

BAHRAIN

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

Revocation of citizenship remains evil, eight years after launch

Citizenship is a right not a gracious act by any ruler, and that this right must not be "weaponized". It must not be used to subdue the individual into total submission or accept enslavement by the dictators. Unfortunately, this is exactly what has been happening in Bahrain where citizenship is not considered a right of the native citizens. It is viewed as a commodity owned by the ruler who is free to give it to whoever he wishes or withdraw it from anyone who opposes him. These days eight years ago the khalifi regime issued a list of 31 native individuals whose nationality had been revoked by the dictator. This was done with the whim of a pen, with no resort to any legal means. It was a brutal move by a regime whose brutality known no bounds. As its backers in London and Washington preferred to ignore his criminal acts, the khalifi dictator continued revoking citizens of more native Bahrainis. At one point almost 1000 were affected by this illegal khalifi act. Only when international outcry in the human rights world became deafening that the khalifi dictator was ordered to change course. He ordered the reinstatement of the nationality to some of the, leaving hundreds stranded in the homeland of their great grandfathers or in countries where they had sought refuge. More than 500 native Bahrainis are now stateless, despite the banning of such practice by the UN.

Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) says: Article 15 says: (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality. This is a clear statement by the UN that people have unquestionable and unconditional right for citizenship. No ruler has the right to deny this right especially if it leads to statelessness. Yet the khalifi dictators chose to violate the international law and punish their opponents in this manner. Hundreds of families are now denied treatment as citizens in the land of their great grandfathers; those who had lived in Bahrain for centuries. In contrast the regime is granting Bahraini citizenship to foreigners in order to entice them to replace the natives as the new citizens of Bahrain. This is to punish those who had a role in the 2011 Revolution whose echoes resonate in the ears of

the victims of tyranny and torture. They have been denied their basic right of citizenship which has also led to denying them their inalienable rights of living, working and receiving aid from the various agencies. This is a harsh punishment for people who had not committed any criminal act. The regime has always attempted to criminalise peaceful and legitimate dissent. It expects people to tow the line of the khalifi dictator or risk losing means of livelihood. For decades the victims of this policy have survived due to their patience and steadfastness. They will still live despite the odds.

Dictators often react on the impulse of the moment and believe that horrendous punishment will become a deterrent against anti-regime activism. The contrary is true. People become more active in opposing their dictators when they exceed the limits and become a threat to decency, dignity, rights and life. Atrocious acts by dictators become catalysts to more activism that may become detrimental to the regime itself. The past 100 years of anti-khalifi opposition has seen increased anti-regime activities. The present Revolution that had started on 14th February 2011 has remained a source of fear to the khalifis despite inviting foreign forces to crush it. The Saudi and Emirati troops were instrumental in causing severe damage to the country and the people. Native Bahrainis hate the occupiers of their land and have identified with the predicament of the Palestinians who live under Israeli occupation. When the khalifi dictators rushed to the rescue of the occupiers of Palestine native Bahrainis reacted angrily and called for regime change. It is now clear that the khalifis cannot control the situation on their own and have become totally dependent on foreign aid. This has led to more alienation from the natives who view them as enemies. There is deeply-rooted conviction that the present dictator has lost a golden chance to re-establish working links with the natives. He has thus become exposed to more serious threats to his rule and is likely to be forced to step down, two decades after he grabbed power following his father's death in March 1999.

Revocation of nationality has done more harm to the regime than to his intended

victims. The khalifis have made mockery of themselves and are blamed for missing out a golden chance to re-connect with Bahrain and its people. It is anticipated that the political crisis will persist and that the khalifi political arrangements will fade away. While many native families continue to suffer the ill-effects of citizen revocation, some are now more convinced than ever that the more cruel the regime becomes the faster its downfall will be. Its policies are unsustainable on the long run. It is not natural to adopt policies that alienate the natives of the land hoping for support from foreigners. Bahrainis are now three types; those thousands who have been languishing behind bars for up to ten years, the community that lives on the land and those who are scattered around the world. They will remain connected with one shared aim; to liberate their land from occupiers and enjoy freedom and justice.

The khalifis have chosen to go it alone on almost every policy they had adopted. They have no popular support in most of these policies. The latest of these mindless adventures is the abandonment of the Palestinian case and switching sides in this intractable conflict. They have lost and residual confidence of the people. They are seen as traitors, treacherous and enemies of Bahrainis, Arabs and Muslims. The support they receive from Donald Trump will soon evaporate when Americans reject him at the ballot boxes in November. The Bahrainis, on the other hand, will continue to receive God's support as they persevere in the struggle for freedom, justice and peace. Those whose nationality had been revoked naturally feel sad, but they do not despair. Divine support and help, as well as that of the freedom-loving people of the world will help them stand their feet and march forward in their sacred struggle. They may have not citizenship but they have an open passport to victory, as had most of those who had struggled against tyranny, dictatorship, corruption and oppression. What matters to the noble people is how faithful they are to their ideals, values and principles. Bahrainis have already passed this test and are on the road to eventual declaration of victory over the khalifi, Emirati and Israeli evil.

UK challenged on arming Saudis, MPs force a U-turn on FCO's IAF

Campaigners have filed for a judicial review of the UK government's decision to renew arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) said the weapons would "fuel destruction and prolong the conflict" in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition has employed widespread bombing in a war that has killed thousands of civilians. Last month, a United Nations report said countries arming parties involved in the conflict could be "aiding and assisting" war crimes, and said there had been "documented patterns" of serious international humanitarian law violations. In a June 2019 case, also brought by CAAT, the court of appeal ruled British arms sales to Saudi Arabia were unlawful and said ministers had illegally signed off on arms exports without properly assessing the risk to civilians.

At the home front disturbing events have caused serious concerns among human rights bodies. Sheikh Abdul Nasser Ahmad Mahmood Abu Taqiqa has been arrested by Saudi regime's forces for opposing the destruction of his hometown. The regime decided to obliterate an area in Northwestern Arabia to make way for Mohammad Bin Salman's project known as NEOM. His brother, Abdul Rahim was liquidated by the regime three months ago. His son, Ahmad is behind bars.

On Monday 26th October woman activist, Loujain Al Hathoul began hunger strike to protest denial of family contacts. She told her parents that she was exhausted of being mistreated and deprived from hearing her family's voices. She told them she would start a hunger strike until they allowed her regular calls again.

Representative Ilham Omar has called on Mike Pompeo to withdraw the US from the G20 summit in Saudi Arabia. She said:

"The Saudi government stands in stark contrast with every ideal we claim to uphold as Americans. We must hold this oppressive government with a long record of human rights violations accountable."

In a debate lasting 90 minutes on 22nd October several cross-party MPs severely criticised secret UK government funding to the Gulf. Foreign Office minister for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) James Cleverly made an unprecedented U-turn by promising to publish a summary of future activities funded by the controversial Integrated Activity Fund (IAF), a £20m a year fund reserved exclusively for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The move comes after years of appeals by MPs, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Reprieve for openness and clarity. They had repeatedly condemned the fund's lack of transparency amidst concerns that IAF recipients had been implicated in human rights violations especially Bahrain. As well as pledging to publish a summary of activities funded by the IAF in the 2020/21 financial year, Cleverly promised that the government would "hold ambassadors or heads of missions accountable for effective programme delivery and value for money" when allocating funds from the IAF in future. He stated that the government is taking steps to improve the governance of the IAF, which has been renamed the Gulf Strategy Fund. However, there was no indication that the government would release details of activities funded in previous years, a key demand of MPs.

In his new weekly newsletter "Axios" investigative journalist Barak Ravid said Israel had been conducting undercover diplomacy in Bahrain for more than a decade through a front company listed as a commercial consulting firm. According to Bah-

rains public records, the company offered marketing, commercial promotion and investment services. One of the shareholders listed in public records is Brett Jonathan Miller — a South African national who was appointed in 2013 as Israel's consul general in Mumbai. On the company's board was Ilan Fluss, a British national and now the Israeli Foreign Ministry's deputy director general for the economy. He said: "Israeli officials tell me the secret mission really did promote hundreds of business deals struck by Israeli companies in Bahrain. It also served as a secret communications channel for the Israeli government."

Serious concerns are rising for the health and well-being of Mr Hassan Mushaima, 73 the most senior leader of the Bahraini revolution who has been behind bars for ten years. Last week he was transferred to hospital when his health deteriorated with high blood pressure, breathing difficulties and raised sugar level. He also had Cancer and needs regular scanning. He was kept under emergency treatment for six hours until his symptoms improved. He was then returned to his cell and no real treatment was planned. His case is viewed as "slow death plan".

Native Bahrainis have been waging regular protests since 2011 but have escalated in recent weeks to protest the khalifi betrayal of the Palestinian cause. While intermittent protests and demonstrations have erupted at several towns and villages, Friday protests against the regime have been more regular. Regime's forces often attacked these protests using tear and chemical gases. Many youths have been detained and subjected to severe ill-treatment including torture. On Monday night several protests erupted in various

W20 must call for Saudi women release, khalifis endanger Mushaima's

Yesterday the Women20 (W20) Summit was launched in Saudi Arabia ahead of G20 meeting next month. Amnesty International addressed an open letter to all the individuals and organizations attending the Summit. It said: We are writing this open letter to raise Amnesty International's serious concerns relating to the ongoing detention of women human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia, and to urge all W20 participants to take action in support of these brave women ahead of and during the Summit. It said: Amnesty International urges you to use your leverage at the W20 meetings, privately and publicly, to: Call on the Saudi Arabian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all Saudi women human rights defenders in detention (Loujain al-Hathloul, Nassima al-Sada, Samar Badawi, Nouf Abdulaziz, and Maya'a alZahrani) before the W20 Summit on 20-22 October; Call on the Saudi Arabian authorities to drop charges against all 13 women activists on trial for promoting women's rights.

In the past few days Saudi security forces attacked several areas in the North and East of the country and arrested several people. On 12th October three women were detained after their families were harassed. They will add to several other women languishing behind bars including: Israa Al Ghamghan, Naseema Al Sadah, Na'eema Al Matrood, Fatima Al Nsaif, Noor Al-Salam and Maryam Al Qaysoom. Several people were also detained from the Huwaitat region in Northwestern Arabia where the Neom project will be built. They include: Rashid Ibrahim, his brother Abdulla, Abdul Elah Rashid, Awn Abdullah Ahmad, Saleh Salim Ali Al-Raqabi, Dhaif Allah Salamah, and Sami Hulail.

Saudi prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against eight Saudi men charged with taking part in peaceful protests, some of which they committed as children Yesterday Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch said: "If Saudi Arabia is serious about reforming its criminal justice system, it should start by

banning the death penalty against alleged child offenders in all cases." The Public Prosecution, which reports directly to the king, accused the detained men of several charges that do not resemble recognizable crimes, including "seeking to destabilize the social fabric by participating in protests and funeral processions," "chanting slogans hostile to the regime," and "seeking to incite discord and division." All of the men are from Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, where most of the country's Shia minority live. "Saudi authorities should spare Ali al-Nimr, Dawoud al-Marhoun, and Abdullah al-Zaher's lives and make sure no other alleged child offender ends up on death row," Page said.

On 18th October the Specialized Criminal Court in Riyadh again issued a postponement in the trial of peaceful religious scholar and reformer Salman Alodah, extending his pretrial detention without justification and without giving him a chance to be present in court. Alodah, who has been in detention for three years for his

Saudis defeated at HRC, khalifis detain dozens of Bahrainis in revenge

Yesterday Saudi Arabia failed in its attempt to win a place on the 47-seat Human Rights Council. The result is a severe blow to the country's efforts to improve its image in the wake of the admitted killing of the Saudi citizen and Washington Post reporter Jamal Khashoggi. Their heinous human rights crimes in Yemen also contributed to its defeat. The Saudis lost their bid in the secret ballot on Tuesday conducted at the UN headquarters in New York to fill 15 vacant seats, which are distributed between five regions. Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), the organisation founded by Jamal Khashoggi, said: "It is telling just how badly crown prince Mohammed bin Salman has damaged his country's global standing for Saudi to lose its election to the UN human rights council... Despite the hundreds of millions of dollars he has spent on public relations stunts to cover his grotesque abuses, the international community just isn't buying it."

Reprieve is conducting a campaign for the release of Mohammed Essam al-Faraj who was 15 years old when he was arrested outside a bowling alley in Medina, Saudi Arabia, in 2017. His so-called 'crimes' include attending his uncle's funeral when he was just nine years old. Mohammed was held incommunicado for a week. He was then taken to an adult prison where he was tortured and forced to sign a 'confession'. The prosecution is using that 'confession' to sentence him to death. Members are urged to sign a petition to spare Mohammed's life.

On 7th October, young citizen, Ali Al Awwami was abducted in a raid at Umm Al Hamam district of Qatif in the Eastern Province. Several others were arrested in

raids that lasted three days. Armoured vehicles and heavily-armed personnel invaded the area wreaking havoc and spreading fear among the people.

In Riyadh the Special Criminal Court imposed 5-year prison sentence on writer, Jamil Farsi for exposing official misconduct. He said that the government had granted concessions to companies owned by members of the royal family to work on gold mines and other natural resources. He also warned against privatization of AR-AMCO, the main oil consortium.

On 8th October, the European Parliament voted to downgrade its attendance at the November G20 summit in Saudi Arabia over human rights concerns, and to urge for sanctions. The bill is one of the strongest political messages the institution has ever issued on Saudi Arabia and comes on the two-year anniversary of the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. MEPs approved a wide-ranging resolution that condemns Saudi human rights abuses and urges the European Union to downgrade its representation at the upcoming G20 Leaders' Summit to avoid legitimizing human rights violations.

A newly-launched khalifi revenge campaign has led to the arrest of over 40 natives for exercising their religious rights last week. Among those detained are young activists, preachers, orators and lamenters. They include the popular orators Mahdi Sahwan, his brother Jaffar and Qassem Marhoon. They took part in virtual processions to mark the Arba'een event which was marked by millions of Shia Muslims in the world. Four youths from Karzakkan were also arrested: Ahmad Abbas Ali, Hassan Saleh Al Qattan, Ahmad Saeed Khatam and Jawad Ahmad Jawad. The majority native Shia Muslims are being subjected to genocidal and systematic policies to eradicate their

existence in the land of their forefathers.

A long term prisoner, Khalil Halwachi, 63 was moved to isolation unit for insisting on getting much-needed health care. He had repeatedly suffered ill-health including blood clots. His daughter, Fatima, has been working hard for her father's release. Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace is also riddled with health problems for which he has received little care. Riddled with polio since birth he has been denied rubber ferrules for his crutches.

Scores of academics from across the world are calling on the University of Huddersfield to suspend a controversial Masters degree programme it runs with Bahrain's Royal Academy of Policing over allegations that widespread torture of political prisoners had been taking place at the location. The Masters course in Security Science, which involves Huddersfield lecturers training Bahraini police officers, has been running since 2018 but has been dogged by claims that the Academy has been used as a "torture hub". The letter from the academics states: "We are writing to condemn the University of Huddersfield's decision to maintain an exclusive MSc in Security Science for students at Bahrain's Royal Academy of Policing following revelations in The Times and The Yorkshire Post that at least ten political prisoners report being tortured at the site."

"Since their publication, more individuals have come forward testifying to being tortured on Academy premises. We therefore join human rights groups in urging the University of Huddersfield to suspend their MSc to the RAP, pending an independent investigation. Should the management fail to act, we encourage Huddersfield students to raise the matter with their Students' Union."

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14th October 2020

peaceful speech and activism, faces the death penalty for 37 charges that include "expressing cynicism about the government's achievements," "receiving text messages that reflect antagonism to the Kingdom" and "possessing banned book." Calls have been made to the international bodies such as the UN, the Human Rights Council, the European Commission and Parliament and international NGOs to take immediate action to save the life of Hassan Mushaima, 72, the most prominent leader of the Bahraini Revolution. Fears are rising for his life after his health deteriorated yesterday and was taken to hospital. His symptoms of high blood pressure, temperature and breathlessness were dealt with but no thorough investigation or relaxation of the harsh prison conditions were undertaken. For sometime suspicions have surfaced that the khalifi dictators were planning to liquidate native opposition leaders through various means. They have now enlisted Mossad help against the native population which is seeking democratic transformation and an end to heredi-

tary tribal dictatorship.

In the past week several protests were staged by native Bahrainis against the khalifi betrayal of Palestine and its people. This is despite the mass arrests carried out by the dictatorial regime that criminalises the general human freedoms. The khalifi clan and Israel have signed a joint communique to formalise ties during a visit by an Israeli and US delegation to Manama to broaden cooperation that Washington has promoted as an anti-Iran bulwark and potential economic boom. The Israeli delegation, which flew on an El Al Israel Airlines charter flight from

Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, was accompanied by US Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin. The khalifi and Emirati treachery of Palestine, overseen by U.S. President Donald Trump, is a foreign policy flourish ahead of his bid for re-election next month. For the U.S. allies, it is a chance to close ranks on Iran more overtly. The khalifi foreign minister, Abdul Latif Al-Zayani touched elbows with Ben-Shabbat, who described the step as a "promising beginning" and said the Israeli delegation was accepted "with open arms, with warmth and cordiality."

Several native Bahrainis were summoned by khalifi interrogators for exercising their religious rights. They include Hassan Al Mu'allimah, the head of Sanabis matam (religious congregation hall), his deputy Hani Yousuf, Faisal Al Shamrokh, the manager and Jaffar Al Shamroukh, a member of the executive board. Munir Mushaima, another member was also summoned for the sixth time.

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21st October 2020



GCC: Flawed laws exploited in pandemic to further crush freedom

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Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), specifically Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to continue pre-existing patterns of suppressing the right to freedom of expression in 2020, said Amnesty International today in a detailed statement.

Across these states, flawed laws are being used to criminalize “false news” to summon, arrest, investigate and prosecute individuals who post content on social media about the pandemic or the government’s response to it.

Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said: “The GCC states have failed to justify how these measures are necessary and proportionate for the protection of public health. Individuals are being subjected to harassment and intimidation simply for discussing the pandemic online, in a clear breach of their right to freedom of expression.

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“Once again, GCC states opt for using what means they have at their disposal to silence any public debate, in this instance about the pandemic and are clearly more concerned about averting public scrutiny than about protecting public health. Access to information is in fact essential for keeping the public up to date on how to protect themselves from the virus.

“We therefore call on the GCC states to not only put an end to such unwarranted practices and ensure people can express themselves without fear of reprisals, but also to urgently step up their efforts to ensure they are the disseminating reliable, accessible, evidence-based and trustworthy information, which is crucial to counter false and misleading information.”

Amnesty International has reviewed official statements by these countries, issued via government social media accounts and comments given by government sources for reporting in the controlled domestic press, for the period from March to present.

Background

The right to freedom of expression is protected under international human rights law, primarily under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bahrain and Kuwait have both acceded to the Covenant. Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the

UAE are among the roughly 7% of UN member states that are not parties to the Covenant.

All of the GCC states have overbroad laws on “public security”, which are frequently used to punish protected expressions. In recent years, the Gulf countries have added new repressive statutes under the title of counterterrorism or cyber-security laws, but many provisions in their long-standing penal codes are also incompatible with the right to freedom of expression and continue to be used to suppress online critics.

Blanket prohibitions on the dissemination of information,

based on vague and ambiguous concepts such as “false news” or “spreading misinformation,” are incompatible with international human rights law and standards. International law does not permit general prohibitions of expressions of an erroneous opinion or an incorrect interpretation of events.



UK makes U-Turn on secretive Gulf fund

In a bruising backbench debate in which cross-party MPs severely criticised secret UK government funding to the Gulf, Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) James Cleverly made an unprecedented u-turn by promising to publish a summary of future activities funded by the controversial Integrated activity Fund (IAF), a £20m a year fund reserved exclusively for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. The move comes after years of appeals by MPs, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Reprieve, who have condemned the fund’s lack of transparency amidst concerns that IAF recipients have been implicated in human rights violations in Bahrain.

As well as pledging to publish a summary of activities funded by the IAF in the 2020/21 financial year, Cleverly promised that the government would “hold ambassadors or heads of missions accountable for effective programme delivery and value for money” when allocating funds from the IAF in future. He stated that the government is taking steps to improve the governance of the IAF, which has been renamed the Gulf Strategy Fund. However, there was no indication that the government would release details of activities funded in previous years, a key demand of MPs and rights groups.

Speakers at the landmark debate, the first of its kind since the IAF’s establishment in 2015, included Father of the House Sir Peter Bottomley, who told the government they had “made a mistake” in refusing to divulge information about how taxpayer’s money is being spent in the Gulf. David Linden, MP for Glasgow East who led the debate, challenged the secrecy surrounding Britain’s relationship with GCC states, asking “if the government has nothing to

hide, why will they not publish details of the fund?”

Citing Freedom of Information requests received by BIRD, Labour’s Shadow MENA Minister Wayne David accused the government of failing to follow their own human rights due diligence policies when allocating funds from the IAF. David revealed that the government had failed to conduct a mandatory Overseas Justice and Security Assessment (OSJA) on two IAF-funded visits by Bahraini judges to the UK. The visit featured four judges from Bahrain’s Court of the First Instance, who are responsible for issuing a number of controversial death sentences in recent years.

MPs also questioned why five years after the IAF was first established, the human rights situation in several Gulf states had deteriorated. Brendan O’Hara, MP for Argyll and Bute, asked the government to explain why “two states in particular that have received millions in taxpayer funding, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, are executing people at a higher rate than they were when they began receiving funding under the IAF.” Saudi Arabia executed a record 184 people in 2019, while Bahrain’s use of the death penalty has risen more than ten-fold since 2017.

Others challenged the government on the proclaimed successes of the IAF. The DUP’s Jim Shannon noted that alternative sentencing legislation introduced in Bahrain and developed with IAF-support has been found to discriminate against political prisoners. He pointed out that several members of the Bahrain 13, political leaders jailed in the wake of Bahrain’s 2011 pro-democracy uprising, were excluded from early releases, despite being eligible.