

BAHRAIN

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CP can do one thing: hand power to the people

No sooner had the native Bahrainis announced their plans to mark the ninth anniversary of the 14th February Revolution than the khalifi dictator resorted to his notorious styles of repression and inhumane treatment of the people. Scores of activists were rounded up before the events and after them. In addition many scholars were summoned, abused, tried and imprisoned. To the khalifis the natives are existential enemies who cannot be trusted or allowed to flourish. The torture dungeons run by the khalifis are unique in the region. The treatment of the people is worse than anywhere else. It may only be replicated in the occupied territories where the Palestinians are denied the right to exist as a people, culture and identity. The natives have never overcome their grief over the death of their brothers, sons and sisters, brutally murdered by the khalifi occupiers. It was not a coincidence that the pictures of Bahrain's dictator is burnt in the streets and alleyways of Bahrain and Gaza. He represents the ultimate evil dictator who is possessed by the idea that he could only live if the others die. He cannot envisage a situation in which all can live together on equal footing, equal rights and shared ownership of the land and its natural resources. He is paranoid about the ability of the Bahrainis to inflict so much misery on his fledgling reign.

The khalifi dictator and his clique were shaken to the core in recent weeks. First came the people's uprising to mark the anniversary of their Revolution. What happened in the first two weeks of February was beyond what they had expected, having inflicted so much pain and agony on the natives. At least 71 activities were carried out, including protests, demonstrations, visits to the martyrs families and graves and pursuing the foreign-staffed riot police. This is despite the enormous precautions and pre-emptive actions by the regime including the detention of the fathers of the martyrs especially Abdul Hadi Mushaima, father of the first martyr of the Revolution. Other fathers were kept behind bars or forced to flee the country. Outside the country, the Bahrainis in the diaspora proved to be a thorn in the side of the hereditary dictatorship. Protests, seminars, press conferences and rallies were held in at least 17 major cities in Europe and America. It was a show of strength by the

people who, unlike the regime, relied only on God and themselves. The Bahraini wounds were laid bare in the international media as the regime struggled to mobilise its agents and mercenaries.

Then came the massive defeat of the alliance that had been instrumental in bringing back the khalifi dictator to power after the people's revolution virtually knocked him out of action after less than a month of the launch of the Revolution. The alliance comprising Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Israel has been struggling to keep itself intact in the face of conflicting interests of its member states. The Emirates suddenly abandoned its role in Yemen and withdrew its forces, conceding defeat at the hands of the Yemenis who are defending their lands. The Saudi incursion into South and East Yemen is now causing major rifts with the Emiratis as well as their Yemeni allies who now view them as occupiers. The Saudis have been preparing for annexing large parts of Yemen including the region of Mohra which is bordering Oman and touching the Arabian Sea. The Saudis have long dreamt of a passage to the waters south of the Peninsula to which it did not have access. But the internal squabbling with the Emirates has rendered this move dead before it started. The khalifis are thus losing their foreign backers who have long ago set their sight on annexing Bahrain.

Then came the major annual report by Amnesty International about the situation in Bahrain. It was a damning statement that shredded the khalifi credibility to pieces and forced the regime to react in anger against those "misguided bodies that are influenced by the "terrorists", To them any native who asks for his right or seek liberty, freedom and democracy automatically becomes a terrorist. They feel terrorised by the calls to build modern statehood based on the will of the people and the participation of the natives in the political process as well as the reconstruction. This is not acceptable to the regime which has been betting on leading a country of fragmented people and largely dependent on foreigners. The khalifi foreign ministry lost no time to publish a hollow statement that caused more damage to the reputation of the regime than good. It denied any wrong doing and insisted that the khalifi dictatorship had always upheld the rule of law and respected people's rights. It failed to ex-

plain why the regime continues to refuse access to the UN special rapporteurs on torture and the working group on arbitrary detention. It also failed to explain why human rights defenders remain behind bars years after they had been incarcerated either for carrying out their duties or tweeting their own opinion on various domestic and regional policies. But despite the regime's repudiation of the Amnesty report the fact remains that the Bahraini regime is one of the worst human rights offenders in the world.

There is a suggestion that the khalifi dictator has in the past few months been preparing the grounds for his eldest son, Salman to take over. Being the crown prince since his father took over the rule following his father's death in 1999, Salman has been a senior figure of the much-hated regime which had waged existential war against native Bahrainis. He is not known for any particular stand against the crimes committed by his tribal regime. Instead he has repeatedly "honoured" torturers and approved the crimes committed against native Bahrainis. His weak character has rendered him highly ineffective as a ruler especially in the present circumstances where the people are calling for fundamental regime change. He may have forged some relations with some public figures but he is not seen a saviour of the country, having acquiesced in almost every crime committed by his family against native Bahrainis. The people have deep awareness of the situation and have vowed to accept no alternative to regime change. The best that Salman can do is hand over the government to the people, order the arrest and trial of khalif criminals, torturers, plunderers and traitors who had invited the foreign occupation into the country. Short of this, it is impossible for the people to reverse their ten years demand for a total overhaul of the political system and the removal of the antiquated regime that has overstayed the welcome by the natives. It is simply time for the khalifis to leave the political scene without further bloodshed. If Salman does this, he will stand out as a historic figure who has spared the country and his own tribe the troubles of war and bloody retribution.

UK expels Saudi spy, HRW and Belgian Senate lambast Bahrain

Yesterday UK's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab revealed that two Saudi diplomats have been thrown out of UK. The Saudis have remained tight-lipped about the case fearing serious backlash against the current policies imposed by Mohammad bin Salman (MBS). "We have asked the Saudi Arabian Ambassador to withdraw a Saudi diplomat, and in response to the request a diplomat has been recalled to Saudi Arabia and is no longer accredited to the Saudi mission in London," a Foreign Office spokesman said on Friday. He declined to comment further. London police also declined to give details of the case, which involves a current prosecution. But The Times newspaper named the diplomat as Ali al-Shamarani and described him as an "intelligence officer". It said that over four years, Shamarani had allegedly paid several thousand pounds to a police officer for information about Middle Eastern citizens living in Britain. Few years ago a member of the Saudi royal family killed his servant, Bandar bin Abdul Aziz in a case that focused the attention on the way the Saudis dealt with the others. Under Saudi pressure and financial inducement, the UK government handed the killer to the Saudis "to serve his term in Saudi jails".

Under-aged Saudi boy, Abdulla Al Zaher, 15, has been condemned to death by beheading and crucifixion by a Saudi kangaroo court. He had been subjected to most horrific torture to sign uncorroborated "confessions".

On the eve of the Hay festival in Abu Dhabi, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights and fifty other NGOs signed an appeal for the release of human rights activist Ahmed Mansoor and other defenders jailed in Abu Dhabi

On 19th February the Kuwaiti authorities

arrested human rights lawyer Hani Hussain. On the evening of that day he was transferred to the office of Public Prosecution. He was remanded in custody for 21 days pending investigation. He is being held at the Central Prison. Local sources said that two cases are being investigated, the first is linked to broadcasting news about the area separating Saudi Arabia and Kuwait which has been disputed for decades. The other is allegedly linked to harming the national unity.

The khalifi regime of Bahrain has reacted poorly to the spread of the Coronavirus disease among the native Bahrainis. Yesterday morning they were talking of one person infected while performing religious rituals in Iran. By the evening the number rose to 26. Hundreds of Bahrainis on religious trips to the holy city of Mashad in Iran have been stranded as the regime continues to ignore their pleas for immediate evacuation. Instead of heeding their calls the khalifis have politicized the crisis. Yesterday its media and mouthpieces have targeted Iran for abuse. Some of them have even suggested that the Islamic Republic is intentionally spreading the disease in Bahrain while others attacked the beliefs of the majority Shia Muslim population of Bahrain.

In another round of crackdown on the Bahrain 13 group, the khalifi dictators have denied them family visits, reneged on earlier promises and imposed severe cultural sanctions on those oppressed people. Last year the khalifis agreed to remove the barriers that separate the families from their loved prisoners. The leaders have rejected the barriers which is one of oppressive steps imposed on the political prisoners. Since the new year the regime has adopted more criminal policies against the native majority as they continued to call for regime change.

Najah Yousuf, former prisoner of conscience, released few months ago after more than two year incarceration has confirmed that she had been sacked from her job because of her activism and imprisonment. She was hoping that her torturers and abusers would be brought to justice but she was greatly disappointed. Yesterday she tweeted: I exercised my right to freedom of expression and criticized the Formula1 car racing in 2017. I was subjected to physical and psychological torture as well as arbitrary detention for two years and four months. Instead of taking legal action against the torturers, they sacked me arbitrarily".

Under the title "Nine Years After Bahrain's Uprising, Its Human Rights Crisis Has Only Worsened" Human Rights Watch has issued a statement detailing the downwards trend of the human right situation in Bahrain. The khalifi crackdown on native Bahrainis has continued unabated. Yesterday raids at the town of Dair led to several arrests. Among them is Fadhel Abbas. The raids continued for three days. On the ninth anniversary of the Revolution the Belgian Senate issued a damning resolution on Bahrain. It acknowledges that the Bahraini government continued, and even intensified, its "crackdown and campaign of repression and persecution against political and human rights activists". It strongly condemns the use of the death penalty, calling on the Belgian government to urge Bahrain to "re-establish a moratorium on the death penalty" and to "retry" the cases of torture victims on death row, Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Ali Moosa.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
26th February 2020

Anger at Saudi fuel rises, Bahrainis marked Revolution Day with vigour

A wave of anger is sweeping through Saudi Arabia following the imposition of higher fuel prices. The price of petrol 91 octanes is SAR 1.55 (\$0.41) per litre up from SAR 1.50 (\$0.4) per litre in the previous quarter, while petrol 95 octanes will be SAR 2.11 (\$0.56) per litre up from SAR 2.05 (\$0.55). Aramco has stopped updating oil prices quarterly and said it would update the prices on the 10th of every month, despite the fact that oil prices are decreasing globally. Saudis, who turned to social media to share their opinion, considered it unreasonable as it is an extension of a series of price hikes and taxes which started in 2017 when the 2030 vision was announced. A litre of petrol now costs more than half a dollar, three times the price two years ago. The price hike comes at a time of accumulating economic and political pressures on the regime which has been plundering the country's wealth at unprecedented rates. Social media has been used to vent off the public anger as people accused the regime of

corruption, deception and indifference towards the poor people's plight. Similar rises were imposed two years ago on electricity supplies. Subsidies of essential food items are also being removed.

After much pressure from the human rights world the Saudi regime was forced to reduce the sentence it had imposed on a minor. On 12th February Murtaja Al Qureis had the 12-year sentence passed on him in June 2019 reduced to 8 years. The public prosecutor had called for his execution for taking part in anti-regime protests several years ago. Human rights bodies have called for pressure on the Saudi authorities to quash all charges against him.

Saudi activist Mrs Nassima al-Sadah, a mother of three from the Eastern Province has been transferred from Mabathith prison in Dammam to Riyadh, where her trial session is due today. She has been detained since July 2018 without charge or trial. Mrs Al Sadah has been in solitary confinement for the past 14 months for being one of the women who called for driving permission

to be granted to women.

Yesterday the second session of the trial of al-Abbas Hassan al-Maliki was held in Riyadh. He was arrested in September 2017 for tweeting about his jailed father, Sheikh Hassan Farhan Al Maliki, who himself, had committed any offence except calling for political reforms. The third hearing in the trial of al-Abbas Hasan al-Maliki has been set for Tuesday 17 March. Last week the 9th anniversary of Bahrain's Revolution was marked by the people inside and outside the country. At least 71 activities including protests, demonstrations and road blocks were held in many areas including Manama, Sitra, Nuwaidrat, Bilad Al Qadeem, Al Musalla, Daih, Keranah, AlShakhoura, Abu Saiba, Barbar and Karbad. This is despite the preemptive aggressive measures implemented by the khalifi dictators to stop people participating in those activities. Outside Bahrain, there were activities in at least 17 cities; London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, Rome, Luxembourg, Madrid, Lisbon, Dub-

Bahrainis mark 9th Revolution anniversary as GCC suffers fiscal crisis

On Thursday 6th February the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Gulf Arab states could see their financial wealth depleted in the next 15 years amid lower hydrocarbon revenues if they don't step up fiscal reforms. The six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - whose net financial wealth the IMF estimates at \$2 trillion - accounts for over one fifth of global oil supply, but economies in the region have been hit hard by a drop in oil prices in 2014 and 2015. While lower crude prices have put pressure on governments to generate non-oil revenues and fix their finances, "the effect of lower hydrocarbon revenue is yet to be fully offset," the IMF said in a report. "At the current fiscal stance, the region's existing financial wealth could be depleted in the next 15 years," it said.

The Saudi regime has been accused of plundering people's wealth by engaging in losing financial deals. German market experts have accused the Saudis of selling the shares in Tesla electric car when they dropped to \$735 per share compared to their earlier value of \$887 per share, without giving real care to the losses. On 5th February Alexander Demling wrote in Handelsblatt newspaper that the Saudis had bought shares worth more than \$3 billion few years ago and could have made a fortune if they sold them at the right time. But their lack of attention to the interests of their country led to them to plunder its wealth.

In a landmark decision the United Arab Emirates has conceded defeat in their collective aggression (with the Saudis and the khalifis) on Yemen five years ago. The sudden announcement of withdrawing their forces from Yemen amounted to capitulation to the Yemenis who have proven to be as solid as mountains in defending

their country. The Emiratis have quarreled with the Saudis on their share of the Yemeni cake and their withdrawal without achieving any of their declared aims is certainly a humiliating defeat. Their fortunes have dwindled in recent years as the Yemenis regained the military initiative and inflicted heavy losses on the invaders. The UAE's financial establishment could be obliterated by Yemeni drones if they did not withdraw.

As the native Bahrainis prepare to mark the 9th anniversary of their 14th February Revolution, the khalifi regime has intensified its repression and pre-emptive attacks on people. Scores of people have been detained for taking part in peaceful anti-regime protests. Several others including religious scholars and preachers have been summoned by the notorious security agencies. Yesterday regime's notorious torturers detained Sheikh Mohammad Al Rayyash for one week for no reason except to ensure his absence during the Revolution's anniversary. On Monday 10th February, Hajji Abdul Hadi Mushaima, father of the first martyr of the Revolution, was summoned to the special services offices for interrogation and nothing has been heard of him since. His son, Ali was the first to be killed by the khalifis on the first day of the Revolution on 14th February 2011. The regime did not want the father to be present among the people as this would inflame the anger against their rule. Yesterday Mulla Jawad Mirza was summoned to appear today at a torture centre at Roundabout 17 of Hamad Town. Sheikh Fadel Al Zaaki from Maqaba Town was also summoned. Last week Sheikh Jassim Al Haddad was detained at the airport. Meanwhile, the peaceful protests demanding the end of the khalifi hereditary rule have continued. Several towns including Aali, Abu Saiba and Shakhoura have witnessed protests and demonstrations despite the violent repression

Fears are growing for the life of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, one of the Bahrain 13 group that led the Revolution against the khalifi dictatorship in 2011. He was transferred to hospital on Sunday 9th February when his sugar level dropped significantly, and he had almost collapsed. He has been denied proper medical care.

As the dire conditions inside the khalifi jails deteriorates further, more inmates have engaged in hunger strikes demanding proper medical care and treatment, family visit and access to religious and general books. Yousuf Maitham Ibrahim has recorded a statement saying he had started hunger strike on 4th February to protest the ill treatment at the Dry Dock prison. Since the beginning of the year family visits have been curtailed especially those involving the second-degree relatives

The reputation of Huddersfield University has been seriously dented following last week's revelations that it helped to teach would-be torturers. It is being urged to suspend a lucrative degree programme it runs with Bahrain's Royal Academy of Policing over real evidence that widespread torture of political prisoners has been taking place at the location. The Masters course in Security Science, which involves Huddersfield lecturers training Bahraini police officers at the Academy in areas such as crime scene investigation techniques, cyber crime and "investigative psychology", was launched in 2018 and that year Prince Andrew, then Huddersfield University's Chancellor, visited Bahrain to meet some of the officers participating in the course and senior Government ministers. At least ten native Bahraini victims have testified to being tortured there. Two of these have sought political asylum in UK.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
12th February 2020

lin and New York. In London several events were held, protests outside Bahrain and Saudi embassies and Downing Street. A seminar and press briefing was held at the House of Lords, addressed by political and human rights activists.

Meanwhile, a member of the House of Lords has blasted Huddersfield University boss, Prof Bob Cryan, as "unprofessional" and "rude" after he ignored his plea to sever ties with Bahraini dictators. Lord Scriven had complained that the university has been training officers for the khalifi regime, some of whom have been involved in serious torture crimes. At least ten native Bahrainis have testified that they had been tortured at the notorious Royal Police Academy that the University is involved in. The Masters course in Security Science involves lecturers training

Bahraini police officers in crime investigation techniques. It was launched in 2018 when Prince Andrew, then Huddersfield University's Chancellor, visited Bahrain to meet some of the officers participating in the

course and senior Government ministers. Bahrain's police force has been accused of brutality, torture and even state sponsored murder, prompting human rights activists to lobby organisations that conduct business with Bahrain's vicious dictators.

Following the successful campaign to mark the 9th anniversary of the Bahraini Revolution, the regime has embarked one more arrests and detentions. Mohammad Ali AlJaziri, brother of Martyr Hussain Al Jaziri was arrested on 14th February near his grandfather's house in Daih town. Following extensive torture he was remanded in custody for a week which is likely to result in lengthy prison sentence. The arrests included Khalil Jassim from Bouri town and ten-year old Amin Reda who was snatched from his mother.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
19th February 2020



‘This isn’t humanity’

Inside the Bahraini women’s prison overseen by officials trained with UK money

Maya Oppenheim,
The Independent

“They are closing in on me and suffocating me,” says Hajer Mansoor. “This isn’t humanity.” The 51-year-old has been jailed in Isa Town, a notorious Bahraini prison condemned by the United Nations for its degrading treatment and poor conditions, for almost three years.

In Isa Town, she says she is kept in her cell for almost 24 hours a day, with no drinking water outside of mealtimes. In Isa Town, she says guards refused for months to tell her whether the results of a breast scan showed if she had cancer. In Isa Town, the officials in charge of overseeing the conditions have been trained using millions in British taxpayers’ money, despite allegations that they have covered up torture and human-rights abuses. It is cases like Ms Mansoor’s that have led activists to call for the UK funding to end. The only detention facility for women in Bahrain, Isa Town has a smooth, white concrete exterior. Within its walls, prisoners report unhygienic living conditions and insect-ridden food.

For three weeks in April last year, female inmates were blocked from going to the prison shop where they were able to buy hygiene products, a report by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (Bird) found.

Human rights groups including the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention allege Ms Mansoor was subjected to an unfair trial on trumped-up charges because of the activism of her exiled son-in-law, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei.

“This is completely inhumane treatment,” the mother of five says. “I’m inside the room for almost 24 hours. If I ever leave my room, an officer is always behind me step by step and doesn’t leave me alone. “They lock me in the room almost all day with absolutely nothing to keep myself busy. I can’t receive visits from my children. I’m forbidden from speaking to other Bahraini inmates.”

When she found the lump in her breast in August 2018, she says prison officers initially refused to take her to hospital, and it was only after an appeal by Amnesty International that she was able to have tests including a mammogram. Ms Mansoor was told the lump was not cancerous but, she says, they would not give her a copy of the results, then authorities refused to give her follow-up treatment for tests despite a doctor’s recommendation.

Since 2012, £6.5m of British taxpayers’ money has been spent on training Bahraini public institutions, including the Ministry of Interior Ombudsman and Special Investigation Unit, which have been condemned by human rights organisations for covering up a slew of torture allegations, including the case of Ms Mansoor, as well as unlawful executions.

Bahrain is one of the UK’s longest-

standing allies in the Gulf despite being “one of the Middle East’s most repressive states” according to US NGO Freedom House.

The Foreign Office says it monitors the situation closely, and has raised Ms Mansoor’s case with the Bahraini government.

Among those calling for further action to be taken is women’s activist Medina Ali, who was released at the end of last year after more than two years in Isa Town, where she shared a cell with Ms Mansoor.

Speaking to *The Independent* in her first interview since leaving prison, Ms Ali says she suffered “extremely harsh treatment” throughout her sentence. Guards, led by the major in charge of the facility, also physically assaulted both her and fellow cellmate, Ms Mansoor, in September 2018, she says.

“After being denied access to take part in religious rituals, we were punished and beaten,” Ms Ali says. “The head of the prison punched my back. The pain remained for several days. I was in shock and pain. For unrelated reasons, I had uterine bleeding that lasted for over a month and despite repeated requests to be seen by a doctor or specialist doctor, I was denied. I lived with my own suffering and misery.

“There was one incident where I was strip-searched following a visit by my family. I was asked to take all my clothes off. It was very humiliating. Prison was an extremely painful experience. They also placed a glass barrier for family visits, which was very difficult because I have a child – a boy who is eight years old. I was often in my cell for 23 or 22 hours a day.”

She says she was also barred from speaking to other prisoners and blocked from having relatives visit her at various points during her time in jail.

Ms Ali, who had taken part in peaceful protests calling for equal rights and democratic change in Bahrain, had been driving to work on the day she was taken to Isa Town prison back in 2017.

She says: “It was an abduction because they were wearing civilian clothes. There were four men. They all had their guns raised. They blindfolded me and took me to a horse stable. There was a room nearby where interrogation began. It was very aggressive and threatening. I was threatened with rape and they threatened to rape my mother and younger sister.

“They hit me all over my body. They took my head and started knocking it against the wall until I sustained serious bruises. The mark from this incident is still there. You can feel it when you touch my forehead.”

Both the cases of Ms Mansoor and Ms Ali have been raised by groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, on a number of occasions.

Last month, the UN special procedures raised serious concerns about the situation in Bahrain’s prisons and the treatment of Ms Mansoor and Ms Ali, in a letter signed by eight UN experts.

Husain Abdulla, Executive Director at

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), argues Ms Mansoor continues to “languish in arbitrary detention” being “subject to treatment which may amount to torture”.

Ms Mansoor was left with bruises all over her body and hospitalised after being assaulted by prison guards in September 2018. The assault took place just days after her son-in-law briefed MPs in the UK about the mistreatment of female prisoners in Bahrain.

Amnesty International has previously urged the authorities at Isa Town and all other detention facilities in Bahrain to follow international human rights law in how they treat detainees and prisoners.

Watch more

Police investigate claim Bahrain embassy staff tried to kill protester

A spokesperson for the Bahraini embassy in London says the allegations of mistreatment against Ms Mansoor and Ms Ali have been investigated by Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior ombudsman and found to be without substance. They say Ms Mansoor was convicted of planting fake explosive devices.

The representative says: “It is also wrong to characterise the Kingdom of Bahrain as ‘repressive’ or to claim that it practises or tolerates the mistreatment or torture of those in custody. In reality, no person is detained or prosecuted in the Kingdom of Bahrain for peaceful freedom of expression, nor for legitimate peaceful activism.

“There has been no denial of (health) treatment ... In reality, Ms Mansoor is receiving all necessary consultations, scans, treatment and follow-up as guaranteed by law.”

While the Bahraini government says prisoners are allowed out of their cells for eight hours a day, a government organisation that oversees human rights in the country – the National Institute for Human Rights Bahrain – has previously said female prisoners are allowed out of cells for two hours each day.

Britain has a lengthy history of colonial intervention in Bahrain – as well as still having naval facilities in the country, which has been ruled by the Al Khalifa family for more than two centuries. The UK has licensed £105m worth of arms to Bahrain since the pro-democracy Arab Spring uprising started in February 2011, according to the Campaign Against Arms Trade.

Ms Ali, who constantly fears being recalled to prison and is currently banned from travelling outside of Bahrain, hit out at Britain’s close relationship with Bahrain.

“It is upsetting for me to know the training Britain gives to Bahrain is still ongoing,” she says. “I would like to see Britain stop its training to Bahrain because we are the victims. The people are the ones who suffer the most from abuse by the Bahraini government. Britain is a hypocrite.”