

# INTO THE ABYSS



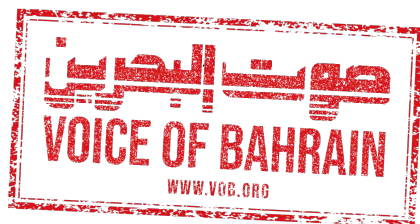
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BAHRAIN  
AND SUPPRESSION OF THE  
POPULAR MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

Karen Dabrowska

# INTO THE ABYSS

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN BAHRAIN  
AND SUPPRESSION OF THE  
POPULAR MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

Karen Dabrowska





Copyright © Karen Dabrowska

The right of Human Rights Watch to be identified as the author on this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in Great Britain in 2012

All rights reserved. Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, this publication may only be reproduced, stored, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, with prior permission in writing of the publishers or, in the case of reprographic production, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

Printed in Great Britain by Euro-Print Ltd, Cardiff, Wales  
Typeset/Cover Design by Georgina Pensri, West Sussex, England

Every effort has been made to fulfil requirements with regard to reproducing copyright material. The author and publisher will be glad to rectify any omissions at the earliest opportunity.

# Contents

Acknowledgements / Dedication	iv
Fact Box - Bahrain at a Glance	vi
Chronology	vii
Introduction	xi
Chapter 1: Historical sketch	15
Chapter 2: The 20th century: Early experiments with democracy, suspension of parliament, popular uprising.	19
Chapter 3: Attempts at reconciliation, the National Action Charter and Broken Promises	31
Chapter 4: Death in Pearl Square Brutal suppression of the peaceful mass movement for change	40
Chapter 5: Testimonies Victims of torture and human rights abuses speak out	65
Chapter 6: Into the Abyss: The Saudi occupation: repression and autocratic rule	111
Conclusion	137
References	142
Appendices: One: Bahrain Youth for Freedom Statement	143
Two: Demography and Bahrain's unrest	146
Three: Main political societies in Bahrain	162



## Dedication

This book is dedicated to Jaffar Al Hasabi who was imprisoned and tortured by the Bahraini regime and to Dr Saeed Shehabi who has campaigned tirelessly for a genuine democracy in Bahrain for the past thirty years.

For their support, encouragement and assistance my thanks to Zeinab Meftah, Abdul Hadi Khalaf, Hasan Hodaie, Zaid Hasani, Abbas Omran, Abbas Nawrozzadeh, Maryam Khawaja and Professor Rodney Shakespeare.

Special thanks to Human Rights Watch for permission to publish torture victims' testimonies from their report *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010. © 2008 Human Rights Watch.

## **Bahrain at a Glance**

Full name: Kingdom of Bahrain

Population: 1,039,000

Leader: King Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah

Type of government: constitutional monarchy

Administrative divisions: five governorates; Asamah, Janubiyah, Muharraq, Shamaliyah, Wasat each administered by an appointed governor

Legislature: bicameral legislature consists of the Consultative Council (40 members appointed by the King) and the Council of Representatives or Chamber of Deputies (40 seats; members directly elected to serve four-year terms)

Elections: Council of Representatives - last held in two rounds on 23 and 30 October 2010 (next election to be held in 2014) Election results: Wifaq (Shia) 18, Asala (Sunni Salafi) 3, Minbar (Sunni Muslim Brotherhood) 2, independents 17

Capital: Manama

Area: 717 sq km (277 sq miles)

Climate: arid; mild, pleasant winters; very hot, humid summers

Terrain: mostly low desert plain rising gently to low central escarpment

Ethnic groups: Bahraini 62.4%, non-Bahraini 37.6% (2001 census)

Religions: Muslim (Shia (65%) and Sunni 22%) , Christian 9%, other 9.8% (2001 census)

Languages: Arabic (official), English, Farsi, Urdu

Life expectancy: 75 years (men), 78 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 Bahraini dinar = 1,000 fils

Main exports: Petroleum and petroleum products, aluminium

GNI per capita: US \$25,420 (World Bank, 2009)

# Chronology

2200 – 1600 BC – Bahrain is the site of the ancient kingdom of Dilmun

600BC – BC Bahrain absorbed into the New Babylonian Empire.

3rd century BC - 7th century AD - Bahrain ruled by two Iranian dynasties, the Parthians and the Sassanids.

899AD - The Qarmatians, a Shia sect, conquer Bahrain.

976 - Bahrain comes under Abbasid rule.

977 – 1520 - Uyunid, Usfurid, and Jabrid dynasties rule Bahrain

1521 – Portuguese invasion.

1602 – 1717 - Bahrain part of the Safavid (Iranian) Empire.

1717 - Oman invades Bahrain.

1736 – Nadir Shah of Persia captures Bahrain

1783 – The Al Khalifa clan captures Bahrain.

1913 - Britain and the Ottoman government sign a treaty recognising the independence of Bahrain but the country remains under British administration.

1931 – Oil discovered

1939 - Britain decides that the Hawar Islands which lie in the Gulf of Bahrain between Bahrain and Qatar belong to Bahrain not Qatar.

1961 - Sheikh Isa Bin-Salman Al Khalifah becomes ruler. Britain moves bases

1967 - Britain moves its main regional naval base from Aden to Bahrain.

1968 - Britain announces it will close its bases east of Suez by 1971.

1970 - The Administrative Council becomes a 12-member Council of State, headed by a president, the ruler's brother, Sheikh Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah.

1970 Iran renounces its claim to sovereignty over Bahrain after a United Nations report shows that Bahrainis want to remain independent.

1971 – Declaration of independence. A new treaty of friendship is signed with Britain. Sheikh Isa becomes the first Emir and the Council of State becomes a cabinet. US permitted to rent naval facilities.

1972 - Constitutional assembly elected by men aged over 20.

1973 - National Assembly elected.

1975 - August – Emir dissolves the national assembly claiming it is impeding the government's work.

1981 - Bahrain becomes a member of the GCC. Members of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain arrested and accused of conspiring to overthrow the government.

1986 - Causeway linking Bahrain to Saudi Arabia opened.

1991 - January/February - As part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force, Bahrain participates in the coalition "Operation Desert Storm" against Iraq (the Gulf War)

1991 - Bahrain rejects Qatar's claims to the Hawar Islands, Fasht al-Dibal and Qitat Jaradah. The case is placed before the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Defence co-operation agreement signed with the USA.

1992 - Emir appoints 30 member consultative council.

1993 - Amnesty International criticises human rights violations in Bahrain, especially the deportation of Bahraini nationals.

1994 - Scores of people arrested for signing a petition calling on the emir to reinstate the dissolved parliament. In December more than 1500 people are arrested following protests.

1995

- January - Sheikh Ali Salman is deported and seeks asylum in Britain. He claims torture is widespread in Bahrain
- February – Bahrain does not agree for the ICJ to mediate in its dispute with Qatar.
- June – Five Shia ministers included in the cabinet after a reshuffle.
- A Shia cleric, Sheikh Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri, arrested in April, is released from prison. Government holds talks with opposition leaders in an attempt to restore calm before Bahrain hosts an international economic conference.
- October – six opposition leaders begin hunger strike in protest at the government's failure to keep its promise to release hundreds of prisoners.
- November – public gatherings banned.
- December – Government pardons some political prisoners and allows a number of exiles to return.

1996

- January/February - After bomb explosions in Manama's business quarter, Al-Jamri is arrested again on 18 January. Police attack worshippers in Grand Mosque. Daily riots as security forces crack down on anti-government demonstrators. Sunni loyalists favoured in university admissions.



- April Setting up of High Council for Islamic Affairs to unify Muslims approved.
- June - The government says it has uncovered a coup plot by an Iranian-backed group, Hezbollah-Bahrain. Bahrain recalls its ambassador to Iran and downgrades its representation to charge d'affaires level. Three Shias sentenced to death for the firebombing of a restaurant in Sitra.
- September - The Consultative Council members are increased from 30 to 40.

1998

- February - Sheikh Khalid Bin-Muhammad Bin-Salman Al Khalifah replaces British citizen, Ian Henderson, as Director of the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS).
- An estimated 1400 political prisoners remain in jail.
- December - Bahrain provides military facilities for US and UK bombing campaign against Iraq.

1999

- March - The emir, Sheikh Isa, dies and is succeeded by his eldest son, Sheikh Hamad.
- July - Sheikh Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri is sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment but is pardoned by the new Emir.

2000 September - Emir appoints for the first time non-Muslims and women to the Consultative Council, including four women - one of whom is a Christian - and a Jewish businessman.

2001 February - Referendum on political reform; Bahrainis overwhelmingly back proposals under which Bahrain would become a constitutional monarchy with elected lower chambers of parliament and independent judiciary.

2002

- February - Bahrain turns itself into a constitutional monarchy and allows women to stand for office in a package of reforms.
- May - Local elections are held, Bahrain's first poll for almost 30 years. For the first time women vote and stand as candidates, but fail to win a seat.
- October - Parliamentary elections held, the first for nearly 30 years. Authorities say the turnout was more than 50% despite a call by Islamists for a boycott.

2003 May - Thousands of victims of alleged torture petition king to cancel law which prevents them from suing suspected torturers.

2004

- April - Nada Haffadh is made health minister - the first woman to head a government ministry.
- May - Protests in Manama against fighting in the Iraqi holy cities of Najaf, Karbala. The king sacks the interior minister after police try to prevent the protest.

- September - Bahrain and US sign free trade pact; Saudi Arabia condemns the move, saying it hinders regional economic integration.

2005 March-June - Thousands of protest marchers demand a fully-elected parliament.

2006 January - US President George W Bush signs a bill to enact the 2004 US-Bahrain free-trade agreement after it is approved by the US Congress.

2006 November - The Shia opposition wins 40% of the vote in a general election. A Shia Muslim, Jawad bin Salem al-Oraied, is named as a deputy prime minister.

2007 September - Thousands of illegal foreign workers rush to take advantage of a government-sanctioned amnesty.

2008 May - A Jewish woman, Houda Nonoo, is appointed Bahrain's ambassador to the USA. She is believed to be the Arab world's first Jewish ambassador.

2008 December - Authorities arrest several people who allegedly planned to detonate homemade bombs during Bahrain's national celebrations.

2009 April - King pardons more than 170 prisoners charged with endangering national security, including 35 Shias being tried on charges of trying to overthrow the state.

2010 September - 20 Shia opposition leaders - accused of plotting to overthrow monarchy by promoting violent protests and sabotage - arrested in run-up to elections.

2010 October - Parliamentary elections. Main Shia opposition group, Islamic National Accord Association, makes a slender gain.

2011

- February - Thousands of protesters gather in Manama, inspired by popular revolts that toppled rulers in Tunisia and Egypt. A security crackdown results in the death of several protesters.
- March - Saudi troops are called in following further unrest. Authorities declare martial law and clamp down hard on pro-democracy activists. Protests continue, despite ban on demonstrations. Focal point of demonstrations - the Pearl monument - is demolished.
- June - State of emergency is lifted, but heavy security remains in place. Almost daily anti-regime protests in Shia villages.

# Introduction

Bahrain is a country with a troubled past and an uncertain future. Throughout its recent history the Shia majority numbering some 70 percent of the population have been seeking more rights from a Sunni monarchy which conquered the island in 1783.

It was inevitable that the reverberations of the Arab Spring and the toppling of the dictators in Egypt and Tunisia would reach the Gulf where autocratic rulers have been entrenched for centuries.

In February 2011, after bloody clashes, protesters seized Pearl Square in the capital Manama and stayed there for weeks.

Bahrain's monarchy could have learned some valuable lessons from Morocco where the 47-year-old ruler, Mohammed VI called for a separation of powers, including an independent judiciary, a more even distribution of governance across the country's provinces and a series of amendments that would enshrine individual liberties, human rights and gender equality.

Instead it chose the path of repression and when it could not subdue the mass movement for change it called in the Saudi army to help quell the protests. Human rights groups reported that in a country of 527,000 citizens 34 people were killed, more than 1,400 arrested and as many as 3,600 were fired from their jobs. Four people died in custody after torture in what Human Rights Watch called "a systematic and comprehensive crackdown to punish and intimidate government critics and to end dissent root and branch".

This book charts Bahrain's violations of human rights since the island has been ruled by the Al-Khalifa family focusing on the suppression of the mass movement for change since February 2011 and the Saudi occupation which began on March 15th after the Al-Khalifa's called on the Saudis for assistance in quelling the protests.

Bahrain is an archipelago state situated between the Qatar peninsula and the Saudi Arabian mainland. It is connected to Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province by a causeway opened in 1986. Bahrain was the first Gulf emirate to export oil which was discovered in 1932 and led to the rapid modernisation of the country.

The population of around 1,039,000 is made up of 527,000 Bahraini nationals with the remainder foreign workers from other Arab countries and South Asia. Islam is the religion of most of the citizens.

The island's economy is heavily dependent on petroleum export revenues which are declining. A diversification programme has focused on development of the financial sector and Bahrain is now a main banking hub in the Middle East and a centre for Islamic finance.

Unemployment is 15 percent and disproportionately affects the Shia community. In its

report *Broken Promises: Human Rights, constitutionalism and socio-economic exclusion in Bahrain*, the Islamic Human Rights Commission notes that : "In terms of the issue of discrimination against the Shia majority, there exists substantial evidence to denote the operation of sectarian trends in the policy process, both implicitly and explicitly, as carried out by governmental departments, institutions and other organisations, including many of Bahrain's private companies. Most prominently evidenced by the Al-Bandar report in 2006, charges of discrimination include, but are not limited to, claims of a vast conspiracy to rig parliamentary elections in 2006, manipulation of the country's sectarian balance through demographic engineering [granting Bahraini citizenship to Arabs who will support the Sunni rulers] and ensuring Sunni domination over the country's majority Shia. Additional evidence of systematic discrimination includes the fact that the Shia community is almost wholly barred from top posts in the government, and security and military forces, whilst also suffering disproportionate levels of poverty in comparison to their Sunni counterparts. Rather than based on purely a religious or ideological motive, it would be more precise to identify discrimination against Shias as employed as a political tool to nullify the political voice of the majority of Bahraini's and thus disregard the calls for democratic reform through popular disenfranchisement".

Bahrain was ruled by different powers including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians and Arabs, who introduced Islam to the country. It was part of the Persian Empire from the 6th to the 3rd century BC. The Qarmatians, a sect of Shia Islam, conquered in AD 899. The Abbasids defeated them in 976. The Portuguese invaded Bahrain in 1521 and were ousted by the Iranians who ruled for 200 years before losing the island to Sheikh Ahmad Al-Khalifa who invaded in 1782.

The Al Khalifas signed a treaty with Britain and Bahrain became a British Protected State in 1820. Between 1926 to 1957, Bahrain was under the de facto rule of Charles Belgrave, the British advisor to the emir. He was sent there due to concern that Iran was again trying to claim the island.

Bahrain became an independent state on 15 August 1971. The constitution provided for a National Assembly composed of 14 members of the cabinet and 30 members elected by popular vote. Article 42 stated that : "No law may be promulgated unless it has been passed by the National Assembly and ratified by the Emir". Yet towards the later part of 1974 parliamentarians were stunned to read in the Official Gazette a law on state security measures decreed by the emir without passing through the national assembly.

When Parliament demanded an abrogation of the law the emir issued a decree suspending parliament on, 26 August 1975. The period 1975 – 1990 was characterised by a struggle for human rights and the restoration of a democratic state legislature. Mass arrests became commonplace as prominent activists were incarcerated and tortured, sometimes to death.

On 14 and 15 February 2001, the National Action Charter was overwhelmingly approved by Bahrainis, with 98.4% in favour. But the king betrayed his people when he promulgated the 2002 constitution in which both the elected and the royally-appointed chambers of parliament were given equal legislative powers, going back on his public promise of 2001.



In 1992, a group of 300 intellectuals representing all trends and sections of Bahraini society submitted a petition to the Emir calling on him to restore the parliament and constitution. He rejected their plea and instead appointed a powerless consultative council known as the Majlis Al Shura.

Calls for a genuine democracy have not ceased. A further petition was presented to Sheikh Isa in October 1994 with 25,000 signatories, both Sunnis and Shias. There was no response from the government other than a refusal to meet with representatives and further cycles of violent suppression of demonstrators and continued violations of political and human rights continued. By 1996 the state security court was expanded to cope with increased numbers charged under the state security law.

Bahrain was declared a monarchy on 14 February 2002 and the emir became a king. Municipal elections were announced for May 2002 and parliamentary elections for October 2002. An independent financial watchdog to investigate embezzlement and violations of state expenditure was also set up.

King Hamad greatly alienated the opposition before the elections with the announcement of 56 Royal Decrees, the last of which was 56/2002. It granted amnesty to members of the security and intelligence services for acts undertaken prior to the general amnesty decree of February 2001.

Turnout for the 2002 parliamentary elections--the first in almost three decades--was 53% in the first round and 43% in the second round, despite the fact that the four-largest Shi'a political societies organized a boycott to protest constitutional amendments enacted by the King that gave the appointed upper chamber of parliament voting rights equal to the elected lower chamber.

The issue of constitutional reform dominated Bahraini politics. Between 2002 and 2006, the four boycotting societies continued their demand for discussions on constitutional reforms.

Elections were held on 25 November 2006 for the 40-seat lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, as well as municipal elections. A dark shadow was cast over the voting by the Bandar Report which described an extensive conspiracy to rig the elections: "Manipulating Bahrain's sectarian demography and instituting complete Sunni control over the country's majority Shia population".

The Islamic Human Rights Commission, concluded that: "As of 2010 Bahrain has not successfully completed its transition from an absolute monarchy in which unqualified power lies with the unelected head of state to a constitutional monarchy that assigns decision-making authority to an elected legislature and representative government. Socio-economic and political exclusion of the wider population is prevalent.

In an open letter to the king, the independent Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) called for wide-ranging reforms. BCHR's Nabeel Rajab appealed to the king "to avoid the fatal mistake committed by similar regimes in Tunisia and Egypt" and not to crush planned protests as this could push the country into chaos or bloodshed.

Sadly his advise was not needed. When protesters occupied Pearl Roundabout in February

2011 they were set up by the security forces and their tents were burned. They returned only to once again be forcibly removed with the assistance of the Saudi army.

But the momentum for change is unstoppable. As this book goes to press no one is winning in the almost daily clashes between the protesters and the security forces aided by the Saudis.

Writing in the *New York Times* on 15th September, Anthony Shadid said : "Most dangerous is the exacerbation of sectarian hatred in a country that has never really reconciled the narratives of the Khalifa family's long-ago conquest. No one claims that Sunnis and Shias ever lived in harmony here. But the country stands as a singular example of the way venerable distinctions of ethnicity, sect and history can be manipulated in the Arab world often cynically, in the pursuit of power".

Ali Salman, the General Secretary of Al Wefaq, Bahrain's largest opposition group described the situation as a tinderbox. "If we can't succeed in bringing democracy to this country, then our country is headed toward violence. Is it in a year or two years? I don't know. But that's the reality".

# CHAPTER ONE

## Historical sketch

The name Bahrain means 'two seas'. It is an archipelago of 33 islands. The island of Bahrain is the largest and comprises 90 percent of the total area. Burial mounds dating back to the Sumerian period of the 3rd millennium BC have been discovered in the north of the island.

Present day Bahrain is believed to have been the site of Dilmun an ancient holy land on the trade route between the Indus Valley and Mesopotamia and one of the greatest entre ports of trade in ancient times where copper ingots and bitumen were exchanged for cotton textiles and domestic fowl.

The ancient Sumerians described it as an island paradise where the wise and brave enjoyed eternal life. Death and disease were unknown here and men and animals lived in peace together.

In the Epic of Gilgamesh it is described as 'paradise' and may have been the location of the Garden of Eden but Qurnah in Iraq also claims this honour. In the Sumerian creation myth it is the land where the hero of the flood Utnapishtim was taken to enjoy eternal life. It was the home of the Sumerian king who gave rise to the myth of Noah, a story retold in the Qu'ran and the Bible.

According to Bahrain's National Museum, Dilmun's golden age lasted from 2200 - 1600 BC. It declined with the sudden collapse of the Indus Valley civilisation when it lost its role as a trading centre. The legacy of Dilmun is found on cylinder seals which portray a complex society influenced by belief in immortality and resurrection.

By 600 BC Bahrain was absorbed into the New Babylonian Empire. It prospered once again and was visited by two of Alexander the Great's

ships when new trade routes were opened. The influence of the Greeks was so strong that it was renamed Tylos.

From the 3rd century BC until the arrival of Islam in the 7th century AD Bahrain was ruled by two Iranian dynasties, the Parthians and the Sassanids. In order to control the Persian Gulf trade routes the Parthians set up garrisons along the southern coast of the Persian Gulf. The Parthian governor of Bahrain Sanatruq was defeated by Ardashir the first ruler of the Sassanid dynasty. He appointed his son Shapur I as governor. A new city Batan Ardashir was constructed.

Bahrain was part of the Persian Empire from the 6th to the 3rd century BC. The Bahrainis embraced Islam in 629. During the time of Umar I the famous companion of the Prophet, Abu Hurayrah, was the governor. Umar I also appointed Uthman bin Abi Al Aas as governor of the area. One of the first mosques Al Khamis Mosque was built in 692.

The Qarmatians, a Shia sect, conquered the island in AD 899. Qarmatian ideology was similar to communist theories and was dominated by ideals of reason, tolerance and equality. Property inside the community was distributed evenly among the initiates.

The Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, the ruler of the Islamic empire, sent an army of 2000 men against the Qarmatians but was defeated on his first attempt to gain control of the island. Bahrain came under Abbasid rule in 976AD.

Three dynasties, the Uyunid, Usfurid, and Jabrid were the next rulers during the Middle Ages a time of chronic instability with local disputes which allowed Persian-based Arab kingdoms to involve themselves in Bahrain's affairs.

The Portuguese started expanding into the Indian Ocean in the early 16th century. The first Portuguese explorer to visit Bahrain was Duarte Barbosa. An Arab navigator Ahmad Bin Majid told the Portuguese that: "In Bahrain there are 360 villages and sweet water can be found in a number of places. A most wonderful al-Qasasir, where a man can dive into the salt sea with a skin and can fill it with fresh water while he is submerged in the salt water. Around Bahrain



are pearl fisheries and a number of islands all of which have pearl fisheries and connected with this trade are 1,000 ships.”

The Portuguese decided that the wealth created by the pearl industry had to be theirs and invaded in 1521. Their rule was one of force and terror which began with the beheading of the defeated King Muqrin. The people revolted after three of the island’s richest traders were executed. The Iranians were quick to fill the power vacuum and Bahrain was subsumed within the Safavid Empire from 1602 - 1717.

Unlike Bahrain’s other conquerors the Safavids ruled from a distance focusing on ideology rather than force to secure the islands with their centrality to trade routes and pearl wealth. Bahrain’s seminaries produced famous scholars such as Sheikh Yusuf Al Bahraini.

Bahrain’s clerics adhered to the more conservative Akhbari Shiasm while the Safavids encouraged the more state-centric Usulism. There was some conflict between the clerics and the land owners but it was contained as the senior ulema were usually the sons of the land owning class.

Oman invaded Bahrain in 1717 as the Safavid state was weakened by an Afghan invasion and nearly collapsed. When the Persians and their Bedouin allies attempted to take back Bahrain much of the country was burned to the ground. The Omanis eventually sold the island back to the Persians but the Safavid empire was weak and the Huwala tribes, the descendants of Sunni Arabs who moved from the Arabian Peninsula to Iran, seized control.

Nadir Shah, the new Shah of Persia was able to recapture Bahrain in 1736 with the assistance of the British and Dutch. In 1753 the island was occupied again by the Arabs of Abu Shahr who ruled it in the name of Persia.

The years of war and instability took their toll: 360 villages were reduced to 60 and the influence of Iran was undermined by the power struggle between the Akhbari and Usuli strands of Shiasm with the Akhbaris emerging victorious in Bahrain.

In 1783 the Al Khalifa clan captured Bahrain. They were Sunnis

belonging to the Anizah tribe which migrated from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait in the early 18th century. They have ruled the island ever since alienating the Shia majority and suppressing democracy with their autocratic rule which has turned the island into a family fiefdom.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The 20th Century: Early experiments with democracy, suspension of parliament, popular uprising

**B**ahrain a tribal monarchy, became a British Protected State in 1820. Under this treaty it was effectively controlled by the British until 1971. The treaty was similar to those entered into by the British Government with the other Persian Gulf principalities. It specified that the ruler could not dispose of any of his territory except to the United Kingdom and could not enter into relationships with any foreign government without British consent. In return the British promised to protect Bahrain from all aggression by sea and to lend support in case of land attack. More importantly, the British promised to support the rule of the Al Khalifas in Bahrain, securing their unstable position as rulers of the country.

Following a series of territorial disputes Iran made renewed claims to Bahrain in 1928. This disagreement remained unresolved until May 1970 when Iran accepted the findings of a report commissioned by the UN, which showed the inhabitants of Bahrain overwhelmingly favoured independence rather than union with Iran.

The British protection and the peace it ensured helped Bahrain to prosper and move from an economy in which pearling was the main earner to a leading trading centre in the Persian Gulf which surpassed Basra, Kuwait and Muscat. Politically the island moved from a tribal trading centre towards a modern state with the help of Persian, Huwala and Indian merchant families who made it the nexus of a vast web of trade routes across the Persian Gulf, Persia and the Indian sub-continent.

In 1862 in his *Narrative of a Year's Journey through Central and*

*Eastern Arabia* W.G. Palgrave described Manama as mixed, "with the indigenous population are numerous strangers and settlers some of whom have been established here for many generations back, attracted from other lands by the profits of either commerce or the pearl fishery, and still retaining more or less the physiognomy and garb of their native countries. Thus the gay- coloured dress of the southern Persian, the saffron-stained vest of Oman, the white robe of Nejed, and the striped gown of Baghdad, are often to be seen mingling with the light garments of Bahreyn, its blue and red turban, its white silk-fringed cloth worn Banian fashion round the waist, and its frock-like overall; while a small but unmistakable colony of Indians, merchants by profession, and mainly from Guzerat, Cutch, and their vicinity, keep up here all their peculiarities of costume and manner, and live among the motley crowd, 'among them, but not of them.'"

The British advisor to Sheikh Hamad ibn Isa Al-Khalifa (1872-1942) Charles Belgrave, who was in fact the de facto ruler of the country instigated major social reforms between 1926 - 1957: the first modern school was established in 1919 and the first Persian Gulf's girls school opened in 1928. The Dutch Reform Church established the American Mission Hospital, slavery was abolished and the pearl diving industry developed at a rapid pace.

When conservative elements in Bahrain opposed these reforms the British removed Emir Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa and replaced him with his son in 1923. Some Sunni tribes such as the al Dosari left Bahrain to mainland Arabia, while clerical opponents of social reforms were exiled to Saudi and Iran. The heads of some merchant and notable families were likewise exiled. Britain's interest in pushing Bahrain's development was motivated by concerns about Saudi-Wahabbi and Iranian ambitions.

In 1932 oil was discovered in Bahrain and the country was the first location in the Persian Gulf to have oil wells sunk. The industry required workers and these came from peasants and freed slaves. The pearl industry, the main source of the country's income collapsed because of the competition of cultured pearls from Japan. The workers



made up the indigenous working class who adopted leftist politics.

In 1938, a group of leading personalities representing the main trends and sections of society in Bahrain, led a movement calling for the establishment of parliament, reforming of the newly established police force and other related demands. The leaders of that movement, among them Sa'ad Al-Shalman, were forcibly deported to India (then under the British Crown).

During WW11 Bahrain was a key base for the allies used to secure oil supplies for them. On 20 October 1940 the Italians launched air raids on the oil refineries. The Bahrainis provided two divisions which joined the war in North Africa, just before the Second Battle of El Alamein in 1942.

A more powerful and broadly-based pro-democracy movement appeared between 1954 and 1956 when a network of 120 dignitaries elected eight representatives to form the "High Executive Committee" representing all sections of society. The movement demanded an elected parliament, a unified written law, formation of an appeal court and the freedom to form trade unions. Both the ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and his British Adviser Sir Charles Belgrave refused to respond to the call for political reforms.

In December 1956, a state of emergency was declared and the British army was deployed, leading to the shooting and killing of several people by security forces during street clashes. Later, three senior leaders of the movement, Abdul Rahman Al-Bakir, Abdul Aziz Al-Shamlan (son of Sa'ad Al-Shamlan who was deported to India in 1938) and Abd Ali Al-Ulaiwat were all forcibly exiled to St Helena in the Atlantic Ocean.

A battle was fought in the British House of Commons as to the legality of British involvement in that forcible deportation. The three were then released in 1961 and given compensation by the British government, while other leaders remained in detention for the rest of the sixties. A British officer was appointed to establish and oversee the intelligence department in 1957.

In 1965 an uprising erupted calling for freedom of speech, the right

to form trade unions and other demands for social justice.

Again the British army was deployed to suppress the movement and several people were shot dead by police during mass demonstrations. Those killed included Abdalnabi Mohammed Sarhan, Abdulla Saeed Sarhan, Abdulla Hassan Bu-Naffor, Abdullah Saeed Al- Ghanem and Faisal Abbas Al-Qassab.

No independent inquiry ever took place. However in 1966 the special branch was restructured and another Briton, Ian Henderson, was called in to head the security apparatus. After his retirement he remained in Bahrain for fear of prosecution under universal jurisdiction for human rights violations.

During the reign of Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, who became ruler of Bahrain in 1942, social services and public works were expanded as a result of the flow of oil revenues. Sheikh Salman died in November 1961 and was succeeded by his eldest son Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa. Extensive administrative and political changes came into effect in January 1970, when a supreme executive authority, the 12-member Council of State was established, representing the first formal derogation of the ruler's powers. Sheikh Khalifa bin Sulman Al-Khalifa, the ruler's eldest brother, was appointed President of the Council.

Meanwhile, in January 1968 the United Kingdom announced its intention to withdraw British military forces from the area by 1971.

This opened up the question of Bahrain's sovereignty as the Shah of Iran resurrected his claims to the islands. The Al Khalifa family felt there was a need for public consensus and for the first time started dealing with the opposition and the Shia population in a different way. Those forced into exile were allowed to return, opponents were promised public freedoms and the Shia community was re-assured that it would not be subjected to discrimination. This was made clear during a visit in 1970 by the ruler Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa to Najaf (Iraq's holy city) where he met the supreme leader of the Shias, Ayatollah Mohsin Al-Hakim.

In March 1968 Bahrain joined the nearby territories of Qatar and

the Trucial States (now the United Arab Emirates), which were also under British protection, in the Federation of the Arab Emirates. It was intended that the federation should become fully independent but the interests of Bahrain and Qatar proved to be incompatible with those of the smaller sheikhdoms and both seceded from the federation.

Bahrain became an independent state on 15 August 1971, when a new treaty of friendship was signed with the United Kingdom. Sheikh Isa took the title of Emir, while the Council of State became the cabinet with Sheikh Khalifa as prime minister. A constituent assembly, convened in December 1972, produced a new constitution providing for a national assembly which would contain 14 cabinet ministers and 30 elected members. On 6 December the constitution came into force and on the following day elections were held for a new assembly.

The 108-article constitution which was ratified in June 1973 stated that all citizens shall be equal before the law and guaranteed freedom of speech, of the press, of conscience and religious beliefs. Other provisions included the outlawing of the compulsory repatriation of political refugees. The constitution also stated that the country's financial comptroller should be responsible to the legislature and not to the government, and allowed for national trade unions 'for legally justified causes and on peaceful lines'.

Compulsory free primary education and free medical care are also laid down in the constitution, which came into force on 6 December 1973. It provided for a National Assembly composed of 14 members of the cabinet and 30 members elected by popular vote.

Thirty members were elected for a four-year term by the male electorate. Since political parties were not allowed, all 114 candidates stood as independents. The national assembly was divided almost equally between conservative, moderate and more radical members.

The constitution stated in Article 42 that: "No law may be promulgated unless it has been passed by the National Assembly and ratified by the Emir." Yet towards the later part of 1974 parliamentarians were stunned to read in the Official Gazette a law decreed by the Emir without passing through the national assembly.

The law issued on 22 October 1974 was called Decree Law on State Security Measures. It empowered the minister of the interior to order the detention of political suspects for three years without charge or trial. The law denied detainees the right of appeal by virtue of the fact that the Supreme Court of Appeal was the first and last court that passed sentences on political cases, if ever an individual was brought to court. Bahrainis are still being detained under these measures, known as the State Security Law.

All members of parliament objected to the content of the law and the manner in which it was passed. On 14 June 1975, seven MPs representing all trends in parliament including the prominent leader Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri (adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International) issued a statement published by the local press clarifying parliament's view.

The statement made it clear that parliament demanded abrogation of a law which it saw as unjust. On 25 August the prime minister withdrew his cabinet from parliament in protest at the MPs refusal to accept the State Security Law. The next day, 26 August 1975, the Emir issued a decree suspending parliament and several constitutional articles. The unconstitutional State Security Law has been implemented since its first day of issue.

Bahrain was profoundly affected by the 1979 Iranian Revolution whose liberal traditions were challenged by the zeitgeist of religious fundamentalism. Even before the revolution a conservative trend was evident and women donned the traditional abaya in preference to Western dress. The Islamists dominated the opposition as the left failed to offer an effective political or philosophical challenge.

An attempted coup in 1981 by an Iranian front organisation, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, which wanted to install a clerical leadership was defeated after a tip off from a friendly intelligence source. Bahrain joined the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) which was formed in 1981 by Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The stability of the region was affected by the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 - 1988, Saddam Hussein's

invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent 1991 war.

In 1992, a group of 300 intellectuals representing all trends and sections of Bahraini society submitted a petition to the Emir calling on him to restore the parliament and constitution. He rejected their plea and instead appointed a powerless consultative council known as the Majlis Al Shura. The majlis held its third session from October 1994 to May 1995. The members of the majlis were evenly divided between Sunnis and Shias and were appointed by the Emir. There were no members of the Ali Khalifa family in the majlis and members of the opposition were conspicuously absent. The chairman was a Shia who was formerly Minister of Transport. The majlis debated marginal issues but did not have the power to introduce legislation or to request to review legislation that the cabinet had not referred to it. When asked to review proposed legislation the majlis could recommend changes but the recommendations were not binding.

In October 1994, another petition, organised by the Committee for the Popular Petition calling for the restoration of parliament was signed by 25,000 people out of a total native population of around 400,000. The first signatories of the petition were 14 personalities representing all trends in Bahraini society. They acknowledged that the constitution allows for the Emir to dissolve the national assembly as was done in August 1975 by a Emiri decree. However they pointed to article 65 of the constitution which states:

*"If the assembly was dissolved elections for a new assembly must be held within a period not exceeding two months after the date of dissolution. If elections were not held during this period, the dissolved assembly would restore its complete constitutional powers and shall meet immediately as if the dissolution has not taken place and shall continue its functions until a new assembly is elected."*

The ruling family felt cornered by an informal referendum. The security forces were deployed in a provocative way to invite a "controlled" unrest, thus justifying a clampdown. But they grossly miscalculated the strength of frustration amongst the targeted section of society.

The government sought to create an image of a Shia-led violent movement intent on overthrowing the regime. By doing so, it hoped that the Western powers, especially the United States and UK, would side with it against a perceived fundamentalist threat.

On 12 April 1994 four Bahraini opposition parties: the Popular Front in Bahrain, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, The National Liberation Front -Bahrain and the Bahrain Freedom Movement, issued a joint statement demanding:

1. Abrogating the royal decrees which resulted in the suspension of the constitution and the dissolution of the elected national assembly in August 1975;
2. Abolishing the State Security Law and suspending all unconstitutional provisions which suppressed individual and civil rights;
3. Releasing all political prisoners and allowing those in exile to return freely and without preconditions.

In September the crack elite forces arrested more than forty young men for taking part in a peaceful demonstration demanding a review of the employment policy in the country which had the highest percentage of unemployed in the Gulf. With a workforce of more than 242,600 people the Bahrainis represented less than 40 percent of the total manpower. It was estimated that up to 30,000 Bahraini nationals were without jobs in 1990, representing more than 30 percent of the national work-force. The opposition stressed that when the unemployed marched in front of the Ministry of Labour, they had no revolutionary agenda, they were merely demanding a fair share of the national jobs. If the government was prepared to give 22 percent of the jobs reserved for expats to Bahrainis there would be no unemployment problem.

The beginning of the intifadah (uprising) was prompted by the detention of a pro-democracy campaigner Sheikh Ali Salman following the campaigning for a petition in October 1994 which called for the restoration of democracy.

Following the sheikh's arrest many inhabitants of Shia villages

demonstrated openly for his release. The police raided his home on 5 December 1994 in Bilad-al-Qadeen, five kilometres southwest of Manama and arrested him. That morning crowds gathered at the mosques where Sheikh Salman had been leading prayers. As a result, excessive use of force by the police and widespread arrests were employed to suppress the popular uprising. Bahraini security forces blocked the main roads while rubber bullets and tear gas were sprayed from helicopters. Reserve military forces were called in and columns of Special Saudi National Guards crossed the causeway from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. They would be used again to suppress the popular uprising during the Arab spring of 2011.

By February 1996 over 5,000 people were detained under the State Security Law of 1974 and held without charge or trial. Prisoners were held in concentration camps purposefully constructed with barbed wire inside the Qala'a fort in Manama, tortured and forced to sign false confessions.

In its issue of January 1995, *Voice of Bahrain*, said that the bullets fired on demonstrators meant the end of the undeclared truce between the government and the people who have been at virtual war for many years. "It is a war between the pro-democracy constitutionalists and the totalitarian despotic clique that has ruled the country with an iron fist policy."

On 26 January 1995, a day before a scheduled meeting between the Bahraini and British foreign ministers, the Bahraini opposition held a press conference in the House of Commons. Sheikh Ali Salman outlined the opposition's demands and strategies.

Eighteen British MPs submitted motions 457 and 458. Motion 457 stated "that this House deplores the emergency visit to London by the Foreign Minister of the Bahraini royal dictatorship, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khalifa who has demanded a meeting with the Foreign Secretary of Her Majesty's Government to demand the deportation of Bahraini opposition leaders who were illegally expelled by the dictatorships on 15 January following weeks of rioting in Bahrain, in which demonstrators have been shot dead by the British mercenary

led security apparatus SIS which, together with Saudi Arabian forces, have been employed by the dictatorship to crush demands for human rights and democracy and calls upon HMG to stand up to the dictators of Bahrain and inform them that Britain will determine its own decisions on the political asylum of those fleeing persecution in their own countries in accordance with the United Kingdom's international obligations and its tradition of a safe haven for victims of dictatorships." Motion 458 concentrated on condemning Ian Henderson a British subject who presided over the security apparatus.

In May 1995 two petitions put an end to the government's attempts to confine the pro- democracy movement to Shias who were singled out for repressions since the start of the protests. The first petition demanding the restoration of the constitution was signed by around 250 people. The second was signed by 300 prominent women from the liberal tendency in the country including Dr Muneera Fakhroo a university professor, Fawziyya Al-Sanadi a poet and Dr Sabika Al-Najjar. The women's petition urged the Emir to restore the constitution, release political prisoners, end the arbitrary actions of the security forces and grant the women of Bahrain the right to take part in the political process in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

Sheikh Abdul Al-Jamri and six other pro-democracy leaders started a hunger strike on 23 October in protest against human rights violations. They were supported by a mass walkout of students throughout the country who wore black shirts as a sign of solidarity.

The hunger strikers demanded:

1. The release of all political detainees and banning of political trials
2. Allowing exiled Bahraini nationals to return home
3. Official recognition of the existence of a dialogue between the government and the opposition
4. Restoration of parliament.

On November 1 more than 80,000 people gathered in front of Sheikh Al-Jamri's house to listen to the declaration of the hunger strike. Until the demonstrations of the Arab spring in 2011 this was



the biggest gathering in the history of Bahrain.

In a letter to the Bahraini government on 23rd January 1996, Amnesty International sought assurances that all those detained were treated humanely and allowed access to families, lawyers and medical attention if required. The organisation also requested information about political detainees including charges against those accused of recognised criminal offences, with assurances that they would be given fair and prompt trials in accordance with international standards.

Liberty for the Muslim World pointed out that it would do the Bahraini government no good to claim that foreign regimes or external elements were behind the disturbances. "The causes of the crisis are domestic and the solution will have to be domestic. Had there been a genuine transition to democracy in Bahrain none of these disturbances would have occurred. Had there been justice and freedom of speech and had human rights been sanctified and protected no citizen would have resorted to violence to draw the world's attention to the plight of the country's people.

Since the dissolution of parliament in 1975 and the enforcement of the State Security Law, international human rights organisations and the Bahraini opposition have documented a scandalous catalogue of injustices characterised by:

- Holding detainees incommunicado without charge or trial
- Torture and ill-treatment of detainees
- Deaths in custody
- Extrajudicial executions
- Forced exile and denial of entry to Bahrain for those attempting to return
- Denial of a trial or holding of unfair trials
- Denying suspects the right of access to relatives and defence lawyers
- Failure to set up investigations into any allegations of torture or into incidents involving killing of demonstrators
- Failure to provide the names of those arrested and their places of arrest

- Prohibition on transmitting news abroad without authorisation from the Ministry of Information
- Denial of treatment to wounded protesters
- Use of tear gas in confined spaces
- Discrimination on the basis of religious, sectarian, ethnic origin and tribal affiliations.

Bahrain is probably the only country in the world which strips its own citizens of their nationality and sends them into forced exile for anti-regime activities.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Attempts at reconciliation, the National Action Charter and Broken Promises

The violence from the intifada of 1994 - 2000 generally subsided when King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa carried out political reforms after he ascended to the throne in 1999. On 14 and 15 February 2001, the National Action Charter was overwhelmingly approved by Bahrainis, with 98.4% in favour. But the king betrayed his people when he promulgated the 2002 constitution in which both the elected and the royally-appointed chambers of parliament were given equal legislative powers, going back on his public promise of 2001.

Following the death of Shaikh Isa bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Bahrain's ruler since 1961, his son, Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (subsequently King Hamad) succeeded the throne in March 1999. He embarked on a programme of democratic reform, described by Amnesty International as representing a "historic period for human rights." The USA was especially vocal about his tolerance of a wider degree of freedom of expression.

The invitation to Bahrain's former exiles to return home revitalised the Kingdom's politics. Exiled leaders included a number of London based Islamists including Dr Majid Al Alawi who became Minister of Labour, Dr Mansur Al Jamri who became editor of the new opposition daily, *Al Wasat*, and Sheikh Ali Salman who became head of the newly established Shia Islamist Al Wefaq, Bahrain's largest political group. Former leftist dissidents formed the National Democratic Action, the Communist Democratic Bloc, and the Bahrain Human Rights Society. Leftists were also involved in the new trade union movement, although they faced competition from Islamists for control of several unions.

The notorious State Security law was abolished along with the State Security Court, political prisoners were pardoned, women were given the vote and there was a promise to return to constitutional rule. This was implemented through the National Action Charter.

Bahrain was declared a monarchy on 14 February 2002 and the emir became a king. Municipal elections were announced for May 2002 and parliamentary elections for October 2002. An independent financial watchdog to investigate embezzlement and violations of state expenditure was also set up.

King Hamad greatly alienated the opposition before the elections with the announcement of 56 Royal Decrees, the last of which was 56/2002. The decree granted amnesty to members of the security and intelligence services for acts undertaken prior to the general amnesty decree of February 2001. International human rights organisations and those within Bahrain voiced their disquiet at what was seen as an attempt to provide impunity to members of the security and intelligence services in spite of their previous actions, including torture.

Turnout for the May 2002 municipal elections was 51%, with female voters making up 52 % percent of voters. Turnout for the 2002 parliamentary elections—the first in almost three decades--was 53% in the first round and 43% in the second round, despite the fact that the four-largest Shi'a political societies organized a boycott to protest constitutional amendments enacted by the King that gave the appointed upper chamber of parliament voting rights equal to the elected lower chamber. Sunni Islamists won 19 of the 40 seats. Despite strong participation by female voters, none of the female candidates standing in these elections were returned. The new parliament held its first joint sitting in December 2002.

Following some political liberalization Bahrain negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2004. The country participated in military action against the Taliban in 2001 with its ships patrolling the Arabian Sea but it opposed the invasion of Iraq. Relations improved with neighbouring Qatar after the border dispute

over the Hawar Islands was resolved by the International Court of Justice in The Hague in 2001. The two announced the Qatar-Bahrain Friendship Bridge to link the countries across the Persian Gulf, which will be the longest fixed link bridge in the world but construction of this ambitious project has been delayed.

The issue of constitutional reform dominated Bahraini politics. Between 2002 and 2006, the four boycotting societies continued their demand for discussions on constitutional reforms. These societies were: Al Wefaq, a Shia Islamist group, thought to be the most popular political society in the country, National Democratic Action, the largest leftist political society, Islamic Action Society, a marginal Shia Islamist society, and the Nationalist Democratic Rally Society, a marginal Arab Nationalist society.

By 2006 these opposition parties indicated that they would participate in parliamentary elections, but retained their demand for constitutional reform at the top of their agenda.

To meet the challenge posed by Al Wefaq the two main Sunni Islamic Parties, the Salafist Asalah and the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated Al-Menbar Islamic Society formed a coalition to maximise their votes.

Elections were held on 25 November 2006 for the 40-seat lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies, as well as municipal elections. There was a 72% turnout in the first round of polling. As expected by most observers, Shi'a and Sunni Islamists dominated the poll, winning a clean sweep in the first round of voting, while liberal and ex-communist MPs lost all their seats. Four candidates of the left-wing National Democratic Action (also known as Wa'ad) made it. Al-Wifaq, captured 17 out of 40 seats.

A dark shadow was cast over the 2006 elections by the Bandar Report which described an extensive conspiracy to rig the elections: "Manipulating Bahrain's sectarian demography and instituting complete Sunni control over the country's majority Shia population." The author of the report, Dr Salah Al-Bandar a Sudanese-born British citizen was deported to Britain and subsequently convicted in absentia

by Bahraini courts for his exposure of the scandal.

Parliamentary elections were held again in October 2010. They were boycotted by the Haq Movement, the Wafa Party, the Bahrain Freedom Movement, Khalas Movement and the Islamic Action Society. Riots followed the arrest of opposition spokespeople who criticised human rights violations. The head of Al Wefaq said: "The way the ongoing security campaign has been handled and the rights violations that accompanied it have in one week destroyed 10 years of progress in this country." Human rights organisations warned of "a drift to full-blown authoritarianism." The head of the Al Wefaq party, Ali Salman, emphasised that government should be shared with the people. "It is unacceptable that power be monopolised by a single family, even one to which we owe respect and consideration. We look forward to the day when any child of the people, be they Sunni or Shia, can become prime minister."

One hundred and twenty seven candidates contested the elections during which municipal councils were also chosen. Al Wefaq won 18 out of 40 seats - one more than during the previous elections.

As pointed out by parliamentary candidates, the significant progress made by the country to improve its human rights situation has been reversed. By the end of the 1990s, Bahrain appeared to have cast off a well-deserved reputation as a country that routinely tortured detainees. The government had taken significant steps to curtail the use of torture and other ill-treatment by its security officials, and reports of such practices became a rarity.

But in its latest report on Bahrain *Torture Redux: The Revival of physical coercion during interrogation in Bahrain*, issued in February 2010, Human Rights Watch concluded that since the end of 2007, officials again have used torture and ill-treatment, particularly during the interrogation of security suspects. This conclusion was based on interviews with former detainees and others, as well as its review of government documents.

The reversion to past practices came as political tensions rose in Bahrain. Street demonstrations involving young men from the

country's majority Shia Muslim community protesting against discrimination by the Sunni-dominated government deteriorated with increasing regularity into confrontations, sometimes violent, with security forces. Arrests often followed. Security officials utilized a specific repertoire of techniques against many of those arrested designed to inflict pain and elicit confessions.

### **Types of Torture and Inhumane treatment used in Bahrain**

- a. Before interrogation (At home and on the way to the detention cell): Torture starts at home, when the security forces raid at dawn, ransack the houses they break into and terrorize the residents before grappling the accused from his bed, without showing any warrant. The accused is hand-cuffed and blindfolded. Beatings commence on the way to the detention centre. The accused's head is forced down between his legs.
- b. In the interrogation offices and detention centres:
  1. Group interrogation (More than one interrogator and torturer) with the detainee who is completely naked.
  2. The detainee is left naked in front of air conditioning and left to sleep on solid ground without any cover.
  3. Sexual molestation, tying the genitals and pulling them causing severe pain.
  4. Sexual assault, sodomy and threats of rape.
  5. Threats of rape to female relatives of the detainee (mother, sister and wife).
  6. Beatings on different parts of the body.
  7. Forcing detainees to stand for prolonged periods.
  8. Suspension from hands and swinging to increase pressure on the hands. While in that position detainees are beaten.
  9. Sprinkling the detainee's face with insecticides and gases burning the face and eyes.
  10. Falaka (falaqa): Foot whipping, is a form of corporal

punishment whereby the soles of the feet are beaten with an object such as a cane or a whip. A hard piece of wood is inserted between the already tied legs and the hands enabling shackling of the detainee between two supports, such that his head suspends downwards with his bare feet coming up facing the torturer for ease of whipping. This is favoured as a form of torture because, its extremely painful and leaves few physical marks.

11. Butterfly: introducing a hard stick between the arms and lifting the body of the detainee up, while his feet are tied, so that by resting on his fingertips, the load bearing is focused on the shoulders causing severe pain on the joints.
  12. Scorpio: While the two hands and legs are tied, the body is lifted causing severe pain to the back vertebrae.
  13. Deprivation of basic needs (bathing, washing, deprivation of toilet facilities, food and water).
  14. Insults and the use of abusive language.
  15. Attacks on religion and beliefs.
  16. Forcing the detainee to curse religious and national figures
  17. Electrocution in sensitive parts of the body including the genitals
- C. Torture outside prison:
1. Collective punishment of protesting areas and villages: ransacking and breaking into parked vehicles, and terrorizing residents
  2. Collective beatings and kicking of youth.
  3. Heavy use of chemical tear gases.
  4. Showering with rubber bullets.
  5. Use of live ammunition.

The arrest and torture of human rights activists is continuing. In August 2010 Hussain Ali Dawood, Hakim Ali Hussain and Ahmad



Ali Hussain were snatched from their homes in Dair Town. They were beaten mercilessly at first. Then pliers were used to pull out their hair. Hussain Ali Dawood had one of his teeth pulled out with the pliers. After this torture at the hands of the death squads, the three were dumped unconscious in Umm Al Hassam.

Twenty-three opposition and rights activists were arrested in late August 2010 and accused under Bahrain's counterterrorism law. The government released all 23 defendants on 23 February 2011 but re-arrested several of them after they continued to condemn human rights violations

One of the 23 who was arrested was Dr Abdul Jaili Al-Singace. He participated in a seminar dealing with the deterioration of human rights and public freedoms in Bahrain held in the House of Lords in the UK on 5th August 2010 Dr Abdul Jalil Al-Singace, the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee of the Haq Movement, which promotes human rights and democracy in Bahrain, was arrested at Manama Airport on the morning of 13th August, as he and his family returned to the country from London. In addition to addressing the seminar Al-Singace had meetings with the Islamic Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and other human rights groups.

One form of torture described by Dr. Abduljalil Alsingace to the Public Prosecutor, Nawaf Hamza, was that his hands were handcuffed and that he was blindfolded the entire time he was detained on the morning of the 13th of August. He was kept in solitary confinement, his prescription glasses were confiscated, and he was not allowed to shower for more than a week. His wheelchair and crutches were taken from him, and thus he was forced to go to and from the cell door pulling himself with his arms. Dr. Alsingace was diagnosed with polio when he was two years old, resulting in complete paralysis in one leg and partial paralysis in the other; he usually depends almost completely on the wheelchair for his movement. As part of his torture he was kept standing on his partially paralysed leg for two consecutive days.

Dr. Alsingace also told the public prosecutor that he was repeatedly

beaten on his fingers with a rigid object and slapped on both ears until he could hardly hear. His nipples and earlobes were pulled with tongs which caused severe pain.. He was beaten with a rigid object on his back during the interrogation period in order to force him to sign papers of unknown content; they would lift his blindfold just so that he could sign but not read the contents. They made him listen to the sound of the electricity machines to scare him, as well as threatening to rape him and his female family members. Whenever he would start to fall asleep, they would play sudden loud sounds or the sound of sharp tools to startle him (a new torture tactic used in the infamous Guantanamo prison). He was forced to listen to the screams of his fellow detainees caused by severe torture in adjunct rooms. Alsingace was freed in February 2011 but was soon re-arrested.

On 22 June 2011 he received a life sentence for his peaceful opposition activities. He was among twenty-one activists convicted of 'plotting to overthrow the government' after a violent crackdown on peaceful opposition protestors in the capital, Manama.

Bahraini human rights groups have the testimonies of hundreds of other torture victims on record. Bahrain's current ambassador to the UK, Khalifa bin Ali al Khalifa is a former torturer who was in charge of Bahrain's security system between 2005 - 2008.

In the executive summary to its report *Broken Promises: Human Rights, Constitutionalism & Socio-Economic Exclusion in Bahrain* published by the Islamic Human Rights Commission, Oman Ahmed concluded that: "As of 2010 Bahrain has not successfully completed its transition from an absolute monarchy in which unqualified power lies with the unelected head of state to a constitutional monarchy that assigns decision-making authority to an elected legislature and representative government. Socio-economic and political exclusion of the wider population is prevalent. The country's regional economic success belies the fact that a significant proportion of Bahrainis live in poverty and unemployment. Resentment is further exacerbated when accusations of profligacy and corruption are levelled at some senior government officials who are protected from legal scrutiny and

public accountability due to their close proximity to royal power in the country.”

In an open letter to the king, the independent Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) called for wide-ranging reforms to avoid a worse case scenario. The centre asked for the abolition of the security forces, the taking of legal action against officials for abuses and the release of 450 jailed activists. BCHR’s Nabeel Rajab called on the king “to avoid the fatal mistake committed by similar regimes in Tunisia and Egypt” and not to crush planned protests as this could push the country into chaos or bloodshed. Sadly his advise was not needed.

Tension was fuelled by the ongoing trial of 25 Dhia activists accused of plotting against the state. The detained alleged police torture and being forced to sign confessions. Their lawyers withdrew from the case after the judge refused to investigate the allegations of torture and appointed new lawyers whom the defendants rejected.

Before the mass protest on February 14th security units and protesters clashed in the Shia village of Karzakan, Western Bahrain. Several demonstrators were beaten. Bahrain was now part of the Arab spring of 2011.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Death in Pearl Square: Brutal suppression of the peaceful mass movement for change

“The youth of Bahrain are calling for a day of rage on February 14th, 2011. We don’t know what will happen, how many people will turn up”, said Maryam Alkhawaja head of the foreign relations office of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

She left London for Bahrain to document the anticipated abuses of human rights. “They will arrest the men before they arrest the woman”, she predicted. “So it is important for me to be there.”

No one anticipated the mass turnout, the success of the peaceful protests and the regime’s brutal response which culminated in the death of protestors and the regime calling on the Saudi army to bring the peaceful demonstrations to an end.

The youth of Bahrain were echoing the common grievances of the Arab world - unemployment, corruption and repressive government. Gulf activists urged conservative monarchies to heed calls for democracy and freedom of expression. “We hope that the ruling families in the Gulf realise the importance of democratic transformation to which our people aspire”, the Co-ordinator of the Gulf Civil Society Forum, Anwar Al-Rasheed said in a statement.

The Bahraini government was hoping February 14th would be a day of pride when the country would celebrate the 10th anniversary of a referendum in which 98.4% voted for a constitutional monarchy. It was agreed that the emir would become a king and the state would change into a kingdom. The voters believed the 1973 abandoned constitution would be resurrected but the emir cheated them and a year later produced a heavily edited version of the 1973 constitution

The young people vowed to turn the day of pride into a day of rage.

A week before the 14th, Bahraini TV was broadcasting national songs and the head of Bahrain's security agency visited Cairo - probably to get some advice on how to deal with protestors. A hand out of 1000 dinars (£1600 to each Bahraini family) was announced, welfare support for low income families to compensate for inflation was reinstated and subsidies on staples such as poultry and flour were raised. A pledge to help parliament secure BD600 million for housing projects in the two-year national budget went out from the housing minister, Shaikh Ibrahim bin Khalifa Al Khalifa who said this would help increase new houses to 8,400 and clear at least a fifth of families on the ministry's waiting list. Government media monitors began talks with government newspaper publishers about new regulations which would limit state control of the press.

But Dr Saeed Shehabi, the London spokesman of the Bahrain Freedom Movement emphasised that more subsidies and promises of reform would not head off the protests. "In the Gulf, people are hypnotised by money. We expect some gracious acts from the king in the next few days but it won't stop us. They feed us with cheap food and cheap fuel but we want rights, freedom and our dignity."

The statement of the Bahrain Youth for Freedom (See Appendix) began on an idealistic note: "It was a dream, then a thought, then a possibility, then it became a reality not a dream." They demanded a new constitution written by the people, the establishment of a new body that has the authority to investigate and hold to account economic, political and social violations including stolen public wealth, political naturalisation, arbitrary arrests, torture and other oppressive security measures and political and economic corruption."

Above all the young people emphasised that they rejected sectarianism: "Our demands and objectives are positive, our means peaceful and are not stained with the sectarianism and division that the regime has promoted for decades. There is no difference between Sunni and Shia, rich or poor - we all sacrifice ourselves for this beloved land", the statement said. They also called for the resignation

of the Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the only premier since independence four decades ago, as well as amendments to the constitution to allow genuine popular participation in government.

Senior religious figures such as Sheikh Isa Qassim approved of the young people's plans and urged them: "to use peaceful means and not to be intimidated by the mercenaries."

The day of rage was publicised at the grassroots level on face book which reached around ten thousand members. It was the first significant public protest in the oil-rich Gulf region since the Tunisians and Egyptians ousted their presidents through widespread revolts. On February 4th several hundred Bahrainis protested outside the Egyptian Embassy in solidarity with the demonstrators in Cairo. On February 14th, the immovable Bahraini royal family was confronted by an unstoppable peaceful force. But the regime's response was not peaceful. Helicopters circled over Manama and a string of Shia villages on the outskirts of the capital were encircled by riot squads.

The armed suppression of the protests began in the Shia village of Nuwaidrat in the south-west of the country. Tear gas and rubber bullets were used to disperse marchers who were demanding the release of those detained during earlier protests. After Ali Abdul Hadi Mushaima was killed in the clashes the protesters moved to another location. The Interior Ministry said the death would be investigated. Another protestor, Fadhel Ali Matrook was killed when police clashed with mourners at Mushaima's funeral. Twenty-five mourners were injured. Amnesty International condemned the heavy-handed tactics of the riot police.

In the village of Diaz around 100 protesters were dispersed with tear gas. Ali Jaffar, a leader of the Diraz protest said: "We are still servants of the government and the royal family. We want to see progress in the political process."

The village of Bani Jamra was also the scene of government brutality. Around 400 protesters who attempted to link up with their counterparts in Diraz were greeted with tear gas and rubber bullets.

The police told drivers who tried to come to the aid of women who had been shot to “let them die.”

“They are scared because they know the people have legitimate demands and with legitimate demands comes unity. There were peaceful protests. There was no justification for this level of violence”, according to Maryam AlKhawaja of the BCHR.

The protesters chanted : “No Shias, no Sunnis only Bahrainis”, “Out, out Al Khalifa”, calling for the resignation of the prime minister and “Give us back our land” in reference to prime real estate on the waterfront worth £40 billion which has been appropriated by Bahraini princes.

In Manama government supports honked car horns and waved Bahraini flags. At a ceremony in Shakar palace King Hamad paid tribute to citizens who voted for the national charter and contributed to ensuring its success. He made reference to the charter’s endorsement of the establishment of viable institutions and the promulgation of rights and duties in a modern state and presented proficiency medals.

At the end of the first day of the protests activists said in a statement on Twitter: “We would like to stress that February 14th is only the beginning. The road may be long and the rallies may continue for days and weeks but if people one day chooses life, then destiny will respond.

The next day the protesters gained control of Pearl Roundabout and started putting up tents. Members of parliament announced their intention to remove the royal family. Practice sessions for the GP Asia Series support race for the 2011 Formula One season Bahrain Grand Prix were cancelled.

The sit-in the heart of Manama at the Pearl roundabout near the financial centre and World Trade Centre, where around 3,000 people gathered had a festive atmosphere. A chair resembling the royal throne of Bahrain’s ruling Al Khalifa family stood in the square with a sign: ‘And does the throne of the oppressor stay?’ “We’ll stay until the government finds a solution for the people of Bahrain,” said Naji Abdelkareem, as other protesters set up a large tent on the grass. There

were a dozen small tents and activists handed out blankets, food and water. Protesters organised a lost-and-found service and said one tent would supply medical services. Others collected garbage and helped keep traffic flowing.

The calm before the storm was deceptive. At 3:00am on February 17th riot police arrived in tanks and armoured vehicles and swooped on the camp using tear gas and clubs to disperse the protesters. The police opened fire with birdshot, rubber bullets and teargas. The tents were set on fire as the protesters yelled “peaceful, peaceful.” They were chased by police as they fled down side streets in terror.

A girl of two was among the four who were killed. The injured totalled 231. Among the dead was Mohmoud Makki Abutaki who had 200 birdshot pellets in his arms and chest. *Herald Tribune* correspondent Michael Slackman described how in the blood stained morgue, Ahmed Abutaki, 29, held his younger brother’s cold hand, stroking his arm tearfully recalling the last time they spoke. “He said: ‘This is my chance, to have a say, so that maybe our country will do something for us,’” he recalled of his brother’s decision to camp out in Pearl Square. “My country did do something, it killed him.”

Dr Sadek Akikri who was tending to injured protesters in a makeshift medical tent in the square described how he was surrounded by police in dark uniforms who then tied his hands behind his back. They forced him onto a bus, pulled his trousers down and proceeded to punch and beat him with sticks all over his body including his genitals. One officer covered his face with a shirt and sat him in a chair and said: “If blood spoils my chair I will beat you to death.” The same officer went outside and asked another officer to come inside, and they both continued to kick him and hit him with sticks. Dr Akiri told Amnesty that one of the officers said, “Let him breathe”, and the other said, “This is just the beginning” and then threatened sexual abuse. When Dr Akiri told them he was a doctor they came back with a torch and could see his white blouse and a Red Crescent sign. They then took him and two others to an ambulance which drove to Al-Salmaniya medical unit. Dr Akiri suffered a broken nose, injured left



eye and bruises to his chest and abdomen. He recounted his horrifying experience by saying: "These physical injuries will disappear but the psychological damage will not disappear. I couldn't believe that this could happen in Bahrain."

Amnesty reported that riot police used tear gas, batons, rubber bullets and pellet guns to disperse the crowds. An eyewitness said that one battalion of riot police was shooting from a bridge over the roundabout while another battalion was shooting from the opposite side while the crowd was trying to seek refuge. Another eyewitness said: "The protesters are being attacked. Women and children are running around screaming and there is no where to run. Riot police are everywhere and are attacking from every corner. Many are wounded. There is a panic and chaos at the roundabout. Everyone is running and screaming. The security forces were blocking ambulances' access to the roundabout and paramedic staff from the hospital were scared to access the area for fear of being attacked. The protesters marched from the roundabout to the hospital with those injured to protect them.

The peaceful protesters turned into an angry mob calling for the death of the king. There was a good chance the reformers would become revolutionaries. The opposition responded by withdrawing from parliament. Bahrain's Foreign Minister tried to justify the crackdown by claiming that the police had no option but to clear the square as the country was on the brink of a sectarian abyss. The unarmed protesters rejected claims that the police were attacked with knives. Sixty people were reported missing after the raid.

After conducting a fact-finding mission to Bahrain Amnesty International concluded that the worst violence took place on the morning of 17th February when five people were killed.

The director of the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty, Malcolm Smart, said : "The Bahraini authorities have again reacted to legitimate protest by using deadly force. They must end their continuing crackdown on activists calling for reform. They must also carry out a full impartial investigation into the force used against

peaceful protesters, including families with children and whether the use of deadly force was justified.”

Writing in *The Independent* on 21st February, veteran Middle East correspondent Robert Fisk reported on disturbing stories of refrigerated trucks which reportedly took dozens of corpses for secret burial, perhaps in Saudi Arabia. “These could be part of the carapace of rumour that has settled over the events of the past few days. But now some of the names of the disappeared - men who were present at the shootings near the Pearl roundabout - are known.”

Among the disappeared were 14-year-old Ahmed Salah Issa, Hossein Hassan Ali (18), Ahmed Ali Mohsen (25), Badria Abda Ali, Hani Mohamed Ali (27), Mahdi Al- Mahousi (24), Mohammed Abdullan (18), Hamed Abdullay Al-Faraj (21), Fadel Jassem (45) and Hossein Salman (48). English residents of a nearby apartment block were warned before the shooting that if they took photographs of the soldiers, they would be shot.

Pearl Square was sealed off with tanks and military personnel. Military checkpoints were set up in Manama, the people were instructed to stay off the streets and the military announced a ban on gatherings saying that key parts of the capital were under its control.

The protesters regrouped inside the grounds of Salmaniya hospital where the injured were treated. “I am a doctor, I am Shia, I am educated and I am nothing in the eyes of these people [the ruling Sunni elite], said Ala’a Ahmed standing in the hospital entrance. “We need our rights. We need to feel we have a voice and by God we will make sure that we do.”

The violent crackdown shattered Bahrain’s carefully cultivated image as a business friendly country. Britain reviewed its arms export licences and Hillary Clinton registered Washington’s “deep concern” and urged restraint. But the protesters were disappointed by the mild criticism of the White House when the Bahraini government had instructed their military and police to fire on unarmed civilians, killing seven and injuring hundreds.

The Foreign Office appears to have taken scant regard of warnings

from Human Rights Watch and other organisations of Bahrain's deteriorating human rights situation. Its own statistics show that in 2010 arms exports licences increased from 34 to 42 and no licences were refused.

Amnesty International's UK Arms Programme director Oliver Sprague said: "The UK has licensed export to Bahrain of tear gas, assault rifles and machine guns and it's a very real possibility that some of this equipment could recently have been used to commit serious human rights violations by the security forces. "We welcomed the UK's suspension of 44 export licences for arms and security equipment bound for Bahrain, but we need to see all UK export licences for Bahrain suspended. It's no good the UK hastily tries to shut the stable door after the horse has bolted. Recent events in Bahrain and the wider Middle East and North Africa have exposed the UK's risk assessment procedures when deciding whether to sell weapons."

The foreign secretary William Hague urged the Bahraini authorities to reach out to the protesters and to hold to account those responsible for deaths. The killing prompted Al Wefaq National Islamic Society which won 18 out of 40 seats in parliament to suspend its participation and to officially join the protests.

The next day the protesters were back in the square. The Crown Prince, after a phone call from Barack Obama urging him to show restraint, ordered the army off the streets. The riot police fired tear gas and shotgun rounds injuring 60 people, before withdrawing. Calling for calm in an effort to hold a national day of mourning for those who were killed, the Crown Prince said: "Fellow citizens of Bahrain I hope that we can join hands, work together and communicate with all political forces in the country. Join us to calm the situation so that we can call a day of mourning for our lost sons. I think there is a lot of anger, a lot of sadness and on that note I would like to extend my condolences to all of the families who lost loved ones and all of those who have been injured. We are terribly sorry and this is a terrible tragedy for our nation."

The jubilant crowd waved flags and carried banners into the square as a show of defiance as a column of military vehicles - dozens of armoured personnel carriers, trucks and jeeps - took to the highway. The police got into their vehicles and drove off. There were no more barricades separating the people from Pearl Square. "We don't fear death anymore, let the army come and kill us and show the world what kind of savages they are," Umm Mohammed a teacher said.

The anger of the young people was the driving force behind the protest but now the movement for change was embraced by all: young and old, men and women, Sunnis and Shias. The protesters were digging in for a long time: tents, portable toilets, food and cooking equipment returned to the square. A barber was doing a busy trade as speaker after speaker called for the ousting of the Al Khalifas.

Opposition leader Ebrahim Sherrif emphasised that the royal family had a part to play once the reforms called for by the protesters had been implemented. "We are not saying to the royal family 'you're not part of this society'. We are saying 'you are welcome to be equal, but not above the law'. We don't want to overthrow the monarchy. We'd like to see a UK - or Spanish-style constitutional monarchy." By nightfall the biggest public gathering in Manama in more than 20 years had swelled to 40,000. They were joined by teachers, lawyers and engineers and members of the Alba aluminium plant signalling to the monarchy that the protesters were backed by a powerful trade union movement.

King Hamad asked Crown Prince Salman to start a national dialogue to resolve the political crisis. The call was endorsed by UN secretary General Ban ki-Moon but Wefaq said that to consider dialogue the government must resign. The call for dialogue was taken up by Muneera Fakhro of the Al-Waad a Sunni political movement with secular leftist leanings.

"We are ready for dialogue - provided we know how much the government is willing to concede and how serious it is in listening and acceding to our demands. Fakhro emphasised that it is not a Sunni-Shia issue. "The demand for better education, better health care

facilities, better standard of living - these are not demands of only the Shias. These are national demands. The issue is not sectarian. It is just because the Shias have been the most- deprived lot that they are in the forefront of the protests. Many Sunnis may not have turned up at the Pearl Square protests but they do support the protesters in their demands. And why shouldn't they? When the concessions are granted they will benefit not just Shias but all Bahrainis. For example, if there are better housing facilities, then everyone will benefit."

The protests were impressive spreading for a half mile stretch of the main highway leading to Pearl Roundabout. 'Down with the Al Khalifa' was the popular chant. The King responded to the mounting pressure by freeing 308 prisoners including 23 Shias accused of trying to topple the monarchy

Sheikh Mohammed Habib al-Mugdad, who was among those released headed a prisoner's march to the roundabout. He described his treatment by the regime: "I was a prisoner of conscience. They wanted to silence me so they tortured me. I was blindfolded for the first nine days. They hung me from the ceiling and beat me all over my body. I thought they would kill me."

The government said in an e-mail that it was taking allegations of mistreatment in custody 'extremely seriously' and is 'committed to thoroughly investigating all and any claims made'.

After his return to Bahrain on February 26th Hassan Mushaima leader of the Haq Movement held talks with other opposition parties to form a joint platform. "We have to have one voice, one demand for all Bahrainis", he said.

The opposition had different views on the nature of reforms. Al-Wefaq led by moderate Shia clerics was calling for a constitutional monarchy and the devolution of executive powers from the king to an elected government. It advocated real legislative powers for the lower house of parliament in which it holds 18 of 40 seats but agreed for the remaining privileges of the Khalifas to be preserved.

Abdul-Wahab Hussein who split from Al Wefaq and has attracted many young protesters called for the dissolution of both the lower and

upper houses of parliament and the drafting of a new constitution.

The main demand of the youth movement of February 14th is an end to the reign of the Khalifa which is echoed by Al-Haq. The British government tried to discourage Mushaima from returning to Bahrain. He spent six months in London undergoing cancer treatment and tried unsuccessfully to hold talks with the Foreign Office. There was no response to his calls until he decided to leave Britain.

A founder of the youth movement was concerned about the future. "The people here are passionate but disorganised. We have no training so what do we do now? Are there people here capable of being ministers in a new government? I don't think so?"

The new Coalition for a Republic was set up by Al Haq, Wafa and the Bahrain Freedom Movement.

The king did not yield to a universally shared opposition demand to sack the world's longest serving prime minister Prince Khalifa who has held his post since Bahrain's independence in 1971 and is widely blamed for the economic and political marginalisation of the Shias. But he did reshuffle the cabinet dropping four Sunni ministers, taking in two new ministers - one Shia and one Sunni - and changing the portfolios of others.

The ministers dropped in the cabinet reshuffle included the Minister of Health Dr Faisal Al Hamar, the Minister of Housing Shaikh Ibrahim bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, the Minister of Electricity and Water Fahmi Al Jowder and the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Shaikh Ahmed bin Attiyatallah Al Khalifa.

The Ministry of Housing was given to current Labour Minister Dr Majeed Al Alwai, while the Ministry of Labour was given to the Undersecretary of Labour Dr Jameel Humadan, a Shia. The Ministry of Health was given to the current Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Dr Nazar Al Baharna. The Executive Chairman of Operation at the Bahrain Development Board Kamal Ahmed, a Sunni, was given the post of Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs. The Ministry of Oil and Gas joined the Electricity and Water Authority and was named the Ministry of Energy under the Minister of Oil and Gas Dr

Abdulgussain bin Ali Mirza.

Neither the Sunnis nor the Shias were happy with the changes. The head of the Sunni National Unity Gathering Dr Abdullateef Al Mahmood described it as a “hidden deal” between a segment of society and the government. His party was against a shuffle that came without the consultation of all political parties.

A spokesman for Al Wefaq said that the reshuffle was limited and far from the main opposition demand that the full government be replaced by a new one, and include young blood.

On February 27th the marchers became increasingly bold and made their first foray into the government and commercial district of Manama converging on the prime minister’s former office. The Americans responded by despatching Admiral Mike Mullen to reaffirm Washington’s commitment to embattled King Hamad.

The next day they blocked access to parliament and forced the cancellation of a session of the 40-member upper chamber which is appointed by the king. The protesters also marched on the foreign ministry, the justice ministry and the state television headquarters chanting slogans that claimed the state media’s coverage of the unrest sought to widen rifts between the Sunni and Shia communities. In front of the immigration ministry they complained about naturalization policies which seek to offset the lopsided Shia population advantage by granting Bahraini citizenship to thousands of Sunnis from the Arab world and south Asia.

The strategy of holding rallies in sensitive locations in the capital placed increasing pressure on the regime: the tourism and finance sectors were hit hard, one project finance conference was moved to neighbouring Dubai and the spring of culture festival was down sized. The usual influx of tourists from Saudi Arabia dried up.

Pearl Roundabout remained the focal point of the protesters. Siraj Wahad writing for the *Arab News* on 5th March described how a cool breeze blows across this island nation that is in the grip of political uncertainty following weeks of anti-government and pro-government rallies.

“As one approaches the roundabout from the souks, the monument is striking. It is a simple but elegant piece of architecture. Six tusk-shaped, snow-white pillars rise from the ground up and meet at a central point holding a pearl. The pillars symbolize the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states of Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and the UAE. From a distance it looks as if someone is holding a ball in his palms. The pearl signifies Bahrain’s past when it used to be the pearl capital of the world.

“The roundabout has a lush, green lawn, and it is fringed by a series of well-rooted palm trees. The surrounding area is open. Since it is the centre of the Bahraini capital, no tourist arriving in the country can miss it. It is the main traffic intersection. Since it is early morning, all arteries, large and small, that lead into the roundabout are open. There is a sense of trepidation in the shadow of the giant pearl, perhaps because of the recent carnage. Minutes later you feel like you are among well-behaved people. All those fears that initially raise a lot of questions are gone. You feel at ease in what is being described as the Tahrir (Freedom) Square of Bahrain.

“Two weeks ago, this was the place where the authorities stormed the circle in the early hours of the morning firing on protesters killing seven of them and injuring scores. Tell tale signs of that violence remain. Lamp posts anchor posters of those slain. The pictures are graphic, and they are accompanied by the names and ages of the victims. Some pictures carry verses from the Holy Qur’an, and others carry highly emotional Arabic poetry. Curious onlookers stare.

“Tents dot the landscape creating a scene reminiscent of the Hajj pilgrimage. Some tents now are media centres and press conference places. Verses from the Holy Qur’an blare from branch-hung loudspeakers. Everything is very well organized, and the place is clean. Volunteers wearing fluorescent green jackets guide incoming vehicles.

“Each palm tree that rings the roundabout now sports a number to ease coordination among the protesters. New arrivals at the roundabout are invited to have a cup of tea at one makeshift camp. At another, volunteers offer cans of juice, sandwiches and scrambled



eggs — all free of cost. It seems like a picnic spot.

“In one camp a young man snores soundly making up for sleep lost the previous night. At another tent, three elderly men in nightgowns pore over the morning newspapers, and at another tent, artists translate ideas into drawings and cartoons that capture in a few strokes what thousands of words from a journalist cannot.

“As the sun climbs the crowd builds. Families arrive with children in tow. At the far end, the sunrays blaze on Bahrain’s iconic skyline. It is these buildings the outside world recognizes; however, now the eyes of the world focus on the roundabout — what was just a traffic interchange a few weeks ago.

“This is not just a roundabout; this is the place where the seeds of a new and vibrant and all-inclusive Bahrain have been sown. We will emerge stronger from this place,” said a Bahraini high school teacher who came along with her husband and three children from a far-off district. “We all want to hold this country just like those pillars that hold the precious pearl.”

More than 100,000 people - one in five - Bahraini citizens - joined the protest but Fatima Al Balooshi the Minister of Development complained that reporting from the country had given an unbalanced picture of what was going on and that social media like face book had been used to spread incorrect information.

As the protests neared their first month the regime seemed to be working on the principle that if it couldn’t win the loyalty of its citizens it could perhaps rent it for a while. The Interior Ministry announced that it was seeking to hire 20,000 people in a measure designed to improve security and benefit the unemployed. The Gulf states pledged to give \$10bn in development assistance.

Writing in the *Financial Times* on 2nd March 2011, Roula Khalaf pointed out that the paying your way out of trouble strategy has its drawbacks. “The bad news is that these strategies are missing the point of the unrest. If there is a single message from the revolts it is that for the first time in decades Arabs are clamouring for political rights and accountable government - not only social benefits.”

Khalafs views were echoed by Ebrahim Sharif a former banker who assumed a prominent role in leading the protests in Manama's business district. "This is about dignity and freedom - it's not about filling our stomachs - we will see every week another activity that will take the momentum higher. We are attacking peacefully all the institutions of the state."

The royal family realised that time was not on its side. Instead of engaging in a meaningful dialogue pro-democracy protesters were attacked by Sunni vigilantes carrying swords, clubs, metal pipes and stones. A raid by the police with tear gas and rubber bullets provoked fighting which led to the seizure of much of the financial district. The protests had gained an unstoppable momentum.

There was division in Bahrain's royal family about how to best deal with the protesters. The crown prince, a moderate, was willing to talk, the prime minister adopted a hard line stance and the king was caught in the middle. The hardliners won and like a bully on the bloc who calls in his older brothers when he senses defeat the regime asked the Saudis for help. On March 15, 2011, 150 Saudi armoured vehicles rolled along the 16-mile causeway linking Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. They were accompanied by 1,000 soldiers. Five hundred troops from the UAE also took part in the invasion. A three- month state of emergency was declared, a curfew was imposed and all public gatherings and marches were banned. Aware that the invasion would inevitably lead to protests in London, Bahrain's king declined an invitation to the royal wedding.

As news of the Saudi intervention spread the protesters prepared themselves for a confrontation with troops and built barricades. Many wore masks to protect themselves from tear gas but they were no match for the military. Helicopters flew overhead as riot police fired rubber bullets at the tents as the protesters slept and set fire to cooking oil. Pearl Square was cleared within two hours.

Civil Society Organisations in Bahrain (The General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions, Bahrain Society for Human Rights, Bahrain Transparency Society, Bahrain Sociologists Society, Bahrain Society

for Anti-Normalization, the Dental Association, the Future Women's Society and Tajdeed Cultural Society) appealed for help in the face of mass systematic murder against the unarmed people of Bahrain who were demanding a democratic system which respects their rights.

Salmaniya hospital was surrounded by troops and the wounded were being taken care of in mosques or in their homes. A terrified doctor told the BBC that she and her colleagues were hiding from troops who had taken over the hospital building and were shooting at people inside the hospital and threatening the doctors with live ammunition. The regime's death squads removed patients' records before a team from the Red Cross arrived.

Navi Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said she was "deeply alarmed by the escalation of violence by security forces in Bahrain, in particular the reported takeover of hospitals and medical centres which is a shocking and blatant violation of international law. She called on the security forces to leave health care facilities and to stop harassing health workers.

A 22-year-old patient, who wished to remain anonymous, went to a local medical facility on March 26. The patient told Human Rights Watch that security forces had fired birdshot pellets at him from about one meter away on March 25, after they entered his village in response to anti-government protests. He said he began to experience severe stomach pains and vomiting several hours later. The pain soon became unbearable, so his brothers took him to a nearby medical facility for treatment.

Doctors gave him pain medication, treated some of his surface wounds, and took an x-ray of his pelvic area and buttocks. The x-ray, which Human Rights Watch reviewed, showed more than 100 pellets lodged inside the patient's body. Doctors told him and his family that they were unable to treat him there because some of the pellets had penetrated deeply and caused internal damage that required surgery.

On the morning of March 27 the patient checked into another medical facility, where doctors told him he required immediate surgery. They said they would need to request blood from Salmaniya

Medical Complex, the country's only blood bank other than the Bahraini Defense Force Hospital. They warned the patient and his family that they could not request the blood without providing his personal information, including his name, national identity number, and the nature of his injuries.

Approximately an hour-and-a-half later, a Human Rights Watch staff member at the scene saw about 10 security force personnel, including two plainclothes agents and at least four riot police carrying weapons, enter the medical facility. One of the police officers told Human Rights Watch that they were from the Isa Town police station and that they had come to take the patient. They entered his room and forced him out of bed and to his feet. They held him up and began escorting him out, but the patient was in noticeable pain and told them that he could not walk. One of the riot police sarcastically responded, "You can run away from the police but you can't walk now?" One of the hospital staff called for a wheelchair.

Human Rights Watch asked the security agents where they were taking the patient, and told them that he needed surgery and wanted to stay in the medical facility to receive care. Hospital staff communicated this same information to the security forces. One of the plainclothes agents told Human Rights Watch that they had orders to take the patient to the Salmaniya but refused to provide more information.

They took him to the parking lot in a wheelchair and put him in an unmarked white sports utility vehicle. One plainclothes agent sat behind the wheel while the other sat with the patient in the back seat. They drove off with a four-jeep police escort. The next day Human Rights Watch learned through unofficial channels that authorities had transferred the patient to the Bahraini Defense Force Hospital, operated by the military and that he had undergone surgery. No official information is available about his condition.

Human Rights Watch had previously documented another similar case. Hani Abd al- Aziz Jumah, also shot at close range with birdshot pellets, had sought treatment at a medical facility where doctors

struggled for nearly two hours to stabilize him after massive blood loss. Jumah's father had told Human Rights Watch that after his son arrived at the medical facility, an ambulance arrived from the Bahraini Defense Force Hospital, accompanied by two masked police officers. The officers announced they were transferring his son to that hospital. That was the last time Jumah's family saw him alive.

Joe Stork, Middle East Deputy Director at Human Rights Watch, emphasised: "There is absolutely no justification for arresting someone solely because the person might have been wounded in a protest-related incident. It is against every tenet of humanity to deprive patients of critical and sometimes life-saving medical treatment, causing them grave suffering and perhaps irreparable harm."

Al Wefaq said that among the 90 people it listed as missing were patients removed from Salmaniya hospital to a Bahrain army hospital on the outskirts of the capital.

As Salmaniya hospital became over stretched the private International Hospital opened its doors for emergency treatment and makeshift hospitals were opened by the people, one in Sanabis.

On March 29 the Interior Ministry's undersecretary for legal affairs announced that at least one patient had died and another was in a critical condition because their families, fearing they would be detained and mistreated, delayed admitting them to hospitals, which "resulted in the deterioration in the condition of [one of the protesters] and the death of the other." Human Rights Watch has confirmed that the death the ministry was referring to was Jumah.

Human Rights Watch called on the Bahraini Defense Force to immediately make public the reason military commanders have detained a former officer for three weeks. Military authorities detained Mohammed al-Buflasa on February 15, 2011, after he spoke at the Pearl Roundabout, criticizing the government and supporting the protesters.

Al-Buflasa, who was wearing civilian clothing when he delivered one of the first speeches at the Pearl Roundabout on February 15, expressed support for public demonstrations that had begun the

day before. He introduced himself as a Sunni and called for national unity between Sunnis and Shias, but did not identify himself as a military officer. His comments touched on numerous controversial issues, including discrimination against the majority Shia population and the “political naturalization” of Sunnis from other countries, which the Shia opposition claims is permitted to change Bahrain’s demographic balance. Al- Buflasa disappeared shortly after leaving the Pearl Roundabout that day.

Commenting on the arrest of Al-Buflasa the Islamic Human Rights Commission pointed out that the Bahraini government is targeting the Sunnis as well as the Shia, who are both protesting on the streets calling for the same demands. The case of Al-Buflasa confirms that the Bahraini government is falsely attributing a sectarian nature to the revolution taking place. The slogan “neither Shia, nor Sunni, we are all Bahraini” that is emanating from the streets of Bahrain is a testimony to the non-sectarian nature of the Bahraini revolution. This is the narrative that the Bahraini government wishes to crush.

In a response to a case that has been reported in almost all pro government media, the ambassador of Bangladesh denied the alleged case of a Sunni Bangladeshi national who is said to be in coma due to being attacked by Shia demonstrators “who cut his tongue off to prevent him from reciting Azzan.” [a prayer]

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights commented that in another case, the pro-government media claimed that a Sunni woman was harassed by protestors camping at the Financial Harbor, while the testimonies given by many eyewitnesses and documented by the BCHR says that a car entered the gathering of protestors, in an intentional attempt to provoke a response. The protesters asked the woman in the car to leave and as two organizers made way for her, she stepped on the gas and ran over them. A video tape published by a pro-government source shows thousands of protestors around the car, while a police officer was called to report the accident and the driver left without any harm. A few hours later, an anonymous source circulated the personal details of the driver and her address, which is

normally available in official data, calling for revenge. In the evening, hundreds of pro-government thugs with sticks and swords surrounded the house of the driver claiming that they intended to protect her from protesters. They then went in groups into the main street searching for any Shia' entering Muharraq (where the driver lived).

In another case, the Bahraini authorities alleged an attack on the University of Bahrain by protesters targeting Sunni students. According to eyewitnesses, the attack was carried out by pro-government thugs who were allowed on campus by the university security. The thugs carried sticks, swords and knives and attacked students who were peacefully protesting in the open space of the university. They also vandalized the university class rooms and buildings. There are several videos showing pro-government thugs standing with the security forces and in one video one of the thugs attacks a female nurse.

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights also reported that pro-government outlets distributed amateur video films showing a car running over a body claiming that it was anti government protestors dismantling a body of a policeman. However, neither the publisher nor the authorities, who used the video unofficially, mentioned the names of the victims. Moreover, the first video shows one of the attackers holding a rifle and ammunition bag which is carried only by security police and the other video shows that when the "body" was kicked by one of the "offenders", it flew a few feet into the air which proves that it was a mannequin and not the body of a real person. In a clear attempt to distort the truth, the local media published the picture of Ahmed Abdulla who was killed by the security forces, depicting him as a police officer killed by the protesters.

Bahrain's largest trade union called for nation wide strikes to be extended until the Saudi forces left the country. Speaking on 21st March the Secretary-General of the General Federation for Bahrain Trade unions which represents more than 60 percent of workers across Bahrain said 70 percent of workers were on strike. The World Federation of Trade Unions expressed its support and solidarity with the working people of Bahrain who are struggling for democracy,

justice and freedom and called for an end to the plundering of the country's resources by capitalists, kings and emirs.

Amnesty called on the governments of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia to immediately restrain their security forces. Eye-witnesses told Amnesty that Bahraini riot police and plain-clothed security forces used shotguns, rubber bullets and teargas against demonstrators in Sitra and Ma'ameer. Several ambulance drivers were attacked by riot police with batons as they tried to reach the wounded. The riot police blocked the entrance to Sitra health Centre where many of the injured were taken, while leaving other injured people lying unassisted in the streets. The electricity supply to the centre was cut.

"The Bahraini authorities must immediately rein in their security forces and end their use of excessive force and the Saudi Arabian authorities should demand this too if they are not to appear complicit", said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa director. "All those involved must act with restraint to prevent further loss of life. The shootings and the reports we are receiving about denial of medical care to the injured are a desperately worrying development and indicate a truly alarming escalation following the police killings of protesters in February and the influx of Saudi Arabia and Emirati police to buttress the Bahraini government."

A new wave of terror has begun as politicians, activists and medical workers are targeted by security forces. The influential blogger Mahmood Al-Yousif, who runs the anti-sectarian website 'Just Bahrain' was among those arrested.

Abdulrasul Hujairi aged 38 was from the village of Buro 25 March. did not return home after going to the market. The next day his body was found four kilometers from the village. He had been beaten to death.

Villagers described how the military asked 'Sunni or Shia?' Shias were forced to strip so the military could determine whether their injuries showed that they were involved in protests. Men on their face or knees by the roadside with their hands bound behind their backs became a common sight as the intimidation continued.



A journalist speaking on condition of anonymity told the Committee to Protect Journalists that independent journalists are receiving threats via phone and text message to stop reporting on the crackdown.

Local journalists told the Committee To Protect Journalists (CPJ) that a list called the “Bahrain list of dishonor,” is circulating online and identifying 25 people as “collaborators aiming to sell their country.” The author is unclear. CPJ, which reviewed the list, found the names of at least nine critical journalists, including Mansour al-Jamri, editor-in-chief of *Al-Wasat*; Abduljalil Alsingace, a Bahraini blogger and human rights activist; Ali Abdel Imam, a Bahraini blogger; and Qasem Hussein, a critical columnist. One journalist whose name appears on the list told CPJ: “I don’t feel safe anymore. I’m receiving threats via phone telling me that they will stab me in the back and my name is also on the list.” The journalist asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal.

Armed assailants stormed the Manama printing facility of the independent daily *Al-Wasat* as military contingents from Saudi Arabia and the UAE were enlisted to help contain political unrest.

Al Wefaq accepted Kuwait’s offer of mediation saying that talks must be based on issues outlined by Bahrain’s Crown Prince which include an elected government and reform of the electoral districts which the opposition claim were cut to ensure a Sunni majority in parliament. Kuwait, which has its own Shia minority, sent navy vessels to Bahrain under a Gulf security pact.

The mothers of some of the martyrs appealed to the political parties not to engage in dialogue. The mother of Ali Badul Hadi Mushaima, the first of the martyrs vowed to spend her life opposing the Al Khalifas until their downfall. The mother of the martyr Mahmood Abu Taki confirmed that the family had received calls from the regime offering to buy their silence with money which they refused insisting that they would only accept the demands of the 14th February revolution.

The first demonstrations after the Saudi occupation was held on 25th March in several areas. One person, Hajji Isa Mohammed Ali

aged 70 from Ma'amir was killed when his house was attacked by riot police. Twenty-three people have been killed since the start of the mass resistance movement, and more than 110 are unaccounted for.

The Health Minister, himself a Shia, resigned and Shia judges resigned en masse.

The White House called on Bahrain to find a political rather than a military solution to its problems. "The use of force and violence from any source will only worsen the situation", National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said.

An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said: "The presence of foreign forces and interference in Bahrain's internal affairs is unacceptable and will further complicate the issue." Both countries withdrew their ambassadors.

The British Foreign Secretary William Hague spoke with Bahrain's foreign minister, expressing serious concern at the situation on the ground and urged restraint on all sides and the need for a return to law and order to enable genuine political reform.

Eight senior members of the opposition were rounded up in dawn raids on their homes: Hassan Mushaima, Dr Abdel Jalil Singace, Abdel-Wahab Hussain, Sa'eed Al-Nuri, Ibrahim Sharif, Abdel Hadi Al Mukhodher and Hassan Al-Haddad. They were arrested by a joint force of Bahraini and Saudi security forces who did not produce warrants. The Bahraini foreign minister alleged the detainees had "refused the principle of dialogue." Four of the eight were previously detained from August 2010 until February 2011 when they were released following an amnesty.

Targeting prominent human rights activists with death threats conveyed through face book and other social media sites also began. The office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said messages on face book and other social media denounced Mohammed Al Masqati, the President of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, Naji Fateel, another member of the society and Abdulhadi Alkhawaja a former director of Frontline Defenders. Sunni pro-democracy protesters were also threatened.

In a statement the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales said that Bahrain's declaration of martial law in mid-March under article 36b of the constitution does not override its obligation to respect fundamental human rights under international law. Although the covenant permits a state to impose restrictions on certain rights during a publicly declared state of emergency that 'threaten the life of the nation', those restrictions must be limited to the extent strictly required by the exigencies of the situation. "We must remind the Bahrain government that a state of emergency should not be used as a pretext to simply deal with peaceful protest and the expression of political opinion or to arbitrarily deprive peaceful protesters of their liberty and their right to a fair trial, including their right to challenge the lawfulness of their detention before an impartial tribunal. We also remind the government that the right to life and the right not to be tortured or ill-treated must be adhered to even in a state of emergency."

Analysing the invasion Fares Braizat of the Qatar-based Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies commented that Saudi Arabia was acting in self-interest because what happens in Bahrain has direct implications for Saudi Arabia - it simply cannot avoid intervention and it is sending a very strong signal that it will not allow significant change to happen in Bahrain.

Ironically the Bahraini royal family was responsible for radicalising the protesters who were asking for a constitutional monarchy. They only called for an end to the rule of the Al Khalifa family when force was used against them.

The GCC was established in 1981 after the Iran-Iraq war to protect the Gulf from outside aggression. Its force was not intended for internal repression or for intervention in member states. The Al-Khalifa monarchy waged war against its citizens, a war it could not have won without the help of the Saudis. Cranes pulled down the monument at Pearl Square. The 300 foot structure with six swords representing the six GCC countries holding a pearl at the top was erected in 1982 in tribute to the GCC as Bahrain hosted the annual Gulf summit. The roundabout, was used initially as a symbol of Manama but was

superseded in 2008 by the Bahrain World Trade Centre, the first skyscraper in the world to integrate wind turbines into its design. The half-dinar coins that featured the roundabout were recalled. But the memories of the people, who lived through one of the bleakest weeks in Bahrain's history, could not be erased.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Testimonies: Victims of Torture and human rights abuses speak out

JAFFAR AL HASABI

I live in London with my wife and five young children aged 13 and below. I have lived in the UK since 1995 when I left my country after having been tortured. I obtained asylum in 2005 and became a UK national in 2009. I travelled back to Bahrain for the first time in 2005, and over the last few years went back several times to see my family and other relatives there. During these visits I had no difficulties with the authorities.

My last visit was in 2010 when I flew to Bahrain on 24 July with my wife and children. On 2 August I went for a holiday trip outside the country with my mother and my two eldest daughters, and we returned to Bahrain on 16 August. It was then that I was detained at the airport in front of my mother and children on our arrival at about 10:00pm. They took my passport and mobiles as well as my daughters' passports and mobiles.

Several plain-clothed men then took me to the back of the airport to a vehicle with blacked-out windows and I was bundled into the vehicle with two men in the front and two in the back, one on each side of me. I was blind-folded and my hands were hand-cuffed behind my back. They were obviously national security personnel although they never said anything.

I was driven for about twenty minutes but didn't know where I was being taken, and then I was placed in a cell about 2 x 2 metres. I know it was underground as I went down stairs to it. I was then taken

to another room where my rings, watch, shoes and socks and my clothes were taken (apart from my underwear), and I was given a set of pyjamas and slippers. From there I was taken to another room and interrogation began. This was now in the early hours of 17 August.

I was blind-folded with my hands cuffed behind, and I was punched hard in the chest and fell-down. I was continuously questioned and accused, it being alleged that I was taking messages to and from Bahrain to Iran for opposition activists, that they had been watching me for five years in the UK, that I was carrying messages from and to Hassan Mushaima and Saeed Shehabi. I denied these accusations as they were untrue, but I was continuously punched and kicked. I said why would I carry messages because I could have used electronic communication, but they kept beating me.

They said I had been seen various people in Bahrain, including at Hassan Mushaima's house in Bahrain, who they named, but I said these were social gatherings and there was nothing secret about them. They went on swearing at me and beating me. I asked to be allowed to eat and pray but this was refused. After several hours I was taken back to my cell and remained blind-folded with my hands cuffed behind me. I was told I had to stand still with my feet together facing the wall. If I moved I was re-positioned with a slap. This forced standing was continuous, 24 hours a day, at all times while I was in the cell for the next week.

I was periodically taken for interrogation and beatings during that first week, as on the first morning of my detention described above. The same questions and accusations were continuously put to me, which I denied. I was then subjected to *falaqa*, and as a result of the pain I said "yes" I had brought messages to encourage demonstrations and protests on the street, so that there would be dialogue between the opposition and the authorities. My 'confession' (which was false) was written down and the torturers also added other aspects of how I was involved in the demonstrations - basically, they fabricated whatever they wanted. As I have said this forced standing in my cell and beatings in the interrogation room was over a period of a week, when I had no

more than two or three hours sleep altogether. Because of the *falaqa* and forced standing my feet swelled up and I was in intense pain. If it looked as if I was falling asleep on my feet I was struck with a hose. I was subjected to *falaqa* twice during this first week, that is, during two interrogations.

The way *falaqa* was inflicted was that a pole was inserted between my bent knees with my hands cuffed in front of me and I was lifted up and suspended and beaten on my bare feet with a rubber hose. I was also struck on my genitals. I urinated in my clothes.

After that first week, torture continued for a further two weeks: the forced standing, lack of sleep, beatings and verbal abuse and threats to my family. I also received further *falaqa* with electric shocks which I will describe hereunder. I was accused of working with other named opposition figures, and under torture I admitted whatever they wanted. It was during the third week that I was subjected to electric shocks and *falaqa* at the same time. I was suspended again for *falaqa* which was given, and I heard a very loud machine switched on and I was touched with a wire on my big toe of my right foot and then later on the small toe of my left foot; I was also touched behind my right ear, and on my back. The pain was excruciating.

I was also suspended with my hands tied above my head on a stick as they tried to lift me but then this stopped. Other torture during this time was forced standing with bent knees and hands held in front. On two occasions I fell down and I was forced up and kicked and beaten. I began to hallucinate. Once I vomited. Another time I went into some sort of comma or unconsciousness as there was a time I don't remember anything. I had hardly any sleep during these two weeks. Between the torture interrogations, even when I was left in my cell, I was tortured by forced standing with bent knees and raised arms held straight in front or above me, or made to stand with bent knees with my arms held in front with the tips of my fingers touching the wall.

During this whole period, up until 22 September, I was being held at what is called the Fort in Manama. It is used by the interior ministry, national security and the intelligence services. Normally one is held

there for not more than 48 hours before going in front of a prosecutor and magistrate, but I didn't get taken to the prosecutor until some 15 days after my detention.

As I have said my cell was tiny, about 2 x 2 metres, with no windows and a bare bunk. It had a thick metal door with a sliding panel for guards to look in. It was very cold. There was no toilet, and if I needed to go I had to knock and ask, and was then only given two or three minutes. I was unable to wash regularly or pray. When I could wash I had to do so still blind-folded. I was not allowed to see a lawyer although I asked for one. Most of the time I was blind-folded with my hands cuffed behind me, deprived of sleep and beaten regularly during interrogations.

As I have also said I was taken in front of a prosecutor and a magistrate after some 15 days, when I saw a lawyer Mohamed Tajir. I had been forced to sign a six-page confession which I had not been allowed to read. I was told before I was taken before the officials that if I said anything about what had happened I would be beaten more. Mr Tajir asked about the marks on my wrist and I said I had been tortured. The magistrate noted that I had 'small marks' but said nothing about the torture and he didn't note it. As a result of me having said what I said I was beaten more, and given the shocks and more *falaqa* I have described. They wanted more 'confessions' and added another page. During all this time I was kept isolated from all other detainees.

Another thing I wish to mention is how they swore at me and mocked my religion. They abused me verbally for being a Shia and said they would bring my sisters in front of me and rape them, and they would also destroy my brother's business.

At some point during that period at the Fort I was visited by a man from the British Embassy. I recall it was after I had been before the magistrate and I estimate this meeting with the British man was early in September. I was unable to say anything about the torture as there was a guard and high official present. In fact I didn't even know I was going to see anyone, as I was given fresh clothes and told I was to be released, and then I found myself in front of somebody who said he



was from the embassy. The clothes had long sleeves to hide the marks from the torture. Because I thought I would be released, and because of the guard and official present, I intended to tell him what happened once I was out. He offered me a list of lawyers but I didn't take it. He gave me his card - I think his name was Simon. The meeting lasted about 30 minutes.

After nearly 40 days in detention on 22 September I was moved to the Muhraq Prison outside of Manama. Here the worst of the torture stopped. I was kept in a bigger cell, and was allowed some exercise. I and other detainees were filmed playing football but this was for propaganda as it was broadcast to show how well off we were; beds were also brought into the cells and filmed. However, the beds were so cheap they soon broke (mine did after five days), as they were just for show.

I received a visit from my family on 27 September. In the days before that I was taken back to the Fort twice, and returned to Muhraq, and just before I saw my family I was told that if I said anything about the torture I would go back to the Fort for more torture. So the two trips were to frighten and intimidate me prior to the meeting. I therefore couldn't say anything about what had happened to me.

I was taken to court on 28 October 2010 where my lawyer explained that I had been tortured. This court appearance was with other detainees who also reported they had been tortured, and was widely publicised on the Internet. After that things got worse again: one of the worst things now was that if I wanted to go to the toilet I had to really beg and was given very little time - only a minute or two. I was blind-folded on my way there and back. I also never had undisturbed sleep as the guards would bang on the cell to wake me. I was not allowed the Koran. The food also got worse. On 5 November I was moved to another part of the prison where I shared a cell with two other detainees.

The second visit I had from the Embassy was when the same man (Simon) saw me about three months after the first visit, so this was in early December. This time I told him in detail what had happened

to me, but again he didn't take any notes. As I have mentioned, it had already become public that I and the others were tortured, after our first court appearance on 28 October.

I appeared in court several times with 23 other detainees who I learned had also been tortured, and we were all accused of being terrorists trying to overthrow the state. These court appearances were reported internationally, as well as the attempts by our lawyers to get the court to investigate the torture, which it refused to do. Eventually we were released on 23 February 2011 as a result of the popular uprising. I managed to leave the country on 12 March and arrived in the UK the next day. Shortly afterwards the political situation got very bad again after Saudi troops entered Bahrain, and many of the people on trial with me, who had also been released in February, were re-detained.

I still have marks of the torture on my wrist and toes; my back is in pain and most of the time I feel weak and depressed. I was tortured before in the 1990s and know what PTSD is, and I am suffering physically and mentally. 11 May 2011.

## **MOHAMMED MUSHAIMA**

Mohammed Mushaima, the son of the political leader, Hassan Mushaima, gave the following account of his experience during one full year of detention which began on 13 September 2010, when he addressed a seminar on Bahrain in the house of Lords on 1st November 2011.

I would like to thank you first for this opportunity, and would pass special thanks for Lord Avebury for this event and also pass my father's special greeting for him.

It is hard for any human to comprehend another's experience, joy, and sadness except if he encountered, felt or examined something similar. For this reason I will try my best to express this experience in an imaginative way so it could be comprehended better.

To understand what it felt inside a prison, a Bahraini prison to be

exact, one should imagine himself a crippled, paralysed person with only his eyes and mouth to have control over, inside a hospital, where the nurses and the doctors have no passion for their profession. You can ask but no answer is given, you can scream, but expect to receive only more pain to receive, and above all you should always be certain that you will be neglected all the time.

I was arrested on September 13th last year (2010) before the “Arab Spring”, I was tortured for trivial charges only because I was the son of a political figure. While my attorney was able to prove that I was absent in another country when my so called crime was committed, the judge found it just to sentence me for a whole year for crimes I was unable to commit.

I spent a whole year away from family, friends, and my studies. The government gave me a scholarship for excellence which was revoked as a way of taking vengeance against my father. Inside the first incarceration I spent five months in a small room with six other persons who had other cases than mine ranging from prostitution to drugs and above all murder cases. I spent those five months with nothing to do but sit in that room where books or anything else to kill time were not allowed.

I had previous injuries to my back which I told the doctors, the police and the officers about. I needed special medical attention which they denied to me for the whole time of my imprisonment, and I was only treated with pain killers on extreme occasions.

Then after the sentencing I was moved to the central jail on February 8th, which I thought would be a better place, only to be surprised that soon after my arrival and after the 14th of February the whole jail was closed and we were to sit inside our rooms, which were smaller than my previous room. In very cold weather the central cooling was turned on and the water heaters turned off. It was torture. All the prisoners. All the police - except the officers - where either of Yemeni, Pakistani, or Syrian origin, and their hatred surfaced after 14th February and what followed.

There was special attention paid to me, the bad kind, after

February 14th and what followed. I wasn't able to see my family for five months while it was usual to have a visit every other week. Almost after every phone call, I would be punished by beating or solitary confinement or insults. I was handcuffed from the back although I told them several times about my medical condition. The officer and the police used to tell me that your father will be executed or tortured. One officer came and told me that my father was dead only to play with my emotions.

We were in a state of terror where we could be taken away at any time, by anyone; officer or policeman of any rank no matter how insignificant and they could do anything with us: beat us, put us in solitary confinement, deny family visits and weekly calls. They were even able to stop us from going to the clinic, or buying anything. They only provided the bare essentials for hygiene.

In the central jail I suffered more torture "with other means" as the officer Hamad Al Madahka put it taking me from a solitary prison to another, not keeping me in a place more than five days, making me stand with my medical problem for long periods in the cold or in heat, beating me, stepping over my face and above all insulting me, my family and my religion which was the hardest to bear. If I was to judge, I would say that my agony measured with the stories I heard was just a drop in the ocean. The worse was still to come. They started discriminating against us more by disallowing us to have our prayer callings, taking our prayer books, and destroying the Quran which we and they read from.

I finished my sentence, and was eligible for early parole but of course I was denied this and had to wait for three more months for release. I went out and only a month or so after I was attacked along with my brother in law who was visiting our house and we were beaten by the riot police. He suffered a broken knee. I sustained three fractures in my backbone along with a tear in my knees and foot and have been on crutches ever since.

I would apologies to my fellow prisoners for it is impossible to understand the day to day, hour by hour agony in just a few minutes,

but I tried my best and I hope I succeeded.

On behalf of my family, I also would like to mention my father who lay in prison and we were not given any information about his medical status. He is a cancer patient who was administered three shots of some unknown medication while he was handcuffed and blindfolded. We call upon you to help us to free him so he can get his treatment before it's too late. He is a political figure, but he is a human being after all.

### **ZAINAB MEFTAH**

I am Zainab Meftah, Bahraini nationality, student at Middlesex University as post graduate in law. My research field is Human Rights and Business law applied in the Kingdom of Bahrain

My story began On 7th of March 2010, when I travelled from London to Bahrain to visit my family because my father was very ill and I had to see him, even though I had course work to submit and I had to prepare for my essays, but I preferred to visit the family regarding my father's situation.

When I reached Bahrain airport and gave the immigration officer my passport he looked at me and asked me. "Where did you come from?" I told him from London. He called a man (wearing traditional clothes) and the immigration man gave him my passport. I asked: "What is going on? Is there any problem?" The immigration man said "no - only some investigation." Then another two men came to me and asked me to go with them. They asked whether I had a mobile phone and a laptop. I told them I did and then they said, "open it and give us your mobile." Then they took me to collect my luggage and asked me to open it and started to examine all my belongings even the small things. My laptop and the external hard disc along with my mobile were with other men and all my papers, my course work, books, and my UK bus pass. They copied all the material and all the papers of course work.

They returned my lap top and I was shocked to discover the hard

drive had been wiped. At the same time they were asking me so many questions. Such as:

“Why are you in London?”

“Studying.”

“What are you studying?”

“Postgraduate in Law.”

“What is your research area?”

“Human right and business.”

“Why did you choose this area in particular?”

“Because nobody studied it before especially in the Gulf region.”

“Do you think Bahrain will benefit from your research?”

“Where do you live in London? And why did you choose this area?”

This questioning last for more than 14 hours and I was surrounded by many men and two women who examined me.

The two women took me to a small room and asked me to take off all my clothes. I could not refuse their orders as they were very tough and aggressive with me when I at first refused to take off my all clothes. Then they asked me to be completely naked and to even remove my underwear. After that the two women started to touch my body and I was strip searched. They did not find anything but I was really terrified.

I had not seen my family for one year and a half and, my family were in the waiting area. They did not know what was happening to me. My mother was at the airport. She has high blood pressure and I was scared that something would happen to her if she heard that I was in a bad situation.

I asked to call the family and in the beginning they refused. They finally allowed me to call my family after 14 hours – just before I was released.

During the time I was in Bahrain, I had been watched all the time. The police officers were around my house for 24 hours until I came back to UK

On 26 of August 2010 during the Holy Muslim month I returned to Bahrain for a visit and spend some time with my family during the

Holy Ramadan month and celebrated Eid with them.

I went on 26th of August 2010 and when I reached Bahrain the National Security treated me even worse than on my first home visit questioning, searching, intimidating, abusing me verbally, searching my laptop taking my mobile - they were more aggressive than the first time. I was also beaten heavily, tortured and kept in prison for four nights.

While I was in prison the police asked me about Dr. Saeed Al Shahabi and Abrar House.

I remember some of the questions the police asked me, "Do you know Saeed Al Shahabi?"

"Yes."

"Do you go to Abrar House? And also Dar Al Hikmah?"

"Yes."

"What is your relationship with Saeed?"

"A Muslim brother from my country."

They said that they would release me if I told them about Dr. Saeed Al Shahabi and the people in Dar Al Hikmah ( the Bahraini Community Centre). They told me to report on the activities of Abrar House and Dar Al Hekmah as well as Dr Shehabi. Before they released me they forced me to sign on an empty paper.

Until now I don't know why they did these things to me. They said somebody called them about me and my study. Is studying human rights a criminal offence? They do not want anybody to study this area of law and they do not want anybody to know the truth?

Why did they put my name on black list?

Two weeks ago the Bahrain Riot and Al Jazeera Sheild entered my family house looking for me. They destroyed ever thing in the house and they took my sister hostage. They went to the school where my other sister is studying and they arrested her in front of her students. They also fired my two brothers from their jobs as they are supporting me financially. Now I cannot go to Bahrain because they will arrest me and I do not have enough money to live or to pay my university fees in the UK. 16th May, 2011.

## VICTIM M.N.

*Age: 20*

Testimony taken by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights on 1st March 2011

*Details:*

On Thursday 17th February, I was sitting in the roundabout next to a tent where people were sleeping. The riot police arrived and we were all standing saying "peaceful." They started shooting and the place was full of teargas. I started running with my mum, who has acute asthma.

We reached Al Muntazah. I saw a boy jumping over a wall so I did too. When I turned around, I realized my mother had fainted. The boy came back with me, to help me carry my mum. We fell over and were surrounded by the police, dressed in completely black uniforms, with black helmets and black glasses and they spoke with a Saudi accent. They had loaded guns and said if you try to run we'll shoot you.

They then hit my mum on her eye- my mother is 47 years old. I covered my mum to protect her and they beat me on my back with their batons. They put guns against the boy's head and my mum's head so they didn't move, and they started dragging me and beating me. They kicked punched and dragged me on my stomach, back, head, and face. They took my abayya (women's dress worn in Bahrain) off and my headscarf. Then one of them grabbed my hair and put my head to his foot telling me to kiss it and to say death to Al-Jamri and Mushaima. I refused to kiss it so he pulled my head to his genitals and told me to kiss them. I urinated involuntarily and he started to tear my inner clothes off.

The boy tried to pull me by my leg and they turned to him and started beating him severely. A riot policeman with a Jordanian accent came and told them to stop. We tried to leave with them beating us. The boy moved my mum - they were going to hit her on the head with their batons, but the boy put out his hand and got hit instead. Then he came back and helped me out. We went inside the Muntazah where many protesters were gathering. Around 4:30am the ambulance came.



They took us to Salmaniya Medical Complex. I am still limp due to the beating and have involuntary urinating.

## **MOHAMMED FAKHRAWI**

Mohammed Fakhrawi described his uncle's death during a seminar on Bahrain held on November 1st 2011 in the House of Lords, London.

My name is Mohammed Fakhrawi. I am the adopted son of Karim Fakhrawi. My father died when I was two years old and my uncle Karim Fakhrawi raised my twin brother and me since then.

I will tell you a little about who my uncle was. He was a publisher, a businessman and founder of Alwasat newspaper and a member of its management board. He was also a founding member of Alwefaq political society and founded several other charitable organizations. He was known for his generosity towards orphans and the needy people in society.

I will talk about what happened to my uncle. On April 3, 2011 at 11.30, over 10 security jeeps came to raid my uncle's house and arrested him. He was not there at the time, and the security forces broke into his house and stole most of the valuables in the house, such as expensive watches, laptops, mobiles, and donation boxes.

The next day he went to the exhibition road police station to report what had happened. The police asked him whether he was accusing them? He replied that he was there to find out who had done that and that if they wanted to arrest him, then he was here. They asked him to wait for half an hour, so he left and came back in half an hour.

According to the driver, as soon as my uncle arrived at the police station he was beaten up, kicked and punched instantly. From that point on, my family did not know what happened or where he was taken. Then on April 12, the police called my uncle's secretary and told her to inform the family that Fakhrawi was ill and was in Salmaniya hospital and they should come and visit him. When my family went, they were shocked when my older uncle was taken to the morgue to see his younger brother lying dead. He was forced to sign a

paper saying that my uncle died of “kidney failure.” He was told that he would not see the sun, and that he would be killed like his brother if anyone took a photo of his body during the final washing of the body near the cemetery.

Despite this, you just need to google “karim fakhrawi” to see the photos and videos showing severe torture wounds all over my uncle’s body. My family has been traumatized at this great loss. My uncle left behind two children, and an old mother who relied on him to take care of her. She has lost sight in both eyes because of a deterioration in her health after hearing the news of her son’s death. She has not stopped mourning him since. As well as taking care of us, he also took care of two other cousins who lost their father as well. The family has been deeply affected by his absence. His businesses have also been affected, and a construction contract worth 4.5 million dinars was cancelled leaving us in heavy debt. Society as a whole has suffered from his loss.

The government knows exactly how my uncle was killed and who killed him. He was in their custody. Six months since his death, they have not charged anyone for his killing, and those who employ the murderers are still walking free today. They have not even returned the belongings they stole from him.

Mr.Basiooni told us after his committee’s investigation, that it was certain that my uncle died because of torture and his case is a very clear and strong case against the government.

He is one of 43 people killed since February 14. We want accountability. We want justice. We do not want money. Money will never replace our loss. We want justice and nothing more.

### **AHMED YOUSIF AHMED**

Testimony taken by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights on: 27th February 2011.

The riot police were on the flyover bridge. Within minutes, and without any prior warning, they started shooting teargas, sound bombs, bird shotguns and rubber bullets. The teargas was abnormal;

it has a type of powder that affected breathing and made the skin very hot.

Everyone started running, I had several blankets which I started to take out and put over the women to protect them from the teargas. The shooting was continuous for about 10 minutes. Suddenly, numerous riot police started coming, too many to count. Everyone was trying to get away.

I was in the middle of the roundabout covering the women with blankets when one of the riot police hit me with a baton on my head and I lost consciousness. When I came after they threw water on me, I was in the street between the roundabout and the other pavement. My body was shaking from the cold. My hands were tied behind my back. I pretended to be unconscious. A woman in a car asked to just pick up her cousin, but the riot police screamed at her to leave which she did.

I saw two ambulances, one was red and one blue. They were removing people. There was an old man shouting "peaceful." Three riot police were standing on the pavement. One of them had a bird shotgun. I used to hunt birds so I know the shotgun. The old man was walking around looking stunned and was coughing from the teargas. He kept shouting "peaceful." I saw them take two children and put them inside the small fish fridges. Two people came to the old man in civilian clothing. The riot policeman, who sounded Balucci, was carrying the shotgun. One of the men in civilian clothing told the Balucci to "shoot him." He responded: "He is saying God is great."

The man in civilian clothing grabbed the shotgun from the Balucci, kicked him and hit him with the butt of the shotgun in his chest. He then pointed the bird shotgun at the old man. The other man in civilian clothing shouted, "don't do it Thawadi, don't do it" several times. Thawadi shot the bird shotgun at the old man. The distance between the old man and Thawadi was about two meters. I thought I was next, so I closed my eyes. A riot policeman grabbed me by hair and ordered me to say, "I am a donkey." I refused, so he beat me until I lost consciousness. I woke up in the Salmaniya Medical Complex.

## A DOCTOR'S STORY

*Emailed to The Independent on 10th May, 2011, a testimony of a consultant and family physician detained during Bahrain's crackdown on medical professionals. State security forces have routinely commandeered health centres to search, investigate, and arrest medics:*

I was arrested with several others from my work place on 26/4/2011. When we reached the police station, Bahraini female security personnel made us face a wall and raise one arm and the opposite leg for a long period. We were ordered to repeatedly sing the national anthem in a loud voice and to say 'Long live the King'.

While we were forced to stand, we were beaten by police officers using a thick hose. Before one male officer starting beating me, he asked me in an intimidating voice if I had ever been physically assaulted by my husband. I said: 'Never.' This officer then slapped me on the face.

We were subjected to humiliating words like: 'Dirty Shia, you were going to the Pearl Roundabout to participate in the dirty behaviours. You are a whore. You have all this money and you go to protest. The government is giving you this salary and gave you a scholarship to study, why do you want more?'

The real torture began when they blindfolded our eyes. They forced me to run while blindfolded in the interrogation room. I ran and hit a wall with such force that it resulted in a big bulge on my forehead. The interrogators then made me place my shoes on the top of my head. They told me that was what I deserved because I am 'a worthless Shia... working against our King and Crown Prince'.

They took off my white medical coat because they said that I didn't deserve it and that I betrayed my career as a doctor. They pictured me while I was forced to dance and sing a song with the words 'all the people want [Prince] Khalifa bin Salman'. The interrogators would also hit me suddenly while I was blindfolded making me cry out in pain. Then they would shout at me: 'We don't want to hear your voice. You are screaming like a whore. Do you think that you are in the bedroom with your husband? Do you miss him?' While

I was blindfolded, the interrogators took me to a room where there were both male and female officers. They were repeatedly asking the same questions over and over, because they wanted 'their answers'. As a result, I was beaten and slapped on the face repeatedly.

They wanted me to say that I went to the Pearl Roundabout and protested against the regime, but I insisted on the truth, which is that I only protested against the Health Minister and his under-secretaries. They threatened me that they would inject me with substances, bring dogs to bite me and that they would take me to the place where my husband is being incarcerated, that I would face a military court and would stay in jail for four years and lose my Bahraini nationality.

At the end, I received a huge slap on my face and then made to sign on a paper saying that I protested against the Health Minister.

Later on, they took us to a corridor and let us open the folds over our eyes... All my colleagues detained with me earlier that day were present and I was relieved that no one had been separated from us. Thank God, we were asked to call a family relative to come and pick us up at the police station.

I hope this serves to expose the violations of human rights and international law by the Bahraini regime. What I was subjected to is, in my view, not as severe as that experienced by hundreds of Bahrainis who have and continue to be unlawfully detained by the state.

### **SAYED AL-NADAEI**

Sayed Al-Nadaei is a 24-year unemployed university graduate. He told Amnesty International about his experiences early on February 17th 2011 at Pearl Roundabout:

I was sleeping in the roundabout. Without warning the police attacked. A friend woke me. I saw children and women crying So I went to stand by them to try to protect them. Then 10 to 12 policemen arrived and kicked me and hit me with sticks. I was on the ground trying to protect my head, screaming but they wouldn't stop. Then I acted dead but they continued kicking me all over my body. Then they stopped.

I have a lot of pain everywhere, in the left arm, left hip, all over both legs, right shin and have two head cuts which required eight and 12 stitches. I spent eight hours in hospital. The doctor put 'flu' on the medical records so as not to cause problems.

From Amnesty International's report *Bloodied but unbowed: unwarranted state violence against Bahraini protesters*, March 2011.

### **KHADIJA & ZEINAB AHMED**

Khadjia Ahmed is an 18 year-old medical student who was volunteering at the medical tent in the roundabout on February 17th, 2011. She spoke to Amnesty:

After 3:00am we heard shots. Some injured arrived at the tent straight away with tear gas problems. The police threw or fired two tear gas canisters inside the tent and pulled the flap down. People were crying "save me, save me from them."

Her twin sister Zeniab a business student who was volunteering in the media centre at the roundabout said:

"They attacked the tents and the medical tent. People were shouting 'Salmiya, salmiya, we are peaceful don't attack'. One of the policemen was shouting at me and another was hitting my dad, really hard with a stick. He was trying to protect me. I don't know if the sticks are wood or plastic or metal but they are so strong - with one single hit they smash a car windscreen."

### **ABDALLAH SALMAN MOHAMMAD HASSAN**

'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan told Amnesty International that he and a friend endured torture and other ill-treatment during hours of detention and interrogation after police arrested them in the Bahraini capital Manama on Friday 18th February 2011.

The pair were said to have been punched and beaten with sticks by police who questioned them about their role in the protests before releasing them without charge on Saturday evening.

Hassan told Amnesty that he and his friend were stopped in their car at a checkpoint near Manama's Pearl Roundabout. The police reportedly searched the vehicle and found a Bahraini flag with the words "We are staying in the Martyrs (Pearl) Roundabout until our demands are met" written on it.

Hassan says the pair were then beaten and taken to a police station in al-Na'im district where they were again assaulted. Hassan says he was also blindfolded and beaten with a wooden stick after being taken to another police station in al-Gadhaibiya.

Describing his ordeal, 'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan said: "They tied my hands behind my back and then put me on a chair; I was standing on the chair. Then they put my arms behind the door from the top and pushed the chair away. I was left suspended: my body on one side of the door and my arms on the other side. It was very painful. I asked for water and they didn't give it to me. I wanted to pray and they refused. I didn't sleep. I was left suspended on the door for a few hours."

Hassan was interrogated about the protests and held for 30 hours before being released. He went to al-Salmaniya hospital for X-rays and his right arm was put in plaster. He said his friend was released earlier than him but did not give any details. 22 February 2011.

## **HANI AHMED ISSA**

Age: 38

Region: Sanabis

Type of injury: a rubber bullet from a distance of two meters and a weapon used in the injury: rubber bullets and tear gas Scene : Sanabis near Dana Mall, Bahrain Details of the incident

After the call for the day of rage in Bahrain on February 14, 2011 I went on a peaceful march with my ten-year-old son. When we arrived near Dana's Mall roundabout there were a large number of riot police who prevented us from progressing to Pearl Square as planned. When we insisted the riot police descended on us from a very close distance

not exceeding six meters with a barrage of rubber bullets and tear gas. Many women and children collapsed. A tear gas canister landed near my son, he stopped breathing and seemed to be dying. The second road was also covered in gas so that is why I took the road near the forces and the distance between me and them was about 30 meters. He could not cry due to the severity of the shock.

A car driven by a woman appeared and I asked her to help. I told her to take my son and I would follow her later.

My son went with the woman and he was crying from pain. I gave her my phone number to tell me about the place where they will stay and I went back near the march in the opposite direction in the same street where the troops were. The march lasted for more than an hour. An intelligence man shouted at me to go to the place where the young people were standing. I told him I could not due to the shooting. Suddenly five of the riot police sped towards me and fired directly at me from a distance of two meters. The bullet hit me directly on the femur and due to the intensity of the blast I fell down unconscious for several minutes. The riot police circled around me screaming at me to get up. I could not walk or talk and was only communicating with hand movements but instead of taking me to hospital they started kicking me and humiliating and abusing me verbally. It was a main road full of cars. One of the woman noticed me while they were kicking me and saw me fall on the ground unconscious. The woman thought I was dead. She came towards me quickly screaming at them saying you killed my brother. One of the riot police said to her we came to help him, look at this car if we did not stop it, the car would have killed him. I was partially unconscious.

I heard little around me. The woman tried to lift me up but the riot police were firing tear gas bullets. The bullets suffocated me and the woman. I tried with help from the woman to stand up and to walk but I did not know where to and was having difficulty in breathing. The woman took me near a car and the driver was scared because the riot police came to him and told him to move or they would kill him. The driver drove his car and left me behind. The woman came



back to me with another woman and they called the ambulance, but the ambulance was not able to come to this area because the police were preventing them even though they knew many people had been injured.

After one hour and a half one of the brothers took me home and again we called the ambulance but they apologized they were not able to come. Then my cousins took me to the emergency department by an indirect route because of check points on the main road. In the emergency department there were many injured people. I was ill for two days from my injuries and could not go to work at Batelco.

The company noticed since 14 February 2011 that many of the staff were absent from work. The managers had a meeting with the staff to study the absences. Some of the staff asked for vacation, others asked for leave of absence. The government asked companies to punish everyone who was absent from work since 14th February and the day of the general strike so I'm now jobless and unemployed. I hope I have not overlooked anything in the narrative of the events. Thank you o people of the Diaspora for helping your brothers in Bahrain.

With our cooperation we will defeat the occupiers and the invaders and we will prove their crimes.

## **HASSAN AL KHABAZ**

Age : 18 years

Injured by live ammunition on the left thigh and a very sensitive place and on the leg. Other serious injuries were sustained when the stomach was stamped on and the spleen was removed in Salmanya hospital

Another injury occurred to the right leg and below the knee. It was treated with tissue taken from other part of the body. After one week the cosmetic operation had been done to alleviate scarring and deformities.

The injuries are documented with photos and videos. They were taken in Sitra Health Centre before the patient was taken by ambulance to the hospital.

## **NABIL HASSAN ALI AL KHAM**

Phone Number: 00973-39-533-856

Email: na.ha.al.kh @ gmail.com

ID Number: 820804193

Age: 28

On March 15, 2011 at 12:00 pm there was a brutal attack on Sitra City. Ahmed Issa al-Farhan was killed on this day, when the attack continued until 6:00 pm. I went to the Salmaniya Medical Centre at 10:00 pm, where I saw all the injured from all the villages. Later in the day I received a call from my older brother telling me not to come back to Sitra as there were checkpoints in all the roads and people were being detained on Sitra Bridge. I spent the whole night in the hospital's car park.

In the early morning two hours before morning prayers I heard there had been an attack on Pearl Square, so I went there with some people. When we arrived we saw smoke from tear gas and burning tents rising strongly, and the women and children trying to move but the density of the tear gas prevented them from doing so. The youth dispersed around Pearl Square so as not to stifle women and children. We parked our car behind the Abraj Al Lulu. I got out of the car. It was 7:45 am. I was aware of the use of asphyxiating gases and there was shooting.

The first thing that hit me was the shell from a stun grenade. I was hit in the stomach but before it exploded I moved quickly and fell on my left shoulder. I'm still in pain from that injury. I felt warm blood falling down on my face. I tried to return to my car but I was hit on my back, head and hands.

I was transferred by car to a nearby area and some lead shotgun pellets which are internationally prohibited were removed from my body. There was one near my eye and the nurse was scared to remove it. I told the youth why don't we go to the hospital in SMC but many injured people were there. Someone asked me to go to his house to reduce the numbers at the place of treatment.

I went with the man and because I was very tired slept for about one hour. After I woke up I felt a severe pain in the eye. It was very red and I was transferred to a nearby hospital. A female doctor saw me and wrote a report about my case. I was taken to the International Hospital and there I saw Mr. Hassan Mushaima and I heard the news of the martyrdom of two young people. Some of the outside doors were broken and the injured were attacked.

I waited for a long time because the doctor was in the operating room, and then the doctor came to examine my situation and decided I should go to SMC. I told him that the hospital is under siege. He replied that the military administration allowed us to leave. I agreed. There were three people in the ambulance. I was the fourth. Two doctors came with us. The people in the ambulance were seriously injured. A man in his forties was wounded by live ammunition with injuries all over his body and his face. The second man had been shot with live bullets which entered through his thigh and exited from his back. Another man was shot in the abdomen with live bullets.

Although the distance is very short between the International Hospital and Salmaniya Medical Centre the ambulance took more than an hour to get to the hospital, and when we reached the outer gate, the voice of a Saudi man from the Peninsula Shield Force asked the driver who was in the ambulance. He replied injured people, and was asked to open the back door.

I was insulted with the words "you do not want the King, you want Mushaima to be your king, if you do not like our king go to Iran ". We entered the hospital through the back door.

Dr. Asamahigi examined my eyes. He is an ophthalmology specialist and he told me that the shot did not penetrate my eye, but it stayed between the eyelid and the eye and redness was caused by the pellet powder. I stayed in Salmaniya Medical Centre for three days when, Dr. Ali Al-Ekry and Dr. Kholood were arrested. When I was in the hospital, and the crisis was bad the doctor advised me to be discharged. I left the hospital and saw the riot police in the car park and at least five check points. Thank God I reached home safely. Until

today the bullet fragments are still in my eye.

The following testimonies are reprinted with permission from Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

### YASSIN MUSHAIMA

On December 20, 2008, Yassin Mushaima, an unemployed single 21-year-old, went to the NSA headquarters at the Manama Police Fort after learning that security forces had been looking for him at his home. There, officers arrested Mushaima and interrogated him about pipes that they said he used for bomb-making. Mushaima was also questioned as to whether prominent Shia opposition leaders—specifically, Hassan Mushaima and Shaikh Muhammad Habib al-Moqdad—were funding illegal activities.

“I was standing with my hands cuffed in front of me,” Mushaima said. “They said I should confess or they would hit me. I heard something that sounded like a bug zapper; they were trying to frighten me. They put a device on my hand for a second which made me shiver.”

Mushaima reported that after 10 to 15 minutes of additional questioning, the officers applied the device to his stomach, causing him to fall. “They kicked me until I stood up and then they started slapping my face and hitting my legs,” he said. “Maybe 30 minutes later they put the device on my penis for just one shot. I was wearing pants, but it made me feel lost and numb.”

According to Mushaima, during an interrogation the following day, agents took off his clothes and put the electroshock device on his penis again.

Mushaima told Human Rights Watch that he was later taken to Dry Dock. There officers applied an electroshock device to his genitals and other parts of his body on four or five occasions during interrogations over the course of Mushaima’s first 15 days at the

facility.

Mushaima said that the electroshock devices left temporary dark marks on his hands, feet, chest, and penis. At a court hearing on February 22, Mushaima said, he told the judge that he was innocent and had been subjected to torture. According to Mushaima, the judge said he did not want to hear the details.

Mushaima was one of the Hujaira defendants whose purported confession was broadcast on Bahraini television. He claimed that an officer with an Egyptian accent told him that if he spoke with “the shaikh” he would be freed the next day. “They took me to a villa,” Mushaima told Human Rights Watch. “I sat down in one place but they said I should sit over in another place. They removed my blindfold. The shaikh was sitting across from me. He kept asking me to speak more loudly, although others in the room were speaking normally. The officers had told me what to say, so when he asked how I was being treated, I said, ‘Very good, OK.’ My face was swollen, and my shirt had sleeves to cover the scars. I only learned many days later that this was on television.”

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.28 & 29.

## MUHAMMAD AL HAMADI

Muhammad al-Hamadi is a 29-year-old single man who works as a hospital cashier. Security forces arrested him on December 16, 2008, at his home and took him to the CID compound in Adliya. Hamadi reported that at Adliya, officers with Egyptian accents (al-Hamadi was blindfolded, but said he recognized Egyptian accents) told him that he had been arrested because he was a bomb maker in a terrorist group. When al-Hamadi replied that he knew nothing about bomb making, one of the officers with an Egyptian accent said, “We’ll help you remember.”

“They ripped my pants and shirt, and tore off all my clothes,” al-Hamadi said. “They made me lie on my side on the floor. I was handcuffed and they held my legs down. An Egyptian was holding an electric device and he put it on my sexual parts. He put it on and off many times.” Al-Hamadi reported that the device was never placed on his body for more than a second or two.

Al-Hamadi said that, later, officers pulled his hands (still cuffed) in front of his knees, and secured a bar behind his knees. They put the ends of the bar on chairs so that al-Hamadi was suspended upside down. While asking him about the location of bombs, officers again applied the electroshock device.

Al-Hamadi reported that he was subjected to electroshock devices periodically during his first three days in detention. After approximately a week, he said, he was moved to Dry Dock. There he reported that an officer with the NSA applied an electroshock device to his genitals twice.

Al-Hamadi was another al-Hujaira defendant whose “confession” was broadcast on television. According to al-Hamadi, an officer came to him in Dry Dock and said, “You will meet an important person today. He will be your link to the king. You must admit that you made bombs and that Hassan Mushaima incited you to do it. Then, the king will amnesty you.”

Al-Hamadi said he was then brought to a “villa” in which he was introduced to the director of the NSA. Al-Hamadi said that the director then introduced him to a “shaikh” and instructed al-Hamadi to say that he had been involved with bomb making at the instigation of Hassan Mushaima, Shaikh Muhammad Habib al-Moqdad, and Abdul-Jalil al-Singace (all prominent opposition figures). Al-Hamadi said that he sat on a couch with the NSA director on one side of him and the shaikh on the other, repeating everything that the director told him to say.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.29 & 30.

## MUHSIN AL GASSAB

Muhsin al-Gassab, 32, works in human resources for a private company. He is married and has a daughter. On December 23, 2008, plainclothes security forces arrested al-Gassab at his home at 5:00am and took him in an unmarked car to Dry Dock; he said it was only after his family visited him a month later that he learned he was being held in the Dry Dock facility. "I asked where I was but they would not even tell me the time," he told Human Rights Watch.

In Dry Dock, an officer who said he was from the NSA questioned al-Gassab. "When I asked what this was about, the officer replied, 'You should tell me,'" al-Gassab said. He reported that most of the questioning concerned trips he had taken to Syria and Turkey; the officer asserted that he had received "terrorist training" in Syria. Al-Gassab said he was punched and beaten during the first interrogation session.

On one occasion, al-Gassab said, guards cuffed his hands behind his back and removed his clothing. "They stripped me completely naked except the blindfold," he said. "When I resisted them taking off my pants, they slapped me on the head until I stopped. Then I heard the sound of sparks, like when you use jumper cables to start a car." The guards applied an electroshock device to al-Gassab's genitals, hands, stomach, back, legs and feet. More specifically, the guards applied the device for a second before removing it and pausing for a moment. Then, they applied the device to another part of al-Gassab's body for a second before removing it again. On a few occasions, guards put the device on al-Gassab for several seconds, which caused him to fall. Al-Gassab reported that this pattern was repeated for what seemed like hours (with sporadic breaks) and that he was repeatedly told to confess to having trained in Syria. Al-Gassab said that his tormentors told him that others had already confessed. "There are people stronger than you who talked," al-Gassab said they told him. "If you don't you'll suffer the fate of those before you."

After this first session, according to al-Gassab, officers used the electroshock device on his arm several times on each of three

additional days. The device was not used following al- Gassab's first week of detention. Al-Gassab stated that the device left temporary black marks on his bicep, sternum, thigh, and penis.

Al-Gassab said that when officers took him to the Public Prosecution Office on his fourth day of detention, his blindfold was removed. "There I saw [myself in] a mirror for the first time," he said. "I had a swollen eye, all red, and dried blood around my nose." He said the prosecutor asked him if he had been beaten or subjected to abuse, and that he showed the prosecutor marks on his thigh from the electroshock device. The prosecutor agreed to a request from al-Gassab's lawyer for an examination by a forensic doctor. Al-Gassab said he saw the doctor several days later and that the doctor took photos of the marks on his body with a mobile phone. According to al-Gassab, the doctor said that the photos would be sent to the prosecutor, but al-Gassab does not believe that the photographs are in his official file. A report by a doctor with the Public Prosecution Office stated that al-Gassab had bruises on his leg and stomach as of December 27, 2008.<sup>109</sup>

Al-Gassab said he was held for about 100 days, all but the last 10 days in solitary confinement.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.30 & 31.

## **HASSAM JASEEM MOHAMMED MAKKI**

Hassan Makki is a married, 29 year-old father of one who had worked as a bus driver prior to his arrest. It was Makki's brother, Ali, whose death on December 17, 2007, led to violent clashes between protestors and security forces in Jidhafs and other Shia villages and neighbourhoods.

On December 18, 2008, Makki went to see his lawyer after learning that security forces had been looking for him; he was arrested before reaching his lawyer's office. Security forces took Makki to the NSA



headquarters at the Manama Police Fort.

According to Makki, officers at the Police Fort taunted him upon his arrival, saying, "Welcome to the brother of the martyr." The officers handcuffed and blindfolded Makki before removing his clothes. They then applied an electroshock device to his genitals for a second or two before removing it. This process was repeated for several minutes before two officers with Egyptian accents told Makki to confess.

Makki reported that over the next two days agents applied the electroshock device to him intermittently during sessions that typically lasted 10 minutes, usually focusing on the genitals.

The agents continually asked about the location of bombs while applying the device. Makki reported that after two days he was taken to Dry Dock, where officers applied the electroshock device every day or two, generally over the course of five-minute periods with an hour's break in between. The device left temporary black marks on his penis, Makki said.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.30 & 31.

## NAJI FATEEL

Naji Fateel is a 35 year-old, married father of three who earns a living by performing maintenance work. Fateel was arrested on December 21, 2007 at his home at 8:00 am. Officers took Fateel to Adliya, where they forced him to stand in the CID compound's yard until 7:00 pm.

Later authorities moved Fateel to an office where he encountered Isa al-Majali. Al- Majali accused him of setting fire to a Special Forces jeep and stealing a weapon from the vehicle during the December 21 Jidhafs clashes. Fateel denied the accusations. According to Fateel, al-Majali "started calm, but then got angry." Two agents, who Fateel said had been standing behind him, kicked him in the back of the knee and the lower back, and punched him. Then, he said, they used two separate devices to inflict electroshocks on his torso and neck; one of

the devices had the shape of a stick, he said, and the other looked like an electric shaver with two small electrodes sticking out of it. Fateel reported that the agents applied the devices to him in response to subtle signs that al-Majali made, such as moving an ashtray on his desk. Later that evening, while Fateel was suspended from the ceiling officers applied an electroshock device to him with a particular emphasis on his genitals. Fateel lost consciousness at times during this episode. According to Fateel, the electroshock device left temporary burn marks on his body.

Fateel told Human Rights Watch that officers took him to the Public Prosecution Office around midnight on the day of his arrest. He reported that he met for approximately an hour with a prosecutor who questioned him about the burning of a police jeep and the alleged theft of a weapon in Jidhafs. Fateel told the prosecutor about the abuse that he had suffered. A medical examiner in the Public Prosecution Office examined Fateel approximately a week after he had first been detained. According to Fateel, during this 10-minute examination the doctor saw burn marks from an electroshock device, but said simply that they were minor injuries. The doctor did not comment on the bruises and swelling that Fateel said were evident on his face at the time.

Naji Fateel told Human Rights Watch that after he was subjected to an electroshock device following his December 2007 arrest, as discussed above, guards blindfolded him and brought him to a room. There, they kicked and punched him until he was bleeding. "Then they handcuffed me and attached my handcuffs to a rope that was hanging down," Fateel said. "They pulled me off the ground so my feet were not touching." Fateel reported that guards hit him with a baton and employed an electroshock device while he was suspended. "They kept telling me to cooperate," Fateel elaborated. "Later they took me back to Isa al- Majali's office and I sat down. I couldn't stand because of the pain. Al-Majali told me to sign a paper. I said I wanted to read it, but al-Majali said, 'No.' Eventually, I signed it during that meeting."

Fateel told Human Rights Watch that doctors from Salmaniyya

Hospital examined him four months later, after he had appeared in court. Human Rights Watch reviewed the report submitted to the court by Ministry of Health doctors from Salmaniyya Hospital, which stated that Fateel suffered from limited shoulder mobility and pain that “confirmed [Fateel’s] claims of being hung from the ceiling, as such symptoms are rare at that age except when the patient is exposed to such an injury.” The doctors also wrote that there were dark bruises on Fateel’s legs that could have resulted from beatings.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.32 & 33.

### **MUHAMMAD MAKKI HAMAD**

Muhammad Hamad, a 20-year-old unemployed high-school graduate from Sanabis, told Human Rights Watch that he had been active with the Unemployment and Low Income Committee. He told Human Rights Watch that he was arrested at about 3:00 am on December 24, 2007, and detained for approximately seven months. He said that during interrogation sessions in the initial period of his detention security officials badly beat him. On the second night of his detention, he said, while he was suspended naked by his wrists, officers subjected him to an electroshock device, applying the device to his underarms and his penis. Hamad said that one officer who appeared to be in charge, a captain with the CID, had also been among the group of officers who arrested him and beat him while transporting him to the CID compound. Hamad told Human Rights Watch that the same man participated in the interrogation session, although he did not think he was present during the electroshock torture.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.33.

## AHMED MUHAMMAD

Ahmad Muhammad, 35, is married with two daughters. He does administrative work for a major international bank. He told Human Rights Watch that Special Security Forces arrested him in the early morning hours of December 28, 2007, and brought him to the CID compound in Adliya. There, Muhammad was blindfolded before being taken to a dark room where someone told him that he had no rights under unspecified new terrorism laws in Bahrain. Someone else said to Muhammad, who was working as a clerk in the Interior Ministry at the time, "You work for us, but really you are against us."

According to Muhammad, guards took him to another room and placed pieces of cloth around his wrists before placing handcuffs on the pieces of cloth and cuffing his hands in front of him. Muhammad said that the guards then lifted him and put the chain of the handcuffs over an object above his head that he believes was a pipe. When the guards released Muhammad, he was fully suspended in the air. Muhammad estimates that he remained suspended for 10 to 15 minutes while officers hit him with what felt like a rubber hose and kicked him. "I was moving frantically because of the pain in my wrists and shoulder," Muhammad said. "I bloodied my toes kicking them against the wall without shoes on. They still hurt now." One of the guards or interrogators told Muhammad to disclose the whereabouts of "the gun." Muhammad said that he knew nothing about a weapon.

Eventually, the guards lowered Muhammad to the floor and brought him to an office, where his blindfold was removed. A supervisory officer asked, "Was that enough to talk about the rifle?" When Muhammad said again that he knew nothing about a weapon, guards took him back to the same room and suspended him in the same way. Later that night, guards took Muhammad to a stairwell where they cuffed his hands (with no cloth) and placed the chain of the handcuffs over a rail above his head. Muhammad, who could barely touch the floor, estimates that he remained in this position for an hour.

Muhammad told Human Rights Watch that officers brought him to the Public Prosecution Office after midnight, approximately 24 hours following his arrest. There he met with Wael Boualay, a prosecutor. According to Muhammad, Boualay accused him of having stolen a rifle from a police car after threatening a police officer who was in the car with a machete, causing the officer to flee. Muhammad asked how he could have threatened an armed officer, allegedly before he stole the gun at issue. Boualay simply repeated the accusations, Muhammad said. Muhammad told Boualay that he had been suspended off the floor and showed Boualay a bruise on his leg that he said was the result of being kicked. Boualay had no response. After a meeting that lasted several hours, Muhammad signed a statement without reading it, feeling that he had no choice but to sign.

Muhammad told Human Rights Watch that at the first court proceeding in the Jidhafs case, he and others related the abuses they had suffered to the court. Ministry of Health doctors later examined Muhammad upon the court's direction and found healed wounds on Muhammad's wrist that they concluded could have resulted from pressure applied by handcuffs.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.35 & 36.

### **AHMED ABD AL HADI**

On December 22, 2007, security forces arrested Ahmad Abd al-Hadi, then 17 years old; at the time Human Rights Watch spoke with him, Abd al-Hadi was 19 and had just finished high school. Abd al-Hadi had been in detention for approximately five days when he was taken outside at the CID compound (after being subjected to electroshocks). There, he said, an officer asked him where "the gun" was and he replied that he did not know. Someone then told Abd al-Hadi, "I advise you to confess before you hang, because people

cannot bear it.” When Abd al-Hadi said that he had nothing to confess, the officer told him, “If you bring me the gun, I will take you to your examination [for high school] tomorrow.” Abd al-Hadi said that he would disclose information if he had any.

Abd al-Hadi stated that the guards then took him inside to a stairwell. They cuffed his hands after wrapping pieces of cloth around his wrists. They made him stand on a chair, and someone reaching from above pulled his hands over his head before attaching a second pair of cuffs to those Abd al-Hadi was already wearing. The guards then attached the second pair to a handrail on the stairs. A guard said, “This is your last chance.”

Someone kicked the chair away and Abd al-Hadi was suspended in the air with his feet not touching ground. When he screamed “Get me down,” a guard hit him in the stomach, saying “Don’t yell. Tell me where the gun is.” Abd al-Hadi screamed in pain nonetheless. After a few minutes, he said, guards detached the cuffs from the rail and he fell to the ground. A few moments after that, the guards suspended Abd al-Hadi again in the same manner, this time for perhaps 10 minutes. They repeated the process a third time after which Abd al-Hadi overheard someone say, “If he had anything to say, he would have said it.” Guards then took Abd al-Hadi to an office, where, he said, an officer remarked, “He doesn’t know anything.” Abd al-Hadi was not subjected to any significant abuse thereafter.

Abd al-Hadi told Human Rights Watch that during the Jidhafs case court proceedings in 2008 (and after approximately three-and-a-half months of detention), he was examined by a Dr. al- Arady and other physicians from the Ministry of Health. Abd al-Hadi said that he reported the abuse he had suffered to these doctors, including the suspension and use of electroshock devices. According to Abd al-Hadi, Dr. al-Arady noted the pain in Abd al- Hadi’s joints and that Abd al-Hadi had a burn that was healing.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.36 & 37.

## MAYTHAM AL SHAIKH

Maytham al-Shaikh, a 33-year-old married father of two, worked as a safety officer for a construction company until he was arrested by CID forces in his father's home at approximately 4:00 am on December 21, 2007. Officers brought al-Shaikh to CID headquarters at Adliya upon his arrest; after four days, he was told that he was being charged with stealing an assault rifle from a police car.

Shortly after al-Shaikh's arrival in Adliya, guards took him to a stairwell. They placed his handcuffs on a rail above his head and let him hang in the air for what he said felt like hours. Al-Shaikh reported that when he was released he had no feeling in his hands. Guards repeated this process later that day.

Al-Shaikh said that officers took him to the Public Prosecution Office at 4:00 am on the fourth day of his detention (and after he had been subjected to electroshock devices and suspension, as discussed above, as well as beatings, as will be discussed below). There, al-Shaikh met with Ahmad Bucceri, a prosecutor. Al-Shaikh said he requested a lawyer, but Bucceri told him that no lawyer was available and began questioning him about events in Jidhafs. According to al-Shaikh, when he said that he had not been at the protests, Bucceri told him to sign a paper, without allowing him to read it.

When al-Shaikh attempted instead to describe the abuses he had suffered, he said Bucceri responded, "Do not tell me about that." Al-Shaikh was then taken to another room where officers beat his stomach, his back, and the back of his head with their hands and feet; according to al-Shaikh the officers seemed to take care not to hit his face. The officers returned al-Shaikh to Bucceri's office. Bucceri smiled and pointed to the paper. Al-Shaikh signed the document, which he said contained false information, in the hope of avoiding further abuse. Al-Shaikh was made to stand near a wall in the CID compound after returning there and to his surprise—in light of his "confession"—guards periodically hit him as they walked by.

Al-Shaikh said that an Egyptian doctor working for the Public Prosecution Office examined him approximately one month after he

was arrested. Al-Shaikh told the doctor about having been suspended. According to al-Shaikh, the doctor said, “Bahrainis learned about hanging from the Egyptians.” The doctor told al-Shaikh that he had injuries consistent with being suspended.

Al-Shaikh also reported to Human Rights Watch that during the Jidhafs case proceedings, his lawyers requested an independent medical examination, which the court ordered to be conducted. Ministry of Health doctors concluded in a written report provided to the court that al-Shaikh had a “circular bruise around the wrists, probably caused by handcuffs around the wrists, and pressure on them during hanging.” In addition, X-rays found a sprain in al-Shaikh’s left shoulder joint.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.38 & 39.

## ISA ABDULLAH ISA

Isa Abdullah Isa is a married 27-year-old with one son. He works as a courier for a private company.

Security forces arrested Isa at a roadblock on December 23, 2007, and took him to CID headquarters. Isa told Human Rights Watch that at one point guards took him to a “portacabin” where they tightly wrapped strips of blanket around his wrists and bound his hands closely together using a third strip of blanket; they then attached a metal handcuff to the piece of blanket binding his hands together. Two guards then lifted Isa so that he was standing on a chair.

One guard attached the open cuff to a metal bar on the stairs and another guard kicked the chair away. They suspended Isa for a period that he estimated to be 30 minutes, during which they swung his body back and forth. After releasing him, guards made Isa run in circles and move his fingers to get his blood circulating. They then repeated the process.

The next day, Isa said, he was suspended again. During this episode,



a guard told him, “We want you to go inside and say, ‘Yes, I gave him the weapon.’” Guards then took Isa to a room where he heard the sobbing voice of a person he knew. According to Isa, an officer said, “Isa, tell me about this person.” Isa reported that he replied, “I saw him take the weapon from the car,” falsely implicating his friend because he simply “needed to rest” and intended to retract his statement later.

Isa told Human Rights Watch that a doctor with the Ministry of Interior examined him towards the end of December 2007. According to Isa, the doctor must have observed a number of injuries to Isa’s face and body, but said nothing. At the end of February 2008, Isa reported, a doctor with an Egyptian accent working for the Public Prosecution Office examined him for approximately five minutes. Isa said that this doctor must have observed various scars and bruises, but told Isa that he saw nothing.

Isa said that doctors from Salmaniyya Hospital, including Dr. al-Arady, examined him at the court’s direction toward the end of March 2008; Isa noted that three weeks passed between the court’s mandating the exam and the actual exam. In contrast to the findings of the doctors who had examined Isa earlier, the Ministry of Health doctors testified during the trial of the Jidhafs case that they had observed injuries to Isa’s person that could have been caused by the abuse that he alleged. A report written by these doctors noted that Isa had circular wounds to his left wrist and concluded that those wounds “could have been caused by handcuff pressure.” The report also stated that Isa’s “shoulder pain and stiffening, and wounds around the wrist may indicate that [he had] been hung from his wrists to the roof.” At the time of his interview with Human Rights Watch, Isa had visible scars on his wrist that he attributed to having been suspended in this manner.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.40 & 41.

## ALI MUHAMMED ALI ASHOOR

Ali Ashoor is a married 30 year-old who is presently unemployed. He was detained at his home on April 9, 2008, at 3:00 am. Authorities at CID headquarters in Adliya interrogated Ashoor with regard to the alleged arson attack on a farm in Karzakan that belonged to the former head of the NSA.

Eventually, Ashoor told Human Rights Watch, guards took him to a stairwell with high ceilings where they wrapped his wrists together with strips of cloth and attached one loop of a set of handcuffs to the cloth. The guards put Ashoor on a chair and attached the second loop of the handcuffs to something in the ceiling. Ashoor said that the guards kicked the chair away, leaving him suspended in the air with his feet not touching the ground. Ashoor said that a guard hung on him to increase the weight on his arms and wrists, and beat him with a stick in the area of his kidneys and on his toes. After a second suspension episode, Ashoor told Human Rights Watch, he was “ready to sign anything.” He then confessed to setting the fire and to a range of related details that were provided to him by an officer who, he said, introduced himself as Isa al-Majali.

Ashoor was taken at around midnight to the Public Prosecution Office where he met with prosecutor Ahmad Bucceri. Ashoor said that he told Bucceri that he had been beaten and Bucceri replied, “It’s good that they did that. Just shut up.” Ashoor asked for a lawyer and Bucceri said that the hour was too late for a lawyer to come. Bucceri then read from a document that contained statements similar to those Ashoor had made at the CID compound. Ashoor signed the document.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.41 & 42.

## SADIADNAN

Said Adnan, 28, was returning from work on March 27, 2008 (it was his second day as a bus driver), when security forces called him and told him to report to a local police station. There, two CID officers pulled Adnan's shirt over his head and handcuffed him before driving him to CID headquarters at around 9:00 pm.

Adnan told Human Rights Watch that on the first day of his detention guards tied his hands together with cloth in the manner described by Isa and Ashoor, made him stand on a chair, and then suspended him. "My arms were being pulled up in a way that made me feel like I was choking," he said. "Someone saw that I was having trouble breathing and quickly said to get me down."

Adnan said that guards then brought him outside. According to Adnan, a supervisory officer approached him and said, "Confess or you will not be able to cope." Adnan replied, "Tell me what to say and I will confess." When the officer said that he wanted to know about Adnan's role in the arson at the farm in Karzakan, Adnan replied, "I don't have anything I can say."

Adnan told Human Rights Watch that the officer responded, "Take him back inside." "They suspended me again in the same way," Adnan said. "I screamed and cried. I felt hopeless. I said, 'Tell me what you want,' and they took me down." Adnan reported that the supervisory officer came to him a few minutes later and said, "You know what you have to confess about."

Adnan told Human Rights Watch that the following day officers brought him to see Ahmad Bucceri at the Public Prosecution Office. Adnan said that he told Bucceri about some of the abuse that he had suffered. Bucceri told Adnan that someone had confessed to the arson and also implicated Adnan. Guards then brought in a man whom Adnan knew from Karzakan. This man said that he had telephoned Adnan to make arrangements for starting the fire, that he and Adnan had brought gas to the farm, and that they had broken a lock on a gate to facilitate the entry of co-conspirators. When Adnan said he had never spoken to this man on the telephone, Bucceri countered that

he had a recording of the conversation. Adnan said that he replied, "Bring the recording now and I will confess." In response, Bucceri said, "You call yourself a man. Go back to CID for three days and if you can withstand it, I will call you a man."

Adnan said that officers brought him back to CID and that on the fifth day of his detention, and after being suspended repeatedly, he confessed to starting the fire. According to Adnan, he was brought again to the Public Prosecution Office where he signed a confession.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.42 & 43.

### NADIR ALI H AMED AL SALANTE

Nadr al-Salatne, 36, works for a private interior design company. Security forces arrested him at his home on December 23, 2007 at 2:30 am. While officers drove al-Salatne to CID headquarters in Adliya, one said to him, "You should be a Sunni, not a kafir." At Adliya, an officer asked al-Salatne about the location of "the gun," saying that others had already given statements indicating that al-Salatne had it. When al-Salatne said he did not know anything about a gun, the officer told him, "You Shia want to change the government, but we're going back to the 1990s."

According to al-Salatne, guards brought him to a room. "They made me lie face down," al-Salatne said. "They tied my ankles and wrists together behind my back and put a bar through my arms.

They lifted me off the ground—I was screaming. They said, 'Now, you will talk,' but I lost consciousness." Al-Salatne said he awoke on the ground when someone threw water on him. He reported that during his first seven days of detention, all of them at CID headquarters, guards suspended him in this manner approximately five more times. On one occasion, they suspended him by putting a bar under his knees and then lifting it up. Al-Salatne told Human Rights Watch that on the third day of his detention, officers took

him to the Public Prosecution Office at around noon where he met with a prosecutor, Ahmad Bucceri. Al-Salatne asked for a lawyer, but Bucceri replied that no lawyer had come to represent al-Salatne (echoing comments attributed to Bucceri by Maytham al-Shaikh and Ali Ashoor). Bucceri told al-Salatne that he had been identified by others as one of the Jidhafs demonstrators and asked al-Salatne about the Bahraini Youth Society for Human Rights (of which al-Salatne is a member) and the Haq Movement. Al-Salatne said that he reported the abuse he had suffered to Bucceri, who cut him off, saying, “I’m not interested.” After approximately 21 days in detention, authorities released al-Salatne without charge; al-Salatne never appeared in court or reported his abuse to judicial authorities.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.43 & 44.

## MUHAMMED ABDULLAH AL SINGACE

Muhammad al-Singace, 44, is a chemical technician with the Ministry of Works. He told Human Rights Watch that security forces arrested him at his father’s house on December 27, 2007, several nights after the incident in Jidhafs village. Al-Singace said that he was blindfolded and handcuffed upon his arrest, and taken to CID headquarters in Adliya where officers questioned him about the whereabouts of the gun that had reportedly been taken by protestors. Al-Singace said that the police claimed to have found a box of ammunition when they later searched his house; according to al-Singace, the authorities had planted it there. For the first several nights his captors forced him to stand, and handcuffed him in a way that made it painful to sit.

On the third night of his detention, al-Singace said, officers took him into a room where they bound his hands in front of his knees in a sitting position and then hoisted him off the ground with a stick placed behind his knees—he referred to it as the “parrot” position. The officers beat the soles of his feet with a stick for approximately

half an hour. Guards then made him stand against a wall, despite his numb and swollen legs, and several times kicked him when he slumped to the ground.

The following night, he said, guards took him to an upstairs room, laid him on his stomach, and bound his arms and legs together behind his back, causing excruciating pain. On the fifth night, he said, he was again brought upstairs and suspended for about 15 minutes by his arms, which were pulled up behind him. Before and after these sessions, he said, officers questioned him about his activities and the whereabouts of the allegedly missing gun. On the sixth night, al-Singace reported, he was brought to the Public Prosecution Office. There, he acknowledged being at the site of the Jidhafs protest, but said that he knew nothing about the gun or any ammunition.

Al-Singace told Human Rights Watch that prior to his first court appearance he was kept mostly in solitary confinement. His lawyers raised his torture complaints at the hearings, he said, and the judge ordered that he get a forensic medical examination at Salmaniyya Hospital. He received a five-year prison term that was suspended with the king's pardon of April 11, 2009. Al-Singace said he was unable to return to his job until he signed a commitment to halt all involvement in political protests.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.45.

## MOHAMMED MAKKI HAMAD

Muhammad Hamad told Human Rights Watch that officers beat him with fists and sticks when arresting him, hitting him in the groin and face while demanding that he “surrender the weapon.” At CID headquarters, he said, guards took him to the office of a supervisory officer. The officer questioned him for perhaps 10 minutes; each time Hamad denied having or knowing the whereabouts of “the gun,” someone slapped him on the head from behind. Then, Hamad said,

the officer and others took him out to a paved yard where they forced him to kneel. The officer said to him, "Just confess to where the weapon is. Otherwise these guys will hurt you." Someone kicked Hamad, knocking him over. Someone else ran at him and kicked him in the jaw, causing his mouth to bleed. "They took me to the clinic there in the headquarters and stopped the bleeding," Hamad said, "and then took me outside again. It was very cold and I only was dressed in a T-shirt. I had to stand in front of a wall blindfolded from 4 to 6 am."

Muhammad Hamad told Human Rights Watch that, on the second night of his detention at CID headquarters in Adliya in December 2007, guards took him to a stairwell connecting the ground floor with the second floor. The guards stripped him naked and removed a blindfold he had been wearing. They suspended him by a chain attached to his cuffed hands that was then attached also to a metal pipe or bar extended from a stair, he said. Hamad reported that he was suspended like this for what seemed to be nearly an hour. For about 10 minutes of this period, he said, an officer asked him about the whereabouts of the gun allegedly taken from the police car in the Jidhafs incident. Hamad said there were about 10 others present, wearing black masks and street clothes. Hamad said that in addition to subjecting him to electric shocks his captors beat him about the trunk of his body with rubber hoses.

"Then [the officer] came back and told them to take me down," he said. Later that night, Hamad said, he (like others) was forced to sign a piece of paper indicating that he had been at the Jidhafs demonstration and had taken the allegedly stolen gun. Hamad said that in a subsequent meeting with a prosecutor, he told the prosecutor of the torture, showing scars on his wrist, but the prosecutor wrote that he saw nothing wrong. When Hamad said the confession he had signed was false, the prosecutor tore it up. Hamad said that several officers then beat and kicked him in a courtyard.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.45.

## ALI SALMAN

Ali Salman, a 23 year-old law student at the University of Bahrain, is an activist with the Detainees' Committee. Salman told Human Rights Watch that authorities arrested him at his home at about 3 a.m. on February 4, 2008. When he arrived at CID headquarters in Adliya, he said, guards blindfolded him and beat him on the back of his head with their hands. Salman said he was forced to stand against a wall, blindfolded, for four days, except for periods when he was allowed to eat, pray, and use the bathroom. Salman's interrogation began on the fifth night. His questioners accused him of starting a fire on the property of a member of the ruling family, which he denied (this was an incident separate from and prior to the alleged arson attack near Karzakan in March 2008).

Salman told Human Rights Watch that around midnight Isa al-Majali said that he, al-Majali, had denied requests from other Civil Service Bureau referring to the requirement of an original copy of a Good Conduct Certificate from the Ministry of Interior-interrogators to subject Salman to rough treatment." I said, "No, let him speak," Salman quoted al-Majali as saying, "But now I say take him, I need to hear his shouts."

Several officers took Salman to a room where they made him stand on a chair. They removed his handcuffs, wrapped his wrists with strips of cloth, and bound his wrists together with another strip. They clasped one loop of a set of handcuffs to the strip binding Salman's wrists together and attached the other loop to the ceiling, about six inches above his head. "Then they kicked out the chair," Salman said. He reported that guards interrogated him while he was suspended for a period of between 15 and 30 minutes. "Whenever I said something they wanted to hear, the chair comes back. When not, the chair goes. This happened three times. Then they kicked the chair far away." When guards took him down,

Salman said, his hands were very swollen and one of his thumbs had turned black. He was told to flex his hands to regain circulation, and guards took him to see al-Majali. "I just said yes to all his



questions about the attack and I signed the statement,” Salman said. When officers took him to the Public Prosecution Office the next night, Salman said, his hands were still swollen. There, he met with Hamad al-Buainain, a prosecutor, who, Salman claims, told him, “Say the same thing [as in the written statement] or go back to the same [treatment].” Regarding the abuse he suffered, Salman said, “I told him nothing, but he could see my hands. Still, he wrote, ‘No signs of abuse.’ I just gave him the answers he wanted.”

Approximately a week later, Salman said, he had his first court appearance and pleaded not guilty to the charge of starting the fire. When a judge asked why he had confessed, Salman described the torture he had suffered. On March 29, 2008, Salman was released. He told Human Rights Watch that he did not know whether he still faced charges in connection with the case.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.46 & p47.

### **AHMED ABD AL HADI**

Ahmad Abd al-Hadi reported that on the day of his arrest, a supervisory CID officer showed him photographs of several people at the December 2007 Jidhafs protest who were wearing masks. The officer said that he knew one of them was Abd al-Hadi and if Abd al-Hadi did not confess to being at the protest he would be taken to the “black room.” Abd al-Hadi said that he had not been at the protest and the officer ordered him taken to another room.

There, at the direction of the same supervisory officer, guards made the blindfolded Abd al- Hadi lie on his stomach. They bound his ankles together and tied them behind his back to handcuffs that were on his wrists. Then Abd al-Hadi felt his feet, which were bare, being beaten while the supervisory officer urged him to confess to having been at the protest. After perhaps five minutes, Abd al-Hadi could not bear the pain and yelled, “Stop, I’ll talk.” He said that while he had not

gone to the protest, he had visited the family of Ali Jassim Makki, the protestor who had died on December 17, 2007. The supervisory officer replied, "You think I will accept only that?" and the beating on Abd al-Hadi's feet began again. Abd al-Hadi cried out that he had seen Abd al-Hadi al-Khawaja speak at the protest, and the beating stopped again. Guards untied Abd al-Hadi's ankles from his handcuffs, leaving him lying cuffed on the floor.

Abd al-Hadi told Human Rights Watch that, later the same night, he was taken to the Public Prosecution Office where he met with a prosecutor. The prosecutor asked for Abd al-Hadi's age and Abd al-Hadi replied that he was 17 years-old. The prosecutor showed Abd al-Hadi a document, saying, "This paper says that you were at the Jidhafs protests." Abd al-Hadi said he "told the police that because they were beating me." The prosecutor repeated that Abd al-Hadi had confessed and said, "If you don't tell the truth here you will go back to CID and then you will return to me and tell the truth."

Abd al-Hadi told Human Rights Watch that after this threat was repeated, he said to the prosecutor that he had been at the protests. The prosecutor then gave Abd al-Hadi a list of names and asked Abd al-Hadi whether he knew any of them. When Abd al-Hadi said that he only knew one, the prosecutor said, "This is your last chance or you will go back to Adliya" After Abd al-Hadi insisted that he did not know the others, officers brought him back to CID headquarters. There Abd al-Hadi said he was subjected to additional beatings, electroshock devices and suspension.

Source: Human Rights Watch, *Torture Redux. The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010.

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>, p.50 & p51.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Into the Abyss:

#### The Saudi occupation: repression and autocratic rule

Since the arrival of the Saudi soldiers life in Shia villages and suburbs of Manama has been one of nonstop intimidation, violence and threats. The protests against the occupation and continued repression continued nevertheless with the night time shouting of slogans from rooftops, candle vigils, weekly marches after Friday prayers and civil disobedience tactics wherever possible.

The British Ministry of Defense admitted that members of the Saudi National Guard dispatched to Bahrain may have received military training from the British Armed Forces in Saudi Arabia. In a written parliamentary answer the British Armed Forces minister Nick Harvey said the government could not rule out the possibility that British-trained Saudis took part in the Bahraini operation.

Demonstrations have taken place in support of the Bahrainis in Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Kuwait. Saudi Shias in the eastern province also demonstrated in support of their Bahraini co-religionists. Iranian students attacked the Saudi embassy with firebombs. Bahrain expelled Arab nationals sympathetic to the protesters including 16 Lebanese. Controversial Iraqi politician Dr Ahmed Chelabi attempted to draw attention to the plight of Bahrain's Shias by sailing a cargo ship loaded with Iraqi doctors, nurses and medicine into Bahrain's waters but the departure of the ship was blocked by Iraq's prime minister, Nouri Al-Maliki. In November 2011 pilgrims in the Iraqi holy city of Kerbala demonstrated against Bahrain's continuing crackdown on protesters.

A resident from one of the villages near Manama described his ordeal. "One night about 7.30pm I parked my car in front of my father-in-law's house and walked towards the door, when at least 50 armed men and masked thugs - they were not in security forces uniform - appeared from one of the village lanes and told me to stop, pointing their shot guns at me. I ran away and they followed but I managed to hide in one of the houses and they did not see me.

"I heard them talking to each other saying, Don't worry, we will find him." I was taking a look from the window and they stayed in the car park opposite the house I was hiding in and they were smashing the windows of parked cars and were stealing from them. Some had Saudi accents: they are very different from Bahraini and easy to tell.

"At 8:00pm most nights people go up on their roofs and chant Allahu Akbar [God is greatest] and the thugs start shooting randomly in the air and at the top of the roofs. That night the area was covered with tear-gas grenades and rubber bullets while the roads around the houses were deserted except for thugs.

"Later that night (I was unable to leave the house I was in) we heard a group of people, 100 or more, chanting : "Bahrain is free, Gulf Shield out". I was watching from the rooftop when the riot police ran in from a main road and started shooting rubber bullets and tear-gas cartridges. I hid inside the house while the demonstrators ran away from the shooting and in 30 minutes I saw riot police with armed civilians among them, roaming around the lanes and roads by the house I was hiding in.

"They managed to catch two people, aged no more than 30 and were beating them up badly swearing at them all the time and cursing the Shia clerics saying: "Where is Al- Khomeini now? Where is Al-Sistani, you Shia dogs?" They took them away. I managed to take a photograph of the blood on the floor after the beating - there was so much. I am sure the man they were beating must have died.

"The security forces can tell the Shias from Sunnis because of the birth town shown on the ID cards, and also sometimes by the name. I get stopped and searched at many checkpoints and I am always asked

the same questions: “Are you Shia? Were you at Lulu Square?” (Pearl Roundabout) and all kinds of other sectarian questions.

“At the checkpoint by Bahrain Mall, which is the entrance to the village of Daih, the man in charge had a Saudi accent but he was masked in civilian clothes with an automatic rifle. My ID card was taken away by another officer to check my name against a list. They have pictures and names of all the people at Lulu and on the demonstrations and have posted them on facebook with notices saying: “Bring these people to justice, they are guilty people”.

“There are raids into villages every night. It’s punishment creating a state of fear so that no one will stick out their head and raise their voice”, said Joe Stork Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Human Rights Watch.

On April 9th the Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa said that he would continue to be firm on the principle that you cannot be lenient towards those who seek to divide our society into two camps. But it is the ruling family’s treatment of the Shias which is entrenching sectarian divisions and hatred.

The unrelenting campaign against the Shia has resulted in the destruction of at least 35 mosques and about 50 religious meeting houses. According to Mohammed Sadiq, of Justice for Bahrain, the most famous of the Shia shrines destroyed was that of the revered spiritual leader Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri who died in 2006. The golden dome of the shrine was demolished and taken away on the back of a lorry. Other Shia mosques have been defaced with graffiti praising King Hamad and insulting the Shias.

Yousif Al-Khoei, head of the Al Khoei Foundation, a charitable Shia organisation with offices in London said he could “confirm reports of desecration of Shia graves, shrines, mosques and hussainiyas (religious meeting houses) are genuine. The foundation is concerned that Saudi troops, who believe that shrines are un-Islamic are trying to enforce their Wahhabi doctrine on the Shia of Bahrain which will undoubtedly result in heightened sectarian tensions.

In Aali village, only bulldozed remains are left of the Amir

Mohammed Braigh Mosque which was more than 400 years old. In Nwaidrat the Mo'men Mosque was a handsome, square building painted in ochre, with white and green trim and a short portico. Today only the portico remains.

"When I was a child, I used to go and pray at the mosque with my grandfather", lamented 52-year-old Abu Hadi. "The area was totally green with tiers of sweet water wells".

Shia leaders told American-based McClatchy newspapers that demolitions were carried out almost daily with crews often arriving in the dead of night accompanied by police and military escorts.

Bahrain's Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah al-Khalifa said that the demolished mosques had been built illegally without permission. But in Aali the government once re-routed a highway to preserve the mosque.

The State Department said it was concerned by the destruction of religious sites and noted that the Bahraini government had international obligations to preserve the common cultural heritage.

On April 12th, 2011 almost a month after the Saudi invasion, Amnesty International said that the Bahraini authorities must urgently reveal the whereabouts of more than 500 mostly Shia opposition activists detained in recent weeks amid concerns about their safety and reports that at least three of them had died in custody.

In a statement on 16th April, the Bahrain Freedom Movement said that the plight of Karim Fakhrawi (49), a father of three summarised the tragedy that has befallen the people of Bahrain. He had been arrested ten days before his mutilated body was handed to his family on the condition that no one took pictures at the morgue. But some young people managed to photograph horrific wounds to the shoulders, eyes, nose, stomach and thighs. Fakhrawi was a well known man of literature who ran a chain of bookshops bearing his family's name.

Three tear gas canisters were thrown into the house of Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Human Rights Centre who posted photos on the internet in April of signs of torture on the body of Ali Issa Sager who died while imprisoned in mid-April.

Another martyr Sayyed Hameed Sayyed Mahfoodh (57) from Saar town had part of his neck cut, probably by a sword. Images of his wounds confirmed that Saudis may have been involved in his abduction and killing on April 5th.

Bahrain's Interior Ministry said that Ali Isa Saqer (31) died while guards tried to restrain him for 'causing chaos' "There was a big bruise on the left side of his head and possible burn marks on his ankles and wrists", said Daniel Williams a senior researcher with Human Rights Watch who viewed the body as it was being prepared for burial. "This looked much worse than anything I've seen", Mr Williams said referring to other cases in Bahrain of apparent lash marks seen on the backs of people detained at checkpoints.

Blogger Zakria Rashid Al-Asherri died in police custody on the same day as Saqer. Hundreds of mourners took part in his funeral procession and anti-riot police were deployed near the graveyard where he was buried while a police helicopter hovered overhead.

A leading human rights activist, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, was detained on April 10th with his two sons-in-law during a raid on his daughter's house where he was staying. Amnesty reported that he was assaulted before being taken away barefoot and denied access to his medication. In an account posted on her website, one of his daughters, Zeinab, described how her father was "grabbed by the neck, dragged down a flight of stairs and then beaten unconscious in front of her. He never raised his hand to resist them, and the only words he said were: 'I can't breathe'. Even after he was unconscious the masked men kept kicking and beating him while cursing and saying they were going to kill him. Zeinab went on a hunger strike, which she subsequently called off, to demand his release.

On April 16 prominent defence lawyer Mohammed Al-Tajer was arrested. Security officers confiscated personal items including laptops, mobile phones and documents. Speaking via skype to a seminar on Bahrain held in the House of Lords in London on 23rd August Al-Tajer said: "It was not clear what I was charged with. There were no charges but they detained me because of my role in defending

the other detainees. I was in Pearl Roundabout and made a speech on 20th February asking the government to free the political detainees. They said in this speech I had incited against the regime and I spread rumours about Bahrain and issued a false report which tarnished the reputation of Bahrain outside. When I went back to this speech I saw that most of what I had said was about the detainees and about torture. Whatever I talked about was what I had seen practically. I was tortured continuously for three weeks, even after the interrogation was completed. I was kept in solitary confinement for almost two months. Then they sent me to the military court on June 12th. The court issued a judgement against me. Decree No 62 was issued saying that all the papers should be sent to a civil court. Since then nothing has happened. They released me on August 2nd. Still I am suffering because of the detention. I have had an experience of what happened to the detainees who I had been defending”.

Mark Muller QC, Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales wrote to the king urging the release of Al-Tajer and to ‘put an end to investigations and other acts of harassment against lawyers defending clients involved in the protests in February 2011 and thereafter”.

Al Tajer is part of a group of Bahraini lawyers who defended opposition figures and human rights activists detained by the authorities during the past several years, including those picked up during the most recent security sweeps. He was one of the leading lawyers involved in the trial of 23 opposition and rights activists arrested in late August 2010 and accused under Bahrain’s counterterrorism law. The government released all 23 defendants on 23 February 2011 but re-arrested several of them after they continued to condemn human rights violations. Among those subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment were seven Shia opposition leaders including Hassan Mashaima, head of the Shia opposition Haq movement, Abdulwahab Hussein, who leads the Shia Wafa Islamic Movement, and Shia human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who is also a Danish citizen. Activist and Haq member Abduljalil al-Singace, who was released in



February after six months in jail, was also sentenced to life. On 29 September the national safety appeals court upheld their sentences.

Jail sentences against seven other activists, ranging from two to 15 years and including Sunni opposition leader Ibrahim Sharif, were also upheld by the national safety appeals court. Sharif, the Sunni leader of the Waed secular group, who played a prominent role pro- democracy protests, received a five-year sentence.

The Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights condemned the court's ruling. "We deeply regret the judgements," Khadija Sharif, the organisation's assistant secretary general, said after the rulings were handed down. Sharif said the convictions were "arbitrary" and "inequitable" and called on the Bahraini courts to release the prisoners.

Scores more activists are facing trial on charges linked to the protests in a semi- martial court set up under a "state of national safety" decreed by King Hamad a day before protesters were evicted from Pearl square in mid-March.

Demonstrations followed the life sentences imposed on the activists. The security forces used tear gas to drive back hundreds of marchers trying to reach Pearl Square. Demonstrations also took place in towns and villages such as Duraz, Bani Jamra, Sanabis, Sitra, Karzakkan and elsewhere.

Writing in the April 2011 issue of *Foreign Policy*, Hussein Ibish concluded that the big picture is extremely clear: "There is no room for dissent of any kind in Bahrain anymore, above all if it comes from the Shia majority". He went on to describe a wide-scale crackdown on various economic sectors including public employees and professional organisations including mass firings, especially of Shias.

Prominent journalists have also been silenced. When her family came under threat for her work Lamees Dhaif stopped writing after relatives urged her to take a break. "I stopped practising journalism because I didn't want to be arrested. If I'm arrested how can I document what is happening to others in jail?"

Bahraini human rights groups reported that hundreds of women

had been detained in mid-May and dozens were still being held. One female journalist was reportedly so badly beaten she couldn't walk. Women have been tied up, thrown on the streets and arrested by the Saudi-backed forces.

At the end of May the International Labour Organisation recommended that some 2000 workers sacked be re-hired as a gesture of reconciliation but this has not happened and human rights activists believe that as many as 6000 people dismissed from their jobs are still unemployed.

Among those sacked who have not been re-employed are 24 Shia journalists working on *Al-Ayam* newspaper who were fired on 16th March. Some 402 workers at Aluminium Bahrain were sacked and only 50 have been re-employed though they have had to sign new employment contracts whereby they lose all annual leave and sickness benefits. Bahrain dropped by 51 places on the Global Peace Index published on 25th May.

Doctors and medical personnel who treated injured protesters have themselves been arrested. In April at least 32 doctors, including surgeons, physicians, paediatricians and obstetricians were detained.

On April 21st the *Independent* published emails between a senior surgeon at the Salmaniya Medical Complex, Bahrain's main hospital: "Interrogation committees question me about our role in treating the injured protesters who are considered now criminal for protesting against the government. We said we were there to treat patients and have nothing to do with politics. I don't have a good feeling about things going on in Bahrain. So many of our consultant surgeon and physician colleagues have been arrested at pre-dawn raids and disappear".

Commenting on the situation in Bahrain Richard Sollom, deputy director of Physicians for Human Rights said: "In two decades of conducting investigations in more than 20 countries, I have never seen such widespread and systematic violations of medical neutrality as I did in Bahrain. Bahrain's ambulances, hospitals and medical clinics as well as its physicians, nurses and medical staff are all being targeted.

It's pervasive and on going. These attacks violate the principle of medical neutrality and are grave breaches of international law.

"Salmaniya, a large 821 bed hospital housing Bahrain's leading medical specialists, is where the most serious injuries have been treated. Doctors there have seen evidence of gas inhalation, gun-shot wounds and beatings. While in Bahrain we documented evidence of the hospital administration at Salmaniya calling doctors and nurses in for appointments from which they were never seen again. Presumably they are taken to places of detention. One notable detention centre, the Criminal Investigations directorate at Adliya is also an infamous centre of torture.

"Unfortunately, the doctors do not have to be taken to detention centres to suffer violent attacks. We have documented the story of six doctors beaten by security forces in a Salmaniya staff room. When security forces are capable of such brutality in a hospital one can only imagine what happens in a detention centre", Sollom said.

On 29 September 20 medics who treated protesters were jailed for up to 15 years after being convicted of incitement to overthrow the regime. The charges included possessing unlicensed arms, seizing medical equipment and provoking sectarian hatred. They were also accused of refusing to treat security officials. Prior to the sentencing they had been released on bail after many staged a hunger strike. The medics' relatives said that they had been tortured into making false confessions. A protestor, Ali Yusof al-Taweel, was sentenced to death for killing a policeman in the Shia area of Sitra, south of Manama.

The UN Human Rights Office has questioned the fairness of the Bahraini court which sentenced the medics. Rupert Colville, a spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees pointed out that the court reportedly gave defendants and their lawyers little time to prepare, failed to investigate allegations of torture and conducted some trials in just ten minutes.

"For such harsh sentences to be handed down to civilians in a military court with serious due process irregularities raises severe concerns. We understand - according to our sources that we trust -

that defendants have had limited access to lawyers and in most cases lawyers definitely did not have enough time to prepare their clients' defence properly. Some of the defendants have been found guilty of nothing more than exercising their right to free speech".

The World Health Organisation also questioned the prosecution of the medical staff. "Health care workers have a moral and ethical obligation to treat the injured regardless of their political affiliation and they should never be punished for doing what is required by this obligation said WHO spokesman Fadela Chaib.

Concerns about the trial were also expressed by the US State Department's spokesman Mark Toner. "We understand that the cases can be appealed and transferred to a civilian appellate court. We continue to urge the Bahraini government to abide by its commitment to transparent judicial proceedings, including a fair trial, access to attorneys and verdicts based on credible evidence conducted in full accordance with Bahraini law and Bahrain's international legal obligations".

Writing in the *Guardian* on October 4th, Ann Clwyd MP Chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group said: "Our foreign secretary has rightly condemned the sentencing of Bahraini doctors and nurses who were arrested after "security" forces overran the Salmaniya Medical Centre. But, with the defendants' credible allegations of torture and intimidation and after dodgy trials by a special security court, to describe 15-year sentences as "disproportionate" is a gross understatement. The regime's abuse of the legal system shows the insincerity of its commitment to reconciliation. Until there is real justice for all Bahrainis there is little hope for peace and stability. The time for diplomatic expressions of disapproval is over. Bahrain's friends need to make it clear that unless its leadership is prepared to respect the rights of all of its citizens then sanctions must follow".

After the sentences were announced The *Independent* highlighted the plight of Dr Roula al-Saffar the 49-year-old president of the Bahraini Nursing Society. Dr Saffar, educated in the US and with a long list of degrees and medical qualifications, is now waiting to see if

she will be re-arrested to start her sentence before her appeal is heard on 23 October. She is not hopeful about the outcome, after spending 156 days in prison. "Knowing what has happened in Bahrain, they can do anything," she says.

Her imprisonment started on 4 April when she was summoned to a police station. She was immediately handcuffed and blindfolded. "There were beatings and electric shocks and a piece of paper was put on my back saying that anybody could do anything to me," she remembers. This went on for a week. She was made to listen to the screams of colleagues being tortured.

She says she was especially targeted by a woman police officer, a member of the al- Khalifa royal family, who beat her and used electric shocks on her. "When I first arrived [the woman] said, 'Welcome. I have been waiting for you since 2005 and you have been under the microscope'." This turned out to be a reference to a campaign led by Dr Saffar to increase nurses' pay and improve their working conditions.

The account by Dr Saffar of her interrogation and mistreatment tallies so closely with that of other detainees that there seems to have been a common procedure, beginning with seven days of severe torture, including sleep deprivation and confinement in a cell with the air conditioning turned down to freezing. One obsession of her questioners was to force a confession that she and other doctors had taken bags of blood from the hospital blood bank to give to protesters to pour over themselves, to lend credibility to false claims that they had suffered injuries at the hands of the police. These and other charges, Dr Saffar said, were completely ridiculous.

Some of the doctors who have been sentenced to lengthy jail terms for supporting the protests against the ruling al-Khalifa family have alleged that Sheikha Noora bint Ibrahim al-Khalifa beat prisoners with sticks and a rubber hose, and gave electric shocks to the face with a cable.

The princess works as an undercover police detective in counter-narcotics. Born into the third tier of the royal family, she is believed to be a cousin of Queen Sabika bint Ibrahim al-Khalifa. Ms Khalifa is

accused of torturing several doctors, male and female. Nada Dhaif, 36, who received a 15-year sentence last week, alleged the princess had been involved in her interrogation in March. Dhaif claimed: "She slapped me, beat me and called me a Shia pig. She put a cable in my ears and gave me electric shocks." Dhaif has alleged she was blindfolded during her torture, but said that there was only one other woman in the room, who was addressed as "sheikha" by the male guards.

A retrial in a civilian court for 20 medical staff who say they were convicted for treating anti-government protesters was ordered on October 6th. Bahrain's attorney general denied the medics had been jailed for treating protesters, instead listing charges including inciting sectarian hatred. In a statement Dr Ali Al-Boainain said the department of public prosecution had studied the National Safety Court's judgment on the medics and determined their cases should be retried in the country's highest civilian court. They would "have the benefit of full re-evaluation of evidence and full opportunity to present their defences. The department of public prosecution seeks to establish the truth and to enforce the law, while protecting the rights of the accused," he was quoted as saying.

Poets, writers and journalists have also been victimised. Speaking via skype to a seminar in London on forty years after the British withdrawal from Bahrain held on 23rd August under the auspices of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, the poet Ayat Al Khurmsi described how she was kept in solitary confinement for 16 days. "I did not see anybody during that time. After that time I saw most of the women in jail. When they brought them back to their cells after each period of torture their bodies were blackened due to the beatings and hanging. The torture was systematic and that is what the regime wants to hide. They say it is just undertaken by unruly individuals. That is why they would pick up two or three Indian policemen and take them to court and say they are responsible. But that is not the truth. Torture has always been systematic and this time it has been administered by senior figures from the ruling family. All the centres use the same methods of torture. My message is for the outside world to apply more

pressure so that all the detainees, men and women, are freed.

“Before the revolution I was not active in politics but when the revolution started I thought and I felt that I have to do something. I felt that I had to take a stand when I saw that the blood of my people was being shed without mercy. I have the ability to write. That is why I tried to translate the feelings and the grievances of the people in the form of poetry. I wrote a poem that I recited at Pearl Roundabout. That was the reason for my arrest and psychological and physical abuse and torture.

“But despite their attempts to try and stop and torture me I tried my best to hide my tears from the jailers. I did not want them to see me breaking down. I wanted them to see me steadfast and unyielding under their pressure. But the pain was so much that no mind or body can withstand this.

“Once they started to torture me I tried not to cry or to weep so that they don’t become happy. I did not want them to feel happy because of my pain. I was forced to sign a false statement. The pen was put between my hands and I was in the peak of pain. I was forced to sign the statement and the pack of wolves who were surrounding me had no mercy in their minds and hearts. I was between life and death in that period so I signed whatever they prepared.

“I wanted to cry, I wanted to shout, I wanted to make a real outcry which was really repressed inside me but I tried my best not to let that outcry come out in case it made them happy. I wanted to translate my feelings in cultural and literary ways but I was not able to do so. Somebody wrote a poem about me and I would like to know who wrote that because it really reflected my feelings at the time.

“From my own experience I felt that poetry and the word itself breaks the back of the tyrants and really defeats their tyranny. This is why they wanted to jail Ayat Al Khurmsi and they put me in jail in order not to speak about what they were doing to the people of Bahrain.

“I will never forget my own experience and it is still dominating my mind and my soul. I tried to forget some of the details however

my experience at the hands of Noura Al Khalifa one of the members of the ruling family who had herself tortured me was unforgettable. I will never forget this. It is an attempt to dissociate a human being from his humanity.

“The jailers wanted me to break down and deprived me of my basic rights. They deprived me of sleep. They used a lot of physical and mental torture on me and I did not expect sadistic behaviour to such a level among human beings. It was professional sadism.

“After this experience I feel that I have been reborn and I realise how strong the spoken word is in the face of the torturers and those who use lashes and beat their victims. That is why all the prisoners are prisoners of conscience. They have been jailed for their opinions and have been subjected to all kinds of torture both physical and mental.

“In the end I would like to convey what we are suffering at the moment in terms of aggression, repression and injustice and I hope there will be a dawn that will not be far away which will take us away from despotism and injustice”.

On October 3rd a security court sentenced 14 people to 25 years in jail each for the killing of a Pakistani man during pro-democracy protests. The man was allegedly beaten to death but details of the killing were not made public. The court also sentenced 15 people to 15 years in jail after they were convicted of attempting to murder military personnel, while taking part in protests and vandalism at Bahrain University in the capital, Manama. In a third case, involving university students, six were jailed for 15 years and a seventh was sentenced to 18 years on charges including attempted murder.

The jailing of pro-democracy protesters continued. On October 5th 27 people were sentenced for up to 15 years in jail. Fourteen people - including Shia opposition party members - were given sentences of up to 10 years for their role in the pro-democracy protests. Some of those convicted were reported to be members of the opposition Islamic Action Society (Amal), which the government planned to disband - along with al-Wefaq - until the move was criticised by the United States.



Bahraini students abroad who support the pro-democracy movement have also been victimised. In Britain more than 20 students were informed that as a result of attending anti- government protests their scholarships have been cancelled.

“My university in Bahrain called me to say my scholarship was cancelled”, said Noor Jilal, a doctoral candidate at the University of London. “They wouldn’t provide any explanation and said I must come back in a week. It was after I attended a demonstration outside the Bahrain Embassy in London. We were calling for the Saudis to get out, for freedom of speech and expressing our solidarity with protesters in Bahrain. My parents told me not to come back. I have a cousin whose scholarship was stopped in Saudi Arabia and she was taken into custody even though she is pregnant”.

The Foreign office stressed that the students had done nothing wrong when they expressed their views freely and peacefully and their scholarships should not have been stopped.

Hundreds of Shias who took part in the protests were dismissed from their jobs and many more have been denied their salaries. Officials at Batelco, Gulf Air, Bahrain Airport Services and APM Terminals laid off more than 200 workers due to absence during a strike. FIFA complained about the arrest of many footballers including Alaa and Mohammed Hubail. More than 100 taxis were crushed because their owners took part in demonstrations. Pearl Roundabout was renamed Al Farooq Junction.

The continued repression and human rights violations elicited the single biggest policy shift from President Barack Obama in his Middle East speech on 19th May when he publically criticised the “brute force” with which the government of Bahrain has cracked down on political opposition.

“Mass arrests and brute force are at odds with the universal rights of Bahrain’s citizens and will not make legitimate calls for reform go away”. Calling for dialogue as “the only way forward”, he added that “you can’t have a real dialogue with parts of the opposition in jail. He also took note of the destruction of Shia mosques in dozens of

towns and villages where Shias outnumber Sunni Muslims nearly four to one. "Shias must never have their mosques destroyed in Bahrain", Obama said.

During a White House meeting with Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa on June 8, President Obama said that those responsible for human rights abuses should be held accountable and urged a compromise between the government and the opposition.

His comments were backed up by American lawmakers including Senators Patrick Leahy and Richard Blumenthal and Congressmen Mark Critz, Steve Stivers, Bruce Braley and Tammy Baldwin. "The people of Bahrain are entitled to a representative form of government and I believe we must encourage an open dialogue between the country's current leadership and the opposition to resolve the crisis in a way that ensures a peaceful outcome and maintains regional stability. I intent to closely monitor the situation and I take very seriously any human rights violations committed by the government of Bahrain against its people," Blumenthal said.

The crown prince also met Secretary of State Hilary Clinton who he assured that: "We are committed to reform in both the political and economic spheres and I would like to reiterate that support and to find out ways in which we can work closely with our very important ally, the United States, in making it happen, because I personally feel and I think many do, that this is in the interests of both our nations".

The state of emergency imposed on March 15 was lifted on 1 June. "I think the security situation is probably pretty well in hand and they [the regime] feels it can relax", said Jean-Francois Seznec, a Bahrain expert at Georgetown University. "But the government is beginning to feel there is some pressure from the world community that what they have been doing is unfathomable and they are trying to make some accommodation for the situation".

Nothing changed in the Shia villages when the state of emergency was lifted. In its issue of June 2011, the *Economist* noted that in the Shia villages it felt much the same as troops shot at a few token demonstrators. While Shia villagers cowered an air of Sunni triumphalism reigned

over the island as Sunni town councils voted to exclude members of the Shia opposition. Hamad Town built in the 1980s 18km south west of Manama as a model of cross-sectarian integration was seething with tension. Sunni and Shia politicians campaigned for the boycotting of each other's businesses and a new Sunni Gathering, the National Unity Gathering, helped to open a market to bolster Sunni merchants. Forced out of public life the Shias started turning their back on the regime with doctors treating protesters in hiding to spare them from arrest in public hospitals.

One family who *Times* reporter Sheera Frenkel met during her journey through the Middle East in early June told her that for years there was no problem between Sunnis and Shias. "We would marry each other and do business together. Suddenly the government, the king, the tv, tells everyone we Shia are the enemy. Frenkel reported that stories of arrest and torture are strikingly similar. People are picked up for any excuse and held for weeks without information or access to lawyers. Almost universally, the charges relate to conspiracy with Shia groups in Lebanon and Iran. When they are released from jail they are warned not to speak to the media. Others who have been caught speaking to journalists have been taken back to jail or have disappeared.

Human rights activists were sceptical about the lifting of emergency rule. "If they are serious about stopping this law then the army must leave the streets and foreign troops leave the country", said Mohammed Al Maskati, head of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights. Around 800 people were arrested since the protest movement began in February and the country's military courts are still active.

But Bahraini officials said that Saudi and UAE forces would remain in the country indefinitely and the Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid Al Khalifa raised the prospect of a permanent Gulf Co-operation Council military presence in Bahrain.

Nabeel Rajab head of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights said that lifting the emergency "is more a message to the business

community and to get back Formula One. But inside is totally different to the image presented to the outside world. Things look no different in terms of repression and security measures". [Formula One was not held in Bahrain and about a quarter of the government-owned Bahrain International Circuit, all Shia, were arrested in early April, suspended and subsequently sacked].

The continued tension and unrest affected the business community. Investment firms posted steep losses since a regional property bubble burst in 2008. On May 28th Moody's downgraded Bahrain's credit rating and assigned a negative outlook due to the continued political tension. Bahrain's world ranking in the 2011 Global Peace index plummeted 51 places to 123 out of 153 countries. Saudi tourist traffic to the shopping areas and nightclubs at weekends has been reduced to a trickle.

A war of words continued between Bahrain and Iran. In a report to the United Nations in June Bahrain accused Hezbollah of seeking to overthrow the ruling family. It also accused Hezbollah of training Bahrain opposition fighters in camps in Lebanon and Iran.

A Sunni cleric Sheikh Abdullatif Al-Mahmoud claimed: "It was Sunnis who were living in terror, not the Shias. Repression is the result of criminal acts they committed". He called for a change in the Shia leadership and claimed the democracy movement had been hijacked by Shias with a sectarian agenda who were in contact with Iran's clerical leadership.

Writing on June 9, Reuters correspondent Andrew Hammond said the sectarian divide was widening despite the idealistic slogans of protesters : "Sunnis and Shias talk of friends lost and of a rift that once seemed manageable. Sunnis feel threatened, Shias abused".

A national dialogue started at the beginning of July with sessions on the economy, politics, human rights and social issues. The speaker of the Bahraini parliament and chairman of the National Dialogue, Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Dhahrani said the dialogue's agenda would cover all issues of national concern without any exception. The government would be represented by one or more figures in the

discussions aiming to build national consensus on the axes and agenda of the dialogue.

Al Wefaq, the main Shia bloc, decided to join the dialogue at the 11th hour after it withdrew its MPs from parliament in March in protest against the crackdown.

Commenting on the dialogue the Bahrain Freedom Movement said: "The dialogue has now become redundant for three main reasons. The first is the harsh sentences of the leaders of the revolution whose consent will determine the success or failure of any dialogue. The second is the continuing attack on the people's demonstrations and rights. The third is the transformation of the 'dialogue' into a public meeting for the people and not a serious discussion of the future of the regime and relations with the people. The ruling family has abandoned any intention for reforms and attempted to deceive the world with the talk of dialogue as being a public debate about various issues in which more than 300 of the registered societies would take place. That is not the political dialogue publicised by Al Khalifa's Western backers".

Britain supported the dialogue. Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt said: "We welcome the king's announcement of a national dialogue and the lifting of the state of national safety. It's now critical that there is a concrete change and genuine political reform, the only way to ensuring long term stability. We remain deeply concerned by reports of human rights abuses including the recent arrests of protesters and medical staff and the nature of the charges brought against them. We continue strongly to urge the government of Bahrain to meet all its human rights obligations and uphold political freedoms, equal access to justice and the rule of law".

At the conclusion of the dialogue it was recommended that more power be given to the lower house of parliament and ensuring improvements to the human rights situation. There was also support for an independent judiciary.

Bahrain's largest opposition group Al Wefaq rejected these recommendations at the end of July stating that they do not represent

“the will of the people”. In a statement posted on its Facebook page, Wifaq said that the report submitted to the King did not include any of the opposition’s demands, which include an “elected government and an elected parliament which has full legislative powers” and a “fair and independent judicial system”.

On 22nd September King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa told the UN General Assembly that more than a decade ago, Bahrain had “recognised the need to proceed towards greater reform and improvement, keeping in mind the supreme interests of the people”.

“In all its modernisation endeavours, the Kingdom of Bahrain has persistently followed the approach of dialogue, building on the consensus of the people of Bahrain.” In response to the speech, Matar Ibrahim Ali Matar, a former member of parliament with the al- Wefaq Party said that Bahrainis want to see such words translated into action. “The king gave positive words, but we want to see those positive words implemented on the ground,” Matar said.

“The king spoke about [continuing] modernisation. We are worried about the term ‘continue’. If they are going to continue in the current track, we don’t believe that the current track is a track of modernisation. It is not a track based on building equality between people. “In many [former] speeches of the king, they were very positive. The problem is, we don’t see those positive terms implemented.”

The speech came a day after pro-democracy protesters filled the streets of Manama, disrupting traffic in the city’s central business district in a bid to step up pressure on the government ahead of by-elections. The demonstration was called by an internet-based youth group that had acted as one of the main organisers of the popular uprising.

The polls were called on September 24th to replace 18 of the al-Wefaq MPs who walked out of the 40-member parliament in February in protest against a government crackdown on protesters. They were boycotted by al-Wifaq and all other opposition groups. Fewer than one in five voters cast ballots. In 14 districts, only 25,130 voters of a total 144,513 came out to vote, a 17.4 percent turnout, according to

figures published on the government's elections website [www.vote.bh](http://www.vote.bh). All the candidates were independents who would have found victory a tall order without the boycott. Michael Stephens, a researcher at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) in Qatar, said the election amounted to a referendum on the king's national dialogue and the country now faced a dangerous stalemate. "Given what King Hamad has said about the urgent nature of reforms, the question is if he can deliver. If he doesn't then I think Bahrain's in serious trouble," he said. "You'll see an escalation of violence."

On the election day, hundreds of protestors gathered in the village of Sanabis with the intention of marching to Pearl Roundabout. Security forces used tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets against the protestors. Amnesty International reported that a group of 38 women and girls who were arrested during a protest against the elections were tortured or ill treated.

Commenting on the elections during an interview with Press TV on September 26th Dr Saeed Shehabi of the Bahrain Freedom Movement said: "The election process has been there for 14 years and that did not deter the people from coming out in the streets against the regime. These elections did not produce parliaments or real democracy - they are just elections for their own sake. They did not bring change, which was wanted by the people.

The people have no say in the way the country is being led. There is nothing else but an absolute dictatorship and elections do not make regimes democratic. It is what the outcomes of these elections are: whether the people can contribute or not, they feel that they cannot contribute to any dialogue or any democratic process: they could not have a share in the way the country is run. It is an absolute dictatorship and this has to end".

These sentiments were echoed by Britain's then defence secretary Laim Fox. "We have tried to impress upon the king and crown prince to embrace reform. If you break, it's because you won't bend. There has to be a recognition of respect for human rights, there needs to be economic reform and the rights of the Shia majority must be respected

by the minority Sunni ruling class”, Fox told a fringe meeting of the Tory Party conference.

But the USA was still willing to support the Bahraini dictatorship and agreed to provide the monarchy with an additional \$53 million of weapons. The deal was subsequently put on hold until the Americans had the chance to consider the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry into the protests. In 2010 the US sold over \$200 million worth of weapons to Bahrain up from \$887 million in 2009. The Pentagon noted that Bahrain “has been and continues to be an important force for political stability in the Middle East”. Brian Dooley, director of the Washington-based charity Human Rights First, condemned the arms sale as a “reward” for the Bahraini dictatorship. The Bahraini army has “committed many human rights abuses including the torture of detainees”, Dooley said.

A new force the Bahrain Bloc emerged on the political stage. It was made up of five Sunni and four Shia members and is now the second largest group in parliament. The bloc’s president Ahmed Al Satti said: “We are fiercer than the opposition when it comes to getting people’s demands and rights and more loyal than loyalists when peace and stability are threatened”.

The protests and vigils are continuing. On October 8th tens of thousands took part in a funeral for Al Qattan who was taking part in a peaceful demonstration two days earlier in the town of Abu Saibe when he was shot at point blank range. His colleagues rushed him to hospital but he was dead on arrival. Helicopter gunships hovered overhead to intimidate the mourners while the people changed slogans calling for regime change.

On 10 September, some 20,000 protesters near Manama chanted anti-government slogans and vowed to stick to their calls for democratic reforms. On 19th September Saudi backed forces fired tear gas at demonstrators in the villages of Dair, Maqaba and Dumistan.

During a week called “Arrows of Dignity” in September revolutionary youth closed many roads bringing traffic to a halt. The highway linking Bahrain to Saudi Arabia was also closed. Live bullets



were fired at demonstrators in the triangle of resistance in Samaheej, Dair, Nowaidrat and Duraz. Countless eye injuries have led to many protesters losing their eyes. The Shia of Muharraaq are living in constant fear as the regime's militias have issued warnings that they would be wiped out in retaliation for the revolution that exposed the brutality of the regime.

At the end of September, a group calling itself February 14th Youth Coalition consisting of activists involved in protests that began in February called for an escalation in clashes with police saying security measures had gone too far to put down attempts to revive protests.

On October 15th Shia women waved the Bahraini flag and shouted anti-government slogans during a rally in the village of Boori south of Manama to mark eight months since the start of the pro-democracy protests.

The vuvuzela, a small bugle, has been used to pipe out the phrase 'down with Hamad' [Bahrain's king].

"All people are doing is shouting slogans or using a bugle", a female government employee told Reuters correspondent Andrew Hammond. "But police are entering people's homes and arresting them".

At the beginning of November hundreds of people marched on Pearl Square after a massive funeral procession for a 78-year-old man who opposition groups claimed died after being beaten by police. The authorities said that the man died of natural causes.

Responding to the protests Bahrain's Interior Minister vowed to maintain safety and security in the kingdom. Lieutenant General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa said the kingdom is committed to bringing acts of violence, rioting and sabotage under control. He said 16 legal marches and assemblies had taken place since the lifting of the State of National Safety, while 1,235 illegal rallies and demonstrations were organised during the period and were dealt with in compliance with the legal procedures.

A teenage Iraqi football player, Zulfikar Naji was among more than 300 prisoners freed after being pardoned by the king on Eid Al Adha. Naji's arrest sparked demonstrations as far away as Canada by

protesters calling for his release.

The simmering unrest was having an effect on foreign investment and foreign companies were considering moving their operations to neighbouring Gulf states amid fears of a fresh eruption of anti-government hostilities.

“The reality is what has happened in Bahrain and what continues to occur in Bahrain is having a negative impact on the investment environment”, said Farouk Soussa, chief *Economist* for the Middle East at Citi. “My expectation is that Bahrain is going to become increasingly dependent on Saudi Arabia for its economic well being”.

Bahraini opposition groups attempted to break the political stalemate by issuing a new declaration on October 13th which called for an elected government and ending discrimination against the Shias. The declaration, known as the Manama Paper called for restructuring the political system while preserving the monarchy. The list of demands included a fair electoral system, redrawing constituencies to guarantee better representation and a legislative authority with a single chamber that would have exclusive legislative, regulatory, financial and political authorities. A chief complaint of the opposition was the naturalisation of foreigners on political grounds suspected as being an attempt to change the demographic balance. It also called for a genuine dialogue after pulling out of the national dialogue called by the king in July.

Pro-government media reacted angrily to the Manama Paper. *Al-Watan* denounced al-Wefaq as “Bahrain’s Hezbollah” and said parliamentarians saw the document as pandering to foreigners.

The royal family is not united about the extent of the repression to be used against the demonstrators but the hardliners seem to be getting the upper hand and senior Bahraini police officers suspended for torturing detainees are being swiftly reinstated. The influence of Colonel Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa who has benefited from Saudi support is growing as the crackdown on protesters continues. The Crown Prince Sheikh Salman Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa who sought an agreement with opposition parties before the protests

began has lost much of his authority and the conciliatory moves from King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa towards the Shia community have not been followed up with action and state companies have not reinstated employees sacked for taking part in protests.

The Bahrain Freedom Movement has expressed fears for the lives of opposition leaders especially Hassan Mushaima the leader of the Haq Movement who was treated in London for cancer. The Royal Brompton Hospital said he was free from the disease but the ill treatment he has received since his arrest in March and the lack of proper medical care has led to serious concerns about his condition.

In October 2011 Mushaima's son Mohammed (24) was kidnapped from his bed together with his brother-in-law and taken to one of the secret locations used for the ill- treatment of prisoners. They were both severely tortured before being dumped near the family's home.

At the end of October unidentified saboteurs attacked the house of writer and upper house parliamentary member Samira Rajab after her participation in a debate on Bahrain on Al Jazeera television.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry was established on 29th June pursuant to Royal Order No. 28 by His Majesty, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa tasked with investigating and reporting on the events that took place from February 2011, and the consequences of those events was due to report on 23rd October but its report was delayed.

The delay of the final report will "ensure that every testimony, complaint, and item of evidence is considered and examined," the commission said in a statement posted on its website. It also said more time is needed "to prepare a final report that establishes the facts about what occurred in Bahrain during February and March 2011."

The commission received more than 8,000 complaints, testimonies and documents. Its members have interviewed more than 5,000 witnesses and alleged victims of the unrest, including detainees, police personnel, doctors and journalists.

In a seminar 'time to support regime change and end occupation in Bahrain' held in the House of Lords on 1st November Lord Avebury

commented: "Whatever the Bassiouni Commission may say, the people have no confidence in their inquiry. Comments made by Cherif Bassiouni himself exonerating the king and the Prime Minister from responsibility for the extrajudicial killings, tortures, detention without trial, military courts, and manipulated court proceedings were highly improper and cast doubt on the independence of the whole inquiry".

## CONCLUSION

Bahrain continues to boil under the lid of repression which has not seen a return to stability. Nightly protests continue in the Shia districts with the police using rubber bullets and stun grenades in an attempt to silence the protesters.

In its report *Arab Spring: Implications for British Foreign Policy* the Conservative Middle East Council stated that as yet there are no signs that any of the uprising's root causes - grievances over political and economic inequality, unfulfilled promises of reform, corruption, perceptions of sectarian discrimination, anger over a history of police brutality and dissatisfaction with living standards - are being addressed. Indeed, perceptions of sectarian discrimination and the problem of unemployment have got worse since several thousands were dismissed from their jobs for taking part in - or merely suspected of possibly taking part in - demonstrations and strikes that were largely peaceful.

The council went on to say that the tensions in Bahrain will not be resolved by security measures and will ultimately require a political solution. This will require dialogue, possibly with third-party mediation, involving a representative spectrum of different groups in Bahrain. While sectarian polarisation is now severe, the idea that there are two political 'sides' is a vast oversimplification of the diversity of political opinion among the various opposition groups, the government and the government's supporters. The call by US President Barack Obama to ensure that peaceful opposition leaders are released before a real dialogue starts should be heeded.

In urging the cancellation of the Bahrain Air show to be held in 2012, the opposition pointed out that the country is unstable and serious human rights crimes are being committed by senior members of the regime which is not representative of the Bahraini people. By inviting the Saudi troops to occupy the island the Al Khalifa have forfeited

sovereignty over Bahrain.

This report has published 14 testimonies from victims of torture. But these are clearly not isolated incidents perpetrated by rogue elements within the security forces: torture of detainees is routine and systematic as pointed out in the 1997 Human Rights Watch Report *Routine Abuse, Routine Denial*. The report states that: "Human rights abuses in Bahrain are wide-ranging and fall into two basic categories. The first relates to law enforcement and administration of justice issues. These encompass the behavior of security forces towards those under arrest and detention, and when confronting civil disturbances; arbitrary detention; physical and psychological abuse of detainees; denial of access to legal counsel; and denial of the right to a swift and impartial judicial hearing. The second area of human rights violations relates to the broad denial of fundamental political rights and civil liberties, including freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly, and the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs. In terms of numbers of people affected, the situation has been particularly acute since the end of 1994, with the onset of a period of protracted civil unrest that has continued into the spring of 1997."

In its latest report *Torture Redux: the revival of physical coercion during interrogations in Bahrain* Human Rights Watch states that the country was notorious between 1995 and 1999 for torture which was a serious and systematic problem. After 1999 torture ceased but was employed again in 2007 and there was a return to routine torture that characterised Bahrain during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1996 BBC journalist Sue Lloyd Roberts reported extensively on human rights violations as did Channel Four.

Both Britain and the USA have called for respect for human rights but Britain was nevertheless prepared to entertain a high profile Bahraini delegation led by Sheikh Mohammed bin Essa Al Khalifa, chief executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board in October 2011.

In a recent report by Amnesty International, Britain was listed as a "major arms supplier" to Bahrain along with France, Germany and the USA.

The West still believes that the regime is capable of reform, favours negotiations and is willing to trade and sell arms to the Al Khalifa's. Double standards are in evidence: both Libya and Syria were referred to the Security Council when the regimes tried to mercilessly crush the popular protests and a case against the Libyan Leader Muammar Al Qadhafi and his son Saif Al Islam was brought before the ICC. But in Bahrain the regime is sheltered by Western powers as it continues with its repression. Oil money has been extensively used to stop an independent international investigation about the torture prevalent in Bahraini jails.

To-date not a single person has been brought to justice for engaging in torture. Some of the doctors who have been sentenced to lengthy jail terms for supporting the protests against the ruling al-Khalifa family have alleged that Sheikha Noora bint Ibrahim al-Khalifa beat prisoners with sticks and a rubber hose, and gave electric shocks to the face with a cable. The princess works as an undercover police detective in counter-narcotics.

Decree 56/2002 granted amnesty to members of the security and intelligence services for acts undertaken prior to the general amnesty decree of February 2001. International human rights organisations and those within Bahrain voiced their disquiet at what was seen as an attempt to provide impunity to members of the security and intelligence services in spite of their previous actions, including torture. The notorious Briton, Ian Henderson, was employed as the head of the General Directorate for State Security Investigations for some 30 years. He retired from his position in February 1998. Despite the allegations of abuse throughout his job, both Mr Henderson and the Bahraini Government have always denied involvement in such torture. Henderson currently resides in Bahrain as a guest of the royal family. He did not return to a £250,000 home named "Stoke Shallows" in Devon, England for fear of prosecution under universal jurisdiction for violation of human rights.

In a cynical ploy to attempt to convince the international community that it is taking increasing expressions of concern about

human rights seriously the regime set up the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry on 29th June pursuant to Royal Order No. 28 by His Majesty, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

But as human rights activist Zeinab Meftah, who was recently detained and abused at Manama airport after returning to Bahrain to visit her family while studying in London pointed out, the commission will not say anything serious against the Al Khalifa's as it is financed by them. Even before issuing his report the head of the commission Cherif Bassiouni himself exonerated the king and the prime minister from responsibility for the extrajudicial killings, tortures, detention without trial, military courts, and manipulated court proceedings casting doubt on the independence of the whole inquiry.

How does the opposition see the future of Bahrain? Dr Saeed Shehabi of the Bahrain Freedom Movement believes that the time for dialogue and negotiations is over and the rule of the Al Khalifa's must come to an end for a genuine democracy to develop. The king may make minor concessions but the regime will always maintain its grip on the judiciary, the security services and the media and can easily go back on promises of reform.

Since 26 August 1975 when the Emir issued a decree suspending parliament the history of Bahrain has been one of promises of reform, a period of calm as the people waited for genuine reforms to be implemented, further protests as the promises were broken and repression to quell the protests.

The Al Khalifa regime has so far managed to stay in power as it has crushed the protesters. But the latest demonstrations in Pearl Square could not be put down without the help of the Saudis. The Arab spring has seen dictators in Egypt and Tunisia driven from power. In Libya NATO helped the rebels to bring about Qadhafi's downfall while in Syria and Yemen and people are still dying in their unquenchable quest for freedom.

Bahrain still has the support of the GCC and the West but the winds of change are stronger and stronger with each passing year and more bloody confrontations are taking place.



Abdulla Al Derazi, Secretary General of the Bahrain Human Rights Society worries what will happen if the police continue their aggressive tactics and the government fails to put forth what he terms more genuine efforts at reconciliation. "The security fist hasn't stopped protests for greater democracy. What happened is the fear barrier is gone. How are you going to deal with the youth if they are willing to die?

Bahrain seems destined to become a battle ground and further bloodshed is inevitable as they cycle of protests, repression, hollow promises of reform and further protests and repression continues.

Writing in the *International Herald Tribune* on 18 February 2011 Michael Slackman described a heart wrenching scene which is re-enacted with monotonous regularity: "In the bloodstained morgue, Ahmed Abutaki, 29, held his younger brother's cold hand, stroking his arm tearfully recalling the last time they spoke. "He said 'This is my chance, to have a say, so that maybe our country will do something for us," he recalled of his brother's decision to camp out in Pearl Square. "My country did do something, it killed him."

## REFERENCES

Ahmed, Omar: *Broken Promises Human Rights, Constitutionalism and Socio-Economic Exclusion in Bahrain*, Islamic Human Rights Commission, UK, 2010.

Amnesty International: *Bloodied but Unbowed: Unwarranted State Violence Against Bahraini Protestors*, March 2011

Explorer: *Mini Bahrain, The Essential Visitors' Guide*, UAE, 2007.

Gause, Gregory: *Oil Monarchies*, Council of Foreign Relations, USA, 1994.

Human Rights Watch, Torture Redux. *The Revival of Physical Coercion during Interrogations in Bahrain*, 8 February 2010,  
<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2010/02/08/torture-redux>.

Zahlan, Rosemarie Said: *The Making of the Modern Gulf States*, Garnet Publishing, UK, 1998.

## APPENDIX ONE

### A statement by Bahraini Youth for Freedom

In the name of freedom and the people.

“It was a dream, then a thought, then a possibility, then it became a reality not a dream.”

We, the Bahraini youth, from all the different sects and ideologies, call the people to unify their position in demanding their rights. We, the Bahraini youth, from all different sects and backgrounds, call the people to unify their position and demand their rights. We call on Bahrainis to take to the streets on Monday 14 February in a peaceful and orderly manner. The time of waiting has ended, and the time of action is now. If we do not demand our rights by our own hands then no one will grant them to us. We have witnessed our brothers in Tunisia and Egypt carry the banner of freedom and justice. For what is the value of life without freedom? And how will we have our dignity without justice? Change will not come without sacrifice, so let us sacrifice for the sake of our future and the future of our people.

We have been suffering the ills of unmitigated corruption and brutal oppression for far too long, established under an irresponsible and unaccountable regime. The grievances may diverge but the cause is one. The regime has grown accustomed to creating crisis after crisis under the constructed banner of sectarianism, escaping accountability and suppressing the legitimate rights of the people. The plunder of the nation's wealth has reached unprecedented proportions, including the expropriation of public land and sea. They have used foreign security forces to humiliate and attack citizens, and endemic corruption has seeped throughout the state's institutions. Our thoughts and voices

have been controlled through censorship and press control, while political naturalisation to change the population of the country has reached unprecedented levels. Anger and frustration is boiling amongst us all.

It is time for us to unify, and for the nation, the entire people of this land, to take control of its destiny. For we either awaken and live, or die and be forgotten. We are demanding a new constitution, where every letter is written by the people. Furthermore, we demand that a special body, fully mandated by the people, is established with the purpose of investigating and holding to account violations in the economic, political and social spheres. These include the theft of public wealth, political naturalisation, human rights and security transgressions, as well as institutional corruption. The aim is to reach national agreement and conciliation. These are the demands of the people, and these are the rights of the people. They are based on universal human values and principles of equality and justice, and the rulers must heed to these demands.

To all freedom-seeking people of Bahrain, now is the time for change, and now is the time to unite. Let us make February 14 a day of glory in the history of Bahrain – the day where all the Bahraini people emerged, in all their colours and from all its towns and cities: from Manama to Muharraq, from the northern villages to the central governate, from Sitra to the southern governate. Our demands and aims are constructive, our means are peaceful, and they are not stained with the sectarianism and division that the regime has sown over the years. There is no difference between Sunni and Shia, rich or poor, between Bahrani, Ajami, Houli or members of tribes – we are all Bahrain. We all sacrifice ourselves for this beloved land. Let us be proud that we emerged on this day to demand our right to a dignified life that embodies our legitimate rights, and to create a state that represents our aspirations and dreams.

Yes to unity, yes to change, yes to human dignity, yes to our demands and rights!

On behalf of the Bahraini youth to the sovereign people of Bahrain.

### **The demands made on February 14:**

- 1. A new constitution written by the people**
- 2. The establishment of a body that has a full popular mandate to investigate and hold to account economic, political and social violations, including:**
  - \* Stolen public wealth**
  - \* Political naturalisation**
  - \* Arrests, torture and other oppressive security measures**
  - \* Institutional and economic corruption.**

### **Important next steps:**

- 3. Forming local committees in every area to manage and direct gatherings on the day**
- 4. Choosing a central and busy area that is easy to reach in the capital**
- 5. Drawing maps to guide protestors**
- 6. Taking precautions to avoid disclosing protest tactics to officials**
- 7. Full use of media and Internet tools like facebook, twitter, and web forums.**

## APPENDIX TWO

### Demography and Bahrain's Unrest

Omar al-Shehabi

16 March 2011

The introduction of GCC troops into Bahrain has been labelled a foreign “occupation” by the opposition, while the government has hailed it as brotherly support from its neighbours. In fact, this “native-foreigner” issue has a long history in the country and serious political implications not only in Bahrain but also throughout the Gulf.

The Bahraini monarchy has long relied on foreigners not only as military and police forces, but also to shift the political balance in the island kingdom. The opposition in Bahrain, drawing primarily but not exclusively on support from the country's majority of Shi'i Muslims, has accused the government of fast-tracking the citizenship of carefully selected foreigners in order to change the demographic makeup of the country. The “politically naturalized,” as they are called, are Sunni Muslims mainly from Bedouin tribes in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Jordan, and Baluchistan. They are seen as having close ethnic and cultural links to the local rulers. Estimates of their numbers range from 50,000 to 200,000, constituting between one-tenth and one-third of the total number of citizens.

The politically naturalized are mainly employed in the security and defence forces, increasing the perception that they have been brought in to contain the local population. The graphic videos surfacing of the recent attacks by security forces against protestors show actions that involved some foreign or politically naturalized individuals.

This systematic use of foreign forces is a tradition that goes back

decades. It was first used in the region by the British in the nineteenth century, when divisions composed of individuals from Baluchistan and the Indian sub-continent were brought in to help establish control over the Trucial coast. It limits the risk of identification with locals and of defection. Fears about loyalty are less of an issue, as long as the right material incentives are provided.

These demographic tensions have come to the fore in the latest protests in Bahrain. There have been fights between local students and their recently naturalized counterparts at schools. A major scuffle broke out recently between local and politically naturalized youth in a suburban town of mixed composition, leaving several injured.

This issue is not only sect-based, however. Political naturalization has caused friction and aroused complaints from locals across the spectrum. One well-known incident two years ago involved clashes between members of a Sunni family and some of the politically naturalized, with the event becoming a cause celebre on the island. Indeed, Sunnis frequently complain that they have been the most to suffer from the effects, as the politically naturalized tend to take up jobs in the security forces and live in areas that historically have been predominantly Sunni.

The regime has also tried to use some of the expatriate workforce on the island for explicitly political purposes. Groups of expatriates have attended the pro-regime demonstrations, whether willingly or not, helping to swell the size of the demonstrations. The majority, however, remain apolitical, with their interests largely confined to the economic domain.

The demographic makeup has also been used as a way to limit dependence on the local population in the economic sphere, helping the regime to avoid the labor unrest that has been a constant feature of Bahrain's modern history. Bahrainis currently constitute less than a quarter of the labor force, so their impact on the economy production-wise (should they choose to strike) is much more contained. They also make up less than half of the 1.2 million residents of the island (down from roughly two-thirds a decade ago).

While the problem is most intense in Bahrain due to the clear political ramifications, the foreigner-native issue is rooted in the institutionalized rentier-state system that prevails throughout the Gulf. It is based on a ruling elite who use the large oil revenues at their disposal to appease local residents through an extensive welfare state, while ensuring that they are marginalized on the political and economic fronts. Productive economic activity is carried out mainly by an expatriate workforce that is tightly controlled and has limited labour rights. Under this structure, it is much easier for locals to lay the blame on foreigners and vice versa. Unless the current rentier-state structure changes drastically, the demographic interplay between foreigners and locals—already playing a pivotal role in the current disturbances in Bahrain and Libya—will eventually affect the stability of other Gulf States as well.

*Omar al-Shehabi is director of the Gulf Centre for Policy Studies.*

Reprinted by permission of the publisher from “Demography and Bahrain’s Unrest,” Omar Shehabi, (*Arab Reform Bulletin*, March 16, 2011 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011). <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada>



## Tajnees - Recruiting loyal subjects in Bahrain

Abdulhadi Khalaf, Senior Researcher, Center for Middle East Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

It is nearly twelve years since Sheikh Hamad assumed the reigns of power in Bahrain, and announced his intention to usher in a new era of political reform to establish "a modern constitutional monarchy". However, an examination of his actions and the changes he introduced in Bahrain reveals that there is little cause for him or his people to celebrate.

Considerable structural, social, historic and political obstacles stand in the way of genuine political and institutional reform in Bahrain; a long history of authoritarian rule; monopoly of power wielded by the royal family; a weak political organizational structure; and a restricted space for action by civil society and its various components. The division of the population along factional and tribal lines compounds the fragility of society, and restricts the ability of its forces to confront the existing political regime which - empowered by the dividends from a rentier economy- is at a clear advantage in managing social and political tensions and disputes.

Other obstacles are related to the king's own personality: viewing the reform process as a personal project, and his inability to curb the powers of the ruling family and the Defence Forces, two of the most powerful institutions that have held back political reform and the establishment of a modern state in Bahrain for decades. The king was simply unwilling to do what is required of an enlightened modern monarch, namely to confront the power centers within the regime.

A series of unilateral decisions, royal decrees, and administrative measures taken since the plebiscite of 2001 have dissipated the sense of optimism that had swept the country at the time. King Hamad's failure to live up to his promises of building a modern constitutional monarchy has dragged his country back to its tension-filled recent past. Protesters, whether they elected members of parliament or faced

covered young rioters in the streets, are mirror images of protesters who effectively crippled the regime of his father.

The vocabulary of protesters, be it at the level of protest, demonstrations, the contents of internet sites, or discussions in public forums, is no longer limited, as was the case ten years ago, to demands for improved living conditions, the release of detainees or the return of exiles. Rather, the political discourse has now begun to connect protests against privileges and discrimination with calls for the devolution of power and the establishment of a state that guarantees equal citizenship rights for all. The king is now faced with signs that suggest that dispensing royal favours is no longer an adequate form of dealing with the consequences of the failure to achieve reform. The danger is now that political gridlock and disillusionment will degenerate into an all out political and security crisis.

The nearly daily protest actions and the government's responses to them are not as violent as they have been during the Intifada of the 1990s. They, however, follow the similar patterns. And, in similarity with protest actions of earlier decades, the participants are predominantly Shia activists. An ICG report notes that:

“While not Many Sunnis undoubtedly are active in the opposition, and it would be wrong to reduce current tensions --particularly those relating to the political situation -- to a sectarian divide. But Shiites are hardest hit by social dislocation and endure, as they have since the late 1970s, multiple forms and levels of discrimination. Against the backdrop of frustration with Bahrain's struggling reform experiment, protracted socioeconomic difficulty and anti-Shiite discrimination are generating the confrontational tendencies that emerged in 2004 and provide a decidedly sectarian hue to the island's troubles”.

### **The controversy over A1 Tajnees A1 Siyasi**

One of the most heated rallying points of current contention in the country revolves around what is has been known as *al tajnees al*

*siyasi*, “political naturalization”. This refers mostly to use of royal *makramat* to grant Bahraini citizenship to a disputed number of foreigners. Protests against *tajnees* have been frequent and regular for the past ten years. Spokespersons for the opposition allege that the king continues to use several of the instruments of rule employed by the authoritarian regime of his father. One of these instruments is reliance on naturalization, *tajnees* to achieve a variety of demographic, political and social objectives.

Critics of *tajnees* allege that the process as an abuse of the king’s constitutional privileges. Since 1999, the process of *tajnees* has intensified. An ICG report notes that:

“Consistent with past practice, the government reportedly is pursuing policies to alter the island’s demographic balance. These include granting citizenship to non-Bahrainis - mainly Sunni Arabs from around the region - to mitigate Shiite dominance. Although there are no published figures for the number of “politically naturalized”, some suggest that as many as 50,000 to 60,000 have been extended citizenship in this way. Exceptional measures appear to have been taken to grant citizenship to Jordanians, Syrians, and Yemenis recruited by the security services and, demographic impact aside, the heavy presence of foreigners in the military and police has provoked sharp anger from locals who consider them ‘mercenaries.’”<sup>1</sup>

The number of Bahraini citizens rose from some 409,619 in 2001 to 529,446 in 2008. Beneficiaries of *al tajnees al siyasi* include foreign personnel employed by the Bahraini Defence Force, BDF, the Police and other Security agencies. They also include people who are not even resident of the country. Critics of *tajnees* allege that the process as an abuse of the king’s constitutional privileges. They also note that the process of *tajnees* lacks transparency and is carried out without proper parliamentary oversight.

---

1. ICG, (2005) "Bahrain's Sectarian Challenge", Middle East Report N°40.

Recently, on June 19th 2010, six Bahrain political groups organized a mass rally under the slogan “*Basna Tajnees*”, Enough Naturalization. The rally, attended by an estimated fifteen thousand persons, was the most recent of diverse protest actions organized by opposition groups against what has been termed as ‘political’ naturalization’ in Bahrain. The rally followed the usual rituals of the previous events during the past nine years. These include speeches by leaders of the opposition highlighting what they perceive as evils of the “political naturalization’ policy promoted by the Bahraini authorities to change the demographic structure of the country.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately this rally was held without incident and did not lead to clashes with the security forces, usually standing vigilantly nearby.

To understand the current naturalization contention I need to clarify three interrelated controversies, the demographic, the legal, and the political. I will, then, argue that naturalization should be analysed within the context of analysing the different modes of penetrating and re-shaping society. While it is evident the naturalization process has intensified following Hamad bin Isa’s accession to the throne in 1999, its practical political uses as one of several instruments of rule have long been recognized by his predecessors.

I will begin, however with a brief note outlining two claims. First, that the ruling family al- Khalifa has persevered in the face of repeated challenges rests largely on its unlimited ability to control state apparatuses, resources and powers. Second, because of its total control of the state the *al-Khalifa* regime has managed to penetrate society and to re-shape its components.

A report by the International Crises Groups notes that while “there are no published figures for the number of “politically naturalized”, some suggest that as many as 50,000 to 60,000 have been extended citizenship in this way. Exceptional measures appear to have been

---

2. The secretary general of the Democratic National Action, Ebrahim Sharif, said at the rally, that the naturalization has recently reached new levels. Between 2001 and 2007, he claims, 60,000 persons have been naturalized. Sharif explained that political naturalization occurs “outside the context of the law” and is harmful to the Sunnis as much as they are harmful to the Shiites”. *Nashrat Al-Demokrati*, vol. 8, no. 60, June 2010.

taken to grant citizenship to Jordanians, Syrians, and Yemenis recruited by the security services.”<sup>3</sup>

Government officials deny the allegations that it is actively manipulating the laws or engaged in activities to change the demographic balance in the country by naturalization of Sunni Muslim foreigners, Arabs and non-Arabs. Official statements underline that most of those who were granted citizenship are have earned it due to their long residence in Bahrain or by virtue of their outstanding services to the development of the country. Officials have accepted a single case of *en mass* naturalization. A reference to granting citizenship to reportedly 8000 persons belonging to *Al-Dawasir* tribe and its affiliates who were exiled from Bahrain by the British authorities in the beginning of the last century.<sup>4</sup> Several sources confirm “the claims by members of the *al-Dawasir* tribe, residents in eastern Saudi Arabia, that they have been recruited to sign up for Bahraini citizenship without having to forego their Saudi citizenship”.

### **The controversy over numbers**

The 1941 census was conducted “primarily for food control purposes” during World War II. In spite its flaws; the 1941 census is the first source detailing the demographic structure in Bahrain. It is also the only census that lists distribution of Muslim according to their sect. The Shia accounted for 52.5%, the Sunni for 47.5%.<sup>5</sup> The censuses of 1950, 1959, 1965, 1971, 1981, 1991 and, 2001 omitted the Shia/Sunni distribution. This left the room wide open for highly speculative demographic estimates, often coloured by political leaning of their

---

3. ICG, (2005), *ibid*. The report notes that an International Crisis Group representative, “visiting Manama in March 2004, viewed a video provided by Shiite activists in which numerous Dawasir residents in eastern Saudi Arabia describe their recruitment to sign up for Bahraini citizenship without having to forego their Saudi citizenship. Adding insult to the ire caused by sectarian gerrymandering, the naturalised Saudis were transported to voting booths at the mid-point of the causeway linking the two countries to allow them to vote in October 2002. In response, the government points out that over 1,000 long-time stateless Shiite residents, the so-called bidun, also received citizenship in 2001”.

4. ICG,(2005) *ibid*.

5. Cf. Fahim I. Qubain, (1955), “Social Classes and Tension in Bahrain”, *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 9, No. 3.271

proponents.

Speculation persists although there is very little evidence to support assuming that the five percent gap between the Shias and Sunnis in 1941 has considerably increased during the past seven decades. Living conditions for the majority of the population are generally comparable and do not make a case for ethnically differentiated population growth. It is worth noting that most villages in Bahraini are inhabited by Shias who commute to town for trade and work. Further, all population censuses indicate that more than two thirds of the inhabitants are concentrated in the main two towns.

Lacking a reliable estimate, and with the benefit of anecdotal evidences, most students of the country consider the Shia as constituting the majority of Bahrain's population. A recent report, typically, notes that:

“Estimates are varied and suggest that the Shi'a constitute 50-80% of Bahrain's population. Given that no survey has ever been conducted on this issue, it is simply not possible to determine a valid sectarian picture of Bahrain. Secondary source material however, consistently indicates that the Shi'a is the dominant indigenous religious sect in Bahrain.”<sup>6</sup>

The 50-80% gap allows most writers on Bahraini affairs I say typically, because most of us dealing with Bahrain move within this spectrum. While some opposition groups downplay the role of these numbers, they take them for granted.

The question whether the Shias make 53% or 80% of the Bahrainis is not easy to settle. The controversy over numbers continues. It gains additional significance when demography becomes an arena of contention and when numbers become tools for mobilizing support by the contending forces. The fear of being 'outnumbered' continues to be a useful rallying point for the regime and its opponents.

---

6. Steven Wright, (2008) "Fixing the Kingdom: Political Evolution and Socio-Economic Challenges in Bahrain" Center for International and Regional Studies Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. See also, Kenneth Katzman, (2010) "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy", U.S. Congressional Research Service, Middle East Council, (2002) U.S. Challenges and Choices in the Gulf: Political Liberalization", *Policy Brief #8*

## The legal side of the contention

Bahraini citizenship laws are restrictive. According to the 1963 Bahraini Citizenship Act and its amendments (Announcement Issue No. 11 of 1963 and Decree Law No 10 of 1981), persons can acquire citizenship through three modes: descent, birth, and naturalization.<sup>7</sup>

Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa reminded his critics that “Bahrain was one of first countries that corrected the situations of stateless individuals by granting many with Bahraini passports. He highlighted that all those naturalised were given Bahraini citizenships according to laws and regulations and international human rights agreements”<sup>8</sup>

Legally the king can do whatever he wishes. According to the Constitution of 2002, the king is “Head of State, its nominal representative, and his person is inviolate. He is the loyal protector of religion, and the homeland, and the symbol of national unity.” He, and he alone, may appoint the prime minister, ministers, ambassadors, governors, judges, members of the Consultative Council, members of the Constitutional Court, the commanders of the armed forces, the security agencies and the National Guard, or dismiss them. The king has the right to propose and amend laws, and to conclude treaties with other countries without requiring the ratification of those agreements by the National Assembly. He also has the final say in any disputes that arise between the three branches of government. Further, constitution gives the king the final word in any legislative conflict.

King Hamad seems to stretch to the maximum the constitutional privileges given to him by the controversial and popularly contested constitution of 2002. By referring to “rendering Bahrain great services” clause in the 1963 Citizenship Act, the royal court is has justified granting Bahraini citizenship en mass to the newly military recruits

---

7. Citizenship by descent which is offered to 1) a person born in Bahrain or abroad to a Bahraini father, 2) a person born in Bahrain or abroad to a Bahraini mother, provided that this father was either unknown, or not legally related to the person. Citizenship by birth is offered to 1) a person born in Bahrain to a father who was also born in Bahrain and has made Bahrain his permanent residence, at the time of birth of that person, 2) a person born in Bahrain to unknown parents. <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3fb9f34f4.html>

8. Suad Hamada “Bahrain Grants Citizenship to 7,102 People”, *Khaleej Times*, December 4, 2008

from Pakistan, Yemen, Jordan or Syria. The problems emanating from abuse of the king's constitutional powers, as well as from lack of transparency, are compounding and are likely to inflame the situation further. To many critics of the political naturalization, it is not enough to point to the constitution or to royal prerogatives to justify the continuing unpopular naturalization process.

### **Fuelling political contention**

On 24 October 2002, the first parliamentary elections since 1973 were held in Bahrain. The four main opposition groups called for boycotting the poll. The boycott call was motivated by the opposition's frustration at what they perceive as the king's unwillingness to listen to their views on the substance, pace and direction of the reform process. Above all, they charge that the king reneged on a central component of the proposed reforms when he unilaterally changed the constitution to introduce a second chamber of Parliament, whose members he would appoint himself, with equal legislative powers to the elected Chamber.

The boycott failed as over 53 percent of the electorate voted. Spokespeople for the opposition found solace in noting that the voter turnout may pale in comparison to the figures of over 98.4 percent at the February 2001 plebiscite, which gave a resounding approval to the National Charter proposed by Sheikh Hamad as a blueprint for political reforms.

Opposition groups explain the poor show of support for their boycott call by pointing to the ban on local media reporting of their views. While they were allowed to state their reasons for boycotting the elections, they were not permitted to campaign for a boycott per se. They also cite some innovative tactics deployed by the government. A last-minute announcement urged voters to take their passports with them to voting stations to be stamped. Many assumed that this would enable the government, literally, to sort out boycotters, i.e. "disloyal" from "loyal" citizens. This fear was corroborated by another announcement made ahead of polling: voters would be issued



“certificates of appreciation” recognizing that they had fulfilled their civic duty. These were a reminder of the “certificates of good behavior” the security and intelligence services used to issue during the 1980s and 1990s, and were required by the authorities before they would process applications for a job, a housing loan, or even a passport. Another tactic was the setting up of 10 “General Polling Centers”, GPC, where persons living in “boycotting neighbourhoods” could come to vote, thus escape the watchful eyes of their neighbors and relatives at their local voting stations. Opposition groups allege that military and Security Services personnel, including the recently naturalized, were instructed to cast their votes in one of the GPCs. With the absence of independent electoral observers, the government has difficult time to deny charges of that it has used the GPC votes to re-adjust the final election results in its favour through manipulating the recently naturalized military and security personnel.

The following observation from the US State Department, Bahrain Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007 is illuminating.

“In the first round of [2006] elections, officials in the 40 district polling stations announced results to observers and candidate representatives immediately following ballot counting. However, votes from the 10 general polling stations were taken to central facilities and folded in with those of other general stations before vote counts were made public.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Regime’s Demographic Engineering Capacity**

The first population census in Bahrain was conducted 1941. It census was a simple de facto count of all persons resident in the country at the time. Subsequent censuses were better organized and have shown a steady population, both local and foreign.

The country has experienced large population growth over the years, with an average annual population growth of 3.7% per year during the period 1941-2001 (see table 1 below). This growth, notes al

---

9. US State Department, Bahrain Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100593.htm>

Kuwari et al (2005) is influenced by two factors, 1) general improvement in social, health and economic conditions, and 2) the influx of foreign labourers to fill as demand for new skills by various economic sectors increases.<sup>10</sup> Both factors were facilitated by the unprecedented rise in state revenues following the 1970s oil-boom.

**Table 1**

**Population distribution 1950-2001 by nationality**

	1941	1950	1959	1965	1971	1981	1991	2001	2008*
--	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	-------

Total Inhabitants	89970	109650	143135	182203	216078	350798	508037	650604	1046814
% Bahrain of total	82.3	83.2	83.0	78.9	82.5	68.0	63.6	62.4	50.6

Source: Based on Bahrain Census 2001, tables A2 and A3. For 2008 figures, see parliamentary statements by Ahmed Al-Khalifa, the minister responsible for the Central Informatics Organisation (3 Feb 2008).

Rising oil revenues have increased the state's its capacities to affect changes all aspects social, economic life in the country. It became better equipped to defend its autonomy and to control of the distribution of resources without interference from society.<sup>11</sup> I will limit myself here to brief note two earlier, and hitherto successful, uses of demographic engineering to re-mold Bahraini society to fit the requirements of authoritarian rule. I contend that *Al Tajnees Al Siyasi* is a most recent manifestation of the increased capacities of the state.

First, the ruling family has, since 1970s oil boom, become better able better able to manage society through strictly maintain its vertical ethnic segmentation. The ruling family has effectively used

10. Zahwa M Al Kuwari, , "Bahrain's Communications to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change", Kingdom of Bahrain, General Commission for the Protection of Marine, Resources, Environment & Wildlife, March 2005. P. 14

11. Cf. 4 Michael Mann (1993), *The Sources of Social Power: Volume I*, New York: Cambridge University Press, also, 5 Joel S. Migdal (1988), *Strong societies and weak states: state-society relations and state capabilities in the third world*, Princeton, N.J.

its resources to solidify ethnic segmentation.<sup>12</sup> According to an ICG report:

“the state-controlled public sector, the largest employer in Bahrain, Shiites are on the outside looking in. Although this is largely true regardless of rank, it is particularly pronounced at the heights of power, which are dominated by the ruling family, and in most sensitive sectors, like the Bahrain Defence Forces (BDF) and the Ministry of Interior.”<sup>13</sup>

Social, cultural and political consequences of vertical segmentation are further consolidated through other state capacities. Regulatory frameworks and informal procedures provide justifications for segmentation of the labour market. It gains additional strength through occasional interventions by the relevant authorities, including courts, state security apparatuses

Second, state became better able to manage society the local labour market, through controlling the influx of foreign labourers and its allocations in various economic sectors. In similarity with the rest of the GCC countries, the labour market in Bahraini became segmented between nationals and expatriates, as well as between the public and private sectors. Segmentation of labour market is sustained by laws and regulations as well as through strictly maintaining disparity in wages and social benefits.

### ***Al Tajnees Al Siyasi as an extension of state capacity***

I contend here that king Hamad continues to use several of the instruments of rule employed during the reign of his father. There are however some noticeable difference in style and in resourcefulness. He obviously more regal and rely on disbursing magnanimously his makramat. This won him praise and made many of his critics reluctant to voice their views lest they squander their chances of receiving one.

---

12. The following quote from *The Economist* (3 April 2008) is illustrative. “The Shias are more likely to be jobless; many government employers discriminate in favour of Sunnis. “Recently I went for a public-sector job and they asked me what sect I was,” says a sour Shia mechanic. “But I didn’t come to the garage to pray!”

13. ICG, (2005) “Bahrain’s Sectarian Challenge”, Middle East Report N°40

King Hamad has also added naturalization, *tajnees* as an instrument of rule and to achieve a variety of demographic, political and social objectives.

With one obvious exception, legal procedures for naturalization in Bahrain are clear and straightforward. The king has, according to the law a discretionary power to grant citizenship to persons who do not meet any of specified requirements.

Several sets objectives are cited by critics of the current forms of *tajnees* in Bahrain. It is too early to speculate whether these objectives could be achieved or not. However a few immediate consequences of *tajnees al siyasi* stand out. First, expanding the pool for recruiting personnel to man the Bahrain's military and security apparatuses in completion with the other monarchies in the Gulf. Second, by creating a pool of loyal subjects would allow the regime to maintain the current ban on members of the Shia community to join military and security services. Third, by creating a loyal electoral base through enfranchising categories of residents and nonresidents of the country. In addition to various vote rigging techniques, this electoral base of newly naturalized Bahrainis could help adjust undesirable election outcomes. Fourth, by creating a third "communal" group, the ruling family could enhance its autonomy vis-a-vis society. It would have an additional bulwark against Shia demands for equality, at the same time that it does not have to cajole the Sunnis or succumb to their pressure. Fifth, the new "community", from the ruling Family's perspectives, has an added advantage. It is the least cohesive and is not likely to become one in the near future.

I end this presentation with a speculation that needs further work to examine. The current forms of *tajnees* could lead to institutionalizing 'differentiated citizenship', where rights and entitlements are allocated on the basis of group characteristics backgrounds and loyalty to the king. While differentiated citizenship may be advantageous instrument of authoritarian rule, it is highly risky and could generate problems of its own. In the long term, differentiated citizenship increases constraints against social integration. It also limits incentives to cultivate national

cohesion as it links citizenship rights and entitlement to belonging to one or the other of the citizenship categories.

## APPENDIX THREE

### Main political societies in Bahrain

**Al-Wefaq** is Bahrain's largest political party and won an overwhelming share of the electoral vote in the parliamentary election of 2006 resulting in seventeen out of forty seats in the Council of Representatives. Its membership consists predominantly of Shia individuals, and it is led by Sheikh Ali Salman who spent five years in exile in London.<sup>28</sup>

**National Democratic Action Society (NDAS)** is the strongest secular party with a mixed Sunni and Shia membership. It is currently headed by Ibrahim Sharif al-Sayed who took over from Abd al-Rahman al-Nuaymi in 2005. The society was formed in 2001 with the intention of creating an umbrella organisation to unify a diverse coalition, including leftists, liberals, Arab Nationalists and communists. It was partially successful, although the communists and some other smaller factions left after a few months. It won only one seat in the 2006 election.

**Al-Asalah** is a Sunni party that won five seats of forty in the 2006 Council of Representatives election. Led by Ghanim al-Buaneen, the society commands support from conservative Sunni areas within the country and was prominent in opposing the US led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

**Al-Menbar Islamic Society** is a Sunni party that won seven seats in the 2006 parliamentary election. Al-Menbar is regarded as more liberal than its conservative ally al-Asalah.

Adeal between the two parties was struck before the election to preclude a split in the Sunni vote. The party leader is Dr. Salah Ali.<sup>29</sup>

**Movement For Liberty and Democracy** (also known as **Haq**) decided to boycott the 2006 elections on the grounds that the 2002 constitution, imposed unilaterally by King Hamad, was illegitimate. The organisation was founded in 2005 and included many ex al-Wefaqmembers. It recently had prominent members, including influential leader Hassan Mushaima, arrested on fallacious charges of terrorism.

(Source: Broken Promises: human rights, constitutionalism & socioeconomic exclusion in Bahrain by Omar Ahmed, published by the Islamic Human Rights Commission 2010)

“ THE BRUTAL SUPPRESSION OF THE  
POPULAR UPRISING IN BAHRAIN IS A  
CONTINUATION OF THE SCANDALOUS  
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS PERPETRATED  
BY THE RULING AL KHALIFA FAMILY, ITS  
POLICE FORCE, ARMY AND SECURITY  
APPARATUS. THIS BOOK DOCUMENTS  
BAHRAIN'S TRAGIC HISTORY WHICH  
MOVES FROM ONE CYCLE OF REPRESSION  
TO ANOTHER. ”