believes that he would face arbitrary charges as before.

Another prisoner is facing severe persecution. Mahmood Abdul Rasool who is held at Bloc 7 at Jau Prison is facing extreme humanitarian conditions. He has not contacted his family for years and has been denied food and drinks for two weeks. Despite promises of change by some members of the regime's parliament he has not yet been able to call his family.

The main Jau prison in Bahrain is facing a mutiny by the political prisoners who have been subjected to most humiliating treatment by the officers and their superiors. Many inmates have confirmed that those officers are adopting sectarian policies and extreme forms of bullying to end the eight

months protest. When Shia Muslim inmates ask for religious books or prayers materials they are faced with threats and humiliation. The inmates are often threatened with physical and psychological torture. The prisoners said that they are aware of the motives behind these violations and that the regime's officers hope to break the will of the prisoners. On Sunday 22nd December the Saudi Interior Ministry announced the execution of two Saudi nationals. It said that the two had "betrayed" their country. The victims: Ahmed bin Saleh bin Abdulla Al Ku'aibi and Aayed bin Hayel bin Hindi El Enezi were falsely accused of carrying out criminal acts that imply treachery, association with terrorist groups, supporting and financing terrorism and terrorist acts, protecting terrorist elements and possessing firearms that they had "hidden" in a farm. They were "tried" by the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC) which issued the verdict of execution, which was then ratified by the High Court. Saudi courts have consistently been criticised by international human rights bodies of holding unfair trials that are short of the international standards of fairness. Last Thursday the Saudi authorities beheaded four Jordanians: Mahmood Abdulla Hjajj, Najeh Meshen Bkheit, Sulaiman Abed Sulaiman and Attaullah Ali Salem. They were accused of smuggling Amphetamine tablets to the country. Concerns over Saudi Arabia hosting the 2024 IGF were confirmed when two panels on human rights were hacked and deleted, and materials removed from an exhibition. The Saudi human rights body, Alqst, condemned this censorship at the UN-sponsored event in Riyadh.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
25th December 2024

Bahrainis jailed for Martyrs Day activism, Saudi executions continue

Bahrain's Martyrs Day was marked by the people inside the country and outside. There were several protests in which participants held the pictures of some of the martyrs. Families visited the graves of their loved ones killed by the regime and prayers were offered for them. In London, the opposition held a protest outside Bahrain's Embassy and organised a seminar in Central London which was addressed by activists and sympathisers. The regime's reaction has been vicious, with many young Bahrainis detained and abused

On 15th December four natives (from Sitra and Ma'amir towns) were unjustly tried and given long prison sentences. Hassan Mohammed Al Abood, 18 (from Sitra Alkharjiyah) and Fadel Abbas, 18 (from Ma'amir) were given one year. Hassan Jaffar, 16 (from Sitra Sfalalah) and Ali Saeed Sdaif, 16 (from Sitra Alkharjiyah) were sentenced to six months in jail. They had been arrested on 5th July 2024 in a police chase in the

roads and alleyways. They were severely beaten after their arrest. They were then transferred to Qudaiibiya police station. On 15th December Bahraini regime's court imposed a one-year prison sentence on political prisoner, Mu'ammal Ali Mansoor, from Malkiyah town. He was accused of "illegal gathering. He had been arrested on 20th December when he attended an interrogation session at Al Adliyah CID centre. On 15th December khalifi forces detained native Bahraini Hajji Jamil ElEqaiffah for praying at Imam Sadeq Mosque in Duraz. Regime's court ordered his detention for one week "pending investigation". Two days earlier he had been stopped and interrogated at the Bahrain-Saudi causeway.

Regime's security services have intensified their repression and summoned many people for interrogation that often involves torture and abuse. On Thursday evening scores of natives from at least three towns (Duraz, Aali and AbuQuwwa) were ordered

to appear for interrogation at the notorious CID centre the following day. The interrogation revolved around a peaceful rally in Adari area, the birth place of the latest martyr, Hussain Amaan who died in custody last week.

Four political prisoners at Bloc 7 of the notorious Jau prison have collapsed as a result of starvation and hydration. They include Mohammed Reda Lu'lui who is in a serious condition. The inmates announced through a loudspeaker that the prisoners are in dire conditions and some of them had collapsed as a result of deprivation of food and drink. The security forces ignored the plea and refused to provide food or drink. For the past two years the prison management had reduced the size of the food portion to the prisoners as a means to break their will and force them to give up the struggle.

For almost two months the families of the political prisoners on death row have not

Syrian events impact on people of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia

The events in Syria have reverberated in the four corners of the world. The mood has been generally positive as an un-elected regime was brought to an abrupt end. It is hoped that this is the beginning of a new dawn in the Arab World heralding a new era of freedom, democracy and respect of human rights. The Syrian regime was dictatorial, brutal and despotic. Opponents were either killed or detained as they expressed opposition to the hereditary dictatorship of the Assad household. When the people burst in anger and decided to change the situation, the regime crumbled within days. But the ongoing Israeli bombing of Syria has muted the celebratory mood of many. They have eradicated its military power and turned it into a "demilitarise zone". The people of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia took notice of the inevitability of the downfall of dictatorships. Like the Syrians, they were part of the Arab Spring in 2011 and have since continued to call for an end to the hereditary dictatorship. They deserve to achieve victory and determine their own fate.

On Thursday 5th December a native Bahraini man was martyred in the notorious Jau prison. Hussain Ali Aman, 41 from the town of Adari passed away after falling down while exercising in the courtyard of the prison. He was left to die before being transferred to hospital. The political prisoners accused the authorities of intentional negligence. He was left unattended for more than ten minutes. This is the second martyr this year. In March Hussain Al Ramram was also martyred as a result of the institutionalised negligence of the khalifi regime.

A young Bahraini man has been re-arrested for asking to be removed from the travel

ban list. Ghaith Mohammed Al Durazi was detained yesterday at the Central District police station. On 12th April 2023 he started his "alternative sentence" after spending five of his six year sentence behind bars. He was told that he should serve the remaining year outside prison. He had been detained on 23rd January.

Meanwhile arrests and detentions have continued. Mr Hussin Eid has been remanded in custody for one week without giving reasons. Another citizen, Ali Al Majed was arrested in a raid on his home to serve a prison sentence of three years. Mahmood Ali Qambar was summoned for interrogation and was detained. Also Ali Hussain Matar was arrested when he responded to a summons by the torture officers. On 5th December regime's forces detained native Bahraini citizen, Jassim Mohammed. He was crossing the Bahrain-Saudi causeway when he was snatched by the regime's torturers and taken to an unknown place. On 3rd December native youth Sayed Mustafa Al Sahlawi was detained after regime's prosecutors ordered a seven days detention. He was crossing the causeway when he was stopped and asked to appear at the CID headquarters, where he was detained. Also, Ali Hussain Ibrahim Fakhar, 29 was arrested on 4th December on his return from visiting holy shrines in Iraq.

On 2nd December regime's courts issued prison sentences for two months on three native Bahrainis: Sayed Ahmed Al Falla, Mohammed Moosa and Ali Reda Jaffar had participated in peaceful protests.

Medical care of the political prisoners has continued to deteriorate. Ammar Abdul Ghani is a prisoner of conscience and has been suffering from a skin disease, possibly Eczema. One year ago, he caught the disease

during his detention at an isolation unit. Despite attending the prison clinic as well as Salmaniya hospital his condition continued to deteriorate with the disease spreading to other areas of the skin. The specialists have said that the present medication is not working but he has been denied a different treatment. This medical negligence is criminal.

Popular protests are continuing in Bahrain, calling for the release of the political prisoners and a fundamental political change in the country. On Monday 9th December the people of Samaheej, Duraz, Al-Markh and Bani Jamma participated in big protests.

Food is being used as a weapon by the khalifi dictator against native Bahrainis. Sixty nine political prisoners at Bloc 7 of the notorious Jau prison were subjected to collective punishment. They were denied food from last Friday until Tuesday. They were punished for protesting inside their prison following the martyrdom of Hussain Ali Aman. The regime's forces attacked several blocs 6, 7, 8 and 10

Calls have been raised for the cancellation of the World Cup event in Saudi Arabia in 2034. Human rights bodies have confirmed that Saudi Arabia's escalating use of the death penalty has reached horrifying levels in 2024, with at least 309 individuals executed as of 8 December, the highest known figure in Saudi history. This grim milestone illustrates the Saudi authorities' callous disregard for the right to life and contradicts their own pledges to limit use of the death penalty. Of the 309 individuals executed so far in 2024, according to data from the official Saudi Press Agency, 189 (61%) were Saudi nationals. The 120 foreign nationals executed were from 14 Asian and African countries.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
11th December 2024

heard from them. Those prisoners are denied the right to communicate with the outside world including their families, go out for fresh air or to exercise their religious rights. The sister of a death row prisoner, Hussain Ali Moosa said: For 50 days I have missed my brother's voice and I do not know when the prison officials will end this misery". The sister of Hussain Marzooq and the father of Hussain Ali Mahdi also expressed anxiety and fear for their sons who are being continuously abused by the prison officials.

Political Prisoner Mohammed Abdul Hadi Al Baqqali is being denied his medicines for his colon ailment. This is in addition to being denied food and water for the past two weeks. His much-needed medicines finished 20 days ago but the authorities have refused to provide new ones.

The Saudi authorities have continued their executions with intensity. On Friday 13th December Raateb Ahmed Raateb, an Egyptian, was beheaded at Al

Jawf town. He was accused of dealing in Amphetamine tablets. On 14th December a Yemeni citizen, Bassam Abdul Rahman Al Faqih was also beheaded at the AlQaseem city in Central Arabia. This time the charge was murder, according to the authorities. A Saudi national from the Eastern Province, was beheaded on 15th December. Muhannad bin Zuhair bin Ali AlMulla was accused of murder, tried and sentenced to death. On 17th December a Jordanian national, Jawal Suleiman Matar

AlSharafat was beheaded at the same town for the same charge. In all these cases the accused were sentenced to death by the Specialised Criminal Court. But jurists have consistently accused the Saudis of killing people after what they call "unfair trials" which fall short of international standards.

Last week, the Saudi human rights organisation, Alqst, held its Annual Conference, to mark the 10th anniversary of its inception. Speakers hailed the work of Alqst and other human rights bodies, called for the release of the political prisoners and urged the Saudi regime to refrain from intensifying the use of capital punishment. Speakers delivered their talks in person and online, while audience also followed the proceedings both live and online. Participants include Khalid Ibrahim, the president of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Palestinian researcher, Marwa Fatafta, Falah Al Sayed, woman officer at MENA group for human rights and Dr Madawi Al Rashid, a Saudi academic and political activist.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
18th December 2024



Joint statement calling on Bahrain to free Khawaja

Joint Statement: After 5,000 Days of Arbitrary Detention, Bahrain Must Immediately Release Danish-Bahraini Citizen and Human Rights Defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

16 December 2024

Today, 16 December 2024, Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja has endured 5,000 days of arbitrary detention in Bahrain.

We, the undersigned, condemn Bahrain for the arbitrary detention and brutal torture of Mr Al-Khawaja and call on the King of Bahrain to release him immediately and unconditionally. We also express our disappointment that Denmark has failed in its responsibility to secure the release of its citizen for over 13 years.

Exactly 5,000 days ago, on the night of 8-9 April 2011, Mr Al-Khawaja was arrested and severely beaten by plain clothes security forces. He was held in solitary confinement and subjected to physical, psychological and sexual torture. The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry medically documented the torture and assault suffered by political prisoners, including Mr Al-Khawaja. However, after 5,000 days, Mr Al-Khawaja has not received adequate treatment for multiple serious medical problems, many of which were inflicted by the Bahraini state.

In 2012, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that Al-Khawaja's detention was arbitrary, in violation of international law, and called for his 'immediate release' and 'an enforceable right to compensation'. However, 5,000 days on from the brutal arrest and assault in April 2011, Mr Al-Khawaja remains in arbitrary detention.

The most recent report on human rights practices in Bahrain by the U.S. State Department asserts that 'significant human rights problems include credible reports of: cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners or detainees', among other abuses. However, the United States remains a close ally of Bahrain, which is home to the US Fifth Fleet, and a non-NATO ally.

Mr Al-Khawaja is a Danish citizen and likely the world's only imprisoned Danish human rights defender. The fact that the Danish state has taken 5,000 days - and counting - to secure the release of one of its own citizens is an utter failure. Meanwhile, Denmark is happy to promote trade and investment in Bahrain while ignoring gross human rights abuses against its own citizen.



Mr Al-Khawaja is a lifelong human rights defender, activist and educator. He is a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, the founder of two civil society organisations - the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights - a published writer and poet, and the recipient of the 2022 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders. Most importantly, he is a husband, father, grandfather and friend who should never have spent a day in jail, let alone 5,000 days separated from his loved ones.

We, the undersigned, urge the governments of Bahrain and Denmark, together with their respective allies, to ensure the

release of Mr Al-Khawaja and all prisoners arbitrarily detained for their opinions, activism, and opposition, including human rights defenders. We also urge the EU High Representative, the Danish Prime Minister and the Danish Foreign Minister to meet personally with Mr Al-Khawaja's family to pledge their joint efforts to secure Mr Al-Khawaja's immediate release.

Signatures:

ActionAid Denmark
ALQST for Human Rights
Amnesty International Denmark
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
CIVICUS
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
Danish PEN
DAWN
FairSquare
Front Line Defenders
Human Rights First
Human Rights Watch
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)
The FreeAlKhawaja Campaign
The Rafto Foundation for Human Rights

Saudi executions rose sharply in 2024

RIYADH, Dec 24 (Reuters) - Saudi Arabia executed 330 people this year, the highest number in decades, despite de facto ruler Mohammed bin Salman's 2022 assertion that the death penalty had been eliminated except for murder cases under his vision for a new open kingdom.

The country is spending billions to transform its reputation for strict religious restrictions and human rights abuses into that of a tourism and entertainment hub under the Vision 2030 plan launched by the crown prince, who is also known as MbS.

More than 150 people were executed for non-lethal crimes this year, according to the tally, which rights groups say is contrary to international law.

Those executions were mainly related to alleged drug smuggling amid a flood of amphetamine like captagon from Syria under ousted President Bashar al-Assad. They also included people charged with non-lethal terrorism, a charge rights groups say is often used against those who have participated in anti-government protests. The total includes more than 100 foreign nationals from the Middle East, Africa, Asia.

Rights groups have accused, opens new tab the country of sentencing minors to

death and using torture to extract confessions.

For decades Saudi Arabia held weekly executions by beheading with a sword in a public square; now that same area is dominated by cafes and restaurants with almost no sign of its bloody past.

"Repression is increasing, but you don't see it," said Dana Ahmed, MENA researcher at Amnesty International.

Relatives of people on death row, who did not wish to share their names due to security concerns, told Reuters they faced difficulties with the Saudi legal system.

A relative of one foreign national arrested on drug charges said he had simply been fishing near the coast and had no lawyer or representative in Saudi Arabia. A family member of another defendant said they had heard no evidence against him despite attending sessions in the criminal court for more than three years. Reuters was unable to verify the accounts independently.

MbS told the Atlantic in a 2022 interview that Saudi Arabia had eliminated the death penalty, except in cases of murder, which he said he was powerless to change since it is punishable by death according to the Koran.