

BAHRAIN

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

Bright future for Bahrain without Alkhalifa tribal rule

As the year came to a close, the Bahraini revolutionaries found many opportunities and causes for hope and celebration, despite the regime's ongoing criminal policies. While the highest religious leader in the country remains encircled at his home in Duraz Town, the people appear to be more vigilant, resilient and adamant on achieving their goals. It is realistic to suggest that Alkhalifa regime had committed numerous errors of judgement while confronting the largest ever revolution in Bahrain's history. The throttling of the people, whether it is the product of the dictatorial mentality of the regime or the "advice" of "friends", the result could easily prove devastating to their regime. Today, the two sides have reached the same conclusion; neither of them could live with the other. This is a new development unseen in previous conflicts. The people believe that they cannot live any longer with the Alkhalifa as their leaders. The ruling tribe feels it cannot accept the natives as the source of legitimacy of its rule or to remain as the dominant social component under their leadership. Neither side believes the other is making constructive steps that makes it acceptable as a political partner to run the country. From the point of view of the revolutionaries, this is the perfect conclusion of five years of endless struggle and sacrifices. Even if they remain in the country they will find it impossible to function. If the natives become rulers, that will be detrimental to their political ambitions. If they remain as they have been, they will become more zealous and rejectionist of the Alkhalifa. The best outcome for the two sides is final and total divorce.

Instead of commanding the situation, the regime escalated the conflict with its policies. These are reflections of its psychological crisis as its members were exposed as "thieves", "torturers" and "systematic torturers". These specifications were confirmed by the treatment of opposition figures. First came the persecution of the human rights activism, embodied by Nabeel Rajab who is now serving lengthy term in jail. Then there was the persecution of Al-Wefaq, the largest of the political societies in the country. Its Secretary General, Sheikh Ali Salman remains behind bars for refusing to tow the line of Alkhalifa while its main body has been dissolved, its web

page closed and various activities linked to it forced to cease up. Then came the persecution of Sheikh Ias Ahmed Qasim. He has been pursued by the regime for his unrelenting stands and rejection to accept half solutions. The country has thus become so polarised that each side has taken its liberty to escalate the conflict. The crisis has thus become intractable. This is certainly what the revolutionary faction of the opposition wanted. It is also what is desired by the extremist members of the regime. What does this mean in reality?

The new year starts with new realities both on the internal and external arenas. Internally both sides are fighting for survival. For the natives they want to rule themselves in accordance with the basic principles of good governance. They aspire to see their country free from outside interference, occupation or subjugation. They want real transformation to democratic system that respects human rights and respect the dignity and integrity of each individual. The rule of law is a cornerstone of any future regime as the Alkhalifa have imposed their tribal unjust laws that are applicable only on the natives. They have always been above the law. Only when they accept to become citizens like the others will they be accepted as citizens. They will always be rejected as occupiers and supremacists. On their part, the Alkhalifa have, long ago, claimed total ownership of the country and treated the natives as subjects. They aspire to see different social composition with small religious minorities that look for protection from the Alkhalifa. They have already occupied half of the main island and most of the other islands.

What is amazing about the Bahraini Revolution is its ability to survive against the odds. Despite the presence of six armies to protect the ruling family, they have been able to remain a revolutionary phenomenon that does not want to disappear. The Alkhalifa are protected by the Saudi, Emirati, Pakistani and Jordanian troops in addition to the protection provided by the American and British bases. Yet the Alkhalifa have always remained fearful of the circumstances. Recently they were the only GCC country to accept the Saudi

proposal of the "Gulf Union". The other members have either rejected it openly as in the case of the Sultanate of Oman or secretly like Qatar and Kuwait. None of these tribal rules wants to be ruled by the Al Saud who are known for their greed, expansionist policies and ability to swallow others. The regional politics are not moving in the direction favoured by the Saudis and their allies. Their war on Yemen is turning against them as the world awakens at the cries of the orphans and the starved. They have committed heinous war crimes, targeting schools, hospitals, homes, markets and other civilian areas. Even their allies in Washington and London are becoming wary of their inability to make headway against the poorest country in the Arab World. In Syria the groups they have financed and supported are being gradually obliterated. The Iraqis have made significant headway in their fight against Saudi-supported terrorists and will soon liberate Mosul from them.

UK has remained the only viable defender of these autocracies. But there is a limit to how much longer London can sustain its unequivocal support of regimes that have flouted international laws and committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. London is under pressures to stop arming the Saudis or actively supporting their aggression on Yemen. Some corrupt officials who are receiving Saudi and Alkhalifa funds and gifts are lobbying for UK's continued support. But there is a limit to what they can do. The conclusion is that these regimes especially that of Alkhalifa and Al Saud are a lost cause. It is wrong for Washington and London to continue its present policy of supporting regimes that are doomed morally, economically and politically. The Bahraini people are welcoming the new year in their style of determination on achieving their noble goals of democratic transformation and the establishment of good modern governance that respects human rights and upholds the rule of law. They have endured enormous hardships, paid dearly in terms of blood, comfort and personal freedoms. They are in no mood for compromises on their core demands. They know that if the regime remains the same horrors will re-happen. With determination to achieve fundamental change they will prevail.

Saudis used cluster bombs in Yemen, Alkhalifa murder Bahraini

On 6th December Saudi-led coalition fired Brazilian-made rockets containing banned cluster munitions that struck near two schools in the northern Yemeni city of Saada, Human Rights Watch said last week. The attack on al-Dhubat neighborhood in Saada's Old City at about 8 p.m. killed two civilians and wounded at least six, including a child. The attack came a day after Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Brazil, and the United States abstained from a vote in the United Nations General Assembly that overwhelmingly endorsed an already widely accepted international ban on cluster munition use. Brazil should join the Convention on Cluster Munitions and cease the production and transfer of cluster munitions, while Saudi Arabia and other coalition members should cease all use of cluster munitions, Human Rights Watch said. "Brazil should be on notice that its rockets are being used in unlawful attacks in the Yemeni war," said Steve Goose, arms director at Human Rights Watch and chair of the Cluster Munition Coalition, the international coalition of groups working to eradicate cluster munitions. "Cluster munitions are prohibited weapons that should never be used under any circumstances due to the harm inflicted on civilians. Brazil should make an immediate commitment to ending production and export of cluster munitions." On 26th December Saudi Interior Ministry said More than 2,000 Saudis are fighting abroad with terrorist groups, with over 70 percent of them in Syria. Many clerics and school of thoughts dominated by Wahhabism publicly invite extremist to go fighting in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and ... as a high precious religious duty. "The number of Saudis proven to be in conflict areas is 2,093," interior ministry spokesman General Mansour al-Turki told daily

newspaper Al-Hayat. He said that 1,540 of them were in Syria, where "jihadists" have flocked since the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL and Daesh) Terror group seized control of vast areas in mid-2014. Another 147 were in Yemen, which is the base of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), considered by Washington as the most dangerous affiliate of the global terror network. Another 31 were believed to be in Afghanistan or Pakistan, Turki said.

The barbarity of Bahrain's regime was laid bare on Friday 23rd December by the vicious killing of a young Sports journalist by one of Alkhalifa terrorists. Ms Eman Salehi, 29, was shot dead near Bahrain's dictator's palace in Rafaa town. She was driving her car, accompanied by her six years old son. She was shot by Hamad bin Murbarak Alkhalifa in a crime that shook the country which is fed up by the terrorism of the ruling tribe. The victim is an accredited Sports journalist who is respected by her colleagues in other GCC countries. Tributes poured from fans, human rights activists and friends. Because he is a member of the ruling dictatorship, he is not expected to be properly prosecuted in accordance to the rule of law.

The regime has escalated the policy of "disappearance". In addition to Sayed Alawi AlDurazi who had been snatched by regime's Death Squads two months ago, other natives have also disappeared without a trace. Among them is Hassan Taqi who was snatched by Death Squads ten days ago. On 18th December he was abducted by Death Squads at Bahrain's International Airport and taken to the CID torture chambers. Under-aged Mohammad Abdul Wahid AlNajjar has also disappeared a week ago without a trace.

On 21st December Amnesty International

submitted its views for UN Universal Periodic review to be debated at the 27th session of the UPR Working Group in May 2017. It evaluates the implementation of recommendations made in Bahrain's previous UPR, assesses the national human rights framework and the human rights situation on the ground, and makes recommendations to the government of Bahrain to address the human rights challenges mentioned in this report. The organization highlights shortcomings in the human rights framework in Bahrain, including national laws that restrict the rights to freedom of expression and association, imprisonment of political opponents and human rights defenders, and questions surrounding the independence, impartiality and effectiveness of national human rights institutions. It also raises concerns about arbitrary revocation of nationality of hundreds of persons, and the death penalty.

Bahraini's dictator has ordered his "judiciary" to confirm the life jail sentence and the revocation of citizenship of fifteen native Bahrainis: Muhsin Ibrahim Hassan AlMajid, Mohammad Abdulla Mohammad Kadhem, Hussain Mohammad Ahmad Falah, Mujtaba Mohammad Ibrahim AlMajid, Mohammad Abdulla Jaffar AlDhaif, Jaffar Abdulla Jaffar AlDhaif, Mohammad Hassan Mohammad Mahfood, Ahmad Mohammad Abdulla Mohammad, Jassim Mohammad Rashid, Abdullah Nasser Mohammad Jassim, Mohammad Jaffar Mohammad AlDemsatni, Hassan Ibrahim Ali Makki, Ali Mohamad Habib AlDhaif, Ahmad Essa Abdul Hussain and Ali Ibrahim Kadhem Matar. They were subjected to horrific torture to extract uncorroborated "confessions".

Bahrain Freedom Movement
28th December 2016

Yemen accuses UK of arming Saudis. More persecution of Bahrainis

The Saudi illegal war on Yemen is has continued to irritate the international community and embarrass the allies of the Saudis. Last week the US indicated that it was "reducing military aid" to Saudi Arabia as the civilians became the main target of the military campaign. Human rights bodies have criticised both USA and UK for supplying arms to the Saudis enabling them to pursue their aggression. It is known that both countries are supplying Riyadh with guided bombs and missiles, intelligence and specification of the targets and experts to operate the control and command centres. Those NGOs have repeatedly warned that those allies would be implicated in the war crimes that have been committed by the Saudis at large scale. But the Americans have continued to help refuel the Saudi aircrafts carrying out daily raids mostly on civilian targets. Neither Washington nor London has indicated it would be stop the support they offer the Saudis.

Yemen's Prime Minister, Abdul Aziz AlHabtour said: They know that the Saudis are dropping them on civilians in Sanaa and Sa'da. He said that "UK is more interested in making money; not protecting human rights." This is serious. It means that war crimes tribunals could be established by the UN Security Council at which Americans, British and Saudis could easily be charged with those most serious offences.

The annual Martyrs Day commemorations were held by the people on 16th and 17th December in their customary styles of protests, rallies, meetings and visits to the graves of the victims of Alkhalifa terror. Fathers of the martyrs led many of those protests which were held in most Bahraini towns; Sitra, Nuwaidrate, Ma'amir, Duraz, Maqsha', Bani Jamra, AlMarkh, Karrana, Barbar, Sanabis, Daih, Musalla, Sehla, Shahrakkan, Karzakkn, Buri, Saar, Abu Saiba', Malikiyah, Nabih Saleh and Bilad Al Qadeem. The protests

dealt severe blows to the regime that had, one week earlier attempted to convey to the world a false picture of the situation. Alkhalifa troops were furious and were told to exact revenge on the people for the failure of the GCC summit less than two weeks ago. The meeting of the leaders of the six GCC states in the presence of Prime Minister, Teresa May, failed to agree on the Saudi-initiated proposal to form the "Gulf Union". Many of the journalists who accompanied Mrs May said they were surprised by the extent of the public discontent, the viciousness of the regime and the versatility of the Bahrain people. They were amused to see that the Bahrainis have maintained the spirit of the Arab Spring despite the cruelty of the counter-revolution forces led by Saudis. In the week 12-18th December the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights documented at least 22 arbitrary arrests including five children. None of them has been released.

Saudis humiliated by GCC failed summit, Alkhalifa jail Sh Ali Salman

The 37th GCC summit in Manama held last week was a political failure as the heads of state disagreed among themselves on the core issue championed by the Saudis; the creation of the Gulf Union. It appears that the Gulf allies, mainly UK and USA, rejected the proposal that would have led to certain fragmentation of the fragile alliance of the Gulf sheikdoms. Among them only the Alkhalifa tribal sheiks expressed enthusiasm for the Saudi proposal, against the people's rejection of compromising the country's sovereignty to the Saudi occupiers. The Omanis and Qataris are angry with the Saudi regional policies and could not accept to merge with them. The Qataris in particular are often infuriated by the Saudi and Alkhalifa continuous attempts to humiliate them at international levels. Last week Salah bin Ghanem Al Ali, Qatari Minister of Youth and Sports said that both are still conspiring against his country. In response to a question about the possibility that Qatar be stripped of the 2022 World Cup because of workers complaining to FIFA about what they say 'workers right abuse' in the country the minister said: "This is not possible. FIFA does not exaggerate a small problem. There is of course concrete evidence that the President of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), Sheikh Salman (Alkhalifa) and the President of Saudi Arabian Football Federation, Ahmad al Harbi were the main organizers of the Scenario against Qatar, lobbying to lead this complaint toward their desired result. If such a thing is going to happen, we have much to say." The controversy surrounding the negative remarks on Saudi Arabia by UK's Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, has continued

even after his trip to the country. The remarks infuriated the Saudis and created confusion in London. Despite a statement by Downing Street to put a line under these remarks, his supporters insisted that what he had said were facts and could not be denied or altered. Boris Johnson accused Saudi Arabia of abusing Islam and acting as a puppeteer in proxy wars throughout the Middle East, in remarks that flout a longstanding Foreign Office convention not to criticise the UK's allies in public. The foreign secretary told a conference in Rome two weeks ago that: "There are politicians who are twisting and abusing religion and different strains of the same religion in order to further their own political objectives. That's one of the biggest political problems in the whole region. And the tragedy for me – and that's why you have these proxy wars being fought the whole time in that area – is that there is not strong enough leadership in the countries themselves." The foreign secretary then identified Saudi Arabia and Iran specifically, saying: "That's why you've got the Saudis, Iran, everybody, moving in, and puppeteering and playing proxy wars." These statements coincided with the controversial visit by the Prime Minister, Teresa May, to Manama where she attended the GCC conference.

On Monday 12th December Alkhalifa court of cassation confirmed the nine years prison sentence imposed by Bahrain's dictator on Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary General of AlWefaq, the largest political society. He is accused of spreading hate of the regime, and working to change it. Amnesty International rejected the verdict and called for the immediate and unconditional release of Sheikh Ali Salman. On the same

day Amnesty International's Middle East Deputy Director of Campaigns said: "Today's shocking verdict is another example of Bahrain's flagrant disregard for the right to freedom of expression. Sheikh Ali Salman is a prisoner of conscience. He has been put behind bars merely for peacefully reaffirming his party's determination to pursue power in Bahrain, to achieve the reform demands of the 2011 uprising and to hold those responsible for human rights violations to account. Instead of punishing him for peaceful criticism the Bahraini authorities must order his immediate and unconditional release."

The international rating agency, Standard and Poor, has degraded Bahrain's economy to BB- from BB. It said that the foreign reserves are dwindling and is a cause of concern. The Saudi financial aid will be needed to offset this decline. This explains Alkhalifa servitude to the Saudis.

A British thinktank that bills itself as a global authority on military and diplomatic affairs has been accused of jeopardising its independence after leaked documents showed it has secretly received £25m from the Bahraini royal family, which has been criticised for its poor human rights record. Confidential documents show that the country's repressive rulers donated the sum to the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) over the last five years. The documents also reveal that IISS and the Bahraini royals agreed to "take all necessary steps" to keep most of the donations secret. The Bahrain donations make up more than a quarter of IISS's income.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14 December 2016

Female journalist, 28, is shot dead in front of her six-year-old son 'by a member of Bahrain's royal family serving in the military'

A young mother has been gunned down in the street as her six-year-old son watched from inside their car in Bahrain. Eman Salehi, a 28-year-old Shiite woman, worked as a sports journalist for Bahrain's state-run television broadcaster. She was known for her piercing blue eyes and friendly demeanor. It's unclear what sparked the December 23 shooting.

That night, her car was stopped in the Bahraini city of Riffa, a community popular with members of the ruling Al Khalifa family and the military. A man shot Salehi once in the head, then immediately turned himself into authorities. The murder shocked the small island and has sparked controversy over who carried out the killing.

Activists abroad allege a member of Bahrain's Sunni royal family serving in the military pulled the trigger.

Bahrain's monarchy has a long love of Britain's own royal family and in No-

vember Prince Charles and his wife Camilla visited the country, which is repeatedly accused of human rights abuses.

The prince's Clarence House issued a statement at the time saying 'their royal highnesses are aware of the points raised by human rights organizations and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are providing background briefings and information.'

A report by the Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) organisation this year revealed British arms sales to Bahrain have increased significantly over the past five years.

Between February 2011 and September 2015, the UK has done deals with Bahrain worth £45 million, covering arms such as machine guns, assault rifles and anti-



armour ammunition, the organisation said.

The total for the three years prior to the country's 2011 Arab Spring protests was just £6 million.

The accusation that a member of Bahrain's Sunni royal family serving in the military is Ms Salehi's killer goes to the heart of lingering unrest on the island off the coast of Saudi Arabia, now five years on from

its protests and in the grips of a renewed government crackdown on dissent.

'If you say it involves the military, it involves the king,' said Said Yousif Almuhafehdah of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. 'No one wants to mention that.' Bahrain's Interior Ministry issued only a terse statement on Twitter saying there had been a 'murder of a female.'

The Daily Mail, 29th December 2016

It's Time to Assert Your Values

A Letter to France and Germany from prison (by Nabeel Rajab)

The Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab wrote this article from his prison cell in Riffa, Bahrain. On October 31, he faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in jail for charges that include criticism of the Saudi-led coalition's military intervention in Yemen.

As the tragedy of the refugee crisis has unfolded, it is clear that the consequences of European policies in the Middle East both before and since the 2011 "Arab Spring" have now spilled into Europe. France has been actively involved in two of the region's crisis points – Syria and Libya – and it was the previous Sarkozy government, alongside Britain, which led the bombing of Gaddafi's forces. The dictator deserved to fall, but in the aftermath Western forces retreated without helping Libya establish a post-Gaddafi consensus. The impacts have been devastating. Then there is the rise of ISIS out of the conflicts in Iraq and Syria, the worst manifestation of a violent ideology which still receives state-support in the Middle East.

European countries need to do their part to address these issues, and to do so they must win the war of ideas which pits democracy and human rights against authoritarianism and brutality. To support these concepts in the Middle East, they must be willing to face off against the Arab Gulf monarchies. The Gulf states claim to be allies in this fight against extremism, but they have fuelled the crisis and Western alliances with and support for these monarchies must be reassessed. France and Germany are now the twin beating hearts of Europe and they need to assert their values.

I write from a Bahraini jail, on trial facing 15 years in prison for criticising the Saudi bombing of Yemen and exposing torture in Bahrain's prisons. In September, when I wrote an open letter to the US administration, the Bahraini government brought new charges of damaging Bahrain's reputation against me.

My trial is not exceptional, it is ordinary. Thousands of Bahrainis are in prison for voicing criticism and demonstrating against the government, and thousands more have been murdered across the Arab world for daring to exercise their right to self-determination. That is truly appalling.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates sent troops into Bahrain to crush its pro-democracy protests in 2011, and these are the same countries that have created a humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The international community could have countered the negative role played by the Arab Gulf monarchies on numerous occasions since 2011, but have not. European support for Saudi Arabia, the

United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and their allies, through security cooperation and arms sales, has only increased.

It is the height of irony that Saudi Arabia claims to be fighting for Syrians who desire self-determination and for the legitimate government of Yemen, when it is one of the most violent dictatorships in the world. The Arab Gulf countries, rather than being induced to hold war criminals, human rights violators and terrorism supporters accountable, have felt empowered by the silence of key international allies – who don't want to rock the boat with oil-rich countries – to use deadly force against innocent civilians and protesters.

Rather than open their doors to refugees, the Gulf monarchies help to create them. Rather than pursue those responsible for civilian deaths in Yemen, these countries imprison peace advocates and rights activists. I am not the only Bahraini who has been jailed for daring to voice criticism of the war being waged in Yemen – the leader of the Wahdawi political party, Fadhel Abbas, is serving five years in prison for calling the war unconstitutional.

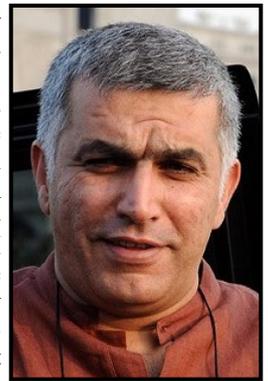
There are books published by Bahrain's Ministry of Defence which endorse the killing of Shia if they do not 'repent'. How is this different from the ideologies of ISIS, which Bahrain is supposedly fighting against? The Bahrain Defence Force is a de facto sectarian army, and includes virtually no Shia soldiers, even though they account

for the majority of the population. After ISIS published videos showing three recruits who had defected from the Bahraini security forces, I criticised the Bahraini security forces for allowing these violent sectarian ideologies to foster in their ranks. For that I received a six month prison sentence, and the Bahraini authorities still refuse to acknowledge the problem.

It is ultimately impossible to successfully defeat terrorism in countries such as ours, where it is impossible for a person to peacefully express their opinions without ending up in a prison cell.

France and Germany, you need to reassess their relationship with these monarchies, which actively work against democracy and human rights and fan the flames of violence and extremism. Security cooperation and arms sales must come with this strong condition: that these countries must respect human rights and international law, or lose their privileged relations.

Anything less will have calamitous long-term effects. These are the very countries which consider democracy and human rights a threat, and so condemn our region – and the world – to violence.



Yemen accuses UK of arming Saudis, *Cont from P 2*

There were 59 protests and demonstrations in 26 town and villages. Several of them were mercilessly attacked by the foreign-staffed riot police and masked men. Eight native Bahrainis were sentenced to a total of 67 years for their anti-regime peaceful activities. Despite international calls for the release of Nabil Rajab, the regime insists on persecuting him for his peaceful human rights work. Last week he appeared at Alkhalifa court and his case was postponed until 28th December for the fifth time. Amnesty International and over 50 other NGOs have signed a letter to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on behalf of human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, to urge his office to urgently and publicly call on the Government of Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release him and drop the charges against him. The case of the disappeared native Bahraini, Sayed Alawi Sayed Hussain Al Durazi is still causing great concern and fear for his life, having been subjected to most horrific torture over the past two months. Last week he "called" his wife and said three words only in very weak voice: I am well, before the call was abruptly and suspiciously cut. A statement

by "Bahrain Scholars" was issued last week calling on the regime to end his ordeal. The statement said that the abduction of Mr Alawi confirms the barbarity of the Alkhalifa tribal rule.

Fears are growing for the safety of hundreds of inmates at the notorious Jaw Prison. Last week they started hunger strike to protest the inhumane conditions at the torture chambers and the continuous attacks on their beliefs. The inmates at Block No 4 were prevented from holding their mass prayers or reciting religious texts. For one week now there have been no communications with those on strike. Nothing is known of their welfare and fears are growing that they are undergoing similar treatment to that inflicted on them in March 2015 when many received severe wounds at the hands of the Jordanian officers. Mohammad Al Khabbaz who was condemned to death by the tribal dictatorship has been denied the pleasure of his son, Abbas despite his severe illness that led to his death few days ago. His family was prevented from taking the child for treatment abroad and was poorly-treated at the militarised Salmaniya Hospital.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

21st December 2016