

BAHRAIN

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

Western hypocrisy adds to the predicament of unstable Middle East

When the regime forcefully bans human rights activists from leaving the country to attend the UPR on Bahrain, it must have something to hide. To go to this length knowing that the world is watching, this thing must be ugly, sinister and criminal. That is exactly what the Alkhalifa tribal rule has; a bleak record on human rights that is kept under tight control in order to hide the truth of the situation. The human rights abuses that have been committed over the years by the criminal Alkhalifa regime is beyond anybody's imagination. When its torturers issue summons for five year olds only to hand them to the torturers upon their appearance at the prosecution office, it means the situation has surpassed any level of indecency, criminality and enmity of humanity. When the mouthpieces of the regime go so far to suppress the reality from reaching the outside world, spending millions to hire Public Relations companies to handle them, then the situation must have reached the point of no return.

Arbitrary detentions have reached new highs. For the past six years, the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights has documented between 20 and 50 of such arrests, with names of victims, time of raid on their homes and where they were taken. As young as five years and as old as 70, Bahrainis have been summoned by the torture apparatus in order to be treated in the harshest and most undignified way. The aim is to break their will and lead them to despair as they aspired for a better way of life under the rule of law. The grim situation is masked by public relations machine that spares no cash in its quest to ensure proper misinformation and deception. The propaganda machine that has been placed at the disposal of the regime is financed by the Saudis who have been shivering since the Arab Spring erupted six years ago. Since then, they have felt the after-effects of the revolutions that swept the Arab world. The counter revolution forces comprising Saudi Arabia, Israel, UK and USA have spared no effort to dismantle the popular structures of those political psunamis. The Saudis went out of their traditional way of shrugging off such events to become most vicious in dealing with the emerging threat to the dictatorships of the Arab World. Their criminal activities culminated in the invasion of Bahrain in mid

March 2011. It can be claimed that that was the most significant single act of treason against the whole Arab nation.

For the past six years the Saudis have embarked on their most destructive campaign in the Arab world. They have spared no effort or dirty means to break the will of the people and turn them away from the task of establishing representative rule. Their first weapon was military intervention employing overwhelming power to subdue the people they are taking. This is what happened in Bahrain in mid-March 2011, and Yemen in 2015. The Saudis also intervened in Libya and Egypt to ensure that the Revolutions there would not reach real fruition. They used their extensive financial wealth to buy off regimes, policies and loyalties in the "Free World". They have played major roles in corrupting the Western elites who sold out for Saudi cash. This has been going on for the past six years and are unlikely to subside in the near future. How could this be resisted? The Western powers need to be aware of the social and political impact of these corrupting practices.

The phenomenon of mercenaries has mushroomed in recent years. The financial squeeze on the world's poor has forced them to work as mercenaries. This is clear in the case of Bahrain where the regime made use of the Saudi offer and imported thousands of those mercenaries from Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan and the UK. Their role is to defend the ruling Alkhalifa tribe as it unleashed reign of terror on the Arab people in the countries mentioned above. In this process the boundaries of the state were opened to illegal foreign migration with the aim of crushing local dissent. These mercenaries were used extensively against the Bahraini people. The Saudis also used them both on its soil and in Yemen. They imported thousands of them to fight their war on Yemen. Fighters from Senegal were the first to take part in the Saudi aggression in Yemen. In the process those foreign fighters were slaughtered at the war fronts. Then they employed Sudanese mercenaries who are fully engaged in the attrition war on Yemen. There are many criticisms of this policy and the UN is accused of complicity in this human trafficking. People's lives are

more precious than the war they are fighting on behalf of others. The numbers of the dead among those mercenaries are constantly rising. This is true of the Saudi military policy as well as that of ISIS. Foreign fighters are the first casualties of this atrocious war. It is deafening that the UN is retorting to silence at a time when the world expects it to call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

As for the military hardware the Western countries have contributed their share. Siphoning the Saudi oil wealth at an astronomical scale in return for either arms supplies or fighting along their soldiers against the Yemeni people. That alone has galvanised the Saudi political project in the region, basing it on sectarianism, terrorism, denying people their natural political and human rights and engaging anyone who is ready to sacrifice principles for cash in this destructive war. The Western countries failed to show political leadership. This has led to serious consequences. The far right movements are making headway in election while the Free World has managed to produce, one again, Hitler-like leaders. The emergence of Donald Trump was an event that could not yet be comprehended by those who have held positive views on the Western democratic policies. The world has thus become less safe and more polarised along the lines of nationality, religion and class. This needs to be undone if the world's security matters.

The case of Bahraini Revolution is unique in exposing those discrepancies in Western politics. One of the results is the return of Russia as a front line country in the Middle East with influence expanding to areas traditionally considered Western protégé. There are now several wars being fought on the Arab lands, in addition to the Arab-Israeli conflict. To avert eventual aramageddon or a third world war there needs to be an immediate end of all military conflicts especially in Yemen. Then the issues of democracy and human rights must be re-visited in order to create less demonic world. Thirdly the policy of shielding Middle East dictators like those in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia must be changed. The world will be a safer place if democracy and human rights are preserve, protected and even supported. The West needs to re-visit its priorities.

Saudi & Alkhalifa achieve bleak records on human rights and freedoms

Fury and anger have dominated the human rights world after Saudi Arabia was elected to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, despite the country being ranked by human rights experts as one of the worst for gender equality. The role of the UN's Commission is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Saudi women are forbidden from obtaining a passport, marrying or accessing higher education without the approval of a male guardian — usually a husband, father, brother, or son. Saudi women are also banned from driving and are forced to have the permission of a male guardian to travel or work in the oppressive kingdom. In a report last year, Human Rights Watch said "as long as it [Saudi Arabia] fails to take steps to eliminate the discriminatory practices of male guardianship and sex segregation, the Government is undermining the ability of women to enjoy even the basic rights".

The Saudis who are waging wars on several fronts have escalated their aggression on the people of the Eastern Province. On Thursday 20th April several towns were attacked including Awwamiyah, the birth place of Martyr Sheikh Nimr Al Nimr. They attacked the home of Sayed Hamza AlShakhouri at AlNasera District of Awwamiya. He is a political refugee in New Zealand. The attack came one day after the visit by US Secretary of State for Defence, James Mattis to Riyadh during which he pledged to continue supporting the Saudi illegal war and aggression on Yemen.

A Saudi-owned television channel could face closure in the UK after it committed a "serious" breach of British broadcast rules in broadcasting an interview with an

imprisoned Bahraini torture survivor. The future of Al Arabiya News in the UK hangs in the balance after independent regulator Ofcom found that it infringed on the privacy of imprisoned opposition leader and torture survivor Hassan Mushaima, when it broadcast footage of him obtained during his arbitrary detention in Bahrain. Arabic-language Al Arabiya News, which is broadcast in the UK and across Europe and the Middle East, could now face a potential £100,000 fine or suspension of its licence after a complaint was made on behalf of Mushaima by a US-based rights group.

Reporters Without Borders has issued its 2017 World Press Freedom Index. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia ranked down near the bottom of the index at 164 and 168 respectively out of 180.

In a flagrant violation of one of the most basic rights, the Alkhalifa regime continued its policy of stripping native citizens of their natural right of citizenship. Yesterday their court issued a shocking ruling to strip 36 natives of their citizenship for engaging in anti-regime activities. The same court passed life sentences on three native Bahrainis and prison sentences of 3 to 10 years on the rest. This brings the number of native Bahrainis whose nationality has been revoked to over 408.

More than 30 human rights and political activists have been summoned by the regime's torture apparatus and charged with "illegal gathering, rioting and incitement against the government". The offence is alleged to have occurred on 6th January outside a mosque in Duraz. The town has been under total siege for more than ten months and no one from outside is allowed access. Most of those sum-

moned and charged had not been to that town for years. The liberal political leader, Ibrahim Sharif and his wife, were among those charged. He said he has not been to Duraz for six years. The human rights activists were targeted in this way to prevent them from attending the Universal Periodic Review of Bahrain's human rights records which started this week. The regime sent its mouthpieces to Geneva to defend its bleak reputation while preventing human rights activists from attending. Yesterday Amnesty International issued a statement condemning this flagrant attack on the activists under the heading: "32 dissidents rounded up within days in clampdown ahead of UN human rights session". It said: "Those summoned include human rights defenders, political activists, lawyers, a journalist and relatives of victims of human rights violations, raising fears that they are being targeted as part of a deliberate attempt to stop them – and deter others - from criticizing Bahrain ahead of and during its upcoming review at the UN Human Rights Council." "The intensified crackdown against Bahraini dissidents in recent days is highly alarming and exposes the shocking extremes to which Bahrain's authorities are prepared to go to silence criticism of their human rights record," said Samah Hadid Director of Campaigns at Amnesty International's Beirut Office. "The timing, just a week before the examination of the country's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council, strongly suggests that this is part of a deliberate attempt to prevent peaceful critics from speaking out about the government's record in Geneva."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
26th April 2017

Saudis, Alkhalifa show signs of political, moral fatigue heralding defeat

The noose is tightening around the necks of the Saudis, prompting their allies to rush to their aid. As their losses in Yemen mount, it is becoming clearer by the day that the Saudis could not win the war they had launched against Yemen, supported by the US and UK. Yesterday they suffered one of their biggest losses in one day. A Black Hawk helicopter was shot down by the Yemenis, killing at least 12 of their elite forces including senior commanders. It was on combat mission in Ma'rib Province, attacking Yemeni civilians. Also yesterday US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis insisted a political process was the only option to break the stalemate. "Our goal is for that crisis down there [in Yemen] — that ongoing fight — be put in front of a U.N.-brokered negotiating team and try to resolve this politically as soon as possible," Mattis told reporters aboard a military aircraft Tuesday en route to Riyadh. "It has gone on for a long time."

Also, in a letter to Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday,

Human Rights Watch said the Australian government should immediately halt military sales to Saudi Arabia following numerous unlawful Saudi-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen. Australia should also release details about military weapons and material it has sold to other members of the Saudi-led coalition carrying out the Yemen campaign and whether any Australian-made arms have been used in unlawful coalition attacks. In the past year, based on media reports, the Defence Department has approved four military export licenses to Saudi Arabia, but it has not released information on the types or quantities of arms and equipment sold. Since the Saudi-led coalition began its military campaign in Yemen in March 2015, the United Nations and nongovernmental organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have documented numerous unlawful coalition airstrikes, some of them apparent war crimes, on homes, markets, schools, and hospitals. Fears are growing for the safety of most prominent religious figure in the Eastern

Province of Arabia who has languished in jail for the past year. His trial began on Thursday 13th April on terrorist charges. Both Saudi and Alkhalifa regimes use terrorism to justify persecuting their political peaceful critics. Sheikh Hussain Al Radhi was arrested two months after the execution of Sheikh Nimr Al Nimr in January 2016. He had condemned the execution and was banned from leading the mass prayers. He called Al Nimr "the Master of Martyrs" and was abducted in March 2016 as he left Great Prophet Mosque at Al Rumaila town in the Eastern Province.

In a serious political snub to Bahrain's dictator, the largest teachers' union in the UK, NASUWT granted a Bahraini citizen its annual award. Mahdi Abu Deeb, President of the dissolved Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) was given the International Solidarity Award for 2017. NASUWT held its annual conference on Saturday (April 15, 2017) in Manchester and presented the award to Abu Deeb

Continued on Page 4

Calls to stop F1 Blood race in Bahrain to save people's lives

Human rights campaigners have urged Formula One management to cancel this week's Bahrain Grand Prix, accusing the country's rulers of using the race to "whitewash" abuses and improve their image abroad. Bahrain's biggest sporting event is watched by a worldwide audience of millions and has been held since 2004, with the exception of 2011 when violent civil unrest forced its cancellation. "Concerted and visible action is now required from Formula One, consistent with its commitment to human rights," the groups (including Article 19 and IFEX) said in a letter to Formula One chairman Chase Carey and the two managing directors Sean Bratches and Ross Brawn. "We call on you to suspend this year's race in view of the alarming situation in the country." The letter, also addressed to the chief executive of F1 sponsor Heineken, was sent by the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, Article 19 and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain. The revolutionary forces inside the country have launched their campaign against holding the Grand Prix in Bahrain. Hundreds of Bahrainis were arrested and tortured in previous years during those races including two women activists: Nafisa AlAsfoor and Rayhana Al Mousawi. Several people were killed by regime's forces in this context.

For the week 3rd-9th April the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights documented at least 17 arbitrary arrests including one child. Out of 37 protests in 22 towns and villages at least six were attacked by masked members of Alkhalifa Death Squads and mercenary forces. In the early hours of this morning Ali Abdul Nabi AlSheikh was snatched by masked members of Alkhalifa Death Squads in a raid at

his home in Karzakkan. Mohammad Saeed of Demstan Town was also abducted in a similar way.

British allies Saudi Arabia and Pakistan remained in the top ranks of the world's executioners. Since resuming executions in 2014, Pakistan has executed innocent people as well as juveniles and other vulnerable prisoners. Two brothers were recently acquitted by the Supreme Court, a year after they had been prematurely hanged. Other countries – notably Bahrain – have recently resumed executions following a pause of several years. Three native political protestors were executed this year. Egypt's government was also highlighted in the report as a strong user of the death penalty. All four countries have close ties with the UK. Britain has continued to provide assistance to their security forces, despite concerns over abuses such as executions, and the use of torture to extract forced 'confessions'. Human rights organization Reprieve has discovered that Bahraini and Saudi police have received training from UK public bodies, despite concerns over the risk of complicity in abuses. Maya Foa – Director at Reprieve – said: it's disturbing that certain governments are increasingly using the death penalty as a means of crushing dissent. Many of those with the worst record on executions are countries which British Prime Minister Theresa May has been actively courting in recent weeks – including Saudi Arabia, where juveniles face beheading and crucifixion, and Bahrain, where political protesters have been executed on the basis of forced 'confessions.' UK government must not let the trade agenda trump concerns for human rights. Mrs May must condemn the use of the death penalty as a tool of oppression."

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned Bahrain of looming economic crisis

if it did not stop spending at the present rate. In the past few weeks Alkhalifa rulers signed military deal with the US of more than \$5billion to buy 19 F16 which the country and the people do not need at all. On Monday IMF said that the drop in crude prices has largely offset "significant fiscal measures that were implemented," causing the budget deficit and public debt in 2016 to stand at 18 percent and 82 percent of gross domestic product, respectively. "A sizable fiscal adjustment is urgently needed to restore fiscal sustainability, reduce vulnerabilities, and boost investor and consumer confidence," the IMF said in a statement after concluding regular consultations with Alkhalifa authorities. The country's 2016 budget deficit of 1.5 billion dinars (\$4 billion), which is larger than its foreign exchange assets, spurred the government to tap both domestic and international markets to fund spending last year. Sayed Hadi AlMousawi, a former MP, has been banned from travel to Geneva to take part in the debate on the Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review which is due this month. Yesterday, prominent human rights activist, Nidal Al Salman was interrogated at the airport on her way back from Paris with her husband. The famous musician, Mohammad Jawad, has also been prevented from travel. A national Orator, Mahdi Sahwan, has been sentenced to six months jail term for reciting poems and visiting Sheikh Isa Qassim's house. The world renowned human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, has had an operation at the military hospital but was transferred to his cell before his treatment was completed. The US Human Rights Commission has called on Alkhalifa to return him to hospital for further treatment.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
12 April 2017

AI: 32 dissidents rounded up in clampdown ahead of UN human rights session

Amnesty International: 25 April 2017
Bahrain's authorities have dramatically escalated their crackdown against perceived critics with 32 people summoned for questioning by the Public Prosecution within the past five days and charges brought against the majority of them, said Amnesty International, less than a week ahead of the country's UN human rights review session in Geneva on 1 May.

Those summoned include human rights defenders, political activists, lawyers, a journalist and relatives of victims of human rights violations, raising fears that they are being targeted as part of a deliberate attempt to stop them – and deter others – from criticizing Bahrain ahead of and during its upcoming review at the UN Human Rights Council.

"The intensified crackdown against Bahraini dissidents in recent days is highly alarming and exposes the shocking extremes to which Bahrain's authorities are prepared to go to silence criticism of their human rights record," said Samah Hadid Director of Campaigns at Amnesty

International's Beirut Office.

"The timing, just a week before the examination of the country's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council, strongly suggests that this is part of a deliberate attempt to prevent peaceful critics from speaking out about the government's record in Geneva." Samah Hadid, Deputy Director for Campaigns at the Beirut Regional office

At least 24 of the 32 people who were summoned were later charged with "illegally gathering" in Duraz, a village west of the capital city Manama, in October 2016 and January and March 2017. Some of them were summoned before the Public Prosecution unit for terrorist crimes. The accused have denied the charges, claiming they were not present in Duraz at the time in question. The majority of them are not Duraz residents and, since 20 June 2016, non-residents have been barred from entering the village by the authorities. These charges appear to relate solely to their exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and anyone

imprisoned on that basis would be considered to be a prisoner of conscience.

Since June 2016 dozens of human rights defenders and political activists have been barred from travelling abroad and Amnesty International believes that all those summoned and charged over the past week are likely to be stopped from leaving the country. "The charges against these individuals are baseless and are merely a ploy to punish human rights defenders and other peaceful critics for highlighting the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain. The world must not stand by as Bahrain continues with its calculated campaign to persecute human rights activists, political opponents and anyone else who dares to speak out about human rights," said Samah Hadid. "The international community and in particular allies of Bahrain, such as the UK and USA, must urge the authorities to ensure that the charges are dropped and travel bans are lifted. Anyone who wishes to participate in Bahrain's Human Rights Council session must be allowed to travel to Geneva."

UK allies among worst world's executioners

UK allies are bucking a trend towards the abolition of the death penalty worldwide, according to new figures.

A new Amnesty report has found that there are fewer executions worldwide, and fewer countries using the death penalty. However, the annual study found that far more people than in previous years are being sentenced to death.

British allies Saudi Arabia and Pakistan remained in the top ranks of the world's executioners. Since resuming executions in 2014, Pakistan has executed innocent people as well as juveniles and other vulnerable prisoners; two brothers were recently acquitted by the Supreme Court, a year after they had been prematurely hanged.

Other countries – notably Bahrain – have recently resumed executions following a pause of several years. Three political protestors were executed in the Gulf Kingdom this year.

Egypt's government was also highlighted in the report as a strong user of the death penalty.

All four countries have close ties with the UK. Britain has continued to provide assistance to their security forces, despite concerns over abuses such as executions, and the use of torture to extract forced 'confessions'. Human rights organization Reprieve has discovered that Bahraini and Saudi police have received repeated training from UK public bodies, despite concerns over the risk of complicity in abuses.

Reprieve has written to the Prime Minister, Theresa May, asking her to call for the release of three Saudi juveniles who face beheading – and in one case, 'crucifixion' – following their alleged attendance at political protests.

Mrs May visited Saudi Arabia last week to promote closer UK-Saudi ties. However, it was unclear whether she raised the cases with the Saudi leadership.

Commenting, Maya Foa – Director at Reprieve – said:

"While the overall trend towards fewer executions is welcome, it's disturbing that certain governments are increasingly using the death penalty as a means of crushing dissent. Many of those with the worst record on executions are countries which British Prime Minister Theresa May has been actively courting in recent weeks – including Saudi Arabia, where juveniles face beheading and crucifixion, and Bahrain, where political protesters have been executed on the basis of forced 'confessions.' The UK government must not let the trade agenda trump concerns for human rights. Mrs May must condemn the use of the death penalty as a tool of oppression."

IMF sounds alarm as Bahrain is Seen needing urgent spending cuts

by Glen Carey and Vivian Nereim
April 11, 2017

Bahrain needs to make significant spending cuts to restore stability to its budget and improve investor confidence as the smallest economy among Gulf Arab monarchies tries to manage the impact of lower oil prices, the International Monetary Fund said.

The Washington-based lender said on Monday the drop in crude prices has largely offset "significant fiscal measures that were implemented," causing the budget deficit and public debt in 2016 to stand at 18 percent and 82 percent of gross domestic product, respectively.

"A sizable fiscal adjustment is urgently needed to restore fiscal sustainability, reduce vulnerabilities, and boost investor and consumer confidence," the IMF said in a statement after concluding regular consultations with Bahraini authorities.

Bahrain, a close Saudi ally and the home of the U.S. Fifth Fleet, has been more vulnerable to slumping oil prices than richer Gulf Cooperation Council states after authorities increased spending in response to the global recession in 2009 and civil unrest two years later. The country's 2016 budget deficit of 1.5 billion dinars (\$4 billion), which is larger than its foreign exchange assets, spurred the government to tap both domestic and international markets to fund spending last year. More Declines?

The central bank's foreign exchange as-

sets fell 11 percent in January to 725.9 million dinars from December. Overall, they're down 68 percent from a peak of 2.24 billion dinars in November 2014, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

"We expect reserves to drop to about \$1 billion by year-end on the financing of the currency account deficit," said Carla Slim, Dubai-based economist at Standard Chartered. "This is well below reserve adequacy levels in the context of a fixed-exchange rate regime."

Saudi Arabia's implicit backing for Bahrain has long supported the island state's assets. Even as the nation's income sank and its budget deficit widened, the premium investors demand to hold Bahraini debt rather than U.S. Treasuries is lower than high yielding assets, according to JPMorgan Chase & Co. Indexes. While the difference between the two spreads is narrowing, it has been in Bahrain's favor almost everyday since February 2012.

The IMF said fiscal measures could include valued-added taxation and further rationalizing of spending on subsidies and social transfers. "The wage bill, which is nearly 12 percent of GDP and among the highest in the GCC, can be reduced in the near term by streamlining allowances and freezing nominal wages," it said.

Economic growth is projected at 2.3 percent in 2017, which will be "driven by strong infrastructure spending from GCC funds," the IMF said.

AlSaud, Alkhalifa show signs of political fatigue, *Cont from P 2*

in recognition of his commitment to fighting for the rights of teachers and for quality education in Bahrain. Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT, said: "Mahdi has faced years of repression, violence and the loss of his liberty simply for standing up for the rights of teachers and challenging the ruling orthodoxy."

In the week 10-16th April, at least ten citizens were arrested by regime's forces, including one child. Since his arrest on 10th April, there has been no news of the whereabouts and welfare of 15-year old Mohammad Abdul Hussain Mirza. He was summoned to appear at the most notorious torture authority, the prosecution office on 10th April only to be handed to the torturers. He is another native citizen to be added to the long list of the disappeared Bahrainis.

While continuing their attacks on native Bahrainis, Alkhalifa tribal tyrants are showing signs of political and psychological fatigue, having realised that their situation is untenable. Despite their attempts to pretend business as usual, their

failure to function as credible government is working against their interests. In recent days they have been humiliated to take different stands on several cases. First came their major defeat in the case of Sheikh Isa Qassim who remained steadfast in his refusal to recognise their corrupt judiciary. Second was their U-turn on Sheikh Ali Salman's case. Last week they were humiliated into reducing his prison sentence from nine to four years. Thirdly, their attempt to close down the main liberal political society, Wa'ad, was rebuked by their masters in US and UK. They have now postponed their decision until 30th April. The Bahrainis insist on a new political structure to replace the antiquated tribal rule.

The F1 management team has been heavily criticised for insisting on holding the race in Bahrain. Many natives have been detained to pre-empt serious protests during the event. It has specifically been condemned for ignoring human rights deterioration in Bahrain despite pledging two years ago to take them on board.

BFM, 19th April 2017