

BAHRAIN

A Brickwall

*Correspondence between Lord Avebury and the
Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British Government
on the Human Rights Situation in Bahrain*

**Parliamentary Human Rights Group
London**

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**Parliamentary Human Rights Group
London**

The Parliamentary Human Rights Group

The Parliamentary Human Rights Group was founded in 1976 as an independent forum in the British Parliament concerned with the defence of international human rights. Since 1976, its members have increased to a current level of 130 Parliamentarians from both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. With the increase in numbers has come an increase in the range and extent of its activities. Members of the group represent all political parties, making the group broadly representative. The group undertakes human rights missions, publishes discussion papers, receives visitors and engages in dialogue with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office.

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Main Objectives

- To increase awareness in Parliament, Britain and abroad generally of human rights abuses whenever they occur
- To communicate to governments, their representatives in the United Kingdom and visiting delegations, the group's concern about violations of basic human rights
- To work for the implementation by all governments of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of the UN Covenants on civil and political, and on economic social and cultural rights

For more information, contact Lord Avebury, Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group:

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London SW1A 0AA

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Forward

A few days ago, I received the message that every journalist dreads. I had recently returned from Bahrain and reported for the BBC on human rights abuses there. During my week long stay in Bahrain, dozens of people had talked to me and volunteered to show me, at considerable personal risk, the daily demonstrations that take place in the struggle for democracy and to introduce me to the families of those imprisoned or "martyred". The message read that two of those people had been arrested, one severely tortured, apparently for the "crime" of telling an outsider the truth about what is happening in Bahrain today. I have since appealed to the Foreign and Commonwealth office for help in intervening with the Bahraini Government but, after reading the ensuing 210 pages, I am not hopeful.

The affection for Britain and things British in Bahrainis widespread. Many of Bahrain's prominent businessman, shia and sunni, have been educated in Britain and are today behind the pro-democracy movement. They speak in awe of the "Mother of Parliaments" (theirs was abolished in 1975). They speak with envy of "Speakers' Corner", "Spitting Image" and other symbols of free speech which we take for granted. Above all, they speak with sadness of the lack of interest by the British Government towards their cause.

As if to explain the silence from Whitehall, people plead with visiting journalists to "tell the truth". They say that "if only" the British Government knew about the arbitrary arrests of men, women and children, the desecration of mosques and the terror tactics carried out against the homes of ordinary people living in Shia villages, then H.M.G. would intervene with the al-Khalifa family and urge restraint and negotiation.

Lord Avebury's indefatigable letter writing reveals that the Foreign Office knows full well what is going on but chooses to support, in Douglas Hurd's words, our "old friends", i.e. the Al-Khalifas. The campaign to restore democracy and a parliament to Bahrain is not the work of a group of hotheads and terrorists, as the Government may prefer to believe. It is a campaign that is supported by the vast majority of the people of Bahrain and it is foolish and shortsighted to ignore them. Or, as Eric Avebury so eloquently puts it (letter to Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hanley, 13.1.96), "you could have helped prevent the instability now occurring and likely to get worse if the al-Khalifas play the Canute and attempt to stop the incoming tide of democracy".

Sue Lloyd-Roberts

London

June 1996

Introduction

The events that have been taking place since December 1994 are seen as a continuation of the process seeking change in the island state of Bahrain. Since the Amir, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, issued a decree suspending the 1973 Constitution and dissolving the parliament (National Assembly) in August 1975, there has been systematic opposition to the unconstitutional rule, and many sacrifices were offered in the struggle to force the Amir to rescind his infamous decree.

Bahrain was a British protectorate for more than 150 years, whose sheikh entered with Britain into the General Treaty of 1820 banning piracy in the Gulf region. Since then Britain became more involved in the internal affairs of the island as well as the other sheikhdoms along the crucial coast, Qatar and Kuwait. Until 1971, the British control over the region was exercised through a unique arrangement with a Political Agent (PA) acting as the local British representative in one or more of the sheikhdoms, and the Political Resident (PR) as the main British authority in the Gulf. The PR resided at the Iranian city of Bushire until 1947 when he moved to Bahrain. This arrangement continued until 1971 when the British withdrew from the Gulf following the Labour Government's decision in 1968 to withdraw from all areas east of Suez within the following three years.

During the British presence in the region, little development of the political system took place, and the aim of the Government of India and later the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) was to safeguard the British interest in the Gulf through the preservation of the tribal rule in each of the sheikhdoms. They resisted any movement for change throughout the Gulf. In Bahrain, for example, the British were instrumental in the crushing of the popular uprisings of 1938, 1956 and 1965 which were seeking the establishment of representative and legislative bodies. In all these instances the decisions of the successive PA's and PR's to prevent the development of democratic regimes led to the ruthless suppression of the popular movements. It was their policy to deport leading Bahraini political activists from Bahrain to India in 1938, St. Helena in 1956, and to various Arab countries in 1965. The case of the three Bahraini exiles in the Atlantic Ocean's island of St. Helena, Abdul Rahman Al Bakir, Abdul Aziz Al Shamlan and Abd Ali Al Ulaiwat, is well documented in the FCO archives. The three were exiled aboard a British ship in January 1957 after the British deployed troops in the streets of Manama and Muharraq in October 1956 to crush the uprising that had been going on for two years.

Furthermore, the British role in Bahrain was made even more direct through the "employment" by Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa in 1926 of a British "Adviser", Sir Charles Belgrave. His services were enlisted after the decision by the British Government to remove from power Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa in 1923 whose reign of terror led to an outburst of anger in 1922 threatening the future of the Al Khalifa rule. The move was meant to preserve the tribal rule by allowing a degree of central authority to evolve after decades of gross violation of the rights of indigenous inhabitants of the island, the Bahamah, or the Shia. Sir Charles managed to centralise the affairs of the government but refused to acknowledge the need to establish a modern political system. In his opinion, the Shia ought not to be given the chance to flourish and become a formidable political force. To this end he countered the two major popular movements of 1938 and 1956 and used force to repress the people. In both cases the leaders of the movements, both Shia and Sunni were punished and some of them exiled.

In 1965, a popular movement erupted following the decision by the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), to make redundant 500 employees. The whole nation went on strikes and demonstrations, and were ruthlessly suppressed. The RAF personnel took active role in suppressing the movement, and more than ten people lost their lives by police arms. Following that popular uprising the British administration decided to improve the efficiency of the security system, and the notorious colonial officer, Ian Henderson, was employed to oversee the development of the State Intelligence System (SIS). He was chosen by the British

for his earlier experience in Kenya where he had managed to suppress the Mau Mau rebels in Mount Kenya. This colonial hero, with two King George medals, was to dominate the internal affairs of Bahrain for the following three decades.

Following Bahrain's independence in 1971, when the British finally withdrew from the Gulf, the future of the country was decided by the United Nations which ruled that the people of Bahrain wanted to be independent of Iran, and that, in return, they would share power with the Al Khalifa family. The first Constituent Assembly was elected in 1972 to propose a constitution for the country. In 1973, the Amir, who had risen to the throne in 1961 following the death of his father, officially approved the Constitution and sealed it. In the same year the first parliamentary elections took place. For the first time in their modern history, the people of Bahrain tasted a limited degree of freedom. However, within a year Ian Henderson, the security chief, proposed the notorious State Security Law that empowers the minister of the interior to order the administrative detention of any political suspect for a period of up to three years without charge or trial. The parliament reacted fiercely, and in a show of solidarity and defiance, rejected the bill in June 1975, causing serious embarrassment to the British officer. The prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa reacted angrily and on 25th August, submitted the resignation of his government. One day later, the Amir issued a decree suspending those articles of the Constitution which guarantee a degree of freedom to the people. The first parliamentary experience had thus come to an abrupt end. This decision heralded a new dark age in Bahrain that was to continue until the present day.

As the people's outrage became apparent in the following few months, the government announced that it had foiled the first of a series of alleged coup attempts. At the time it was convenient to accuse the Democratic Republic of South Yemen, which was under communist rule, of conspiring to overthrow the government and smuggling arms into the country. Hundreds of young men were rounded up, and a few died under torture. The following two decades would witness the emergence of a popular movement calling for the reinstatement of the Constitution, an aim that has remained unchanged ever since. In 1981 the government announced that it had uncovered a plot to overthrow the government. This time the culprit was Iran. Hundreds were arrested and seventy three of them were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from seven years to life. Some of these men are still in jail. The situation in the country became even more bleak in the following years, and in 1984 a group of 18 people were jailed for 5-7 years after the government had claimed that they belonged to an illegal organisation. Thousands of people were either jailed or exiled in the eighties. At least six people died under torture: Jamil Al Ali, Karim Al Hebshi, Mohammed Hassan Madan, Sheikh Jamal Al Asfoor, Radhi Mahdi Ibrahim and Dr. Hashim Al Alawi. In 1986, a group of 11 people were also accused of plotting to overthrow the government and jailed for seven years. Two years later, several citizens were sentenced to 3 - 10 years of jail after a summary trial in the State Security Court. Among them was Mohammed Jamil Al Jamri who is still in jail eight years after the alleged conspiracy to stage a coup.

This background helps to give a picture of the internal situation in Bahrain as it emerged over the past twenty years. The morale of people remained high all along as the embattled regime continued its reign of repression. The advent of the second Gulf war to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation (1990-91) encouraged the people to resume their struggle to attain a degree of freedom. They chose to submit to the Amir a petition signed by 300 known personalities who were mostly professional lawyers, doctors, artists, businessmen, clerics, preachers and engineers. It called on the Amir to reinstate the Constitution in order to stabilise the country. The Amir rebuked the petitioners in a meeting in January 1993, and rejected their demand. Instead, he appointed 30 people to a Consultative Assembly which has neither power nor a constitutional validity. In 1994 the sponsors of the first petition prepared a new one with the additional demand to give women their political rights. Up to 25,000 people signed it, including many women. The Amir refused to receive it. In this connection, a young cleric, Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested, a step that was to prove ill-conceived and to lead to a popular uprising that the country had never experienced before.

Since December 1994, Bahrain has been in a state of crisis with the people calling for the reinstatement of the Constitution, the release of prisoners and the return of political exiles. The government, on the other hand, has consistently refused to succumb to these demands and precipitated a crisis that seems to grow worse by the day. As in the past, the Al Khalifa government has failed to acknowledge the need to change, and in twenty years that succeeded the abandonment of the democratic experiment, it has done absolutely nothing to impress its own people in terms of political reforms. It has sought to blame outsiders of fomenting the dissent, a claim that does not absolve it from the need to modernise the autocratic tribal system which is both outdated and repressive. Massive evidence has been collected by international human rights organisations on the human rights abuses in the country, and the finger has always been pointed to Ian Henderson as the chief engineer of the repressive measures employed by the foreign-staffed security system and riot police. More than twenty Bahraini citizens have so far died in the struggle to attain a degree of freedom, many exiled and thousands imprisoned.

This book is a compilation of the correspondence between Lord Avebury, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, and the British Government on the crisis in Bahrain. As will be seen, the human rights activists, has received little positive response from HM government on the issues he raised in his letters. He often said he is hitting a brick wall as the British Government, which left a legacy to Bahrain of its notorious security system, has constantly refused to express any view on the general, political or human rights situation in Bahrain. The letters contain details of the day-to-day development of the situation in the first eighteen months of the uprising. They reflect a genuine concern of a man who spent most of his life championing the cause of human rights around the globe. After more than thirty years in this field, Lord Avebury, as is clear in some of his letters to the Foreign Office in London, seems perplexed by the fact that HM Government chose to ignore the plight of the pro-democracy movement in a country that was not long ago, been under its direct protection. Bahraini opposition maintains that the British Government have a moral and political duty to acknowledge its part in establishing the security system in the island. and the appointment of Ian Henderson at its top. This colonel hero is viewed as the main mastermind behind the terror that has engulfed the country as the constitutionalists pursued their legitimate demands to have the constitution reinstated. The book will serve as a useful reference for researchers, politicians, human rights activists and researchers as they start digging into the crisis of Bahrain. Lord Avebury has tried to be as neutral as possible in expressing his views, condemning acts of arson and sabotage regardless of who has carried them out, whilst reaffirming his commitment to the defence of human rights. It is a valuable contribution to the cause of justice, democracy, human rights and freedom in a region whose governments are not renowned for their affection for these values.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

House of Lords

January 25, 1994

Dear Ambassador,

You may recall that I wrote to you on May 9, 1993, about the application of the citizenship laws in Bahrain, and you kindly forwarded my letter to the Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Mohamed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, who replied on June 7, sending us a copy of the statement made before the Commission on Human Rights at the 48th session from January 27 to March 6, 1992. He also asked us to supply a list of the persons to whom our inquiry related, and I wrote to him on June 18 enclosing the lists (a) of citizens fearing to return in case they would be arrested and tried; (b) of those who tried to return and were allegedly denied leave to enter, and (c) of citizens of Persian origin said to have been deprived of their citizenship. I added that it seemed to us that although the Minister had emphasised that all Bahrainis enjoyed equal rights irrespective of their religion etc, as laid down in the constitution, the Shias and those of Persian ancestral origin felt themselves to be suffering discrimination through the citizenship laws.

On August 9, I wrote again to the Minister, saying that we had taken note of the lifting of monitoring under the special Resolution 1503 procedure of the human rights situation in Bahrain by the UN Human Rights Commission, and I repeated that we hoped to receive a full account of his Government's point of view on the matters raised, so that we could give our members a briefing which covered both sides of the picture.

Since then we have not heard from the Minister, but we have taken note of the Amnesty International paper Banned from Bahrain: forcible exile of Bahraini nationals, published in December 1993. This indicates that your Government had responded to some of their communications, and I very much hope we may expect an early reply to our own concerns. Otherwise, we may be compelled to distribute briefings to our 120 members which do not contain a direct account of the Bahrain Government's view on the matters raised. I certainly hope we would not have to rely on the description given by Amnesty International of your Government's responses to their inquiries, since the reasons given for exiling Bahraini citizens, or of refusing them admission, were not valid under international law.

Yours sincerely,

H E the Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords

P9411042

April 11, 1994

Dear Prime Minister,

I have been corresponding with the Ambassador of Bahrain in Britain, about human rights in Bahrain, and in particular about the laws of citizenship. In view of the close and historical relationships between our two countries, I would now very much like to visit Bahrain myself, to discuss these matters with you and other Ministers and officials, and a range of eminent private citizens. I would be most grateful if you could let me know when it would be convenient for you to receive me.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

H E the Prime Minister,
Sheikh Khalifa bin Salmam al-Khalifa,
PO Box 1000, Manama,
Bahrain

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9418041

House of Lords

April 18, 1994

Dear Ambassador

As you know, we are anxious about some aspects of human rights in Bahrain, and I enclose a copy of a letter I wrote to the Prime Minister asking if he would receive me for a discussion on these matters.

In the meanwhile, we heard about two cases, and I would be most grateful if you would convey our views on these to the authorities in Bahrain.

Mr Hashem Al-Mousawi, an activist in the Islamic opposition movement, tried to enter Bahrain on April 15 by Gulf Air flight GF902 which arrived in Bahrain 20.00. He was detained on entry, and then sent to Abu Dhabi, where he has not been admitted either, and is stuck at the airport.

Mr Al-Moussawi was detained without trial between November 1982 until some time in 1986. He was then freed, but was arrested again in 1988 and tried before the State Security Court, which sentenced him to five years in prison. Apparently he got no remission, and at the end of the full sentence was taken direct from his cell to the airport where he was expelled to Syria, on a special one-shot Bahrain travel document. There were no formal procedures to deprive him of his citizenship, and his expulsion was contrary to international customary law..

Mr Abdul Jalil Saleh Ahmed An-Noaimi, a founder and Vice-President of the National Union of Bahraini Students (NUBS), sought to enter Bahrain on April 15, but was expelled on April 16 to Syria. When the National Assembly was dissolved in August 1975 he left Bahrain, and since then has been advocating the restoration of democracy and human rights from abroad. His passport was cancelled, but again as far as we are aware, he was never deprived of his citizenship.

We would respectfully ask that these two gentlemen be allowed to return to their country, as is their right under customary law, and under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

*Yours sincerely,
Lord Avebury*

H E the Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords

P9424052

May 25, 1994

Dear Minister

We have just been informed of a possible attempt by Bahrainian officials to transfer two persons from prisons in Bahrain to Iran. Mr. Nabil Ibrahim Baqir and Mr. Ahmed Hussain Mirza were both arrested on November 23, 1987, and were sentenced to seven years imprisonment by the State Security Court. It is our understanding that these two individuals are now to be removed from Bahrain and sent to Iran.

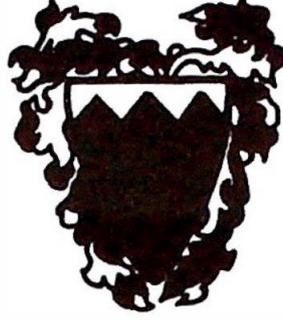
We would appreciate it if you would investigate this matter and inform us of the location and condition of the two prisoners. If they are to be expelled to Iran, would you be kind enough to explain under what law this is to be enforced?

Sincerely,

E. Avebury

Al-Shaikh Mohamed Bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa
Minister of the Interior
P.O. Box 13
Manama, Bahrain
Fax: 010-973-290-526

*Embassy
of the State of Bahrain
London*



سَفَارَةُ دَوْلَةِ الْبَحْرَيْنِ
لندن

4/ 375
8th June 1994

Dear Lord Avebury,

With reference to previous correspondence, and upon directions from my Government, I have the great pleasure to extend an invitation to you to visit Bahrain as guest of the Government of the State of Bahrain, hoping that your visit will contribute to the long standing close and friendly relations between Bahrain and the United Kingdom.

I would, therefore, appreciate receiving from you suggestions for possible dates for such a visit in order for me to communicate them to Government officials in Bahrain for mutually convenient dates.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar
Ambassador

Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights
House of Lords
Westminster,
London, SW 1



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9414066

House of Lords

June 14, 1994

Dear Ambassador,

Thank you for your letter of June 8, and the kind invitation which the State of Bahrain extends to me to visit the country. I am happy to accept, on the understanding that I bear all my own expenses, as is my rule when making any overseas visit. I am sure you can understand that otherwise my independence might be open to criticism.

I certainly look forward to discussing, with the Bahrain Government, and leading members of the legal profession, the matters of concern to us, which I have raised in correspondence with the Minister of the Interior, and with Your Excellency. Would a date around the middle of September be convenient, do you think?

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

H E The Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

5 August 1994

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 21 July about human rights in Bahrain which I passed on to the Charge d' Affaires in Bahrain for his comments.

I was interested to learn that you are intending to visit Bahrain later in the year. I hope the arrangements for your visit are running smoothly. Please let me know if you run into difficulties: the Middle East Department here at the FCO and our Embassy in Bahrain are ready to help in any way.

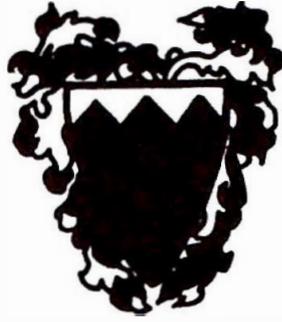
We believe that there has been a marked improvement in Bahrain's human rights record. The Amir has recently offered amnesties to a number of political prisoners and exiles, and we believe that only a few political prisoners remain.

However, we continue to take an interest in the human rights situation. Your contacts with the Bahraini authorities and forthcoming visit could be a useful complement to our own dialogue with the Bahrainis over human rights. I would welcome your assessment of the human rights situation in Bahrain after your visit.

Yours sincerely
Douglas Hogg

Douglas Hogg

*Embassy
of the State of Bahrain
London*



سِفَارَةُ دَوْلَةِ الْبَحْرَيْنِ
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4/ 578
15th September 1994

Dear Lord Avebury,

Further to the correspondence regarding your proposed visit to the State of Bahrain, I am writing to you on behalf of H.E. The Ambassador who is abroad to inform you that the relevant authorities in the Government of the State of Bahrain welcome your visit during the last week of October or the beginning of November 1994.

I will be grateful to receive from your office the suitability of the dates suggested for the visit to take place, and in due course the flights itinerary to communicate them to the relevant authorities .

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

✓
Adel Sater
Charge d' Affaires a.i.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights
House of Lords
Westminster
London, SW 1

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



House of Lords

September 22, 1994

Dear Mr Sater,

Thank you for your letter of September 15 about the dates of my visit to Bahrain.

From October 28 to November 22 I am taken up with the London Bach Festival, of which I am President, so immediately after that would be a good time to go, if that would be convenient. I would be available from November 12 onwards, and will earmark that week in my diary. In the next few days I will be in touch about the details of flight times etc.

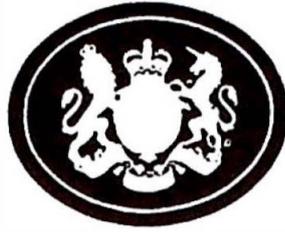
Best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

Mr Adel Sater,
Chargé d'Affaires ai,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU

From Lord Avebury



House of Lords

November 10, 1994

Dear Ambassador

I am greatly looking forward to my visit to Bahrain in a week's time, and your Private Secretary said it would be useful if I dropped you a note on how I would like to spend the time there.

I would hope to meet a range of intellectuals - lawyers, journalists, religious leaders, businessmen, University teachers etc - as well as Government Ministers and officials. I would also very much like to see ordinary people in their villages. If possible, I would like to visit the Jaw prison and talk privately to some detainees.

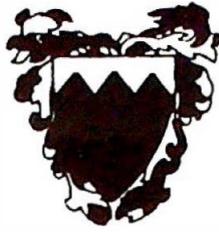
May I call on you before next Thursday, and if you have the time, could your Private Secretary please let me know when it would be convenient for you?

*Yours sincerely,
Eric Avery*

His Excellency Sheikh Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU

Fax 071-370 5943

STATE OF BAHRAIN
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



دولة البحرين
وزارة الداخلية
مكتب الوزير

Date: ...13..11..1994..... التاريخ

Your Ref: رقم

Tel: هاتف

Our Ref: رقم

Lord Avebury,
Chairman,
Parliamentary Human Rights Group,
House of Lords,
London.

Dear Lord Avebury,

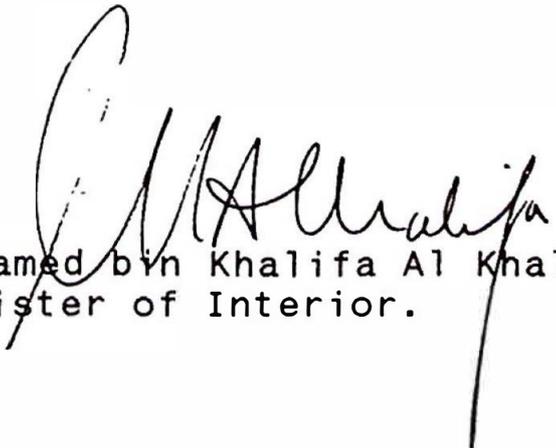
I was very pleased to receive a copy of your letter of the 22nd of September Addressed to Mr. Adel Sater Charge' d' Affaires of the Bahrain Embassy in London concerning possible timings for your visit to Bahrain.

As you know we are just entering upon a particularly busy period of the year including the hosting of the forthcoming GCC Summit.

In view of the importance which the Government attaches to your visit it would be more convenient and enable us more easily to extend to you the normal courtesies and facilities if you could arrange to visit us sometime say in the new year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,


Mohamed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa,
Minister of Interior.

*Embassy
of the State of Bahrain
London*



سِفَارَةُ دَوْلَةِ الْبَحْرَيْنِ
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4/689

14th November 1994

Dear Lord Avebury,

Further to your earlier request and correspondence concerning your proposed visit to Bahrain .

As I informed you earlier today that I have been requested by my Government to inform you of the postponement of your proposed visit to Bahrain due to unforeseen Ministerial engagements and commitments. I am enclosing a copy of letter received today by fax from His Excellency Shaikh Mohamed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa Minister of Interior, which is self explanatory. However, I will convey to you the new suggested dates to your proposed visit as as soon as they are communicated to me.

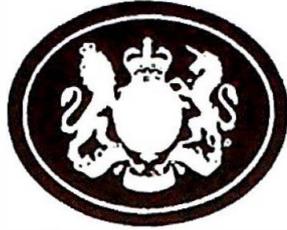
May I take this opportunity to thank you for you understanding of the situation.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely

Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar
Ambassador

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
Westminster
London, SW 1



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9405121

House of Lords

December 5, 1994

Dear Ambassador

I was very disappointed to learn from your Private Secretary that the new dates I proposed for my visit to Bahrain, January 5 to 12, were also not going to be convenient. The problem is that I have to try to fit overseas journeys into the parliamentary recesses, and this means putting it off at least until Easter. But since I have a number of other invitations still outstanding which are more definite, perhaps I should treat the visit to Bahrain as cancelled until further notice. This I propose to do, unless I hear from you to the contrary.

Yours sincerely

Eric Austin

H E Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Embassy of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9420123

December 20, 1994

Dear Mr Hogg

I am sure you will have been following recent events in Bahrain with great concern, as we have. I spoke to Caroline Alcock this afternoon and she told me that the latest news was that things were rather quieter. But this is not surprising if they have arrested some 600 people as we have been told; that at least four people have been killed, and that some villages have been virtually under siege by armed police, with helicopters intimidating them from above.

All this stems from the demand for the restoration of the 1973 constitution and the Parliamentary assembly which was dismissed by the Emir in 1975. He has been governing the state extra-constitutionally ever since then, and recently a petition to the Emir has been circulating for the restoration of democracy. This petition, which has attracted 25,000 signatures from every section of the community, is expressed in the most respectful terms. It recalls a previous appeal addressed to the Emir in 1992; calls attention to the worsening economic situation, the lack of freedom of expression and the exclusion of women from public life; and suggests either the reconvening of the dissolved Parliament under Article 65 of the constitution or the holding of free elections.

The spark which set off the disturbances was apparently the voicing of these demands by Sheikh Ali Salman, a junior Shia cleric who happens to have attended theological college in Qom. The press has seized on this fact to portray the demands as a sinister plot by Iran to destabilise and perhaps even to annex Bahrain. As you know, Persian speakers constitute only 15% of the population of Bahrain, and there is no reason whatsoever to suppose that Arabic-speaking Shias would favour accession to Iran, if they were able to express themselves democratically on the issue.

Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested on December 5, and has been held incommunicado and without charge since then. Under the Emir's rule, detainees have no access to lawyers or to their families, and may be held for three years, a term which is indefinitely renewable.

I think people will find it extremely distasteful that the security apparatus which props up the family dictatorship of the Al-Khalifas is commanded by a British citizen, Mr Ian Henderson. It is under his authority that people are arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned indefinitely, shot dead at demonstrations, and tortured while in custody. I know that there are restrictions on our citizens taking service in the armed forces of foreign powers; do you not think that similar rules should apply to the security services of foreign powers?

We are one of Bahrain's closest allies, and we may be presumed to have some influence with them. As with all the autocracies of the Gulf, we can either try to persuade them to move with the tide of history towards participatory democracy, or we can support their creaking feudal systems until they finally disintegrate in explosions of violence and anarchy. Surely it is in Britain's interests, from the business point of view as well as from a human rights angle, to use our influence to the utmost in favour of peaceful reform. I hope that you might respectfully suggest to the Emir that after 20 years, it is about time he considered giving back to the people the representative institution he arbitrarily and unlawfully dissolved in 1975.

Yours sincerely,

E. Hogg

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



December 20, 1994

Sir,

Your correspondent Michael Sheridan's article *Violent Shia protests embarrass Bahrain* omits material facts which are essential to a proper understanding of the situation.

The reason for the demonstrations was the demand for restoration of the 1973 constitution, under which the state had an elected Parliament. The Emir dismissed the Parliament in 1975 and has ruled by decree since then. The arrest of Sheikh Ali Salman for voicing this demand was only the spark which set off the unrest, and if he had not spoken out, others would have done so.

A petition signed by more than 25,000 people, calling for the restoration, was to have been presented to the Emir on or about December 16, the Bahraini National Day. The leader chosen to present it was Dr Abdul Latif El Mahmoud, a Sunni Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Bahrain, but it was supported by people from every section of the community.

Few if any of those involved in the demonstrations were from the Persian-speaking minority, which constitutes 15% of the population. There is no question of a revival of Iranian claims to Bahrain, which were disposed of by the United Nations nearly a quarter of a century ago.

We have a list of 79 people arrested since the troubles began on December 5, but we know that the actual total is much higher. Four people are known to have been killed by the security forces, and others are critically injured. Under the emergency law prevailing in Bahrain, a person may be detained without charge for three years, and the detention may be renewed indefinitely.

Your correspondent does point out that a British citizen, Mr Ian Henderson, commands the security apparatus of Bahrain, and many people here will be surprised that we should tolerate an arrangement which associates us with abuses of human rights in another country.

I had hoped to visit Bahrain as the guest of the Government in November, but the authorities cancelled at the last moment, suggesting that early 1995 would be more convenient. Recently they again put me off, without suggesting an alternative date. It might help to restore confidence in the Bahrain Government's good intentions if they would reinstate their invitation, for a January visit.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "E. Avebury".

The Editor,
The Independent

Fax 071-962 0017



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

30 December 1994

London SW1A 2AH

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A OPW

From The Minister of State

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 20 December about recent events in Bahrain.

Like you, we followed recent events in Bahrain closely. We have received reports that two civilians and one policeman have been killed during the disturbances. Our Embassy has been reliably informed that around 500 arrests have been made and they understand that the Bahraini authorities are reviewing individual cases with a view to releasing as many as possible soon. We have no evidence to suggest that the Bahraini police used unnecessary force.

I was sorry to read in the Independent on 20 December that your visit to Bahrain has not yet been reinstated. We hope that the Bahrainis will propose an alternative date. But I doubt that they would be able to accommodate a visit before Ramadhan: March would be more timely. Middle East Department of the Foreign Office and the Embassy in Bahrain would readily help with arrangements.

*Yours sincerely
D. Hogg*

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9505016

January 5, 1995

Dear Ambassador,

Your Private Secretary suggested that I might write to you about my proposed visit to Bahrain, which had been scheduled for November originally and then for early in the new year. Although I understood that you thought a later date would be more convenient, I would very much like to go soon, to assess the situation following the petition which was to have been presented to H E the Emir on constitutional reform, and the arrests of demonstrators calling for the restoration of the 1973 Constitution. Would you kindly let me know if this is possible?

In any case, I would be grateful for a note about the demonstrations and the arrests. Could you please tell me how many people are in custody; whether they have been charged and if so with what offences; whether they have been allowed to see lawyers and relatives, and whether the dates have been fixed for the trials. Would it be possible for us to send an observer to the trials?

Yours sincerely,

Lord Avebury

H E Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar
Ambassador,
Bahrain Embassy
98 Gloucester Road
London SW7 4AU

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9506014

January 6, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg

Thank you for your letter of December 30 about Bahrain, which reached me this morning on being forwarded from the House.

According to our information, four people were killed, not two as you were informed: Hani Abbas Khamis (24), Hani Hassan Ebrahim Ali Al-wasti (22), Yaqoub Al Ma'touq, from Al-Daih and Haji Mirza Ali Abd Al-Redha (65) from Al-Qadam. It is reported that four other people have died, but their identity cannot be confirmed until their bodies are released from the Salmanya Hospital, where those injured in the disturbances are being treated in a high security area, in which no visits are allowed. Mr Khamis was a university student in his final year. Mr Al-wasti was an employee of the Ministry of Health, who was due to get married a few days later. Mr Abd Al-Redha was killed when police stormed the Al-Musharraaf Grand Mosque in Jidhafs on December 20.

A number of others were severely wounded, including a child named Habib from Barbar, and two women, Asma'a Al-Rashed, from Sanabes, and Zaynab Al-Rashed, hit in the eye by a bullet fragment on December 18 in Sanabis. Detainees said to be hospitalised include Badir Habib Jumaa (21) from Sanabis, with bullet wounds in the chest and abdomen; Riyadh Ashoor (29) from Sanabis also; Mansoor Abdul Redha (18) from Bani-Jamra, with a bullet wound in his knee; Hussain Al-Nashaba (21) from Nuaim, wounded in the back by a bullet; Hussain Ramadhan (15), hit in the chest by two bullets on December 19 in Sanabis; Akeel Mohammed Shareef (15) from Manama, and Sheikh Ali Salman (29) from Belad Al-qadeem. The police are reported to have used live ammunition, as well as tear gas and rubber bullets, in their dispersal of the demonstrators. I invite you to reconsider your opinion that there is no evidence to suggest that the police used unnecessary force. Surely the deaths and casualties speak for themselves? *Res ipsa loquitur*, as they say in your profession.

On the other hand, I have no reason to disagree with your assessment of the number of detainees, though a lawyer interviewed by the BBC Arabic

service gave a figure of 2,000, and I have faxed him asking for clarification, and AFP quoted a figure of 1,600. We have a list of 138 names, but we were informed that the total is estimated to be somewhere between 400 and 600, which tallies with your estimate of 600.

I think it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the reason for the demonstration was to support the petition calling for the restoration of the 1973 constitution. Ministers have often repeated the call made originally by Douglas Hurd for good government, including representative institutions. It is surely quite unacceptable that when people demand their ordinary rights, this degree of violence should be used to suppress them, and the support you give to autocratic régimes in the Gulf is not consistent with the general principles of our foreign policy. It smacks more of the Conservative administration of 1859, which was determined to prop up the Bourbons of Naples when they were at their last gasp.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Auckman

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



January 9, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg

Further to my letter of January 6 about Bahrain, in which I suggested that you might wish to revise your statement that you had no evidence to suggest that the Bahraini police used unnecessary force, I have to draw your attention to another death, this time while in custody. Mr Hussain Qambar, 18, who was arrested in mid-December, who was in perfect health when he was taken into custody, died on or about January 4, when his family were summoned by the intelligence department to witness his private burial. The family said that his finger and toe nails had been pulled out, and they were threatened with reprisals if they gave this information to anyone else.

On Friday, January 6, a peaceful demonstration was held on the main Budayya highway, between al-Qadam and al-Maqshaa villages, 7 miles west of the capital, Manama, and near the residence of the US Ambassador. The main demands were the restoration of the constitution and the release of the political prisoners, but the demonstrators also wanted to make it clear that they were not anti-foreigner, as had been suggested in some quarters. The demonstration had been going peacefully for some 45 minutes, when the riot police appeared, encircled the demonstrators, and used tear gas, rubber and plastic bullets against them, quite unnecessarily. Some fifteen people were taken to Salamaniya hospital. The police imposed a curfew on the two villages mentioned, and made a number of arrests from houses in both villages.

On Saturday, January 7, there was a large demonstration on the streets of al-Duraz village. The police again used plastic bullets, and more people were injured

We understand that apart from the demonstrations of which the details have been reported, there have been many others, in which people have been injured and arrested. I think the number in custody must have risen since we both heard the figure of 500. I talked to one Bahraini who arrived here yesterday, and he said that the commonly accepted number there is 1,500.

The policy of forcible deportations of Bahraini citizens is continuing. On Thursday last week Mr Hamid Hasan Al-Madeh, 37, with his wife and seven children; Mr Hani Al-Bannaye, 23; Mr Fuad Mubarak, 23; Mr Ibrahim Ali Al-Setri, 22; Mr Ibrahim Al-Sanadi, 23; Mr Al-Jufeir, 25, and Mr Mahmood Al-Ghoreifi, 23, were deported to Dubai. Mr Moneer Abdul-Rasool Radhi, his wife and three children were deported to Beirut.

As I have said before, we should not be giving our support to autocratic régimes in the Gulf, which are certain to fall anyway. Even if you look at from a purely self-interested point of view, it cannot be to the advantage of Britain in the long term to be seen by the people as backing their oppressors.

Tom Nicols

E. Hogg

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9509014

January 9, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg

Further to my earlier letters about police assaults on demonstrators in Bahrain, I heard today of an incident involving a nine year old boy. Ali Noori Al Aradi was walking along Sheikh Abdullah Avenue in Manama when a police patrol stopped and tried to arrest him. The frightened boy tried to run away, but it was reported that he was caught and beaten up by the police, using their boots and truncheons. They left the boy unconscious on the pavement. When the police patrol left the area, bystanders picked him up and took him to Salmaniya hospital, where he is said to be receiving treatment. His family have not been allowed to visit him!

As the father of a nine year old boy myself, I feel particularly indignant about this latest example of gratuitous use of force by the police, and I certainly hope you will agree that you were badly advised when you made your first comment on their behaviour. Will you please ask our Ambassador in Bahrain to make particular inquiries about Ali Noori's current state of health, and try to find out why the police decided to pick on a child in this way?

We hear that demonstrations have been continuing, and so have the arrests. Today there was a large demonstration in Bilad Al Qadeem, again calling for the restoration of the constitution and free elections. As usual, the police attacked the demonstrators using tear gas, rubber and plastic bullets.

Once more, let me repeat that it is odious that a British citizen, Mr Ian Henderson, should be in charge of the forces which commit these outrages against people asking only for the most elementary democratic rights. It is also repugnant that Britain should be so closely allied with a mediaeval autocrat with so little respect for human rights.

*Yours sincerely,
Eric Avebury*

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9513011

January 13, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg

We now have a more reliable estimate of the numbers detained in Bahrain, arising from the fact that all prisoners are given serial numbers, which are consecutive. The first person to be arrested was Sheikh Ali Salman as you will remember, and his serial number was 5181. At the beginning of this week the serial number of a prisoner was 6000, indicating that more than 800 arrests had been made. Some may have been released, but this is a very large number out of a population of half a million. The equivalent figure for Britain, if the same proportion of the population had been arrested, would be 80,000.

It is estimated that the number of detainees under the age of 18 is 200. Bahrain is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the failure of the authorities to grant access to parents or guardians is a violation of Articles 5 and 9 of that instrument.

The arrests are still continuing. We have the names of 6 people arrested on January 11, one of them 17 year old. We have also been informed that a teenager from Duraz, Jaffer Al Shehabi, lost an eye last week as a result of a shooting incident. So the police are still using firearms, as well as tear gas, rubber bullets and, it is alleged, a white chemical substance which causes irritation to the eyes and skin.

I have yet to hear that we have remonstrated with the Emir over the violence being used to quell the demonstrations, and you have not yet commented on the role of Mr Ian Henderson, a British citizen, who is responsible for the behaviour of the security forces.

Yours sincerely,

D. C. Hogg

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

**From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group**



January 20, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg,

I note that there has been a propaganda campaign by the Bahrain authorities in the Gulf press about Sheikh Ali Salman, who is awaiting the hearing of his application for asylum in Britain. In the newspaper Asharq al Awsat, a Saudi-owned daily published in London, it is claimed that Sheikh Ali Salman wanted to go to Tehran or Beirut, but changed their minds in Dubai. The fact is that they wanted to stay in Bahrain, and the tickets issued to them by the authorities in Bahrain would have landed them finally in Damascus, a matter over which they were given no choice.

Adel al Shu'la, who was deported on Wednesday January 18, was taken straight to Damascus, where he has no friends or money.

There have been further deaths since I last wrote to you. Abdulqader Muhsien Alfatlawi, 25, from Duraz, was shot dead on Thursday January 13. The following morning, the security forces stopped mourners carrying out funeral rites, storming the cemetery and dispersing the relatives with tear gas, arresting many people. Mohammad Ridha Mansour Ahmad, 30, from Bani Jamrah, was severely wounded in the head and is critical in Salmaniya Medical Centre.

I was disturbed to read in this morning's Guardian that the FCO is 'upset' by Sheikh Ali Salman's presence here. If his arrival, and that of his colleagues 'annoys' you as the Diplomatic Editor says, you have a perfectly simple remedy: tell your friends in Bahrain to stop deporting their own citizens, contrary to international law.

*Yours sincerely
Eric Avebury*

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P952001b

January 21, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg,

This afternoon I saw Sheikh Ali Salman Ahmed Salman, Hamza Ali Jassim Kadhem, and Sayed Haider Hasan Ali Hasan, who arrived here on January 17 after being deported by their own country, Bahrain, on January 15, as you know.

In his first comment to the BBC Arabic service Sheikh Ali Salman stated that the reason for his arrest and subsequent exile was his support for the petition which demanded the restoration of the 1973 constitution.

Following the deportation, large demonstrations were reported in Sanabis, Jidhafs and Daih (six miles west of Manama), calling for the return of the exiles. Security police raided mosques in Jidhafs and Mani (four miles west of Manama), and destroyed their contents.

I told you that Abdul Qader Mohsin Al Fatlawi was extrajudicially killed on January 13, but I may have omitted to inform you that Husein Qambar died under torture on January 4. We are beginning to get many allegations of torture and, Hamza Ali Jassim Kadhem has promised to give me a list of those who told him personally that they had been tortured. Sheikh Ali Salman himself tells me that on his first day in custody he was alternately interrogated and beaten while forced to stand, from 07.00 to 20.00. The interrogators were Adel Flaifal and Mahmood El Akkari, a Jordanian, while the man who beat and hit him was named Shamsan (first name not known). Sheikh Ali Salman said that he was handcuffed for the entire 22 days he spent in the interrogation centre, and had to sleep on an industrial carpet on the floor. He was kept in a space one metre by two metres. After 22 days he was moved into the main prison at Qalaa, where he was kept in cell no 31, about 2 by 3 metres. For the whole of the period of his detention he was allowed to see nobody except the guards. He was denied any reading matter, except that after he was moved to the main prison he was allowed a copy of the Koran, but as they continued to withhold his glasses, he was unable to read anyway.

The Saudi-owned paper Al Sharq Al Awsat of January 19 reported under the headline 'fears of bad relations with Britain' that Bahrain government sources commented on the negative effect on Britain's relations not only

with Bahrain, but the Gulf as a whole, arising from Britain having 'invited' persons who were persona non grata in Bahrain to come here. Today the Arabic newspaper Al Quds, published in London, confirmed that this was an official reaction. The writer of the article mentioned on the telephone, though not in the paper, that the Bahrain Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, was coming here next Friday to drive this message home. I asked your Private Secretary whether he knew anything about this visit and he confirmed that the Foreign Minister was indeed coming here, though he couldn't say when this had been arranged, and whether it was at our invitation or of the Minister's own volition. I did say that if he was coming here to instruct us as to who we should or should not grant asylum to, he should be told in no uncertain terms that we are governed by our international obligations under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and that we would not be deflected from those duties by threats or pressure. **May I please know the dates, purpose and detailed arrangements for this visit, before it takes place?**

I have asked you about the status of Mr Ian Henderson, and I hope I may have a reply on that matter soon. Sheikh Ali Salman told me that some people in Bahrain drew the conclusion, from Mr Henderson's role, that the British people were supportive of the Al-Khalifa régime and their treatment of the democracy movement, but he emphasised that he himself did not take that view. It seems to me that if under our law, a British citizen is not allowed to serve as a mercenary in foreign armed forces, the law should be extended to security forces as well. Otherwise there is a danger that, as with Mr Henderson, the wrong inferences may be drawn. To put it at its lowest, the presence of a British citizen in the top levels of another state's security forces makes it seem as though we officially support their methods of dealing with dissent. It makes one feel extremely uncomfortable to be associated, however remotely, with the extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary detention now being practised in Bahrain.

Yours sincerely,

E. Hogg

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P952201a

January 23, 1995

Dear Douglas,

I wrote to Douglas Hogg yesterday about the visit by the Foreign Minister of Bahrain which I understand is scheduled for the end of next week. Since then, my attention has been drawn to yesterday's issue of The Times, in which the headline over Michael Binyon's article says that you personally are being pressed for talks with the Minister, Shaikh Muhammad al-Khalifa.

If the declared purpose of the meeting is to influence the decision on the asylum applications of Sheikh Ali Salman Ahmed Salman, Hamza Ali Jassim Kadhem, and Sayed Haider Hasan Ali Hasan, who arrived here on January 17 after being deported by their own country, Bahrain, on January 15, I hope you will find a way of indicating beforehand that this is not the way things are done here in Britain. Asylum applications are of course considered on their merits, in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and there is no scope for the process to be influenced by other considerations. If the Minister does say that Britain's relations with Bahrain, or with Gulf states as a whole, are likely to be adversely affected by a decision to grant the three applicants asylum, I hope you will tell him that we would not be deflected from carrying out our obligations under the Convention by threats or pressure. I hope you might also say that Bahrain is in breach of her own obligations under international law, by expelling her own citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Eric

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

bcc Michael Binyon Esq, The Times



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

24 January 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letters of 20 and 21 January, which appear to have crossed with mine of 19 January.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, the Bahraini Foreign Minister, will pay a short visit to the UK towards the end of January after his scheduled visit to France. The Foreign Secretary makes a point of trying to see his opposite numbers if they are in the UK. He has agreed to see Shaikh Mohammed on Friday 27 January. Their meeting will be the second in five months and will be an opportunity to discuss both bilateral relations and regional and international events.

*Yours
Douglas Hogg*

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



p9526015

January 26, 1995

Dear Douglas,

I know you are seeing the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Muhammad al-Khalifa tomorrow, and I wanted you to have the latest information about the situation there. Mr Mohammed Redha Mansour Ahmed (Al-Hajji), died today without recovering consciousness since he was shot in the head by the police on January 12. This brings the total number dead to six including Mr Mirza Ali Abd Al Redha, (65) the immediate cause of whose death may well have been a heart attack, but who was beaten up by the police in the mosque as my informants have confirmed.

The deportation of three more people was reported to us today. These are Mohammed Hassan Ali Hussein Khojasteh (23) who had been beaten and held in solitary confinement since his arrest on or about January 12; Ali Mohammed, a Sunni from Isa town, and Mohammed Nasr, a university student, who were all expelled to Bushir in Iran.

I do hope that in addition to making it clear that in Britain, Ministers do not bend rules to accommodate their friends, you will express concern to the Foreign Minister over the level of force that has been used to deal with these demonstrations, the object of which is to secure elementary democratic rights for the people.

On June 6, 1990, speaking at a conference organised by the Overseas Development Institute, you said:

'Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles should be encouraged'.

Conversely, you said that *'those who persist with repressive policies..... should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be better used elsewhere'.* In the case of Bahrain, no aid from Britain is needed, but they do look to us for political support and friendship. We cannot be expected to support the folly of killing, imprisoning and beating demonstrators asking for a democratic constitution in Bahrain, and your meeting with the Foreign Minister can be turned to useful account if you urge the Emir to grant the people's justifiable demands.

Yours sincerely,

Eric

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9527014

January 27, 1995

Lea Douglas

I gather that when the Bahrain Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa saw you this morning, he warned you that if the asylum applications of Sheikh Salman Ali and his two colleagues were accepted, relations between Britain and Bahrain would be damaged.

The Foreign Minister told reporters that you had promised to consider his representations.

I am sorry you didn't tell him that it was improper for a Minister of a state that deports its own citizens to try to blackmail us into refusing asylum applications. I am sorry you didn't tell him that Ministers here do not make arbitrary decisions at the behest of those requesting favours; they act in accordance with the rule of law.

The Minister is also reported to have told you the deportees wanted to introduce a Shi'a fundamentalist Islamic system in Bahrain. Whatever their ideological position may be, their actual demands are limited to the restoration of the 1973 constitution, and in this, they are supported by many Sunnis. It would be a matter for the people of Bahrain, if they ever get the chance, to decide what form of government they would like, and it is not for us to interfere in their choice. The constant identification of Shi'as with the pejorative term 'fundamentalist' is to be deplored, however, and I hope you emphasised our own commitment to the principle of freedom of religion.

While you are considering the remarks made by the Bahrain Foreign Minister, you may also like to bear in mind that yesterday evening Mr Hussain Ali Al-Shafi was shot dead during a demonstration in the streets of Sitra and neighbouring villages, bringing the number of dead to seven. According to an official statement, the number of riot police on the streets exceeded the number of demonstrators, a fresh confirmation of the excessive force being used to counter expressions of the people's support for the restoration of the 1973 constitution.

*Tours
Eric*

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

WRITTEN ANSWER

The Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government:

whether they have remonstrated with the Government of Bahrain about the accusation made by Crown Prince Hamad al-Khalifa that the United Kingdom was "a haven for terrorists and saboteurs"; whether the Foreign Secretary made any promises to the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Muhammad al-Khalifa, on this question when they met on 23 January; whether the Foreign Minister of Bahrain warned that relations between Bahrain and the United Kingdom could be harmed if particular applications for asylum were granted; and if so, what was the Foreign Secretary's response.
[30 January]

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY: Our exchanges with the Bahrain Government are confidential. During the visit of the Bahraini Foreign Minister, Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, the Bahrain Government confirmed the strength of UK/Bahrain relations. They are also well aware that the British Government has no intention of allowing the UK to become a haven for terrorists and saboteurs.



TUESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 1995

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9522024

House of Lords

February 22, 1995

Thank you for seeing me yesterday afternoon to discuss the situation in Bahrain. I appreciate that your reaction to the recent developments there has to be somewhat different from ours, but the important thing is that we agree on the facts.

First, the arrest of Sheikh Ali Salman was the spark that lit the gunpowder, but there was a lot of discontent among the people already, which found expression in the demand for the restoration of the constitution. People felt strongly about other issues such as unemployment, which were not covered by the petition. They might have reasoned that a democratic constitution was likely to yield measures for dealing more vigorously with unemployment.

That the security forces used excessive force in dealing with the demonstrations is a fact. I showed you the photographs of the injured and killed, and of the types of projectile used by the police including live ammunition, and I gave you the lists of dead and injured.

I also gave you the list of about 560 named detainees, and told you that the most recent estimates put the number in custody at 2,000 plus or minus 10%. This was higher than your advisers put it, but I pointed out that arrests were still continuing, and I cited the 18 people arrested in the village of Bani Jamra on Sunday, and the 90 arrested on Monday on the island of Sitra.

By all accounts, the situation is calmer just now, and opinions differ on whether this meant that the unrest had been contained, or simply deferred until after Ramadan. I mentioned that signs were going up all over the place "See you after Ramadan", and this could be interpreted as an indication of the people's resolve to bring matters to a head.

The organisers of the petition had not been successful in obtaining an appointment to submit it to the Emir, whose officials did not give them a

blank refusal, but continually procrastinated. The organisers are going to have one last go at pinning the Emir down to a date, and if they are unsuccessful, they will assume this means a refusal of the demands. You did agree that it was the custom for the Emir to receive subjects who want to petition him, but you said that Ministers could not directly advise him to receive the petitioners. You could only say that we encourage dialogue, which in effect comes to the same thing because it means the petitioners get to see the Emir.

We dealt with the question of the Bahrain asylum seekers, and particularly the three who arrived here straight from prison. You told me that the Home Office had not asked you for any advice on them, nor had you offered them any. This I was glad to learn, because it means that the visit by the Bahrain Foreign Minister did not achieve the results he expected. Indeed, I was sure that you would not allow anybody to interfere with the exercise of our responsibilities under the UN Convention on Refugees.

One point I omitted to make was that none of those arrested in Bahrain has been brought before a court. As one informant put it to me, 'the judicial system has been switched off, and all files are being dealt with by the Interior Ministry'.

I said I hoped that our Embassy would keep in touch with leading opposition figures such as Sheikh al Jamri and Mr el Shamlan, and you said you would look at that point.

You didn't think there was very much point in pressing my request to visit Bahrain, and I'm afraid that is a dead duck. It occurred to me afterwards that they might be prepared to accept a visit by another of our members, and if they would do so in principle, we could submit a name or names for their consideration. What do you think?

Again, many thanks for the useful discussion.

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

3 March 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 22 February about our useful discussion of recent events in Bahrain.

As I said, we believe the number of detainees to be considerably lower than the figure of 2,000 or so which you mentioned. Releases are continuing and there is a possibility that an amnesty will be declared during the Eid Al Fitr for some of those currently in detention.

We agreed that your visit to Bahrain was unlikely to be reinstated in the near future. As for visits by other Parliamentarians, you may be interested to know that David Mellor MP visited Bahrain last month and held substantive discussions with several members of the Bahraini Government. You may also wish to be aware that a group of MPs, lead by William Powell, is due to visit Bahrain from 12-16 March.

*Yours
Douglas Hogg*

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9509038

House of Lords

March 10, 1995

Dear Mr Powell

I have been trying to contact you since I heard from Douglas Hogg that you are leading a group of MPs which is to visit Bahrain from March 12 to 16, to ask if you would make inquiries about the petition for the restoration of the 1973 Constitution which has been circulated among the people, and the demonstrations which have broken out since early December, and to raise concerns about human rights and democracy with the Bahrain Government.

A powerful and broadly-based pro-democracy movement developed in Bahrain between 1954 and 1956, when a network of 120 dignitaries elected eight of their number to form the High Executive Committee representing all sections of Bahrain society. The movement demanded an elected parliament, written law, the right to form trade unions, and other social justice principles. In 1956, three of the eight leaders were arrested and forcibly deported to St. Helena. They were Abdul Rahman Al-Bakir, Abdula Aziz Al-Shamlan (son of Saad Al-Shamlan who was forcibly deported to India in 1938) and Abd Ali Al-Ulaiwat. The British House of Commons hotly debated the legality of our involvement in that forcible deportation. The three were then released after five years in the prison cells of St. Helena and were compensated by the British Government for wrongful detention. Other leaders spent more than a decade in Bahrain jails.

Since 1957 Bahrain has been under a state of emergency. The opposition were forced underground and dispersed in many parts of the world. In 1965 another uprising was ignited by the workers of the oil refinery (Bapco) and schools' students. The British Army was deployed and the uprising was quelled. As a result, the Special Branch was re-structured and given more powers to suppress opponents.

In 1968, the Labour Government of the United Kingdom decided to pull out all British forces from east of Suez including Bahrain. The status of Bahrain was brought before the UN to settle an Iranian claim to the islands. In May 1970, the UN Security Council unanimously approved the verdict of the Personal Representative of the Secretary General, Mr Winspeare Guicciardi, who stated: *"The Bahrainis I met were virtually unanimous in wanting a fully independent sovereign state. The great majority added that this should be an Arab State"*.

To gain public support, the ruling family, Al-Khalifa, allowed an election in 1972 for a Constituent Assembly. The Assembly debated a draft constitution that was later ratified by the Amir (Head of State) Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, and by members of the Constituent Assembly. The 1973 Constitution paved the way for election of the National Assembly, which had 30 elected members and 15 ex-officio government ministers.

After 18 months, however, the Amir dissolved the short-lived parliament, when it refused to approve the government's *"State Security Law of 1974"*. That law, which was then passed by decree, empowers the interior minister to order the administrative detention of any political opponent for three years, renewable, without charges or trial.

And if the person is brought before a court, he or she has no right of appeal against a verdict that may be based on confessions extracted under duress, or by torture.

Since the dissolution of the parliament, the government has ignored the Constitution. The latter specifies that a draft law may not become legal unless the parliament and the Amir approve it. The Constitution also states that Bahrain may not be without a parliament for more than two months.

The rule of law does not operate in Bahrain, and human rights are conferred only at the discretion of the ruler. Freedom of the press and of expression are limited. According to the US State Department's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994*,

While the Constitution provides for the right "to express and propagate opinions," citizens are not generally free to express public opposition to the Al-Khalifa regime in speech or writing. The Government does not permit political meetings and monitors gatherings that might take on a political tone. The security forces sometimes disperse such meetings. The Government prohibits press criticism of personalities in the ruling family and on certain sensitive subjects, such as the Hawar Islands dispute with Qatar.

No association is free to exist without government permission or to act free of government intervention. Political prisoners stand no chance of fair trials, if ever they are brought before a court (International Commission of Jurists reported the persecution of lawyers and judges in 1993). Forcible deportation has been a common practice and many hundreds now live abroad in permanent exile. Bahrain's Constitution forbids the deportation of citizens or preventing them from returning to their home. Arbitrary arrests are common, and cases of arrests of children have been documented by Amnesty International. Many forms of torture are used including sexual torture.

The US State Department sums up the last year:

There was little change in the human rights situation: civil liberties remained broadly circumscribed. The main abuses included arbitrary and incommunicado detention; involuntary exile; the absence of impartial inspection of detention and prison facilities; some instances of abuse of detainees; restrictions on the right to a fair public trial, especially in the Security Court; and restrictions on freedom of speech and press, freedom of assembly and association, women's rights, and worker rights. As a practical matter, the people do not have the right to change their government.

After the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, a new political environment paved the way for a group of Bahraini leading personalities to initiate demands for reforms. In November 1992, hundreds of intellectuals coming from all walks of life signed a petition that was submitted to the Amir calling on him to reinstate the parliament and restore the constitution of 1973. The government disregarded the plea, and instead the Amir appointed a powerless consultative council of 30 people. The latter has no legislative or monitoring powers and its resolutions are not mandatory.

In October 1994, a new initiative revived the 1992 petition. This time the pro-democracy campaigners submitted the petition to the public and managed to gather more than 25,000 signatures (voters in 1973 were 17,000 only) from Bahraini citizens above 18 years of age. The sponsors included a university female professor, Dr Moneera Fakhroo, for the first time in the history of Bahrain in addition to representatives of all sections and political tendencies). The petition was supposed to have been submitted on 16 December, Bahrain's National Day. This year was also the turn of Bahrain to host the Gulf Cooperation Council summit. The government wanted to obstruct the submission and gave the green light to the interior ministry to arbitrarily detain and persecute campaigners. Some were dismissed from their jobs. For example, Mr. Saeed Al-Asbool, an engineering manager with the Ministry of Works, was sacked after refusing to remove his name from the petition.

Demonstrations started on December 5, after the arrest of a popular figure, Sheikh Ali Salman, who was instrumental in gathering signatures from the public. The interior ministry refused to listen to a delegation led by Sheikh Hamza Al-Deiri to calm down the situation by releasing Sheikh Ali Salman. In fact the response was the government has decided to use an "iron fist" policy to deal with pro-democracy campaigners.

Since December 5, 1994:

- eight people have been killed, one of them under torture, one of them a 65 year old who died at home after receiving harsh beating from police, another a one year old who died after suffering police tear gas, and the rest were shot dead in the streets.
- scores of people have been injured including elderly people in their seventies. The casualties have been denied proper medical treatment and face persecution. The police used many forms of tear gas, white powder (that causes vomiting and skin irritation), bullets that explode and spread glassy particles in the victim's body and for the first time since independence, live ammunition.
- more than 2,000 have been detained including children. The prisons are fully packed and a zoo (Mahmeyyat Al-Areen) has been converted to a concentration camp.
- Sheikh Ali Salman (whose arrest sparked-off the uprising), Sheikh Hamza Al-Deiri (who led the delegation to the interior ministry) and Seyed Haider Al-Setri were forcibly deported on January 15. They arrived in London after 2 days. The Bahraini government sent its foreign minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa to London on 27 January 1995 to persuade the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, that the three leaders be denied political refugee status. Douglas Hogg tells me that the advice of the FCO has not been sought by the Home Office on these cases, and Ministers no doubt explained to the Bahrain Foreign Minister that we operate under the rule of law, which forbids interference by ministers in quasi-judicial decisions.
- many other activists were later forcibly deported from Bahrain. (Note: Amnesty International started a campaign against Forcible Deportation in Bahrain and published a major report in 1993).
- demonstrations are continuing. This week, on Saturday, Sunday and Monday February 11, 12 and 13, hundreds of women (wives, mothers, sisters and relatives of prisoners) gathered in front of the Courts Building (Ministry of Justice) in the diplomatic area of the capital, Manama. Many were injured by police use of force, one of them a middle aged woman, Fatima Abdulla Ali, whose son Assad Ashoor has been detained since early December.

Now, the situation is extremely volatile after the government's refusal to release prisoners, to appoint a committee to investigate the arbitrary killing of citizens and to address the question of restarting the parliament and constitution. It is reported that on Wednesday February 15, a military force of 150 armoured vehicles was stationed in the international airport ahead of demonstrations that were expected to take place by the end of February, marking the end of the holy Muslim month of Ramadhan. During the fast, signs appeared on the walls everywhere, See You after Ramadhan.

On February 15, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling on Bahrain to restore the constitution, release the political prisoners, and respect human rights.

Concern has been expressed about the role of Mr Ian Henderson, a British citizen who is head of the Bahrain security service. Although he has no official connection with the UK government, the fact that he is the holder of a high profile, controversial and unpopular

office does have an effect on the minds of ordinary people in Bahrain. They associate us with the repressive policies of the rulers.

During the 1992 conference of UN Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International campaigned for considering Bahrain under the 1503 Procedure. This caused minor improvement during 1992. However, in 1993, the Bahraini government depended on the US delegation's support to have the consideration dropped. As a result we see innocent citizens arbitrarily killed, detained, tortured and forcibly exiled merely for demanding to be treated as dignified human beings as mandated by the country's Constitution.

- It would be useful if you could urge the Bahraini government:
- to allow a delegation to present the petition to the Amir
- to lift the state of emergency
- to end the use of live ammunition against demonstrators
- to free all those who are arbitrarily detained
- to end the practice of forcible expulsion of Bahraini citizens
- to allow those previously expelled to return in peace to their homes and families
- to guarantee full participation of all sections of society, including women, in the political process as stated in the Constitution.
- to allow free access for international human rights NGOs to assess and report on the human rights situation

Yours sincerely

William Powell

William Powell Esq MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From William Powell, MP (Corby)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

WRP/CAW/LACPHRG

17 March 1995

The Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Powell'.

I was most grateful to you for your letter of 10 March 1995 which I distributed to the other Members of the All Party Group for the Gulf who accompanied me, Mr Tony Marlow MP, Mr Martin Redmond MP and Mr Bill Etherington MP.

During the course of our visit we had a long talk with the Minister of Information about the matters which you had raised, but do not feel that we have been able to take the matter very much further.

What is quite clear is that although Bahrain is not a democratic state there is a wide atmosphere of freedom within the country. Information is not suppressed or censored, television, newspapers and all other parts of the media are widely available to all citizens of the country. It is quite obvious walking around that there is no great atmosphere of hostility.

It is clear that there are a number of dissidents abroad who have an axe to grind and who may well be pushing out misleading information. For example we arrived to find a thunder storm which delivered 2.5 inches of rain in a little over an hour. It reduced the country to chaos. During the course of that time the Minister of Information received a call from Agence France Presse saying that they had received an anonymous call from a telephone kiosk to say that at that very moment there was rioting in the streets and that weapons and guns were being used against the rioters. The one thing which could not have happened at that time was what the anonymous caller apparently claimed. The whole place had been brought to a halt by the savagery of the weather.

It may be that my colleagues would wish to approach you about their own individual discoveries. I am aware that two individuals attempted to telephone us including one Mr Shawki AlmajOed who contacted me. He identified himself as a businessman and asked for my fax number. I invited him to come and have a talk at my hotel but I heard no further from him. It is possible he was nothing to do with the Human Rights Movement at all but it is possible that he was and was aware through your network of my presence in Bahrain.

I would welcome the opportunity of talking about these matters further to you : if this was of interest perhaps we can organise a suitably convenient time through my secretary whose telephone number is 01536400133.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'V' shape at the top, followed by a horizontal line, and then a series of loops and a wavy tail.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9522032

House of Lords

March 22, 1995

Dear William

Thank you for your letter of March 17 about your visit to Bahrain.

You had a letter from the six leading sponsors of the petition to the Amir, which they copied to me, and I enclose a copy for ease of reference. We also had a number of calls from Bahrain during your visit asking where you were staying, but none of the leaders of the democracy movement were able to get in touch with you. So it is not just a question of dissidents abroad, but of the 25,000 people who signed the petition to the Amir, and the many thousands in every part of the country who have been demonstrating since December 5.

There are indeed many exiles abroad, as you say. Just because they have an axe to grind, having been imprisoned without trial and kicked out of their own country, it doesn't mean they are pushing out misleading information. As a matter of fact, before the thunderstorm you mention had reached its peak, there were confrontations between the police and demonstrators in Karzakkan in the southwest of the country, and this may have been the story which reached AFP.

It isn't that difficult, however, to obtain information direct from people living in Bahrain. There are some leaders, such as the sinatories of the letter to you, who are prepared to stick their necks out. You can fax Mr Ahmed Essa Al-Shamlan and he will reply to your questions, though anybody who does speak out about the political situation is taking a great personal risk. There cannot be an atmosphere of freedom, surely, in a state where so many can be imprisoned or exiled for political reasons.

You say that information is not suppressed or censored, and that TV and newspapers are widely available. The US State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights 1994 says, on freedom of expressions:

While the Constitution provides for the right "to express and propagate opinions," citizens are not generally free to express public opposition to the Al-Khalifa regime in speech or writing. The Government does not permit

political meetings and monitors gatherings that might take on a political tone. The security forces sometimes disperse such meetings. The Government prohibits press criticism of personalities in the ruling family and on certain sensitive subjects, such as the Hawar Islands dispute with Qatar.

The local press is free to report and comment on international issues. Discussion of local economic and commercial issues is also relatively unrestricted. In practice there are few restrictions on the discussion of political and economic issues in private settings, provided such discussions do not become public.

The Information Ministry exercises sweeping control over all local media. Bahrain's privately owned newspapers routinely exercise self-censorship of stories on sensitive topics. In 1994 the Government prohibited a local editorial columnist from publishing for 1 month following his criticism of government policy during the Yemeni civil war.

The Government does not condone unfavorable coverage of its domestic policies by the international media and has occasionally revoked the press credentials of offending foreign journalists. Since the Ministry also sponsors foreign journalists' residence permits, this action can lead to deportation. The Government deported a correspondent of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) in December for covering the civil disturbances in a manner unfavorable to the Government. In addition, Reuter withdrew its correspondent in April and did not replace him after the Ministry of Information indicated that his residence permit would not be renewed. Other international news services have frequently complained of government restrictions. Several news services have departed Bahrain and established offices elsewhere in the region.

The State owns and operates all radio and television stations. The Government does not interfere with radio and television broadcasts from neighboring countries and from Egypt, nor does it interfere with the English-language news from the British Broadcasting Company and Cable News Network. Many senior government officials, ruling family members, and well-to-do citizens receive international television broadcasts via satellite receiving dishes. The Ministry of Information closely controls access to these and the importation or installation of them without government approval is illegal. In October the Ministry established a 13-channel subscription cable network and announced plans to add an additional 7 channels by the end of the year.

Although there are no formal regulations limiting academic freedom, as a practical matter academics try to avoid contentious political issues. In general there is greater latitude to discuss politics in an academic setting. Nevertheless, strict limits are observed, and research, publications, and public discussions critical of the Government are highly infrequent.

As you may have found, there are two daily newspapers in Arabic and one in English, all of them sponsored by the Ministry of Information. The editor of Al-Ayyam, Mr Nabi Al-Hamar, was actually appointed by the Minister! These papers do not report the demonstrations, or the use of incapacitating gases, rubber bullets and live ammunition by the police against the demonstrators, or the arrest of an estimated 2,000 people. This is rather a large number in relation to the population of Bahrain, the equivalent of 275,000 people being arrested in the UK.

I look forward to discussing these matters with you, and in the meanwhile, for ease of reference, I enclose a copy of the petition which is the cause of the repression. As you can see, it is expressed in moderate terms, and the demands it makes would have been quite acceptable to Charles I or Louis XVI!

Yours
Gwi

William Powell Esq MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9527031

March 27, 1995

Dear Douglas

At about 14.15 on March 25, a woman resident of the village of Duraz saw riot police entering the Duraz Intermediate School building carrying tyres, and a few minutes later the building went up in flames. People rushed to the scene and began shouting slogans, confronting the police who were outside the school. There was a tear gas attack on the crowd at about 15.30, and Hamid Abdullah Yousif Qasim, age 17, was injured by a projectile. His friends tried to carry him to safety, but the police drove them away and took Hamid into custody.

On Sunday March 26 at about 08.00, the police delivered Hamid's body to his family. Three fingers of his left hand had and his face had been mutilated beyond recognition. His left side was covered with cuts and contusions and his left elbow had a massive cut.

Hamid was buried at 15.30 yesterday afternoon, and his funeral was the occasion for manifestations of great concern by the people. This fresh instance of the use of torture by the security forces will make it harder to promote the dialogue which you told me we had been urging on the government. Up to now, it has been the democratic opposition which asked for dialogue, and the government which had turned a deaf ear. The danger now is that the people will begin to see that peaceful means of satisfying their moderate demands have been ruled out and this may be a very ominous development.

This morning I received, in confidence, the following copy of a letter to Ian Henderson by the wife of one of the three exiles whose applications for asylum the Bahrain Foreign Minister tried to persuade us to reject:

*Your Excellency Major General Ian Henderson
Director of Special Branch
P.O. Box 13
Ministry of the Interior
Manama State of Bahrain*

I write this letter to Your Excellency regarding my Passport. No. 272953 issued on 16.9.1981. The passport was seized on my return to Bahrain on 16.6.1993 without any reason. The matter was not of much importance to me until the Ministry of the

Interior decided to deport my Bahraini husband, Sayyed Haidar Sayyed Ali Sayyed Hassan outside Bahrain.

I am a mother of six children, hence my stay away from my husband puts me in a highly inconvenient and embarrassing situation. Since I cannot ask you to return my husband to Bahrain, at least I request you to make it easy for me to join him in his place of stay.

I have checked with the Immigration and Passports Directorate which indicated that it is not possible to issue Passports to me and to my children without your prior approval.

I sincerely hope that you will issue your instructions to the Immigration and Passports Directorate to issue passports to me and to my six children.

Qudsiya, Sayyed Hassan, Zaynab, Batool, Ghadeer and Fatima, as soon as possible.

Thanking you in advance,

*Wafa Ali Akbar
P.O.Box 260 Bahrain
Tel 735 488*

It certainly would compound the offence of the regime if, after expelling one of their own citizens, contrary to international law, they now prevent his wife and children from joining him. I hope you would ask them to release Mrs Wafa Ali Akbar and her children, and that we would give them entry certificates to join their husband and father here.

Yours

E. H.

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



April 3, 1995

There has been an intensification of the crackdown in Bahrain, which may not be unconnected with your forthcoming visit to the state, for the conference which is due to begin on Monday week. It could be that the authorities are keen to prevent their distinguished visitors from discovering that most Bahrainis are very upset about the Amir's refusal even to receive the petition which has been signed by more than 25,000 people, asking for the restoration of the 1973 constitution and Parliament.

Last night, some time after 21.00 local time, the police raided the house of Mrs Zahra Salman Helal, age 31, and took her into custody, leaving her children without adult care. The eldest is Hawra (8), then Mohammed Baqer (6), Ma'ali (3) and the youngest Maryam (1½), who is still being breast-fed. Mrs Helal's husband has been in custody since the end of January, together with an estimated 3,000 other political prisoners. Ten people have died as a result of violence by the police since demonstrations in favour of the restoration of the constitution and Parliament began in early December 1994. Only this morning Mohammed Jaffer Yusif Twaig, in his early thirties was shot dead in the village of Bani Jamra, and his wife Kawther is critically injured in hospital as a result of the same incident. Kawther's 8-year-old sister was also injured by a police bullet and is in hospital

As well as Mrs Helal, the police arrested an unknown number of other opinion leaders this morning. They include Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, 60, elder statesman, former MP, and former judge, whose elder son Mohammed Jameel, an Oxford graduate is serving a 10 year prison sentence imposed in 1988 for political offences; Sheikh Hassan Sultan, 30, cleric; Sheikh Halil Sultan, 34, cleric; Omran Hussein, 52, teacher, whose son is in custody for the last 3 months without trial, and is himself a former political prisoner and the father of Kawther mentioned above, and Mohammed Al-Qadami.

Armoured personnel carriers are patrolling the streets throughout northern Bahrain and on Sitra island. The atmosphere is very tense and I

would expect that as the news of the latest arrests spreads, there will be strikes and further demonstrations, which in turn may spark off more arrests and violence by the police.

My immediate reason for passing on this information is to ask you to intercede urgently for the release of Mrs Helal, so that her little children may receive proper care, particularly the youngest who is still being breast fed. To wrench the mother away like that is an act of great cruelty, both to the mother and the infant.

It would be much appreciated if you could make your own inquiries about the demands of the opposition while you are in Bahrain. When William Powell went there last month, members of the opposition did try to see him but they were unable to gain access to him. I'm afraid he only heard the government's side of the story, and thus in my view underestimated the size of the problem. If people think what is happening in Bahrain is going to blow over and that the requests made in the petition will be meekly abandoned, they are sadly mistaken. This applies with equal force to the business leaders who will be attending your Forum, as to those of us who are concerned with human rights. The prospects for the economy of Bahrain, and for trade and investment there by foreigners, are inevitably functions of political stability, and common prudence suggests that Bahrain's business partners should take a closer look at the scenarios for political change.

The Rt Hon the Baroness Thatcher



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

6 April 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A OPW

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 27 March about Bahrain.

We were sorry to hear the sad news of a further death during the latest series of incidents. I have asked the Embassy in Bahrain whether they can shed any further light on the circumstances of Mr Qasim's death, and will let you know their response in due course.

We fully understand your concern for Mr Hassan's wife and children. As you know, Mr Hassan's application for asylum in the UK is currently under consideration. We do not think it would be right to approach the Bahraini authorities in relation to the wife and children before the substantive application has been decided.

Yours sincerely
Douglas Hogg

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9506044

April 6, 1995

Dear Douglas

Further to my earlier letter of today's date, since you may not have been fully briefed on Bahrain, to judge from your comments at yesterday's celebration of the Arab League's 50th anniversary, I thought you might like to have an account of the case of **Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri**, who was put under house arrest on April 1, 1995.

Born in 1937, Sheikh Al-Jamri studied Islamic theology and law at Al-Najaf Religious Institute from 1962-1973. His books include: Islamic Duties, Islamic Teachings, Women in Islam, and some works of poetry.

In 1973 he was elected by the 14th regional constituency for the National Assembly. As an active opposition member, he spoke against the imposition of the State Security Law which was introduced by the Amir (ruler) in October 1974. The constitution specifies that the legislative power is shared between the Amir and the National Assembly. Both branches of the legislature must agree on any bill before it can become law. The Amir ignored this provision, illegally dissolved the elected parliament and suspended the important articles of the constitution in August 1975.

The State Security Law, which the Amir then purported to enact by decree, empowers the Interior Minister to order the administrative detention of any person for up to three years, which can then be renewed for further periods of three years at a time. This law has been fully used to suppress the opposition since 1975.

Between 1975 and 1977 Sheikh Al-Jamri worked as a religious scholar and active member of the Islamic Enlightenment Society. He was involved in many cultural, social, charitable and educational activities for the promotion of religious teachings and social justice.

In 1977 he accepted an appointment as a judge in the Religious Court. The religious courts are part of the Ministry of Justice, and were established in the twenties to deal with cases involving personal affairs, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance and other religious affairs of the community. The courts are divided into two departments, one for the Shia community and one for the Sunni community, these being the two major Muslim sects of Bahrain. Sheikh Al-Jamri was a member of the Shia court.

As a prominent figure in society, his domain of activities extended beyond the courts to include all cultural activities, including peaceful opposition to the social injustices caused by the banning of the parliament and the unlawful implementation of the State Security Law.

In 1988, the Bahraini authorities decided to punish him for his open opposition. On May 14, 1988, the security forces surrounded and searched the Mosque where Sheikh Al-Jamri leads the daily prayers. Then, although Bahrain law does not allow the dismissal of a judge, in July 1988 Sheikh Al-Jamri was suspended from duty. In September both his son (Mohammed Jamil) and son-in-law (Abdul Jalil Khalil Ebrahim) were arrested, severely tortured, charged with anti-government activities and sentenced to ten and seven years imprisonment. Sheikh Al-Jamri himself was arrested on September 6, but

was released after a few hours when the people demonstrated against his detention. The sentencing of both his son and son-in-law was a substitute punishment.

From 1988 to 1993, Sheikh Al-Jamri continued his writing and educational work, at home and in the mosque. He also continued campaigning against what he considered the unjust policies of the government.

In November 1992, he, with five others, sponsored a petition calling for the restoration of the constitution and the dissolved parliament as stated in the constitution. The petition was signed by hundreds of leading personalities from all sections and tendencies in Bahrain's society. The sponsoring six-person committee included Dr Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood (a university professor and a leading Sunni figure) Mr Mohammed Jaber Sabah (an ex-MP, a nationalist and a Sunni personality), Sheikh Isa Al-Joder (a Sunni religious scholar), Mr Abdul Wahab Husain (a Shia personality) and Mr Hamid Sangoor (a lawyer, nationalist and Shia personality).

The petition was submitted to the Amir in mid November, but the Amir ignored it and instead on December 16, appointed a 30-member Consultative Council.

A meeting between the committee and the Amir ended in deadlock, as the ruler insisted on the appointed council, which he saw as the best option for Bahrain. The Amir personalised the issue by asking the delegates if they distrusted the people he had appointed.

Dr. Al-Mahmood then conducted a detailed legal study comparing the Consultative Council (Shura) appointed by the Amir and the National Assembly prescribed by the constitution. He concluded that the differences between the Shura Council (SC) and the National Assembly (NA) are:

1. The SC is consultative while the NA is legislative;
2. The SC is appointed while the NA is freely elected by the populace;
3. The SC is for offering unbinding suggestions while the NA is for enacting statutory law and monitoring the Executive branch of the Government;
4. The SC is for recommending policies while the Assembly is for formulation and implementation of policies;
5. The provisions of the SC are "for information" while those of the NA are binding;
6. Members of the SC represent themselves while members of the NA represent all citizens;
7. The Government's presence in the SC is nominal while in the NA it is integral;
8. Presidency of the SC is appointed while that of the NA is elected;
9. Sessions of the SC are held in secret while those of the NA are public.

On March 6, 1993, both Dr. Al-Mahmood and Sheikh Al-Jamri were invited to speak at Al-Khawajah Mosque in Manama, and present their views to the public in a peaceful way. The Bahraini authorities intervened to cancel the meeting. Both speakers were told not to attend the meeting, or they would be arrested. Then, the security forces encircled the mosque, closed its gates and posted a prohibition notice on the wall.

Sheikh Al-Jamri was invited for another meeting on March 18 at Mo'min Mosque in Manama. This time the security forces arrested him just before he started his journey

towards Manama. Crowds of people gathered immediately and after heated exchanges, the security forces left the scene.

On March 20, Sheikh Al-Jamri was summoned to Al-Khamis Police Station, where he was questioned about the two seminars, who organised them and why would he cooperate with a Sunni on a political issues. **(The authorities seem to be particularly nervous of any political initiatives which cross the Sunni/Shia boundary).** Sheikh Al-Jamri stood by his views and insisted he had not done anything illegal. He was then informed that the State Security Investigations Directorate, which incorporates the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS) would summon him for further investigation on March 30.

On March 27, the Government passed a message to Sheikh Al-Jamri, through three people: one clergy: Sheikh Mansoor Al-Setri, and two businessmen: Mr. Ahmed Mansoor Al-Aali and Sayyed Alawi Al-Sharakhat, that a decision had been taken at the highest level to deport him to Syria. The reasons behind this decision were his relationship with Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood and his speeches in public. So by March 30 he was to be ready packed for deportation. This created a tense atmosphere and people started to gather in the main mosques. Speeches were made warning the Government of the serious consequences if they deported Sheikh Al-Jamri from his homeland. The two businessmen, who are also members of the appointed Shura Council, met Sheikh Al-Jamri on March 28 to urge him to sign a declaration - to be passed to the Government - undertaking to end his relationship with Dr. Al-Mahmood and to stop delivering lectures on the necessity for restoration of the suspended constitution. This he refused to do. On March 30, he was interrogated at the SIS headquarters by the Interior Minister himself, about his campaign and collaboration with Dr. Al-Mahmood. He was ordered to end this relationship and his public speeches. Again he refused to comply. He was ordered to attend another interrogation session on Saturday, 3rd April. On that occasion Mr Ian Henderson questioned him, and warned that he would *'never be allowed to destabilise the country'*. He replied *'Without me the country would be destabilised, because I am guiding young people towards obedience to the law and productive behaviour. If you have any proof that I am linked to subversive activities, produce it'*. The authorities had to accept that there was no evidence against him, and there the matter rested for the time being.

In October 1994, a new petition was sponsored by 14 pro-democracy leaders. These included Islamists (both Shia and Sunni), secularists, leftists and liberals (including for the first time a female university professor). Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri headed the list. The petition called for the restoration of the constitution and reinstatement of the dissolved parliament. More than 22,000 Bahraini citizens (male and female above 18 years of age) signed the petition which was to have been submitted on December 16, 1994 (Bahrain's National Day). However, on December 5 the police arrested a leading cleric, Sheikh Ali Salman, who was active in the campaign for collecting signatures from the public. People responded by demonstrating for his release, and the pattern since then has been of violence by the security forces, mass arrests, curfews, house to house searches, and the continued refusal of the Amir to make the slightest concession to the pro-democracy movement, or to receive their moderate and respectfully worded petition.

On Saturday April 1, 1995 at 03.00, the village of Bani Jamra (where Sheikh Al-Jamri resides) was surrounded by thousands of paramilitary troops. The neighbours of Sheikh Al-Jamri (around six to eight of them) were ordered to evacuate their houses within minutes or be sprayed with gunfire. The two daughters of the next door neighbour, Mr Omran Hussain Omran, were injured: Maryam Omran age 8, who was hit in the back by a bullet, and Kawther age 21, who is in a critical condition with a bullet in her head. The husband of the latter, Mohammed Jafer Yousif Atteya Twaig, age 30, was killed by a bullet from a machine-gun. Later, the neighbours demonstrated; more were shot and up to fifty were injured. One of them, Mr. Mohammed Ali Abdul Razzaq, a 50 years old carpenter, who rushed to save his injured son, Asaad, but found himself the target of

machine gun fire, has since died. The funeral of the two victims was stopped by the authorities and only a handful of relatives were allowed in the cemetery for the last rites.

Following these clashes, the family of Sheikh Al-Jamri was isolated inside their house and the first house arrest in the history of Bahrain began. Together with Sheikh Al-Jamri, the following were also held prisoners inside the house:

1. Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri
2. Zahra Yousif, 52 years old, wife of Sheikh Al-Jamri
3. Mona Habib Al-Sharrakhi, 32 years, wife of Mohammed Jamil (son of Sheikh Al-Jamri who is serving ten year sentence since 1988)
4. Afaf Al-Jamri, 31 years, daughter of Sheikh Al-Jamri and wife of Abdul Jalil Khalil Ibrahim, who is serving seven years sentence since 1988. He served his period in jail but has not been released.
5. Sadiq Al-Jamri, 29 years old, son of Sheikh Al-Jamri
6. Leyla Yousif, 29 years, sister of Sheikh Al-Jamri's wife
7. Zahra Atteya, 26 years, wife of Sadiq Al-Jamri
8. Mansoor Al-Jamri, 22 years old, daughter of Sheikh Al-Jamri.
9. Ali al-Jamri, 17 years, son of Sheikh Al-Jamri.
10. Nibras Al-Jamri, 14 years, daughter of Sheikh Al-Jamri
11. Ammar Mohammed Jamil Al-Jamri, 13 years, son of Mohammed Jamil and Mona Habib Al-Sharrakhi.
12. Batool Mohammed Jamil Al-Jamri, 11 years, daughter of Mohammed Jamil and Mona Habib Al-Sharrakhi
13. Zainab Abdul Jalil, 9 years, daughter of Afaf Al-Jamri and Abdul Jalil Khalil Ibrahim.
14. Mahdi Al-Jamri, 8 years, son of Sheikh Al-Jamri
15. Ahmed Mohammed Jamil Al-Jamri, 7 years, son of Mohammed Jamil and Mona Habib Al-Sharrakhi
16. Hussain Abdul Jalil, 7 years, son of Afaf Al-Jamri and Abdul Jalil Khalil Ibrahim
17. Adnan Sadiq Al-Jamri, 4 years, son of Sadiq Al-Jamri
18. Fatima Sadiq Al-Jamri, 2 years, daughter of Sadiq Al-Jamri
19. Fatima Hadi Al-Mosawi, 10 months, daughter of Mansoor Al-Jamri and Hadi Al-Mosawi.

If Sheikh Al-Jamri has committed any offence, then he should be charged and brought before a court of law. His neighbours and the members of his family should not be made to suffer because of any misdeeds he is alleged to have committed, but as I think you may agree in the light of his previous history, Sheikh Al-Jamri has been scrupulous in

his observance of the law, and is being targetted purely for his political opinions. Rather than oiling up to the Amir, you would do better to persuade him also to adhere to the law; both the domestic law of Bahrain, and the international law of human rights, which prohibits arbitrary detention, extrajudicial execution, and the punishment of relatives and neighbours for the supposed misdemeanours of an individual.

Yours sincerely,

Ei

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9506042

April 6, 1995

Dear Douglas

According to your speaking notes for your address at the reception in the Banqueting House to mark the 50th anniversary of the Arab League yesterday evening, you said:

'I much regret that a very small number abuse our hospitality by indulging in malevolent propaganda campaigns against our good friends in the region. These activities are as unwelcome to us as they are in their own countries'.

'Secondly, Bahrain. Our thoughts are with the government of Bahrain in the difficulties which they face. As old friends they should know that they have our full support as they work to ensure a stable and prosperous future for all the people of Bahrain'.

I don't know whether it was your intention or not, but the juxtaposition of these two paragraphs signals to me, and perhaps to many in your audience at the time, that you were telling the Bahraini opposition in London to keep quiet, and characterising their news releases as 'malevolent propaganda'. The use of that language was distinctly alarming, whoever you were referring to. We do have a law of libel in this country, and if anybody makes inaccurate comments of a defamatory nature against the rulers of a foreign country, they would be at risk of being on the receiving end of a writ. But if what they say is fair comment, then we have a long and honourable tradition of allowing it to be said here.

You say that the government of Bahrain have our full support. Does that mean that you condone the violence used by the police and security forces against demonstrators, which has so far led to the deaths of at least ten people? Do you really support the imprisonment without trial of 3,000 people, many of them women and even children? Do you uphold the absolute monarchy in Bahrain, and do you encourage the Amir to resist the demands made by 25,000 of his citizens, for the restoration of the 1973 constitution and Parliament? Do you agree with the Amir's policy of dumping unwanted citizens abroad, and then trying to persuade us not to give asylum to his victims? I got the impression from Douglas Hogg that at least you were concerned about these matters, and he specifically told me that the government were trying to encourage the Bahrain authorities to engage in dialogue with the opposition. If you were a true friend of Bahrain, you would be helping the people to escape from the middle ages, and to enjoy the benefits of democracy, not attempting to prop up a system which is going to change anyway. The only question is whether it does so peacefully or violently. I prefer the former, and I thought you might too, until today.

Douglas Hurd
Em

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From William Powell, MP (Corby)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

WRP/CAW/LACPHRG

7 April 1995

The Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
London
SW1A0PW

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'The Lord Avebury'.

Many thanks for your note of March 30 for which I am most grateful. The Minister of Information will be in Britain in a few days time and perhaps you might seek a meeting with him yourself.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'William Powell'.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

11 April 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A OPW

Dear Lord Avebury,

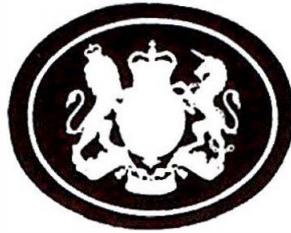
Thank you for your letter of 30 March enclosing a press release from Amnesty International.

The maintenance of peace and stability in the Gulf is a key objective for us. Bahrain played a valuable role in 1990 and again last year when Iraq threatened the security of the region. She is also an important trading partner and a home to some 7,200 British citizens. We are naturally keen to maintain our close links. We will continue to take an interest in Bahrain and keep in touch with the Bahraini authorities over recent events.

*Yours sincerely,
Andy Hogg*

pp Douglas Hogg
(approved by the Minister and
signed in his absence)

From Lord Avebury



House of Lords

April 18, 1995

Dear Mr Davies

Please may I submit the following for today's ballot:

Lord Avebury to ask Her Majesty's Government

Whether they will make representations to the Bahrain government for the release of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, former MP and judge, and one of the leading signatories of the petition for the restoration of the 1973 Parliament and constitution, who was arrested on Saturday April 15, and is being held in an unknown location.

Yours sincerely

L Avebury

**Michael Davies Esq,
Clerk Assistant,
House of Lords
Fax 071-219 5933**



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

19 April 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 6 April to Douglas Hurd about Shaikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri. I have been asked to reply as Minister responsible for policy on the Middle East.

We were of course already aware that Shaikh Al Jamri has been put under house arrest. The Embassy in Bahrain are following the matter closely.

When I wrote to you on 6 April, I undertook to let you know whether the Embassy could shed any light on the circumstances surrounding Hamid Qasim's death. Mr Qasim's death was not reported in the local press, but there have been reports which suggest that he was caught in the act of burning down Diraz school. The Embassy have no information to support the allegations about the state of his body, but they believe his fatal injuries may have been caused by rubber bullets.

Douglas Hogg
Douglas Hogg

Douglas Hogg

From William Powell, MP (Corby)



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

WRP/CAW/LACPHRG1

21 April 1995

The Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
London
SW1A0PW

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Powell'.

Many thanks for your note of April 18. The Minister comes often and I should keep in touch with the Ambassador's Office about it. I am sure it would be sensible to pursue this particular line.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W Powell'.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9525043

House of Lords

April 25, 1995

Dear Douglas

Thank you for your letter of April 19 about Sheikh Al Jamri.

If the Embassy in Bahrain are following the situation so closely, it is surprising they hadn't informed you that on April 15 he was removed from his home, where he had been under house arrest, to an unknown place of detention, and nobody knows where he is now.

You say the Embassy had no information to support the allegations about the state of Mr Hamid Qasim's body. If they had made inquiries, I do not think they should have had much difficulty in getting hold of the photographs which were taken of his body in the morgue by a person who has to remain anonymous for obvious reasons. I will have copies made and sent to you.

While there may be occasional acts of violence by individuals in connection with the present disturbances, I do not believe there is a shred of evidence to show that Mr Qasim set fire to Diraz school, and I would like to know what 'reports' you have that he did so. An judicial inquiry should be established to go into the arson of the school, the death of Mr Qasim, and his mutilation. One knows this will not happen, because in Bahrain the truth is not popular.

Yours sincerely,

DH

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

25 April 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letters of 11 and 20 April about Bahrain.

We too sympathise with the women and children who have suffered as a result of the disturbances. We were also concerned to learn the sad news of another death. The Embassy in Bahrain have no further information on the specific cases you raised and they are not aware of any recent mass arrests. We believe that the number of detainees is considerably lower than the figure of 3,000 quoted in your letter, and that people are being released on a regular basis.

The Embassy have reported the establishment of a dialogue between the Ruling Family and Shia leaders. We believe that these contacts may have played a part in calming down the situation. We will continue to emphasise to the Bahraini authorities the importance of maintaining such a dialogue.

D. Hogg

Douglas Hogg

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury -
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9527041

House of Lords

April 27, 1995

Dear Douglas

Thank you for your letter about the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr Hamid Qasim in Bahrain.

I enclose photographs of his body, taken by members of the family, and you can see that either he was tortured, or the body was mutilated after his death. Possibly the injuries to his face and head were caused by rubber bullets as you say; if so, they must have been fired at very close range.

I'm sure our Embassy in Bahrain do their best to come by the facts of these cases, but since they were unable to do so as far as this boy's death was concerned, there may well be other violations of human rights which are not coming to their notice, and you may not be getting a full picture.

At the date of your letter, April 19, you were still not aware that Sheikh Al Jamri was no longer under house arrest, but had been taken away by the police to an unknown location four days previously, on April 15. To the best of my knowledge he is still being detained incommunicado.

Yours sincerely

L

*Please return the photographs
in due course.*

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9502051

House of Lords

May 2, 1995

Dear Mr Hogg,

In your last letter about Bahrain, of April 25, you told me that our Embassy had reported a dialogue between the ruling family and Shia leaders. You thought this might have played a part in calming the situation.

H H the Amir first met a group of Shia citizens, none of whom were identified with the constitutional movement. Three were leading businessmen and members of the Consultative Council, Mr Ahmed Mansour Al-Ali, Mr Abdulnabi Al-Shuala and Mr Ali Salah Al-Salah; three were clerics, Shaikh Sulaiman Al-Madani, Shaikh Ahmad Al-Osfoor and Shaikh Atiah, and four were private citizens: Mr Sadiq Al-Baharna, a leading pro-government businessman, one of whose brothers is the Minister of Legal Affairs, and another a member of the Consultative Council; Mr Sulaiman Al-Mubarak, a businessman and ex-Member of the dissolved National Assembly; Mr Hassan Al Radhi, an ex-President of the Bahrain Bar Association and inactive supporter of democracy, and Mr Rasool Al-Jeshi, a pharmacist, popular ex-Member of the Assembly and a cautious pro-democracy figure.

At the first meeting on April 2 of this group with the Amir, the Prime Minister, the Crown Prince, and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Justice, Defence, Housing and Communication, all of whom are senior members of the ruling family, were also present. The meeting was tense, with H H the Amir being unwilling to listen to any comments except a condemnation of the protesters. Thus, when Mr Rasool Al-Jeshi tried to identify the reasons for the unrest, he was interrupted and silenced by the Prime Minister, who also declared that he would not accept any submission in writing from the group. In fact the only subject the rulers allowed the group to discuss was the question of stopping all forms of protest before any submission of whatsoever kind could be entertained. The meeting could not be described as consultative, either in form or content.

At the second meeting, held on April 14, the atmosphere was more relaxed. The Amir and the Prime Minister did listen to requests that the security forces use less violence against the protesters, and particularly that casualties resulting in death be avoided, and that all detainees be released (presumably unless charges were to be brought against any of them). The Amir promised to look into these matters.

HH the Amir and the same members of the ruling family also met a group of Sunni notables and informed them about the measures which had been taken to stop the unrest. This group included Mr Mohammad Jalal, Mr Farouq Al-Moayyad and Mr Hassan Zainulabideen; there were others but I haven't their names. They were not reported to have made any suggestions.

Obviously the idea of dialogue at all levels should be supported, but the limited extent of the processes described comes nowhere near meeting the needs of the country. If the Amir is genuinely interested in national reconciliation, he could begin with some confidence-building measures which would demonstrate the government's willingness to allow the expression of peaceful suggestions of reform. Those who were sacked from their jobs for signing the petition could be reinstated. The teachers who were suspended from their appointments without any kind of legal process could be reinstated, and their arrears of salary paid to them. On the occasion of the Grand Islamic Eid, on May 10, there could be an amnesty for those detained without charge, including particularly Sheikh Abdulamir Al-Jamri and Mr Abdulwahab Hussain, and all the women and children presently detained.

It is also essential that the State Security Court be reformed. On April 24, Hussain Mahoon was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of 58,000 BD (\$153,000), and yesterday 10 people were sentenced: Hussain Ali Hussain El-Tattan (7 years); Salman Al-Nashabah (5 years); Nazar Al Qar'e (3 years); Ra'ed Al-Khawaja (3 years); Ahmed Sayyed Hashim (3 years); Jaffar Al-Sayyah (3 years); Abbas Al-Aradi (3 years); Majjid Milad (3 years); Jaffar Salih (3 years) and Jawad Marhoun (3 years). Fines totalling 120,657 BD were also imposed. The charges were membership of an illegal organisation, incitement of, and participation in riots and destroying public property. The hearing had lasted one day. There is no right of appeal. As you know, Amnesty International have been critical of the violations of internationally accepted legal standards in the State Security Court, and the injustice of these latest sentences is likely to add to the tension in Bahrain.

Beyond any immediate measures, a national consensus could be developed around the 1973 constitution, and as a first step in this direction, the Amir could indicate his willingness to engage in a dialogue with people who could form a bridge between the government and the democratic

opposition. Clearly, the demand for the restoration of the constitution has quite a head of steam behind it, and is not going to evaporate as a result of the discussions undertaken by the Amir so far. Either he and the ruling family can move with the tide of reform, in the direction of a constitutional monarchy which could be a model for the whole region, or they risk being swept aside entirely if they continue to oppose even the mildest of democratic change.

As close friends and allies of Bahrain, we do have an opportunity of influencing the direction they take. From our conversation, I know that you are reluctant to be specific in the comments you make to the authorities, in the hope that general encouragement for dialogue will produce the right results. Perhaps the Amir believed that any form of dialogue would be enough to satisfy Britain, and that the processes described above would be accepted as a complete answer to the reform movement. I hope this would have been a misunderstanding, and that when you employed the term 'dialogue' at our meeting, you had in mind a realistic process involving a broad cross-section of opinion leaders. It should go without saying that such a process ought not to be conducted separately with Shias and Sunnis, a divisive and unwise procedure. Could you not find ways of clarifying these matters, so that the Ruler knows that we mean a genuine dialogue, and not the bogus and restricted form of 'consultation' so far staged?

Yours sincerely

DM

Douglas Hogg Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

11 May 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letters of 25 and 27 April, and 2 May about Bahrain. I have arranged for copies to be passed to our Embassy.

Since I wrote to you on 19 April, the Embassy have reported that Shaikh Al Jawri has been moved from his home. There have been no official reports of his whereabouts, but he is believed to be in detention within a military area.

As you will know, the situation in Bahrain has been calm now for almost three weeks. I agree that the recent dialogue between the ruling family and community leaders is not in itself a solution to Bahrain's social and economic problems. But it is a step in the right direction, and we will continue to encourage the Bahrainis to develop these contacts. We will also urge them to take further steps to address the root causes, unemployment in particular.

As requested, I am returning your photographs with this letter.

Douglas Hogg

Douglas Hogg

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P951605a

May 16, 1995

Dear Lynn

Further to Peter Archer's supplementary question about the detention of children as hostages for their parents in Bahrain, I enclose copies of a letter to Douglas Hogg of May 11 about the victimisation of the family of Sheikh Al-Jamri, which I referred to yesterday. I'm afraid this is not the only example of children being detained as hostages for their parents, or in retaliation against their parents' political activities. My informants estimate that as many as 200 children under the age of 15 are being detained. Only yesterday evening I heard about one such boy, Mohamed Ali Mohamed Ekri, who was arrested on or about April 10 from Daih village and has been held in a police station since then. His mother Zahra Alawi was finally allowed to see him a week ago and found him very frightened. He had been beaten up and sexually assaulted. This information came to me from the boy's uncle, who had it direct from the mother on the telephone yesterday morning. The boy's grandfather Haji Mohamed Ali Al Ekri, 60, also from Daih village, was arrested in December, released in February, arrested again in March, and is now believed to be detained in Jaw Prison, though he is being held incommunicado - no charge, no lawyers no family.

I also thought you might like to see the enclosed translation of a petition which has been originated by a group of women intellectuals. Here is an opposition group acting 'responsibly and within the law', to use your own phrase, but there is no encouragement to act in this way in a political system where the ruler's word is absolute, and he consults, grudgingly, with a handful of people who are bound to agree with anything he says. The corollary of your insistence that opposition groups comply with the law is that the government should do so as well, yet there is no rule of law if any person can be arbitrarily detained at pleasure, and the security forces can shoot and kill people on the streets with impunity.

I understand only too well that our government's commitment to human rights is heavily qualified by our commercial and geopolitical interests, but I think that Bahrain is unparalleled in the enjoyment of the UK's uncritical approval notwithstanding the abundant evidence of the authorities' violations of human rights, and their adamant refusal to consider modest reforms in the direction of a more democratic system.

*Yours
Eric*

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9517058

House of Lords

May 17, 1995

Dear Lady Olga

Thank you for your letter of May 16 about the tragic death of 17 year old Hamid Qasim. I have photographs of the body showing severe mutilation, though of course it is impossible to say whether this was done before or after he died. What we do know is that although he was hit by a projectile, thought to be a rubber bullet, he was not severely injured when the police took him into custody soon after 15.30 on the afternoon of Saturday March 25, and his mutilated body was delivered to the family at 08.00 on Sunday morning.

The Minister, Douglas Hogg, said there was evidence that Hamid had set fire to the Duraz Intermediate School, but when challenged, he has not been able to produce any evidence. Local people think that the security forces committed this arson, in revenge against the students who had gone on strike and had been demonstrating. We were told that a local woman saw the riot police carrying tyres into the building shortly before it went up in flames, but as far as I know there has been no attempt to discover the circumstances of the fire.

In any case, the way Hamid met his death is an entirely separate matter, and in a society where the rule of law operates, the death of a person in custody, and the mutilation of his body, would be the subject of an independent inquiry.

I was going to send you the photographs of the body but can't lay hands on them just for the moment. I will forward them later when they turn up.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

Lady Olga Maitland MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9504062

House of Lords

June 4, 1995

Dear Lynda

I am writing to you about one or two of the matters I will be raising in my unstarred question on Bahrain tomorrow.

This morning I listened to the testimony of I about the killing of Abdel Qader El-Fatlawi, 25, who was a driver employed by a local contractor. He said:

‘On the night of January 13, the whole of Bahrain erupted in demonstrations. Duraz was the last place to start demonstrating. I was in a group of about 10 people, on the way to join the demo, and Abdel Qader was another. Because of the presence of the riot police, we were cautious about crossing the main road, and Abdel Qader went ahead to check that it was safe. As he emerged into the road from the side of a wall, he was shot immediately in the neck with a live bullet. He staggered back a few steps and collapsed. We tried to give him first aid and I ran to fetch someone with a car. They took him to their house in the car, and from there his family took him to Salmaniya Hospital, 20 minutes drive. Abdel Qader’s uncle, who works at the hospital, pleaded with the doctor, an Indian, to treat him, but the doctor said that permission had to be obtained from the Ministry of the Interior’.

‘Abdel Qader died without receiving any treatment, I think. It was 01.45 when he was hit, and he reached the hospital at about 02.30. We don’t know exactly when he died, but it was between 08.00 and 08.30 when his body was brought to the family home in the hospital van’.

‘When the family and friends tried to bury Abdel Qader later in the morning, the riot police attacked them with the aid of a helicopter, using tear gas and batons. Many people were injured and many more were arrested’.

‘Three days after Abdel Qader was killed I was arrested and taken to the CID headquarters at Al Adliyya, in Manama. There I was tortured for three days by ‘falaka’. I was suspended by the knees from a pole, with my arms passed under the pole and handcuffed above it, so that the pole went through the triangle formed by the upper and lower parts of my legs, and my forearms. Whilst hanging in this position, which was extremely painful in itself, I was beaten on the soles of the feet, and kicked and hit on the back and buttocks. During the torture, I was blindfolded, but I heard the torturers speaking to each other. The head torturer was Mohammed Al Akkori, a Jordanian aged about 60. There

were three or four others, including Saddakat, a Pakistani, and Samir, a Bahraini’.

‘On the third day, I was taken before Abdel Karim Al-Affoni, another Jordanian, and he told me: “You are extremely lucky. You are allowed to go, but you must sign this paper”. I tried to read the paper but was cuffed and told to sign immediately without looking at the text. Only afterwards I was told that I had undertaken (1) not to speak about what had happened; (2) not to take part in any political activities, and (3) to inform the authorities about any other persons I knew of, who were engaged in political activities’.

‘I asked for my property, which had been taken from me when I was arrested, but they did not return any of it - my money, credit cards, watch, or even my clothes. While in custody I had been dress only in shorts, though it was January. I had to accept a shirt and trousers belonging to someone else, and left the CID headquarters with no money even to get me home’.

‘The cell I was in at the CID measured about two metres square and was occupied by 12 of us including a 14 year old boy I knew only as Jassem. One of the 12 was known to be an informer’.

‘From my neighbourhood, the youngest child to be arrested was Seyed Hadi Said, aged 11. I think he is still in custody’.

Mohammed , a student who had been about to start a university course in control and instrumentation engineering, also from Duraz, told me about the killing of Hamid Abdullah Yousif Qasim, 17, on March 25:

‘At about 4 pm a few of us were across the road from the Duraz Intermediate School, where a building was on fire and riot police had taken up positions. Hamid started to cross the road to look into the grounds of the school, and was hit in the neck by a rubber bullet fired by the police. He was lying on the ground and I saw the police emerge from the school and fire at him again from point blank range. I think they were using live ammunition, though I cannot be sure’.

‘There had been a demonstration in the morning and the riot police had arrived to quell it. They were occupying the building from about 10.00 onwards, so it would have been impossible for anybody to get in there to start the fire’.

[Note: I asked him specifically about this because Douglas Hogg said in a letter to me of April 19: *‘Mr Qasim’s death was not reported in the local press, but there have been reports which suggest that he was caught in the act of burning down Diraz (sic) school. The Embassy have no information to support the allegations about the state of his body, but they believe his fatal injuries may have been caused by rubber bullets’*. I wrote to Douglas on April 25, copy attached, asking what these reports were, and I wrote again on April 27, copy attached, enclosing photographs of Hamid’s body showing the mutilations. He replied on May 11 saying that he had arranged for copies of my letters to be passed to our Embassy, but so far there has been no comment on the substantive questions raised.]

'The troops were from Pakistan, and we couldn't communicate with them because they couldn't speak Arabic'.

'As far as we could see, the only reason for picking on Qasim was that he tried to cross the road to see what was happening'.

'That was the last time anybody saw Qasim alive. The riot police closed the school gates so we couldn't see inside. About 6 pm we heard an ambulance and we thought he must have died. They don't bother to send out ambulances when somebody is merely injured'.

I wrote to Douglas Hogg about the systematic persecution of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and his family on May 11, and particularly about the loathsome conduct of Mr Adel Flaifel, who tortured Mrs Afaf Al-Jamri in front of her father on May 8. In that letter I made the point that women had been on the receiving end of some of the worst treatment in this round of oppression, a phenomenon never seen in Bahrain up to now. Douglas Hogg said he had referred that letter to our Embassy as well, and you have a copy of it, sent under cover of my letter to you of May 16.

In my letter to you of May 16 I told you about the sexual assault on a 14 year old boy in custody, Mohammed Ali Mohammed Ekri, and I sent you a copy of the petition by women intellectuals. I will mention both these matters tomorrow.

Sorry about the length of this letter, but there are rather a lot of serious concerns that I will try to cram into the few minutes available.

Z

Eri

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

PS The names of the witnesses mentioned are in confidence.
Although they are outside Bahrain, there could be repercussions
for their families.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9506069

House of Lords

June 6, 1995

Dear William

Many thanks for your letter of June 5. Perhaps as a result of your suggestions, Mr Al Gosaibi, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, invited me to the Bahraini offices in Upper Brook Street and I spent an hour and a half with him there yesterday. I gather that he also had a meeting with Ms Hania El Mufti of Amnesty International.

Mr Al Gosaibi showed me photographs of a video shop in which the proprietor had been burned to death and a general store which had been destroyed also by arsonists, and of two police officers murdered by terrorists, allegedly instigated by foreign interests. When I asked if the Iranians were suspected, he did not give me a plain answer, but I gather Tehran is very much in the frame. I told him that I condemned these crimes, and supported the government of Bahrain in their efforts to catch those responsible and bring them to justice. I also condemn Iranian terrorism, of which I have some knowledge, having published an account of the murders of Iranian dissidents abroad entitled *The Tehran Murder Machine*. But when I then tried to raise other matters he kept returning to the photograph album and to the 'groups which have a certain ideology and are trying to destabilise Bahrain, bringing in extremism and intolerance'.

Mr Al Gosaibi said that the people of Bahrain were happy with the political system they have. Bahrain has no taxes, free health and education, and free housing, and this was better than democracy. The culture of Bahrain was different from that of Britain, and a Westminster-style parliament would be unsuitable for them. The people were not asking for the restoration of democracy, he said. I asked about the petition which had been signed by 25,000 people, and he said the document did not exist! I also asked him about the women's petition, and he professed to be unaware of that too. He did not know that the signatories of the women's petition had been threatened that they would be sacked if they did not withdraw their names and he said that could not be so. I told him that Professor Munira Fakhro told me on the telephone on Saturday that she

had been called in by the President of the University and told that she would lose her job unless she recanted, but she had refused.

You say the Bahrain authorities believe that much of the information I receive is false or distorted. I can only say that I am in direct contact with a number of people in Bahrain itself, and with many more exiles and visitors. But if I am getting the wrong impression, why are the authorities not willing to let me go there and see for myself? I couldn't get a clear answer from Mr Al Gosaibi to that question, or to the question as to why they would not allow Amnesty to visit the country. You may be aware that the authorities have told the FCO that they had issued an invitation to Amnesty international, and this is being passed on no doubt in good faith, for example in a letter from Douglas Hurd to Edward Heath of May 22, 1995.

With regard to the exiles, Mr Al Gosaibi said that Sheikh Ali Salman and his two clerical colleagues had left the country voluntarily, and that no Bahraini living abroad had been refused permission to return. He knew nothing of the lists of exiles published by Amnesty International.

The defendants who had appeared before the State Security Court had all been represented by lawyers of their choice, and they had a right of appeal against their convictions and sentences. This was the exact opposite of my information, and I am very glad to be corrected. I look forward to hearing about the appeals, but I have to say that everything Mr Al Gosaibi told me about the judicial processes would have carried greater conviction if the courts were open to the public and particularly to foreign legal observers.

We talked about the new offence of transmitting information to overseas recipients. Mr Al Gosaibi confirmed that it is a criminal offence to send false information abroad, but in answer to a question he said that it would be a defence to claim that the information was in fact true. He gave as an example of false information being transmitted the case of one Mohammed Al Fardan, said to be aged 10 and to have been killed in custody, whereas in fact he was 20 and a ceiling had fallen on him by accident. I told him I was unable to make any comment on the story, because it was the first time I had heard it.

We talked about Sheikh Al Jamri and his family. He said that if, after investigation, it was established that he had not incited people to acts of violence, he would be released. I asked about other members of the family, and whether they were also suspected of acts of violence or incitement to violence, particularly Afaf Al Jamri, and he had no answer. I heard later, however, that Afaf Al Jamri was released yesterday and I am pleased to know this. But I think there never were any grounds for arresting her except to bring pressure to bear on her father. About Mansoor Al Jamri, Mr Al Gosaibi asked me (a rhetorical question, I think) why he had two

visiting cards, one in the name of the Bahrain Freedom Movement and the other the Bahrain Human Rights Association. I volunteered the conjecture that he might belong to more than one organisation, as many people do.

On the question of detentions, Mr Al Gosaibi said I was misinformed about the provisions of the State Security Act. A person could only be detained without trial for a period of up to 3 months, not 3 years, under this legislation, he claimed. Nor would anybody be held beyond the specified length of their sentence.

You kindly suggest that we have a talk, and I will be delighted to see you, perhaps over a cup of tea one afternoon. I will telephone your office to see if we can find a mutually convenient time. In the meanwhile, you may like to have a look at my unstarred question yesterday, in which I raised some of our concerns. I certainly welcome the opportunity of discussing these with the Ambassador and the Deputy Minister, and I hope that we may at least be able to agree on some of the facts. I agree with you entirely that it is necessary to build up confidence, and the best way of doing this, I suggest, is to ensure greater transparency. The more we know, the better we shall be able to understand, and if this can be the basis of the dialogue between us, I am sure we shall make good progress.

Yours sincerely

W.P.

William Powell Esq MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9506069

House of Lords

June 6, 1995

Dear Lynda

Since you were good enough to say during our debate on Bahrain that you welcomed the information I sent, I give below the text of the women's petition I mentioned:

"We were alarmed as Bahraini citizens by the recent escalation of incidents and the use of the language of violence instead of the language of dialogue... The continuation and spread of violence will touch everyone sooner or later. Experiences of other nations have proved that violence is a vicious circle that generates resentment, deepens hatred and entrenches violence and in the end we will all be losers and our beloved country will be inflicted with wounds that will not heal for a long time... We were also alarmed as citizens and mothers by the practices of the security and anti-riot force towards the citizens who dwell in the villages; practices which ranged from insults and severe beatings of young men, women and children to killing defenseless demonstrators including pupils and university students with bullets.. We present to Your Highness this statement requesting your Highness' personal intervention to break the circle of violence and open the door to dialogue..which may be achieved through the following means: (1) Ceasing the use of bullets to disperse demonstrators, illegal forced entries and mass arrests; (2) Dealing with detainees according to the rule of law with all that entails of guarantees to the detainees during periods of investigation and trial while expediting the presentation of the defendants to trial, releasing immediately the remaining detainees and repatriating the exiles; (3) Creating employment opportunities for all citizens, securing the minimum requirements for their livelihood and finding an effective solution for the increase in the foreign labour force; (4) Opening the door to a national dialogue with the aim of reaching the appropriate solution; (5) Reactivating the Constitution of the State of Bahrain and calling for elections to the National Assembly and allowing public liberties and freedom of speech; (6) Including Bahraini women in political decision making and utilizing their creative energies in all spheres to serve our country Bahrain".

The petition was sponsored by the "Bahrain's Citizens and Mothers" which includes: (1) Aziza Hamad Al-Bassam, Programme Producer, Bahrain Broadcasting; (2) Dr. Khawlah Mohammed Matar, Journalist;

(3) Dr. Moneera Ahmed Fakhroo, University Professor; (4) Ayisha Khalifa Matar, Director, Modern Handicraft Industries; (5) Dr. Fadheela Taher Al-Mahroos Pediatrician; (6) Jaleela Sayed Ahmed, Lawyer; (7) Wedad Mohammed Al-Masqati, Lawyer; (8) Fawziya Al-Sitri, Employee; (9) Dr. Sabeka Mohammed Al-Najjar, Employee; (10) Sawsen Ibrahim Al-Khayat, Employee; (11) Hussah Al-Khumairi, Director of Continuous Education; (12) Mariyam Abdullah Fakhroo, Employee; (13) Khadijah Ali Masoud, Employee; (14) Sheikha Mubarrak Hamad, Employee; (15) Nadia Al-Masqati, Accountant; (16) Farida Ghoulam Ismael, Employee; (17) Koukab Abdullah Abu-Idris, Employee; (18) Radhia Khalil Ibrahim, Teacher; (19) Muna Abbas Mansoor, Employee; (20) Leila Ali, Employee.

Last week Dr. Fadheela Al-Mahroos was sacked after refusing to remove her name from the petition. She was then reinstated after some coverage in the international media, but all the signatories have been told to withdraw their names on pain of dismissal from their posts. On Saturday June 3, the President of the University of Bahrain summoned Dr Muneera Fakhroo and said that unless she withdrew her name from the petition by the next day, she would lose her job.

This I had personally from Professor Fakroo, to whom I spoke on the telephone. I enclose a copy of the fax I had from her later, and this may help you to appreciate that Mr Al Gosaibi's assertion that everybody is content except a few foreign-inspired terrorists is not correct.



The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9510063

House of Lords

June 10, 1995

Dear Lynda

Further to our correspondence about the democracy movement in Bahrain and the authorities' reaction to it, I give below the list as we know it of those who have died as a result of the use of violence by the security forces, giving the name, place of residence, age, date of death, and the cause:

1. Abbas Khamis, Sanabis, 24, December 17, 1994, live ammunition.
2. Hani Ahmad Al-Wasti, Jidhafs, 22, December 17, 1994, live ammunition.
3. Mirza Ali Abdul Redha, Qadam, 65, December 20, 1994, after beating by batons.
4. Hussain Qambar, Hoorah, 18, January 4, 1995, died in custody.
5. Abdul Qader Al-Fatlawi, Duraz, 18, January 12, 1995, live ammunition
6. Mohammed Redha Mansoor Ahmad (Al-Hejji), Bani Jamra, 34, January 25, 1995, live ammunition.
7. Hussain Ali al-Safi, Sitra, 26, January 26, 1995, live ammunition.
8. Aqeel Salman Al-Saffar, Bilad-al-Qadeem, 18 months, February 8, 1995, effects of tear gas.
9. Abdul Hamid Qassim, Duraz, 17, March 26, 1995, live ammunition.
10. Mohammed Jaafer Yousif Atteya, Bani Jamra, 28, April 1, 1995, live ammunition
11. Mohammed Ali Abdul Razzaq, Bani Jamra, 48, April 1, 1995. live ammunition
12. Hussain Abdulla Al-Asheeri, Dair, 17, April 19, 1995, live ammunition

13. Nidhal Habib Al-Nashabah, Duraz, 18, May 4, 1995, live ammunition.

While there may be some dispute about the circumstances of each individual death, the overall picture is one of excessive violence by the security forces against unarmed members of the public engaged in peaceful protest. The Deputy Minister did tell me that two police officers had been murdered since the beginning of December, and of course I deplore the use of violence against persons or property by elements of the opposition. It strikes me, however, that the **leadership** of the opposition themselves continually stress the importance of refraining from violence, in the face of great provocation.

I was glad to hear, at least from preliminary reports, that the authorities exercised restraint yesterday when there were large numbers of demonstrators on the streets. This is a good sign, and I hope that it may be rapidly followed up by an inquiry into the casualties and deaths of the last six months, and a dialogue with leaders of the opposition, which I know Douglas Hogg has been recommending to the Amir.



The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9507065

June 13, 1995

Dear Lynda

I write to draw your attention to the case of Saeed Al Asboul, (42), from Sanabis a civil engineer employed by the Ministry of Works in Bahrain who was dismissed in November because he refused to withdraw his name from the petition calling for the restoration of democracy. On March 16, the court declared his dismissal unlawful, but the Ministry refused to reinstate him. Mr Al Asboul applied to the aluminiuk smelter ALBA and was accepted for employment by them, but the authorities (I think the Ministry of the Interior) vetoed the appointment.

Abdul Jabbar Ibrahim (25) from Duraz, a technician employed by Bahrain Telecom, was arrested mid December and brought before the court with 10 others on April 30. He alone of the 11 was acquitted. The others received custodial sentences ranging from 3 to 7 years. But Mr Ibrahim is still being held in prison, without legal authority.

I think I may have mentioned the case of Ms Malika Abdullah Yousif Singais (3) before. She was arrested on April 6 and is being held in Issa Town. Her brother Adel is wanted, and the family, knowing that she is apolitical, believe she is being held as a hostage.

These three instances reinforce the impression that the rule of law does not prevail in Bahrain. I am sure it would be useful if our Ambassador could make inquiries about the cases, so that at the very least the authorities would be aware of the concern felt by some of us here.

Yours

Eric

The Baroness Chalker,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

June 22, 1995

Reverting to the conversation with the Deputy Minister, Mr Al Ghosaibi, you will recall that he told me that all citizens of Bahrain were free to re-enter the country. I give below a list of persons allegedly exiled over the last few years, and would be grateful for your observations on the names:

1. Abdulla AL-BANALI, Al-Hid , 2 , 14.4.93 , Lebanon
2. Dr. Abdul-Aziz Rashid ALRASHID , Muharaq , 2 , 5.11.93 , U.A.E
3. Ahmed Ali AL-SHABI, Duraz , 4 , Iran

4. Ali Maki HABIB, Sanad , 4 , Iran
5. Abdul-Nabi Ali Abdul-Hassan, Duraz, 7, Iran
6. Abdul-Hussain M. Saleh AL-ORAIBI, Tubli, Iran
7. Alaa AL-JALAW, Manama , Iran
8. Abdulla Rastam ABBAS, Manama , Iran
9. Abdul-Nabi Abbas AL-HADDAD , Sitra, May 92 , Iran
10. Abdul-Nabi Ali SHAMLOH, Tubli, 5 , June 92 , Iran
11. Ali Ahmed AL-MUTGAWI, Duraz, 18.7.93 , Iran
12. Ahmed Mahdi NASSER , Mahooz, Jan. 94 , Saudi Arabia
13. Ahmed Ibrahim AL-KHAYAT, Manama, 4 , Syria
14. Abdulla Yousif SALMAN, Al-Daih , 6, July 88, Syria
15. Ahmed Ibrahim ALDAWDI, Muharaq, Syria
16. Ali Hassan ZAER-HUSSAIN, Syria
17. Abdul-Shaheed Mahdi ALSATRA, Sitra , Syria
18. Abdulla Ibrahim SALEH , Syria
19. Abdul-Nabi Ali ABDULNABI, Syria
20. Ahmed Hussain AKBAR , Syria
21. Abdul-Saheb Ibrahim ALI , Syria
22. Abdul-Wahab Ibrahim ALI, Syria
23. Abdul-Karim Issa ALABASI, Syria
24. Abdul-Nabi Hassan EL-EKRY, Al-Daih , 2 , Syria
25. Abdul-Amir Hakim AL-ARAB , Bani Jamra, 4 , Syria
26. Abdul-Jalil Radi AL-ASHIRI, Syria
27. Ahmed Yousif OBIEDLY, 3 , U.K.
28. Ali Mansur ALGAWANIM , Syria
29. Abdul-Rida Ahmed FATHALLA , Denmark
30. S. Abdul-Muttaleb KAROONI, Syria
31. Ahmed Majid ALMAJID , Syria
32. Sh. Ali Ahmed AL-MAHFOOD , Bani Jamra, 4 , Syria
33. Ali Hassan MATTAR , Syria
34. Ahmed Hassan NASSER , Syria
35. Abdul-Rahman ALNOAIMI, Hid , Syria

36. Abdul-Jalil Saleh ALNOAIMI , Manama , Syria
37. Ali Ahmed ALHAMALI, Syria
38. S. Abdulla Hussain AL-GORAIFI, Graifa, 7 , Syria
39. Abbas Sanabsi, Canada
40. Mohammed Yousif MAZAAL, 5, 1987, UK
41. Abdul-Jalil ABUDEEB , Syria
42. Abbas Atia Salman Hassan, Syria
43. Ali Hassan Hassan , Syria
44. Dr. Abdul Hadi Abdul-Rasul KHALAF, Manama, Sweden
45. Ali Mansur KHAMEES , Syria
46. Abbas Mohsin HAIDER, Syria
47. Bader Abdul-Malik MOHAMED, Manama, Feb 93, Cypres
48. Essa Mohamed ABDULEID, Karzakan, 7 , June 92 , Iran
49. Essa Radi Hassan MUMIN, Al-Dair, 6 , 16.6.93 , Iran
50. Essa Abdulla ALDURAZI, Duraz , 4 , 9. 6. 93 , Iran
51. Dia Ali Abdulla MOHHMED, Manama , Iran
52. Foad Mahdi AL-HALWACHI, Manama , 4 , UAE
53. Gholam Khairallah MOHAMED, Iran
54. Hadi Rida IBRAHIM, Syria
55. Hani AL-RAYES, Duraz , Dnmark
56. Hameed Ibrahim AWACHI, Syria
57. Hashim Mustafa AL-MUSAWI, Manma, Syria
58. Habib Abdulla MATTAR, Syria
59. Hashim Kadem HASHIM, Syria
60. Dr. Hassan Ibrahim ALI , Sihla , 4 , Jan 84, U.K.
61. Hassan Salman ALI, Tubli, 19 82, UAE
62. S. Hadi ESSA, Issa Town, 2, Iran
63. S. Hashim ESSA , Issa Town, 4 , Iran
64. Sh. Hussain NAJATI, Muharaq , 5 , Iran
65. Hussain Mohamed ALI , Sanad , May 92, Iran
66. S. Hadi Ahmed SHARAF, Tubli, 4, Sep. 93, Iran
67. S. Ibrahim Adnan NASSER , Boggowwah, 4 , Iran
68. Sh. Ibrahim ALANSARI, Muharaq, 4, Iran
69. Ibrahim KARIMI, Muharaq, 1980, Iran
70. Sh. Ibrahim Mahdi AL-HALWACHI, Manama, 4 , Iran
71. Jamal Habib AL-HUBAISH, Manama , 28.11.92, Iran
72. Jaffar Abdul-Rasul ALSANADI, Sanabis , 3 , 15. 4 .92, Iran
73. Khamees Fadel SALMAN, Iran
74. Kamel Hashim AL-HASHIMI, Manama , 3 , Iran
75. Lila Abdulla FAKROO, Manama , 2, Cypres
76. S. Maatoq HASHIM, Qadam, 4 , Syria
77. Mohamed Hamed SANAD, Manama , 4 , Iran
78. Mohamed Yousif MUZIL , Sitra , 5 , 25.8.93, Iran
79. Mohamed Habib ALMUKDAD, Al-Bilad, 5 , 1993 , Iran
80. S. Majeed Ali ALKHORJANI, Jedhafs , 5 , May 93 , Iran
81. Mohamed Jawad KADEM, Makaba, Feb. 93, Iran
82. Mohamed Mahdi ALZUHAIRI, Sanabis, 3 , June 92, Iran
83. Mohamed Sadeq IDRIS, Iran
84. Mohamed Ali MAHDI, Sanabis, Nov 90, UK
85. Jawad Abdul-Wahhab, Bani Jamra, 2, 1980, UK
86. Mohamed Fadel Khadem HASSAN, Syria
87. Mohamed Abdulkarim HASSAN, Syria
88. Maki Fadel Hassan SALMAN, Syria
89. Mohamed Ali HASSAN, Syria
90. Mohamed Mahdi TARESH, Syria
91. Mohamed Abdulla M. ABDULLA, Syria
92. Mahmoud Ali ABDULLA, Syria

93. Mohamed Jaffar M. ABDULLA, Syria
94. Mahdi Abdulla OBIEDAT, Syria
95. Sh. Majed Mohsin AL-ASFOOR, Sitra, 4 , Denmark
96. Mohamed Muhsin ALALAWI, Syria
97. Majid Ibrahim AL-MAJID, Syria
98. Mohamed Ali Hakim ALARAB, Bani Jamra, 4 , Dec 92 , Saudi Arabia
99. Mohamed Abduljalil ALMORBATI, Muharaq, 4 , Syria
100. Mohamed Rida ALNASHEET, Syria
101. Maki Salman NASEEF , Syria
102. Dr. Majeed Mohsin AL-ALAWI, Qadam, 1983 , UK
103. Najiba Hassan Alawi HASSAN, Syria
104. Qosai Ali AL-ORAIBI, Tubli, Iran
105. Dr. Saeed Abdul-Nabi AL-SHAHABI, Duraz , 6, Sep 79 , UK
106. Yousif JAMAL, Muharaq , 4, Iran
108. Yakoub Yousif JANAHI, Muharaq , 3, Syria
109. Ala'a Al-Yousuf, Manama, 4, 1982, UK
110. Sheikh Ali Salman, 3, Jan 1995, UK
111. Sheikh Hamza Al-Deiri, 5, Jan 1995, UK
112. Seyed Haider Al-Setri, 1, Jan 1995, UK
113. Sheikh Adel Al-Shu'la, 3, Jan 1995, Syria
114. Hamid Hasan Al-Madeh, 8, Jan 1995, UAE
115. Hani Al-Bannaye, 1, Jan 1995, UAE
116. Fuad Mubarak, 1, Jan 1995, UAE
117. Ibrahim Ali Al-Setri, 1, Jan 1995, UAE
118. Ibrahim Al-Sanadi, 1, Jan 1995, UAE
119. Mahmmod Al-Ghureifi, 1, Jan 1995, UAE
120. Moneer Abdul Rasool, 3, Jan 1995, Lebanon

H E Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
 Ambassador,
 Bahrain Embassy,
 98 Gloucester Road,
 London SW7 4AU.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

22 June 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 6 June containing the text of the Bahraini women's petition you mentioned as well as a copy of Munira Fakhro's letter to you.

As I said in the House on 5 June, I share the concern about the series of cases of which we continue to hear. As you are aware, I have already asked our Ambassador to do his best to obtain information on some of the cases you mentioned in your letter to me of 4 June. He is in close touch with the Bahraini Government, who are being helpful.

I have sent a copy of your latest letter to our Embassy.

Yours

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

24 June 1995

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 13 June about Bahrain.

We understand from the Bahraini authorities that Malika Al Singais is still in detention pending a possible charge of instigating riots.

The Ambassador has asked the Minister of the Interior for information relating to the cases of Saeed Al Asboul and Abdul Jabbar Ibrahim. As you can appreciate, it may take some time to gather the information and I will write to you as soon as I have any news.

Yours ever

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

24 June 1995

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 11 June concerning Mansoor Al Jamri and your letter of 10 June.

Our Embassy in Bahrain has spoken to officials in the Administration section at the Bahrain University about Miss Al Jamri's predicament. The University informed the Embassy that, under University regulations, any student who withdraws from his/her studies is then ineligible to sit any subsequent examination. However we have been told by the University that Miss Al Jamri is welcome to resume her studies in the Autumn.

It is always sad to read of events where lives are lost especially in situations of violence. As I stated in the House on 5 June people are sometimes hurt who should not have been caught up in the conflict. We regret the casualties on both sides.

I share your concern about the importance of refraining from violence. Both sides should avoid responding to provocation. You may wish to know that the Bahraini authorities dispute opposition claims of non-involvement with violence. They claim that one off duty policeman has been assassinated and another fire bombed to death whilst on routine patrol.

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



House of Lords

July 6, 1995

Dear Ambassador

We were shocked to learn that the State Security Court had passed sentence of death on Mr Isa Ahmad Hassan Qambar, 27, for his alleged complicity in the murder of a police officer in March. Two other accused. Mr Mohammad Ali Hassan Khatam, 20, and Mr Mansoor Saleh Makki, were reportedly sentenced to life imprisonment; Mr Younis Saleh Musa Al Sanini, 22 and Mr Ishaq Hassan Yousef Marhoon, 20 were given 10 years, and Mr Hussain Saleh Mousa Al Sanini, Mr Ahmad Musa Al Sanini, 27, Mr Hamza Majid Habib Al Sheikh Yousef, 24, were given 5 years.

The prosecution based their charge entirely on the confessions of the defendants, which are reported to have been extracted under torture. They had been held incommunicado for the last four months, and were not allowed representation by lawyers of their choice.

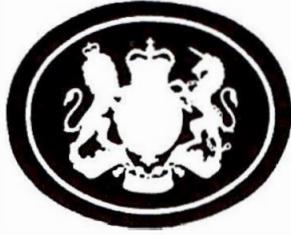
There is no right of appeal against the verdict or sentence of the State Security Court, and this is a violation of another internationally accepted principle of law.

I know, from our recent conversation, that your government are anxious to present a good case to the outside world. Nothing could be more calculated to damage the image of your country than serious flaws in the system of justice, which are inherent in the State Security Courts. It would be quite catastrophic if Mr Qambar is indeed executed as a result of processes which violate so many of the rules of natural justice, and I would respectfully submit that it would be wise, and prudent in the interests of Bahrain's international standing, not to carry out this sentence.

Yours sincerely
Eric Avebury

H E the Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Ambassador,
Bahrain Embassy,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.

Fax0171-370 5943



From Lord Avebury
P9507074

Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords

July 6, 1995

Dear Mr. Rifkind

Congratulations on your appointment as Foreign Secretary.

I gather from Al Hayyat that one of your first engagements yesterday morning was with the Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, and that you discussed 'regional issues' and 'bilateral relations' with them.

Presumably the regional issue which preoccupies them most is the territorial dispute with Qatar, and the likely effect of the coup on Qatar's attitude. Although the International Court has given the parties until April 1996, I think, to make submissions, the expectation was that an out of court settlement would be reached, and this may prove more difficult with the new Ruler. I wonder if Britain has any part to play in helping to resolve the question?

The question of 'bilateral relations' no doubt centres on our government's policy towards the Bahrain opposition here in London, and I am concerned that we should make it plain that we do not interfere with exile movements as long as they observe our laws. It does not seem to be fully appreciated in Bahrain that governments of all political complexions have tolerated peaceful opposition groups here for the last 150 years, and nothing they say or do will make any difference to that policy. I fear that our natural politeness may have prevented us from expressing this with sufficient clarity.

I hope that in your briefing for the meeting with the Bahrainis you were told about the trial which ended on Wednesday, in which sentence of death was passed on Mr Isa Ahmad Hassan Qambar, 27, for his alleged complicity in the murder of a police officer in March. Two other accused, Mr Mohammad Ali Hassan Khatam, 20, and Mr Mansoor Saleh Makki, were reportedly sentenced to life imprisonment; Mr Younis Saleh Musa Al Sanini, 22 and Mr Ishaq Hassan Yousef Marhoon, 20 were given 10 years, and Mr Hussain Saleh Mousa Al Sanini, Mr Ahmad Musa Al Sanini, 27, Mr Hamza Majid Habib Al Sheikh Yousef, 24, were given 5 years.

The verdicts in these cases were based entirely on the alleged confessions of the accused, although it is believed that the confessions were extracted by means of torture. No corroboration evidence was called by the prosecution.

The defence lawyers have appealed, but if under Bahraini law, a confession, however made, is treated as conclusive evidence of guilt, it is difficult to see what grounds there can be for the appeal. Yet it would be utterly shocking if these harsh sentences, which are the result of a process which defies many of the internationally accepted norms of law and of court procedure, are upheld. I do hope you seized the opportunity of your meeting with the Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister to express these concerns, or that you will do so in any communication that may follow the meeting.

Yours sincerely

E. Mervin

The Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

July 7, 1995

We were shocked to learn that the State Security Court had passed sentence of death on Mr Isa Ahmad Hassan Qambar, 27, for his alleged complicity in the murder of a police officer in March. Two other accused. Mr Mohammad Ali Hassan Khatam, 20, and Mr Mansoor Saleh Makki, were reportedly sentenced to life imprisonment; Mr Younis Saleh Musa Al Sanini, 22 and Mr Ishaq Hassan Yousef Marhoon, 20 were given 10 years, and Mr Hussain Saleh Mousa Al Sanini, Mr Ahmad Musa Al Sanini, 27, Mr Hamza Majid Habib Al Sheikh Yousef, 24, were given 5 years.

The prosecution based their charge entirely on the confessions of the defendants, which are reported to have been extracted under torture. They had been held incommunicado for the last four months, and were not allowed representation by lawyers of their choice.

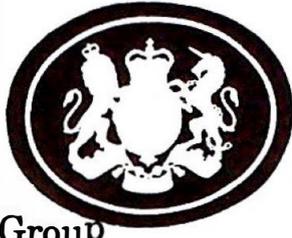
There is no right of appeal against the verdict or sentence of the State Security Court, and this is a violation of another internationally accepted principle of law.

I know, from our recent conversation, that your government are anxious to present a good case to the outside world. Nothing could be more calculated to damage the image of your country than serious flaws in the system of justice, which are inherent in the State Security Courts. It would be quite catastrophic if Mr Qambar is indeed executed as a result of processes which violate so many of the rules of natural justice, and I would respectfully submit that it would be wise, and prudent in the interests of Bahrain's international standing, not to carry out this sentence.

H E the Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Ambassador,
Bahrain Embassy,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.

Fax 0171-370 5943

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9507071

House of Lords

July 7, 1995

Dear Ambassador

This is to correct an error in my fax of yesterday about the sentences passed on the nine persons alleged to have participated in the killing of a police officer on March 30 in the village of Nuwaidat, southeast of Manama. I understand that although the defendants were originally brought before the State Security Court, on May 17 the case was referred to the ordinary criminal court. So they do have a right of appeal, and defence lawyers have announced that they will exercise that right.

The fact remains that the only evidence presented to the court was the alleged confessions of the defendants, and if these are admissible, notwithstanding the fact that they were reported to have been extracted by means of torture, it is hard to see what grounds there would be for an appeal, and I would be grateful for advice on this matter. Under Bahraini law, it appears that uncorroborated confessions are accepted as proof of a defendant's guilt. The lower court's findings of guilt did not require any other evidence to be produced.

Will foreign legal observers be allowed to attend the appeals, and could you please let me know, in due course, when they will be heard? I realise that the defence have 30 days in which to lodge the appeals.

The comments I made in the last paragraph of my letter of yesterday's date are still valid, if premature. We do not see the courts of Bahrain as independent of the executive, and I hope the repercussions of any sentences confirmed on appeal will be considered with due care.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Auchincloss

H E the Ambassador,
Mr Karim Ebrahim Al Shakar,
Ambassador,
Bahrain Embassy,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.

Fax 0171-370 5943



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

7 July 1995

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of 22 June concerning Sheikh Al Jamri. I have sent it to our Embassy with a request for further information.

I will write to you again in due course when the Embassy have received a response from the Bahraini authorities.

Yours

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



House of Lords

July 9, 1995

Dear Mr. Hawley

We have just learned of a new atrocity in Bahrain. Mr Saeed Abdul Rasool Al-Askafi, 16 years old, a secondary school pupil from Sanabis village (4 kilometers west of the capital Manama), who was arrested on Thursday, has been killed in custody. Police came to search his home on Wednesday evening, and he was out. His father told him to report to the Security Directorate in Manama the following morning, and he did so, never to return. Yesterday morning, officials from the Military Hospital telephoned the family and instructed them to collect the boy. Not until the father turned up at the hospital did he realise that the boy was dead. The doctor told the father that the boy had been brought to the hospital already dead on Thursday.

The family say that Mr Al-Askafi's body was mutilated, and they believe this shows that his death was the result of torture.

The security forces did their best to prevent the young man's funeral, but the family insisted on burying the victim. The security forces attacked the funeral procession with rubber bullets, tear gas and possibly live ammunition. Ms Nazhah Sayed Abdullah, aged about 25, was injured and taken to hospital Ali Abdullah Nasser, 27, also from Sanabis. There were confrontations between demonstrators and the security forces, which continued until late last night.

This brings the number of deaths as a result of violence by the police and security forces to 15, since the demonstrations began in early December. From the discussion I had with Douglas Hogg, I know that we have been urging the government to engage in dialogue with the forces of democratic opposition, but they have shown no disposition to meet those who call for the restoration of the 1973 constitution and the 1974 Assembly. The ruling family will only speak to those who are ready to acquiesce in the present de facto constitutional arrangements, under which the Amir rules by decree.

I know that the Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister were here last week, and that they had a meeting with the Foreign Secretary. I enclose a copy of a letter I wrote to Mr Rifkind after learning of that engagement from Al Hayyat. It would be good if we could at least express concern about deaths in custody, and the use of violence against mourners and demonstrators, as we would do if this was, say, Malawi or Russia. For some reason, there seems to be a marked reluctance to broach human rights violations with the ruling family of Bahrain, though our historical links with them would make them listen more carefully to us than to any other friendly government.

Yours sincerely

Eric Ashby

Jeremy Hanley Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Secretary of State

10 July 1995

Dear Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 6 July on my new appointment. It was kind of you to write.

You also raised the question of Bahrain. I have asked Jeremy Hanley to write to you about the specific points you mention.

Yours sincerely

MALCOLM RIFKIND

The Lord Avebury



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

21 July 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Sir

In my letter of 7 July I said that I would write to you once I had more information about Sheikh Al Jamri.

The Bahraini authorities wish to assure you that Sheikh Al Jamri is fully aware of the specific reasons for his detention. They have informed us that he is being detained under Section 1 of the Detention Order, which is subject to regular judicial review, and that the case is a matter of the highest national security for the Bahraini Government.

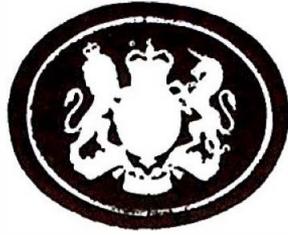
As you are already aware, Sheikh Al Jamri is a former judge and an expert lawyer in his own right. The Bahrainis have told us that an ex parte application for his release brought by a group of Bahraini lawyers was recently rejected at Sheikh Al Jamri's own request. In this context they argue that issues relating to a trial are premature.

Both we and the Bahrainis fully appreciate and understand your concerns. The Bahraini authorities say that they are well aware of their responsibilities to uphold individual human rights. They have assured us that Sheikh Al Jamri has been well treated throughout his detention. They confirm that he is in good health and is regularly attended by independent doctors.

Yours

Lynda

From Lord Avebury



P9525076

House of Lords

July 25, 1995

Dear Jeremy

I wrote to you on July 9 about the murder in custody of a teenager in Bahrain, and I am now sorry to have to write again about the treatment of young persons. Ms Hayat Al-Qamar, 17, from Duraz, was arrested on a date between May 15 and 20 and is said to be held at the juvenile detention centre. No member of her family has been allowed to see her and we assume that no charges have been laid against her.

We have also learned of the detention of two 14 year old boys, Mohammed Ali Mohammed Ali Al-Ekri from Al-Daih, and Seyyid Hussein Al-Alawi, from Jidhafs. The boys were charged around July 12 and we think both were given ten-year prison sentences on the same day. The proceedings must have been cursory and that, as usual in the courts of Bahrain, internationally accepted legal norms were not observed. We also presume that these sentences were handed down by the State Security Court, from whose verdicts there is no appeal. Mr Adel Flaifel, the notorious torturer, told the mother of Master Al-Ekri: "*Your son is now 14; come and pick him up when he is 24. See whether Avebury can help you this time*". This may be a reference to my earlier intervention on behalf of this boy, who was released for a short while.

I hope you will agree that passing long sentences in secret on teenagers, with no right of appeal, is totally unacceptable, and that representations should be made to Bahrain authorities accordingly. Equally, the case of Ms Al-Qamar shows clearly that the rule of law does not exist in Bahrain and that children are suffering the same kind of treatment as their parents. I know that we are always reluctant to say anything to the Al-Khalifas that might damage our special relationship with them, but surely, the victimisation of minors is unnatural enough to justify some remonstrance.

Yours sincerely
Eric

Jeremy Hanley Esq MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9526 071

House of Lords

July 26, 1995

Dear Lynda

Thank you for your letter of July 21 about the circumstances of Sheikh Al-Jamri's detention in Bahrain.

You may recall that Sheikh Al-Jamri was originally placed under house arrest, together with all the 19 members of his family including women and children who were at home at the time, on April 1, 1995. Two people were killed in the village of Bani Jamra during this operation. For the next two weeks, all communication between the family and the outside world was severed.

Then on April 15, Sheikh Al-Jamri was taken away to an unknown location, which was later believed to be a military area in Safrah. For three weeks, he was 'disappeared', until on May 4 his daughter Afaf was allowed to see him. You may remember that two days later she was beaten up in front of her father by the notorious torturer, Mr Adel Flaifel.

Some time later, I think about mid-June, Sheikh Al-Jamri was admitted to the military hospital, and his wife found out, not from the authorities but from a tip-off, that he was there. When she went there to visit him, at first the authorities' main concern was to find out how she had discovered he was there. After some argument, Mrs Al-Jamri managed to persuade them to allow a visit, which lasted a mere ten minutes, and with officials present all the time.

After he was released from hospital about the end of June, he was taken to a new place of detention in the Dry Dock area. From there he was brought to the port area Mina Salman, for a further visit with his wife, this time lasting nearly an hour, at the end of June. Since then, to the best of our knowledge, no member of his family has been granted access to him. As you may also be aware, no lawyer has seen him since his arrest.

The denial of family visits is of course a violation of human rights, and in particular of Article 10(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides that 'all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person', and of Article 23(1), which states that 'the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state'.

It is a well-established principle, that a person held in custody does not forfeit any of his or her rights as a citizen, except those which are not capable of being exercised because of the detention itself, such as the right of free movement within the territory of the state. I don't know how you can repeat, without comment, the assertion of the Bahraini authorities that they are aware of their responsibilities to uphold individual human rights when they are manifestly violating Sheikh Al-Jamri's rights in the manner described.

I turn next to your statement that an ex-parte application made by a group of lawyers on behalf of Sheikh Al-Jamri was rejected at his own request. First, you ignore the fact that all these processes occur without any communication between Sheikh Al-Jamri and his lawyer, Mr Abdullah Hashim. Second, you appear to take it on trust that Sheikh Al-Jamri did indeed reject the application, though he was given no opportunity of communicating his wishes except through his captors themselves, not perhaps the most reliable source of information. Third, I would imagine that since the dispute between Sheikh Al-Jamri and the Bahrain government for the last 20 years has centred on the State Security law, he may very well be reluctant to participate in any court proceedings which appeared to recognise the validity of that arbitrary decree.

Finally, you say that the Bahrain authorities wish to inform me that Sheikh Al-Jamri is aware of the specific reasons for his detention. I am quite certain that in making this statement they are being economical with the truth. Mr Hashim has been informed of the terms of a Ministerial Order made by the Minister of the Interior, in which the reasons for his client's detention are given as (1) participation in a unlawful gathering and (2) participation in riots, contrary to Articles 187 and 179 of the Bahrain Penal Code. If a copy of this Order has been served on Sheikh Al-Jamri himself - and it would be useful to know whether this was so - it gives no indication of the times and dates of these alleged riots and unlawful gathering, and cannot therefore be described as specific. In any proper court of law, such vague charges would be thrown out immediately, but of course in Bahrain as we know, the State Security Law does not require the authorities to give the detainee any reason why they lock him up for a period of three years, which is renewable an indefinite number of times. This law itself, and the manner in which it is applied, are violations of Article 14 of the ICCPR.

It seems to me that all these matters should be considered by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, and I am therefore sending them copies of this correspondence, with a request that they place it on the agenda for their next meeting.

Tours
Eric

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

26 July 1995

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
LONDON SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 9 July about Said Abdul Rasool Al-Askafi.

We had already taken up this case with the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior. I have passed your letter to our Embassy and will write to you again as soon as I have further news.

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP



You also asked about parental access. The Interior Minister has assured us that juveniles in custody are not denied the right to receive such visits.

I hope that the above will prove helpful.

Yours

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

5 August 1995

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 4 June about human rights issues in Bahrain. I am now able to let you have some additional details on the individual cases you raised.

We have been informed by the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior that:

Abdul Qadar Al Fatlawi (the Bahraini authorities believe that he is actually called Abdul Qadar Mohsin Jaffar Yousif Dirazi) died on 12 January 1995 of injuries sustained during riots at Diraz. The Ministry deny that an incident occurred at his funeral.

There is no record of the name Sayed Hadi Said (allegedly aged 11) but your reference might refer to Hadi Saeed Sharaf Jawad born 1981 (aged 14) who was held at the Juvenile Centre from 24 to 29 May 1995.

Hamid Abdulla Yousif Qasim (actually Abdul Hamid Abdulla Yousif Jassim and aka Al Marzook) died on 25 March 1995 from injuries sustained during rioting at Diraz. The Bahraini authorities claim he was trying to kill a policeman with a machete.

Mohammed Ali Mohammed Ekri (alleged age 14 but actual age is unconfirmed). He was held at the Juvenile Centre from 13 April to 23 May 1995. No complaint was received of sexual or other assault. The Interior Ministry states that the Juvenile Centre is staffed exclusively by women, and the Ministry claim that, by implication, the allegation of sexual assault is not well founded.

\You also asked about parental access.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

8 August 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric

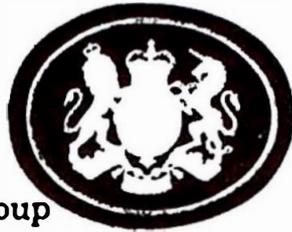
Thank you for your further letter of 26 July about Shaikh Al Jamri.

I am sorry that you do not find the information from the Bahraini authorities contained in my letter of 21 July satisfactory.

Deputy Foreign Minister Gosaibi has invited Amnesty International to contact him on individual cases and points of detail. May I suggest it might be better to pursue the particular points you raise through this channel. I understand that Amnesty International have yet to take up Ghazi al Gosaibi's offer of assistance.

Yours
Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



House of Lords

August 13, 1995

Dear Lynda,

Thank you for your letters of August 5 and 8 about events in Bahrain, and the case of Sheikh Al-Jamri in particular.

If I may say so, your replies on Bahrain are not like the letters you write about human rights elsewhere. You have never been afraid to speak out when it appears to you that human rights are being violated, and I was glad to note that you spoke your mind recently in Kenya, in spite of the predictable reaction from President Moi. In the case of Bahrain, however, all you do is to convey the answers you get from the authorities, without venturing any analysis or comment of your own. Do you swallow everything they tell you, and how does Bahrain get into this privileged situation?

In the case of Sheikh Al-Jamri, I did go into quite a lot of detail, and all you say in reply is that I should raise these matters via Amnesty International, with Deputy Foreign Minister Gosaibi. I speak to Haniya El-Mufti regularly, but I have no intention of following your advice on this matter, having had an hour and a half with the Deputy Minister myself when he was recently in London. He told me a number of lies which must have been deliberate, as you can see from the enclosed copy of a letter to William Powell describing the conversation. (See for example his statement about the length of time a person can be detained under the State Security Act). As you must also be aware, Amnesty International have been seeking an invitation to visit Bahrain and this is still being withheld, in spite of your Department's continued assertion that a visit is on the cards. I can hardly believe that you are serious in suggesting that Amnesty International should deal with Mr Al Gosaibi, from what I know of this gentleman.

Please may I have your comments, not simply those of the Bahraini authorities, on the matters of substance I raised in my letter of July 26. If you tell me that you and other Ministers are not prepared to comment on any allegations of human rights abuses in Bahrain, then we would know where we stand. I certainly intend to raise this issue on the floor of the

House in any case when Parliament reassembles, but in the meanwhile, I would like some clarification of your attitude.

With regard to your letter of August 5, you have simply acted as a post-box, relaying the comments of the Bahrain authorities without offering any hint as to your own view of the cases. I don't know whether it is a complete waste of time and effort to present you with evidence of torture and extrajudicial killings, but I enclose for what it is worth, photographs of the latest victim, 16 year old Saeed Abdul Rasool Al-Askafi, a 16 year old secondary school pupil who was murdered in custody some time between his arrest on June 29, and the delivery of his corpse to the family at the Military Hospital on July 8, as described by his father in the accompanying note. In this case, too, the family say that the body showed signs of sexual violence. You may well think that something is seriously wrong in a country where teenagers can be murdered in such a brutal fashion, yet no inquiry of any kind is held by the authorities to ascertain the cause of death and who was responsible. You may have your own reasons for wanting to accept the version of all these events being given to you by the Bahrain government, but do you not at least consider that a coroner, or equivalent official independent of the executive, should attempt to get at the truth? In the absence of any such mechanism, would you not agree that the government of Bahrain should invite M Bacre Waly Ndiaye, the UN Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Execution, to visit Bahrain and report on the violent deaths, particularly those in custody, which have occurred since last December?

Yours
Eric

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

16 August 1995

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of 4 August to Jeremy Hanley enclosing one to Ms Debbie Boutlander. I am replying in Jeremy's absence on leave.

As you already know, the Bahraini authorities are aware of our concerns about human rights abuses. We continue to raise related issues with them. We have sent a copy of your letter to our Embassy who will request further information from the Bahrainis on the points not already covered in our previous replies to you. Jeremy Hanley will write to you when we have had a response.

Yours ever

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9517086

House of Lords

August 17, 1995

Lee Lynda

You may recall that I wrote to you on June 6 about the petition which had been organised by some women intellectuals in Bahrain, and I enclose a copy of it for ease of reference. Today I spoke to Professor Munira Fakhro, who as you may remember was threatened with dismissal from her post at the University unless she withdrew her name from the petition. She is in France, and is planning to attend the Women's Conference in Beijing as an individual delegate, since obviously her own government would not nominate her.

Dr Fakhro told me that altogether 310 women intellectuals had signed the petition, out of whom 92 were government employees. To her knowledge, some 50-60 of these had been called in by their bosses and told to write an apology and withdrawal of their signatures, on pain of dismissal. They had no option but to comply if they wanted to have any chance of remaining in employment, and all but three agreed to sign. Hussah Al-Khumairi, Director of Continuous Education at the Ministry of Education, Aziza Hamad Al-Bassam, Programme Producer, Bahrain Broadcasting, and Professor Fakhro herself stood firm, and the first two have been sacked. Professor Fakhro expects to be fired when she returns from Beijing where no doubt she will compound the offence she has already committed.

It must take enormous strength of character for a woman in a society like that of Bahrain to resist all the pressures to conform which have been brought to bear by the rulers, and these three women deserve our full support. All they have done is to present moderately-expressed demands for elementary democratic rights and the rule of law, and for declining to recant, they are to be excluded permanently from the labour market - an extra-statutory penalty for an extra-statutory offence.

I have not been very successful in persuading Ministers to react to any human rights violations in Bahrain. In this case, however, I am hopeful that you will not refer me to the egregious Mr Al-Gosaibi, but will agree to raise the matter with the Bahraini authorities yourself. After all, you are going to Beijing as the leader of our delegation, and it would be rather incongruous if you appeared there as the defender of women's rights, having declined to act on such a flagrant violation as this.

Zorun
Eia

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

21 August 1995

Dear Sir

Thank you for your letter of 25 July to Jeremy Hanley. I am replying in Jeremy's absence on leave.

We have sent a copy of your letter to our Embassy in Bahrain and will let you have a substantive reply as soon as possible.

Yours

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

24 August 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letters of 13 and 14 August about Bahrain and the case of Shaikh Al Jamri.

Throughout our correspondence I have made clear that we regularly raise our concerns with the Bahraini authorities in a way which we believe most likely to be effective in securing improvements in human rights. We were pleased to hear that a further 150 detainees were released last week.

We take into account information from the Bahraini authorities as well as that received from you, and have always been prepared to raise your concerns with the Bahrainis. In my letter of 8 August I suggested that it might be better to pursue points of detail with Mr Al Gosaibi. It was not my intention merely to divert all the matters you raise with me to him. But I consider that information about an individual case, especially if there is doubt as to its credibility, is, in the first instance, best obtained through direct correspondence with those responsible in the country itself.

Constructive criticism is an effective method of approaching human rights issues and trust is needed on both sides to nurture an open, efficient working relationship. The Bahrainis have proposed Mr Al Gosaibi as an initial point of contact, but it is, for you to decide to what extent you pursue this.

Yours
Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY

From Sir Nicholas Bonsor Bt, MP



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH
The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

30 August 1995

Dr Lord Avebury

Thank you for your letter of 17 August to Lynda Chalker about Dr Munira Fakhro. I am replying in her absence overseas.

I have asked the Embassy in Bahrain to obtain further information about Dr Fakhro's circumstances and will write to you when I have received a response.

22
N Bonsor

SIR NICHOLAS BONSOR

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9531081

House of Lords

August 31, 1995

Dear Lynda

I realise that by now you will have left for Beijing to attend the UN conference on women, and I hope that you will be successful there in helping to strengthen the collective will to implement the existing Conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Political Rights of Women. Over the last 50 years, many admirable Conventions and Declarations regarding the rights of women have been passed by the United Nations, while at the same time a blind eye is turned to the incessant violations of the rights women are supposed to possess.

May I, with these thoughts in mind, draw your attention to the victimisation of two women in Bahrain, whose only crime was to sign a petition couched in moderate and respectful terms to H H the Amir, and to refuse a demand by their employers to withdraw their names from the petition and apologise for expressing their opinions? I enclose a summary of the facts in the cases of these two women, Ms Hessa Al-Khumeiri, Head of Continuing Education at the Department of Education, and Ms Aziza Al-Bassam, senior programme editor at Radio Bahrain. I also enclose a copy of the petition signed by 310 women, including these two. Some 92 of the signatories were employees of public bodies, and all except these two, and Professor Munira Fakhro, who is now in Beijing, withdrew their names and apologised in response to the threats.

It would be useful if, in addition to asking for a report from our Embassy in Bahrian, you would express your own opinion on these events, not just to me but to the Ruler and his family. At the moment, there appears to be some disposition on the part of the Minister of the Interior and his British boss Mr Ian Henderson to be more conciliatory, and they have made verbal offers to five of the main opposition leaders who have been detained separately from all the other political prisoners, to release all those in custody who have not been charged or convicted, and to discuss political reforms with them. Clearly, one important ingredient of any solution to the problems confronting Bahrain is that nobody shall be penalised for the peaceful expression of their views. These women must be reinstated in their jobs, and any pay they have lost during their suspension must be reimbursed to them.

*Yours
Evi*

The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

4 September 1995

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 31 August about Bahrain.

I have sent a copy of your letter and enclosures to our Embassy and asked the Ambassador to bring the cases you mentioned to the attention of the Minister of the Interior.

We were pleased to hear that more detainees were released in August and continue to encourage the Bahrainis toward reconciliatory dialogue with the Bahraini Shi'a.

Yours

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9512095

House of Lords

September 12, 1995

Dear Jeremy

I had been hopeful, when I heard about the discussions held by the Minister of the Interior and Ian Henderson with Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri and the four other special detainees, that a way out of the impasse in Bahrain was being actively sought by the authorities. As you will be aware, the ingredients of the deal being offered were that all the detainees would be released except those already charged or convicted, in three groups; that an amnesty for those already charged or convicted would be discussed; and that the petition for the restoration of the 1973 constitution and the 1974 Parliament could be presented to the Amir and discussed with him.

The second batch of 150 detainees who were to be released under these proposals were due to be freed on September 7, including Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain. A crowd estimated at 12,000 people gathered to welcome Mr. Hussain in Nuweidrat on September 7, but his release was delayed until about 18.00 of following day. By that time the crowd had grown to an estimated 20,000, and the situation had become tense. The security forces attempted to disperse the crowd using tear gas and rubber bullets, but the people queued for four or five hours to greet him.

On the Saturday, a meeting was called at the Interior Ministry with Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, Mr Hassan Mushaim'e and Sheikh Hassan Sultan (the fifth leader, Sheikh Khalil Sultan being still abroad). Mr Henderson said that 'the political leadership' were angry about:

- the mass receptions and gatherings
- the statements issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement, which conditionally accepted the deal and continued the agitation
- a statement by Sheikh Hamza Al-Dairi, one of the three exiles, about the release of Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain
- a case of arson at the village of Barbar a few days earlier, which was cited as evidence that peace had not been restored

In these circumstances, Mr Henderson said, the government did not feel obliged to continue with the scheduled programme of releases, including the 150 who were to have been freed on September 7.

The leaders replied that the government had issued statements which were contradictory to the spirit of the agreement, and cited the comments by the Minister of Information, who continued to deny that any deal existed. He said that those released were being "pardoned" to be given a chance to "return to the right path". The leaders also referred to the action of the Ministry of the Interior, who took three groups of prisoners, during the period between the first and second scheduled release dates, to various villages, where they were made to write graffiti and to burn tyres while being filmed!

The meeting broke up without agreement, but the leaders decided to continue honouring their side of the agreement by calling for peace and calm, in the hope that the government would also stick to its word. However, I think the authorities have got themselves into an untenable situation, by trying to strike bargains with the opposition in private, and pretending in public that no opposition exists. In today's Al Hayyat, for instance, the Prime Minister is quoted as saying to local journalists:

"What happened in Bahrain took everybody by surprise. What is certain is that foreign agents planned it, but the people made sure, before the government had responded, that the conspiracy would fail; they rejected these acts in all their forms, because the aims of the conspiracy from the beginning were based on destruction, not reform. The people realised, with their awareness and faithful national feeling, the dimensions of this conspiracy, and firmly declared their rejection of all those policies which are aimed at interfering between the members of the one family".

These are provocative remarks, as was also the Prime Minister's comment on "the existence of arrangements for widening the authority of the Shura Council so as to provide a bigger role for activities of society".

With regard to the points raised by Mr Henderson, the fact that only one incident of criminal damage has occurred over the last three weeks is proof of the restraining influence exercised by opposition leaders, but they cannot be expected to have absolute control over every single person living in Bahrain! If the authorities are going to hold opposition leaders responsible for all such acts, they must be attributing enormous powers to them, and that cannot be reconciled with the Prime Minister's suggestion that foreigners planned or instigated the disorders.

Nor can the opposition answer for every word uttered by Bahraini exiles. It is the government which has to ensure that grounds for legitimate criticism are removed, but even then, it would be astonishing if all critics were suddenly to fall silent. There is no such thing as a perfect government, and those with the least faults are the most tolerant of criticism.

On the reception accorded to Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, it is well known that on the release of any prisoner in Bahrain, family and neighbours collect to welcome

him back into the community, and the more friends and supporters a prisoner has, the larger will be the number turning out spontaneously to express their joy at his release. I do not think the people would take at all kindly to any suggestion that they should stay at home and ignore the release of leading citizens.

Please do everything possible to get the dialogue back on track. Tell the Bahraini authorities that a transparent process, in which Ministers are seen to be talking to Sheikh Al Jamri and his colleagues, would be more likely to succeed than the hole-in-corner discussions which are denied by the authorities. It is essential that trust is created between government and opposition, and this can only be achieved, I submit, if the political detainees are all released as originally scheduled by the end of the month. If the government do not adhere to the understanding that was reached, the repercussions are likely to be harmful to the future peace and stability of Bahrain, and perhaps of the region as a whole.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Anderson

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

P S I just heard that another 50 people have been released today, which at least is one third of the number promised, and only five days late.



4/ 849
21st September 1995

Dear Lord Avebury,

I am writing in reply to your letters of 6th and 7th July addressed to the Ambassador.

In your letters you express your concerns over the death sentence passed on Isa Ahmed Hassan Qamber. However you appear to have been misinformed.

The facts are that Qamber and his ten co-accused were tried and sentenced for murder by due process of law in the ordinary Criminal Court, which guarantees rights of fair trial in accordance with the relevant UN principles, including rights of appeal to the Criminal Appeal Court and to the Cassation Court.

Each accused was throughout separately represented by a lawyer of his own choice. Qamber's lawyer was Mohammed Ahmed Abdullah.

Of the eleven accused, nine were convicted and two were acquitted. Sentences were all according to law, and, as is their right, those convicted have recently lodged notices of appeal.

With regard to the allegation of forced confessions, by law these are inadmissible in evidence and I can assure you that the Courts, being inquisitorial, investigate all such allegations most thoroughly before reaching their verdicts.

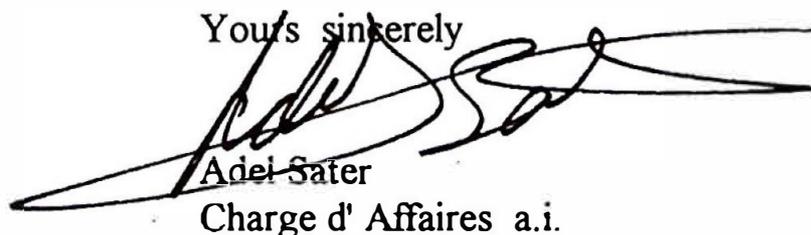
I have also been asked by His Excellency Mr. Ghazi Al Gosaibi, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bahrain, to acknowledge your letter to him of 9th June, written after the meeting which you had with him in London.

You are of course aware that the Government of Bahrain and Amnesty International are engaged in discussions on the same issues which you have raised in your letter, and the Government is concerned to avoid the unhelpful complexities of dual dialogue.

The Government of Bahrain always shows its concern to protect and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms, which are the cornerstone of its policies. We sincerely believe that meaningful dialogue on important human rights issues is only possible when conducted free from the agendas of the political arena, and I am sure that you too recognise the intrinsic value of politically neutral dialogue. Accordingly, I am confident that the Government of Bahrain can look forward to your support for the conduct of such dialogue between it and Amnesty International.

Finally, I take this opportunity to enclose a booklet giving some details of the orchestrated campaign of terror which has been carried out against my country by the terrorist groups who have been active there. I think that this may help to give you a fuller perspective on the situation and assist in identifying the real issue concerned.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adel Sater', written over a horizontal line.

Adel Sater

Charge d' Affaires a.i.

Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
Westminster
SW 1

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9502108

House of Lords

October 2, 1995

Dear Mr Sater

Thank you for your letter of September 21, and the information about Mr Isa Ahmed Hassan Qamber. I note that he does have a right of appeal and would be much obliged for more information on when the appeal will be heard.

With regard to the matters I raised with H E Mr Ghazi Al Ghosaibi, I was not aware that he was dealing with Amnesty International on the same issues. If he had already written to them covering the points in my letter, perhaps he would be good enough to send me a copy.

Of course I agree with you that a dialogue between your government and Amnesty International would be useful, but I am not part of Amnesty International, and my interest is in obtaining information about Bahrain at first hand. If I may remind you, I was invited to visit Bahrain by your government a year ago, and was actually due to go there at the beginning of November 1994, when the visit was postponed at the last minute. This was because the authorities were busy with the preparations for the GCC meeting, and it was suggested that the meeting be rearranged for early in the new year. I proposed some dates in January, but these also were not found to be convenient at your end. Nor was it found possible to fix a date after Ramadan.

Have your government withdrawn their invitation or could we now attempt to resuscitate the arrangements? I have a number of overseas visits in the course of preparation and it would be useful to know whether Bahrain is definitely off. If I may remind you, I was going there at my own expense, but would very much like to meet leading members of the government, as well as academics, lawyers, clerics and ordinary citizens.

Thank you for sending me the booklet. As you are well aware, I unreservedly condemn violence, and I believe that political changes can only be effected in Bahrain by peaceful means. I also believe that governments have a duty to pay attention to widely expressed popular opinions, and that if they fail to do so, they must take responsibility for the consequences. But I am glad to note that your government have decided to listen, and I hope they will accede to reasonable demands which are supported by the majority of the Bahraini people, even if they have not had the opportunity yet of expressing themselves through the ballot box.

*Yours sincerely,
Lord Avebury*

Mr Adel Sater,
Chargé d'Affaires ai,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Your Ref: P9512095

2 October 1995

The Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

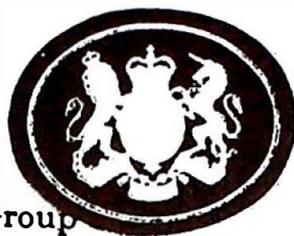
Thank you for your letter of 12 September about Bahrain.

We have always hoped for, and advocated, peaceful reconciliation between the Bahraini authorities and the Bahraini community. Recent events, including the release of Shaikh Al Jamri, are clear and welcome indications of the efforts being made on all sides to reach this goal. We shall, of course, continue to encourage this process in whatever we consider to be the most effective way.

Yours truly,

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9503104

House of Lords

October 3, 1995

Dear Lynda

You may remember that I have written to you several times (most recently on August 17 and 31), about the situation of Professor Munira Fakhro, who was threatened with dismissal from her post at the University of Bahrain because she signed a petition, together with 300 other women intellectuals, asking for the restoration of democracy and an end to the use of violence against the opposition. Nicholas Bonsor wrote to me on August 30, in your absence abroad, saying that inquiries were being made through our Embassy in Manama about Dr Fakhro's circumstances, and he was going to write again when he had some information.

In the meanwhile, as we feared, Dr Fakhro received the attached letter dated September 30 from the President of the University, suspending her from her duties. He says:

Emphasising that you had been told by the Head of the Faculty to cease working at the General Studies Section of the Faculty of Literature, I am sorry to inform you that it has been decided to stop your work at the University of Bahrain from October 1, 1995, until the issue is decided.

**(Signed) Dr Mohammed bin Jassim Al Ghatam,
President of the University.**

The 'issue' mentioned here is Dr Fakhro's refusal to withdraw her name from the petition, the text of which you already have, but I enclose a copy for ease of reference.

I was hopeful that with the release of the political prisoners, the 'dialogue' which Douglas Hogg told me you were encouraging, might be about to start. The victimisation of Dr Fakhro, and of the two other women dismissed from their posts in the public sector for refusing to withdraw their names from this perfectly reasonable petition, does not augur well for the freedom of expression, without which there can be no genuine dialogue. Rather than contenting yourself with making inquiries through our Embassy, will you please instruct them to make known our concern at these dismissals, and ask the authorities to see that the three women are reinstated. Without this sign of tolerance, I am afraid that the restraint shown by the people in recent weeks is unlikely to last.

*Tommy
E.*

The Rt Hon the Baroness Chalker of Wallasey,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9502101

House of Lords

October 11, 1995

Dear Mr Sater

In your letter of September 21 you said that the Government of Bahrain believe that meaningful dialogue about human rights can only be conducted outside the framework of other political questions, if I may be allowed to paraphrase. The way we look at it, as you must have realised after the many exchanges we have had with you and your predecessors, is that human rights are inseparable from the political context. In particular, unless there are representative institutions, freedom of speech and of assembly, the people will be unable to secure for themselves all the other human rights supposedly conferred on all peoples by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

I make these remarks by way of preface to our request that you will convey to H H the Amir the enclosed submission from persons resident in the United Kingdom, including a number of Members of both Houses of Parliament. I think that most people here in the UK would agree that Article 21 of the Universal Declaration is the foundation of liberty, and we very much hope that, in this fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the principle of democracy may commend itself to rulers who up to now had not considered elections as a means of testing the will of their people.

We very much hope that the release of the political prisoners, a welcome confidence-building measure, will be followed by discussions with representatives of the democracy movement in Bahrain, and that in particular, the matters raised in this submission will be on the agenda.

I enclose a second copy of the submission, and would be grateful if this could be transmitted to H E the Foreign Minister of Bahrain.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Avebury

Mr Adel Sater,
Chargé d'Affaires ai,
Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P952110e

House of Lords
email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
compuserve 100275,1565

October 21, 1995

Dear Jeremy

I haven't troubled you with the problems of Bahrain for some while, but this is not because any political progress has been made there since the unofficial deal between government and opposition resulted in the liberation of some of the political detainees. In fact, contrary to the undertakings understood to have been given by the government, some 500 people are still in prison. The detainees started a hunger strike on October 8 and we believe this is still continuing.

At several schools there are daily protests. These include Al-Jaberyah, Nuaim, Ahmad Al-Omran and other schools in Jedhafs and Bilad-al-Qadeem. The students in other schools have also been refusing to chant the "Amiri" anthem in protest against the security forces encircling their schools and subjecting the students to degrading searches on exit and entry.

Freedom of expression is still being severely restricted. On October 16, a leading women activist, Dr Ibtehal Al-Aali, was prevented from delivering a talk at Awal Women Society. The seminar was organised to debate current affairs in the light of the dismissal of leading pro-democracy activists, such as Dr Munira Fakhroo (Bahrain University), Ms Aziza Al-Bassam (Bahrain Radio) and Ms Husna Al-Khumeiri (Ministry of Education). The women were dismissed when they refused to withdraw their names from a moderately worded petition.

On October 14, three Bahraini citizens were forcibly exiled upon their return home: Abdulla Abdul Jabbar Al-Asfoor, Seyid Mahmood Mostafa Al-Ghoreifi and Ahmad Amrallah Fathalla who had been held at the detention centre of Bahrain-Saudi Causeway for 26 hours without food or water. They were then forced to travel back to Saudi Arabia.

Political trials are continuing and these are creating unrest. In one case two people, Abdul Nabi Ahmad Al-Turaifi, 20 years old from Bani Jamra and Seyed Baqir Mohammed Isa Hashim, 21 years old from Mahooz, have been accused of belonging to an 'underground organisation'. These people were arrested prior to the uprising of last December.

A woman from the ruling family, Shaikha Mohammed Al-Khalifa has been giving evidence in court against a 14 year-old boy from Sanabis, Amin Salman Ali Al-Qaffas, whom she accuses of 'participation in protests'. Amin was arrested from his parents' home on 28 June and is reported to have been subjected to severe forms of torture to force confessions.

You did say you were obtaining the observations of our Embassy on the matters raised in my previous letters. If I may say so, they seem to be taking rather a long while to comment, or is the delay at your end?

*Yours sincerely
LH*

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

24 October 1995

Dear Eric

Thank you for your letter of 3 October about Dr Munira Fakhro.

The Ambassador has registered our concerns about the suspension of Dr Fakhro from the University with the Interior Minister. We are following Dr Fakhro's case closely and noted that her visit to the UN Conference on Women held in Beijing recently was fully reported in the Bahraini press. We will consider making further representations to the Bahraini authorities if we judge they would be useful.

Yours ever

Lynda

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9524104

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
compuserve 100275,1565

House of Lords

October 24, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letter of October 21 about the human rights situation in Bahrain, we have learned that on October 23, the pro-democracy leaders started a hunger strike, following the failure of the meeting the previous day at the Ministry of the Interior to resolve the main issue and the government's refusal to honour its earlier promises.

On October 20, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, the pro-democracy leader recently released from jail, declared that he and other leaders of the uprising would go on hunger strike starting Monday October 23. The following announcement was made by Sheikh Al-Jamri before tens of thousands of people who attended the Friday prayer at Al-Sadik Mosque in Duraz (the same statement was also read in major mosques all around the country):

"O Great Peaceful People:

Our beloved country, Bahrain, went through a major crisis that was characterised by violence exchanged between the government and the people, resulting the shedding of sacred blood. Cautious calm returned to the country as a result of the initiative (to start dialogue with the government) which was supported by all sincere political forces, both inside and outside the country. The people have shown their absolutely peaceful nature and have confirmed their natural tendency for serious dialogue between the people and the government, which started inside the jail. To demonstrate their support for an enlightened future, the people staged happy celebrations and complete calm was about to be established, had not it for the government which failed to comply with the agreed timetable for releasing the detainees. The situation was further exacerbated by the resumption of political trial of 22 teenagers, who had been released earlier. This has created a sweeping wave of dissatisfaction amongst the public and in the schools. Political detainees started a hunger strike protesting against their continued detention, which created unease amongst their families. All people have come to understand the action of the government as a political manoeuvre to bypass the aim of the dialogue initiative and to hinder any progress towards the submission of political demands. Popular political forces, inside and outside, reacted by radicalising their positions. The group of the initiative has reflected all this to officials at the Ministry of the Interior and requested them to take decisive actions concerning the release of all political detainees and the stopping of political trials as has been agreed earlier, to prevent further deterioration in the situation. The security leadership in the Ministry of Interior promised to come back on Wednesday (October 18). No reply was received on Wednesday or Thursday.

All that was relayed was that a meeting will take place on Sunday October 22 without defining the nature of this meeting. The group of the initiative has been left with no choice but to respond to their religious, national and historical responsibilities that require them to stand on

a definitive and wise position to control matters, and be able to progress serious dialogue for the benefit of development and reforms of the country, so that the general public do not fragment into uncontrolled actions.

As a result, the group of the initiative, based on their legal-religious duties have decided to initiate picket and hunger strike starting from Monday October 23, 1995. Such action will continue until the satisfaction of the following demands which were agreed with the government before:

- 1. The release of all political detainees and the immediate stoppage of all political trials*
- 2. Allowing those people who were prevented from entering the country to return back home*
- 3. The official recognition of the dialogue that started between the opposition and the government.*
- 4. The putting in place of provisions for political dialogue to tackle the following:*
 - a) those convicted during the last months*
 - b) political exiles*
 - c) parliament*

Finally, we would like to direct the attention of the people to the following:

- 1. The absolute necessity for staying calm and not going out in marches or practising any violence under the theme of solidarity with the hunger strikers. We reaffirm that any such acts are against our will and they could back-fire on our noble peaceful and constitutional causes.*
- 2. The participation in solidarity with the hunger strikers is not open for every one, unless otherwise authorised.*
- 3. There will be an official spokesman for the hunger strikers, who will be available for the latest on the strike.*

Signed by (the group of the initiative): Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, Hassan Ali Mushaimaa, Abdul Wahab Hussain Ali, Ibrahim Al-Sayed Adnan Al-Alawi, Hassan Ali Sultan, Hussain Ali Al-Daihi.
Bahrain: Sheikh Al-Jamri on Hunger Strike

The hunger strike by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and six other pro-democracy leaders, started on the dawn of Monday October 23, at the home of Sheikh Al-Jamri in Bani Jamra, northwest of Bahrain. The spokesman and coordinators for the hunger strikers were interviewed by international news agencies while the house of Sheikh Al-Jamri was surrounded by tens of thousands of people.

Schools all over the country witnessed silent protests by thousands of students who put-on black-coloured shirts (as a sign of solidarity with the strikers) and walked-out of class-rooms. Scores of lorries packed with riot police surrounded the campuses of Bahrain University and schools all around the country.

Many women refused to prepare dinners for their families in solidarity and people of all ages declared their support in various forms. Tens of thousands of people have applied to join the hunger strike and await permission from the leaders of the opposition. Many senior opposition figures declared their support and could also join the protest at a certain phase.

The spokesman, Mr. Abdul Wahab Hussain stated that "the meeting that was supposed to have taken place on Sunday (22 October) with the Ministry of Interior did not take place because of the stalemate. The picketing and hunger strike will continue and will be subjected to continuous assessment and their ending will be announced as may be appropriate for furthering our noble cause. We are also studying the many offers and options from all sections of the society for participating in the strike, one way or the other. Our aims remain as were initially declared:

- (1) the release of all political detainees and the stopping of political trials;
- (2) allowing those banned from entering the country to return home;
- (3) the official recognition of the existence of dialogue;
- (4) putting in place provisions for releasing political prisoners, allowing the return of political exiles and restoring the parliament."

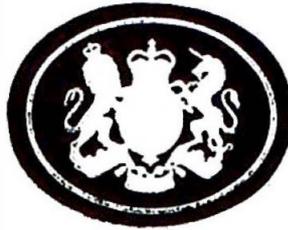
On the other hand, the State Security Court, rushed through arbitrary sentences against 14 teenagers, acquitting two of them while sentencing the other twelve to 18 months imprisonment and a fine of 300 dinars (\$600) each. These young people have already spent some ten months in jail.

These latest events give serious cause for concern that the impetus towards a peaceful solution of the constitutional problem has been lost, and Bahrain may be in for a period of further unrest, in spite of the efforts by the pro-democracy leaders to persuade their supporters not to even demonstrate in favour of the modest demands being made. Douglas Hogg did say, when I met him in the spring, that we were trying to encourage a dialogue between the government and opposition, and this process is more necessary than ever.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Auckley

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



P9531106

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

House of Lords

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
compuserve 100275,1565

October 31, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letters of October 21 and 24 about the situation in Bahrain, you may have heard that the seven leaders on hunger strike since last Monday October 23 announced that they will end the hunger strike on the evening of November 1.

They said they would clarify their position and next step in the struggle for restoring the constitution and parliament, both dissolved since 1975. The vigil by some 40,000 people continued today and a traffic jam stretched seven km along all the roads leading to Bani Jamra, the home village of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, where the hunger strike is taking place.

Mr Riyadh Ashor, from Sanabis, was arrested on October 29 after participating in the march in front of Sheikh Al-Jamri's home. Yesterday he was brought handcuffed to a group of security men, to his home, which they searched.

The State Security Court sentenced several people yesterday. Mr Mahdi Sahwan was sentenced to six months imprisonment and fined was 300 dinars (\$600). Sheikh Fadhel Hammad and four of his brothers were sentenced to six months imprisonment and fined 400 dinars (\$800). The person in-charge of the library in Zain al-abdin Mosque was sentenced to six months imprisonment and fined 300 dinars. These three have spent between eight months and one year in jail.

The security forces established a new headquarters for the riot police in Aali village, in what is seen as a new policy for deploying more security forces in the areas that witnessed pro-democracy marches.

These events have heightened the tension, and as I have tried to emphasise already, the situation in Bahrain is dangerous and unstable. People's expectations were raised by the supposed bargain between the government and the detained opposition leaders, and if there are no discussions on the proposals made by the opposition, I'm afraid there will be unrest on a much bigger scale than before. I can do no more than repeat my earnest plea, that you should use whatever influence you have with the government (ie the Al-Khalifa family), to persuade them to sit down and listen carefully to the opposition - not to stooges appointed by them to give the semblance of consultation.

Yours sincerely
JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P950511u

House of Lords
email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
compuserve 100275,1565

November 5, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letters of October 21, 24 and 31 about the deteriorating situation in Bahrain and the intransigence of the government in the face of requests by the opposition for the discussion of reforms, we learn that at a meeting held today, 6 security officers delivered an ultimatum to the seven opposition leaders who staged a hunger strike for ten days between October 23 and November 1. The meeting was held at the Isa Town Police Headquarters and was attended by senior security personnel including: Sheikh Abdul Aziz Atteyatalla Al-Khalifa (Head of the Investigation Committee that detained 5,000 people and killed two under torture since last December), Ahmad Abdul Rahman Bu-Allay, deputy of the notorious British head of security, Ian Henderson for administrative affairs, Abdulla Musallam, as well as three other officers.

The seven opposition leaders went to the headquarters accompanied by their lawyers, but the security officers made the lawyers wait outside. Sheikh Abdul Aziz Atteyatalla Al-Khalifa said that "the aim of the meeting is to pass a warning to you that you must not lead prayers in mosques outside your residential areas, that you must not contact any opposition group or news organisation outside or inside the country, that you must not issue any statement, that you must not gather anywhere without prior permission, that the security forces will use all their authority to crack down on any mass gathering".

The seven opposition leaders, headed by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, replied that "this is an unacceptable attitude and a very negative response to our contributions in calming down the situation. We had an agreement with the Interior Ministry, and this was violated by the government. We also requested the lawyers to stay out of this meeting because you requested it. We demand that you give us all these warnings in writing. We do not consider these threats to be the official position of the political leadership".

Today also the Prime Minister and Crown Prince were reported to have made hard line statements by local media. The Prime Minister said that "security and stability are top priorities", while the Crown Prince talked about the preparedness for the crackdown by praising the "skills of the special unit". No member of the government talked about the necessity to solve the problems of the state by negotiation and compromise, and the atmosphere is becoming increasingly tense as it appears that the government are determined to suppress freedom of expression and of assembly.

As I have said on more than one occasion, the Amir is more likely to listen to us than to any other power because of the close historical relationship between our two countries. This places a special responsibility on us to do everything we can to prevent a recurrence of the violent confrontations between the authorities and the people which started last December and continued until the government indicated that they wanted to reach agreement on the matters under dispute with the opposition. If they are now determined not to offer any concessions, or even to discuss the reforms which the opposition have proposed, then I very much fear that we shall see more violence. I am also afraid that, by rejecting the moderate demands of the people in their petition, the authorities are encouraging those who want more radical changes. The Al-Khalifas should learn the lesson of the Bourbons and the Romanoffs of history, if they want to keep their throne - and perhaps their heads as well.

Yours sincerely
Eric

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

9 November 1995

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London
SW1A OPW

From The Minister of State

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 31 October about Bahrain, which I have sent to our Embassy for their comments.

I understand your concerns about Bahrain and have noted your views. Our stance on the importance of reconciliation and dialogue is well known to the Bahraini authorities. We will continue to express our support for a peaceful solution at every appropriate opportunity.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9510111

House of Lords
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Compuserve 100275,1565

November 10, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letters of October 21, 24 and 31 and November 5 about the situation in Bahrain, on November 6 the local press published an announcement by the Interior Ministry amounting to a declaration of a state of emergency. The Ministry decreed that any gathering of more than five people would be dispersed and, if necessary, fire arms would be used. Lorries packed with riot police were deployed in all areas where previous gatherings took place.

The opposition leaders who received an ultimatum on November 5 defied these measures and declared them illegal. The many tens of thousands of people who participated in the gatherings in the past few days have complied with the request of their leaders to stay calm and avoided street clashes. At the same time, it was made clear that neither the opposition leaders nor their followers considered the government's action as legal or moral and hence "these measures will be resisted by all means".

The government of Bahrain is losing a golden opportunity to settle the crisis. Instead of adopting a rational approach, the ruling Al-Khalifa family wrongly decided to resort to violence once more against the peaceful opposition movement.

The military officer installed as president of Bahrain University issued an instruction on November 6 notifying the university guards that from now onwards the Interior Ministry will be fully in-charge of the university security.

I have also drawn your attention on several occasions to the victimisation of three women who signed an innocuous petition and refused to withdraw their names when threatened, and I have had no indication of your willingness to raise this matter with the régime. Now, the US Working Group on International Women's Human Rights (a bi-partisan group comprising 11 Senators and 35 Representatives) sent a letter to the Amir of Bahrain protesting about human rights violations in the country. The letter says:

"We are writing to express our deep concern regarding the suspension of Dr. Munira Ahmad Fakhro from her teaching position at the University of Bahrain. Dr. Munira Fakhro is a well-regarded academic and author of numerous works on issues related to the cause of women and democratic change in Bahrain. Her suspension from her university position resulted from her refusal to withdraw support for a petition calling for greater degree of democracy and women's participation in the political process in Bahrain. In April 1995, Dr. Munira

Fakhro along with over 300 Bahraini women signed a petition (the Bahraini Women's Petition) submitted to Your Highness calling for the restoration of the constitution and calling on security forces to observe human rights during public demonstrations which Bahrain has experienced since last December”.

“The petition also called on the government of Bahrain to permit women to participate in political decision-making. Subsequently, the government pressured signers of the petition to withdraw their support. At least two women, Aziza Hamad Al-Bassam, a radio producer at Radio Bahrain, and Hessa al-Khumeiri, head of adult education at the Ministry of Education, refused to sign statements renouncing their work on human rights and democracy, and subsequently were dismissed from their jobs ... The suspension of Dr. Munira Fakhro and the dismissal of her colleagues from their jobs due to their peaceful expression of opinion violated Article 19 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, which is part of customary international law binding on all nations”.

The Congressional protest letter was preceded by similar letters of protests from leading American institutions such as the Middle East Studies of North America, Committee for International Academic Freedom and Human Rights Watch.

In the past few days, military forces have been deployed around strategic locations in the country as part of the latest unwise moves by the government. A campaign of rumours and distortion of facts has accompanied these measures. Hassan Al-Laquees of the London-based Saudi-financed Al-Hayat newspaper assigned statements to Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri that he never made in the issue of November 8. On November 9, Al-Laquees claimed that six opposition leaders (including Sheikh Al-Jamri) begged for a pardon from the Amir before their release last August and September. All the opposition leaders have declared their positions clearly, rebutting these inaccuracies. The reporter published extracts from a letter sent by opposition leaders to the government. Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain said "we can never apologize because we did not commit any mistake in calling for the rights of the people". All other leaders have reiterated the demands of the people, most important of which is the reinstatement of the constitution and parliament. They said they would pursue these goals in every peaceful way.

Today, the Bahrain newspapers published the full text of the letter from Sheikh Al-Jamri and other opposition leaders, which they wrote last April at the beginning of a long process of negotiation with the government which culminated in the release of the political prisoners in September. But now, Mohammed Al Mutawwa, the new Information Minister, is denying that there was any dialogue or agreement. He says the Amir decided to release the prisoners in response to their appeals, as a pure act of clemency. This is not true, and I can tell you that when I chaired a press conference on Bahrain on August 24, Dr Mansoor Al-Jamri outlined the details of the negotiations. No doubt the opposition will be considering the publication of a fuller account of those events, so that the letter can be seen in a proper context.

In the meanwhile, I must again emphasise my concern at the way things are moving in Bahrain. It is a tragedy that the régime has backed away from any

negotiations on the demands made by the opposition, reneging on the understandings which had been reached, and breaking faith with the people, whose restraint in the face of enormous provocation has been quite admirable. I have appealed to you in every letter I have written over the last few weeks to exercise your influence in favour of peace and a political settlement of the disagreements between the Ruler and the people, based on the principles we are supposed to uphold. Perhaps I may remind you of some wise words used by the former Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, speaking to a conference organised by the Overseas Development Institute in London on June 6, 1990:

Aid must go where it can clearly do good. Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles should be encouraged. Those who persist with repressive policies, with corrupt management or with wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be better used elsewhere.

These remarks apply parri passu to our dealings with other countries, which may not need our aid, but with which Britain has close political relations.

Yours sincerely



The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9513112

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House of Lords

November 13, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Thank you for your letter of November 9 about Bahrain, which you are referring to our Embassy in Manama for their comments.

You have told me this several times, and I would very much like to know (a) whether our Embassy consider the facts I present are accurate, and (b) whether they believe that the dialogue you urge on the Bahraini authorities should be held with the recognised leaders of the opposition. As you know, there is already a dialogue with the hand-picked shura, and there have been meetings with government-selected 'representatives' of the Sunni and Shi'a communities. What I would be very keen to know is whether you urge dialogue with Sheikh Al-Jamri and his colleagues.

If, in your dealings with the Bahrain authorities, you simply repeat the mantra 'dialogue' without mentioning who should participate, and what subjects should be discussed, I do not think you are making much of a contribution to the peace and stability of the State.

Yours sincerely

JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
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From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

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House of Lords

19

November 8, 1995

Dear Tony

Further to my letters in which I have tried to keep you informed of developments in Bahrain and to point out the dangers arising from the Amir's refusal to engage in discussions with the opposition, I write to inform you of the remarks made by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri on Friday November 17 in Al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, north-west of Bahrain. He said:

"Alongside the changes taking place in the region, we find ourselves committed to clarifying several issues to remove any misunderstanding. Some ill-intentioned newspapers attempted to mix issues in a desperate trick to damage the reputation of the people's movement that is seeking political reforms and calling for legitimate demands. These newspapers can never win because:

Firstly, the trend of the people is indigenous and has nothing to do with external involvement. The trend is a result of the political situation and the accumulative problems resulting from it. The trend seeks public interests and aspires for effective involvement in a sound decision making process.

Secondly, The trend is a grass-root one and is open to all. It is not a partisan agenda. All sincere activists working for the good of the nation, whether Sunnis or Shia, Islamists or patriots, are involved without any significance to tribalism or sectarianism. The concerns and wishes of all tendencies are the same and all are united in their aims and means as have been stated in the Petitions of 1992 and 1994.

Thirdly, the trend adopts peaceful means and rejects resorting to violence, extremism or terrorism. All activities are aimed at achieving the just demands by serious and fruitful dialogue. The people responded positively and established calm since the first day of our initiative (mid-August). They will continue to preserve stability because their trend is peaceful and seeks reform. The government can assist the people by reviewing and achieving these demands.

Fourth, the aims of this trend are moderate and objective. The trend does not aim to topple the regime or destabilize it. Indeed, it aims for security and stability and aims at the re-activation of the constitution, restoration of the parliament, the release of all political prisoners and return of exiles. The trend of the people is not a naive one. The people understand and are aware that some of the aims can be achieved instantly and some require time for preparing necessary provisions.

The question raised is: Do these aims represent extremism or terrorism?

The answer must be No. This is the real picture of the nation's trend.

Why don't we see and positive response from the respected government? Is this because of the false coverage of some ill-intentioned newspapers? Why is the government creating more barriers with the people? We have stated once and again that we are prepared for dialogue and we demanded it. Up until when will the doors remain shut? Up until when will the

deployment of riot police continue? Why do these police units stop a bus of students and beat them?

We witness sound political moves in the countries of the region aimed at development and stability. In one country we witnessed the removal of state-control on media and a promise for local council elections; in another we witnessed the abolition of state security law, and in a third country an amnesty for all political prisoners and exiles was declared. These types of actions are bound to enrich the trust between peoples and governments, and these actions consolidate the sincere efforts aimed at developing the countries. We have a hope that the Amir would issue an amnesty for all prisoners without distinction, allow exiles to return home, officially open the door of dialogue and hence reach the stage for achieving political demands, the most important of which is the parliament”.

The tens of thousands of people who attended the gathering in Duraz shouted slogans at the end of the speech confirming their peaceful and legitimate demands. Sheikh Al-Jamri's statement was also read in other major mosques in the country.

In spite of the total commitment to non-violence expressed by the opposition, and the absence of any attacks on public buildings or police, the security forces have engaged in provocative measures. For example on November 12, a bus taking students to schools was stopped by the riot police near Qadam area. The students were attacked and beaten with electronic batons by the security forces. Police officers have been going to a number of private houses after midnight and disturbing the residents. On several occasions, they banged on the front doors of opposition activists and damaged them. Eight students from Karzakan village were arrested on November 13 and remain in detention.

As far as we can ascertain, there has been no response to the demands by opposition leaders, which are obviously supported by a large body of public opinion. As I have said before, if the Ruler continues to ignore the reasonable demands of responsible opposition leaders, the danger is that more radical forces will emerge, and the stability of Bahrain will be compromised. I know that the Amir will listen to us, as his oldest friends, and I do beg you again to advise him, not just to engage in dialogue generally, but to invite the five main opposition leaders to discuss their platform with him: the restoration of the constitution and Parliament; the return of the exiles; an amnesty for political prisoners, and the removal of restrictions on the freedom of expression and of assembly.

Yours sincerely
Eric

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

27 November 1995

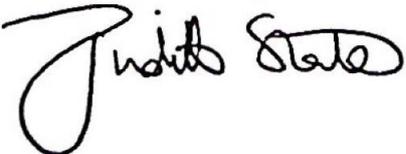
Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Avebury,

Thank you for your letters of 5 and 10 November to Jeremy Hanley about Bahrain.

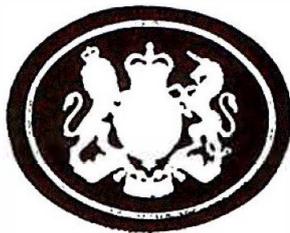
The Minister is overseas at present and has asked me to reply in his absence to avoid delay. Please let me know if you would prefer a reply from the Minister on his return.

We have noted your comments about the current situation, which we continue to monitor closely. The Ambassador took the opportunity of a recent meeting with the Foreign Minister to reiterate our support for a peaceful dialogue with the community. We continue to take every appropriate opportunity to encourage positive steps to achieve reconciliation.

Yours sincerely,


Judith Slater
Private Secretary to
The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



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House of Lords

November 30, 1995

Dear Ms Slater

Thank you for your letter of November 27, replying to the ones I wrote to the Minister about the situation in Bahrain. I gather the Minister has been in the Gulf, though not in Bahrain itself, and he must have gained some new insights into the current position, which it would be interesting to hear. Our correspondence has been rather one-sided, as I am always giving the Minister my own impressions, but I have no idea of his.

On November 27, the Supreme Court of Appeal approved the death sentence passed on Isa Ahmad Hassan Qambar (27). The defence argued that the verdicts passed on the group accused of causing the death of Sergeant Saidi were out of proportion, considering that in that period about a dozen citizens were killed by security forces. They said that the killing was not premeditated and that occurred in the context of clashes with security forces firing live ammunition against crowds of people.

The court also confirmed the life sentence against the second defendant, Mohammad Ali Hassan Khatam (20). The rest of the group were sentenced as follows:

Mansoor Salah Makki (25), five years (reduced from life), Younis Salah Mosa Al-Sanini (22) five years (reduced from 10 years), Eshaq Hassan Yousif Marhoon (20) acquitted (was 10 years), Hussain Salah Mosa Al-Sanini (20) acquitted (was 5 years), Ahmad Mosa Al-Sanini (27) 5 years (no change), Hamza Majid Habib Al-Sheikh (24) five years (no change), Hussain Mohammed Abdul Wahab Hassan (22) acquitted (was five years). A tenth person was also acquitted.

The security forces attacked groups of students of the University of Bahrain (Isa Town), who had gathered after hearing the news. An alert declared some time before was intensified. Many people who attended the major mosques to declare their solidarity with the group reported skirmishes.

On November 27, schoolchildren at the Sheikh Abdullah Secondary School in Isa Town demonstrated against the verdicts and called for the prisoners' release. The police attacked and beat them, arresting 10 pupils who are reported to be still in custody at the time of writing.

Yesterday, November 29, pupils demonstrated at the same school, and also at the Al-Aali Intermediate School and the Al-Jabiriya Secondary School, near the US Embassy. In each case the security forces drove onto the school premises and beat the children. Both on Monday and again yesterday, police entered schools and searched textbooks, arresting any pupils whose books were found to have the Amir's picture torn out of them.

It is reported that some children are detained at the Isa Town interrogation centre, and others at the Nabih Saleh interrogation centre. At the latter place, parents or guardians were summoned and asked to sign statements undertaking that their children would not take part in demonstrations.

As I have predicted, in the absence of any movement towards dialogue with the opposition, the people will find ways of expressing their feelings, and this may lead to disorder and violence, particularly as the security forces are evidently determined to crush any sign of popular discontent. I had urged the Minister on a number of occasions to use his influence with the Amir to initiate a dialogue, as his predecessor had said he was doing. This is really the 11th hour, but there is still a chance that a peaceful settlement of the opposition's demands could be reached, if only they could be discussed.

Yours sincerely,
Eric Hanley

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9513121

House of Lords

December 13, 1995

Dear Jeremy

I have been in hospital having a quadruple bypass operation, so I may have missed replies from you to previous letters on Bahrain. However, I am now gradually picking up the threads, and I hope you will also have learned of the letter from 96 top people, asking the Amir to restore democracy to Bahrain. Amongst the signatories were eight members of parliament, the head of the Kuwaiti Human Rights Society, politicians, academics, lawyers, businessmen and pro-democracy activists. The letter reads as follows:

"HH Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Amir of Bahrain, Greetings.

It is about one year since the people of Bahrain started their uprising demanding their legitimate and constitutional rights, while the government fails to abide by its promises. There are many Bahrainis in the jails and detentions, there are hundreds of exiles all over the world, and there are many demands, not yet fulfilled, the most important of which are the restoration of constitutional legitimacy and freedom of the people to participate in the political arena through the National Assembly in accordance with the Constitution of the State of Bahrain.

We are keen for the stability of the situation in the Gulf region, particularly in Bahrain, and we appeal to you to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Bahrain by releasing the political prisoners, allowing exiles to return home, and by calling for free legislative election for a new National assembly. In our world of today, violent clashes and encounters are not compatible with respect of human rights and the principles of modern civil societies.

Our appeal emanate from our concern for the stability of the State of Bahrain which would be reflected positively on the future of the country and the region.

Signed by A Group of Kuwaiti Citizens"

I am sure you will agree that the terms of this letter show yet again that, to put it at its lowest, there is a substantial body of opinion in Bahrain in favour of democratic reforms, and that the democrats have not been deterred by the arrests, the exiles, the torture and murder of activists over the 12 months that have elapsed since the troubles began.

It was not wise for the authorities to deploy substantial military forces on UN Human Rights Day, December 10, following the departure of the prime minister the previous day on his annual absence from Bahrain. Sheikh Khlifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, brother of the Amir of Bahrain, usually leaves Bahrain during the celebration of the National Day, due on December 16. In his absence, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, son of the Amir, takes over as acting prime minister in addition to being Heir Apparent and chief of Bahrain Defence Force.

Sheikh Hamad has a reputation for using military force to combat the pro-democracy movement. When, last June, the ministry of education came under his influence, he appointed a military officer as a minister and placed the University of Bahrain under another military officer.

Since December 10, the security forces have taken positions inside schools and around university campuses. In the past week 600 teenagers were beaten-up inside their schools and dismissed. Forty others were taken into custody.

Military forces are now in place all over the country and are located at entrances and exits of all strategic areas including the causeway linking Bahrain to Saudi Arabia. Many of these soldiers do not speak Arabic and their presence is intimidating.

So you see, the authorities appear to have turned their back on dialogue, and are determined to provoke confrontation with the people. The use of violence to counter peaceful democratic demands is surely repugnant to every right-thinking observer, and if we remain totally silent and passive observers, we become accomplices to the crimes of the régime. Throughout the whole of my correspondence with you and your predecessor Douglas Hogg, I have failed to extract even the mildest deprecation of the detentions, the tortures and the murders, or any indication that we sympathise with a people struggling to achieve the sort of rights we gained in our Revolution against the Stuarts 350 years ago. Ministers were quite prepared to denounce Communist dictators, and quite rightly so; they were forthright about bad government in Africa, as for example when Douglas Hurd MP, speaking to a conference organised by the Overseas Development Institute in London on June 6, 1990, said:

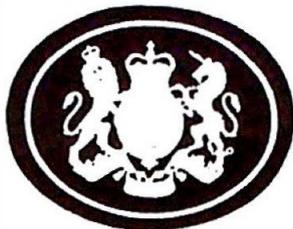
Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles should be encouraged. Those who persist with repressive policies, with corrupt management or with wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be better used elsewhere.

What is it that makes the states of the Gulf so different from those in any other region of the world, that they are beyond all public criticism? I have my answers to the question, but I would prefer to have your own comments on the multiple human rights standards we adopt.

Yours sincerely,

Emi

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
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From Lord Avebury
Chairman
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House of Lords

December 22, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letter of December 13 about recent developments in Bahrain, I thought you would like to know of the statement made by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri today in Al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, north-west of Bahrain, before a congregation of tens of thousands of people. He said:

“A nation with clear objectives and just demands has the capability to withstand shock waves. Yes, our nation entered into an experience that resulted in the falling of martyrs, the jailing of youth (men and women), the exiling of people and the fleeing of others, and yet our demands have not been obtained. We must not succumb to despair, we must not lose hope and we must not retract. Do not say that there is no use in continuing on this course with the government that does not listen to anything but violence”.

“Violence is not our means. We should not also say that we sacrificed blood while our sons in jails or in exile and that we should retract. Turning back is not in our dictionary”.

“The people who raised the just demands and volunteered their youth for achieving these objectives, such people can not be defeated, and their demands will certainly be achieved. It is a matter of time. Steadfastness and patience are pre-requisite factors for attaining the objectives. Our belief in the correctness of our approach gives us the strength of will and provides us with hope. We do not bear any ill-feeling against anyone and we are not the enemies of the government, despite the shedding (by the government) of blood, despite imprisonment and despite exiling of our people. We will never succumb or turn-back until we achieve our targets. We will remain sincere to our martyrs, to our jailed youth and to our forcible-exiles. Our objectives will remain to be the release of all political prisoners, the return of exiles, the activation of the constitution and the restoration of parliament”.

“There are students who have been dismissed and not yet returned to their classes while some of them remain in detention. The ministry of education doesn't seem to care. Why is all this? Aren't these students your children? Why do you ignore their case? I understand that parents are circulating a petition with this regard to be submitted to the minister of education. I support this and any other peaceful action. Educational establishments have problems and these should not be referred to security authorities. I suggest the formation of a committee of parents to follow-up on this issue”.

“As for freedom of expression, I refer to Article 23 of the constitution which states “Freedom of expression and research is guaranteed. Every person is free to express his/her views and is free to publish such views in accordance with the law”. We see the clear violation of this constitutional article against persons expressing their views on certain political issues. In the past few days, both Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan (lawyer) and Mr. Hafedh Al-Sheikh (journalist) were made to pay 500 dinars (\$1500) each, after expressing their views. Similarly, Sheikh Hassan Sultan was detained and made to pay 500 dinars, pending trial, allegedly for his sermon last Friday. Before these people and after them many others were detained and made to pay 500 dinars for expressing their views. Where are we heading to in this country? Does this mean that any person with a different point of view should prepare 500 dinars before expressing his/her views?”

“We expected something special on the National Day. Something special to solve the problems related to freedoms, related to freeing of prisoners, related to the return of exiles. Some releases took place while detentions were continuing. Every morning we wake-up to hear that this person and that person have been detained. Do these people who declared their peaceful approach deserve such treatment?”

Last Friday, the first anniversary of the reform movement, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri also delivered a notable Friday sermon at Al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, north-west of Bahrain. Again, a massive crowd of tens of thousands of people gathered to hear this speech on the eve of the National Day of December 16. Sheikh Al-Jamri said:

“God Almighty said in Quran, Sura 51, Verse 55: But remind them, for reminding benefits the believers. Every matter that influences the nation is a subject for reminding ourselves so that we seek the right path. The aims of the reminder should be concerned with the following”:

“Reminding for documenting history: The nation has roles to play and through its history many events take place. These might be war or peace, victory or defeat, sweet or bitter, and all must be documented for a nation that does not remember its history may neither have a past nor a future”.

“Reminding for reform: The reminder must also aim to solve problems and plan for the future. Mistakes of the past should not be repeated. Previous viewpoints of the ruler and the ruled ought to be studied and re-assessed”.

“Those whose blood was shed did not die in vain. They suffered because they raised legitimate demands. Those men and women who went to jail and those who were forcibly-exiled suffered because they raised just demands. These demands are the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles and restoration of the National assembly. These are the demands and the people want to achieve them through dialogue”.

“These demands are compatible with those demands raised by the seven judges who recently submitted a letter to His Excellency the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs demanding the formation of supreme judicial council and demanding the independence of the judiciary. All these voices are demanding political reforms”.

“The people’s movement is spontaneous and raises legitimate and rational demands. The people have chosen the means of dialogue for achieving their aims, despite the fact that their blood was shed (by security forces) and despite the many who were detained and forcibly-exiled. For all these factors, it is no surprise that such a movement gained the support of many in the outside world”.

“For example:

- In the US, some congressmen wrote letters (to the Government) requesting the restoration of the constitution and the fulfillment of popular demands.
- In Britain, parliamentarians submitted petitions supporting our aims and demands.
- In our sisterly country Kuwait, 96 personalities comprising parliamentarians, businessmen, professional, felt that their duties and concern for security of the country and the region necessitated the submission of a petition to HH the Amir calling on him to release political prisoners, to allow exiles to return home and to restore parliamentary life”.

“O Great Peaceful People: let us always remember those who stood with us and let us thank them, because so they deserve”.

“Reminding for action: remembering these events ought to result in a better understanding and ought to provide us with lessons for steadfastness, truthfulness, hope for success, insistence, continuation and preparedness to sacrifice for the right path. The aim however is not to agitate for anarchy but for solving the problems and preventing their re-occurrence”.

“For the aims stated above, may I remind of the following events on the (first) anniversary of the popular reform movement”:

“First: The sacred blood that was shed last year is the greatest proof of the depth of the crisis in the country. We ought to commemorate the martyrdom of those whose blood was shed so that such thing may not to re-occur. It is not in the interest of the nation, both the ruler and the ruled, for the crisis to return”.

“Second: We must remember the young and the old, the men and women who were packed in miserable jails without crime, and yes, we must remember those many hundreds who are still suffering in these inhuman conditions. They suffer torturing conditions in cells that do not protect them from winter or summer. They are tortured if they keep quit and they are tortured if they go on hunger strike demanding the improvement of their conditions. Above all these things, there is someone sentenced to death. Would it be wise to leave this painful episode without a solution”.

“Third: Let us remember those who were forcibly deported when the crisis peaked. Let us remember Sheikh Ali Salman, Sheikh Hamza Al-Deiri, Seyyed Haider Al-Setri, Sheikh Adel Al-Shu’ala and the others who were forcibly-exiled under the pretext of agitating the situation. Many others have fled the country fearing for their safety and have since been separated from their parents, wives and children. Hundreds are experiencing the painful exile conditions and are waiting the day they return home with dignity. Until when will they remain in exile?”

“Fourth: Let us remember those who were dismissed from their positions not because they failed their functional duties but because they raised the popular demands and refused to back down. Let’s remember. Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood, Dr. Monira Fakhro, Saeed Al-Asbool, Hussa Al-Khumeiri, Aziza Al-Bassam and others. These people deserve respect not dismissal”

“Fifth: Let’s remember the students who were expelled from their class rooms”.

“This crisis must no be forgotten. There is no justification for the riot police to storm schools, beat students and detain them. There is no justification for expelling the large number of students. Any problem, major or minor, can be controlled and solved without the intervention of police force”.

“Let us remember, the martyrs, the prisoners, the exiled and the dismissed, so that the crisis might be solved. Matters can not be solved by force. The use of force (by government) will only exacerbate the situation and enflame events. If there is a solution then we need to control nerves and utilize logic rather than muscles”.

“The peaceful and dialogue-based approach is the means by which security of the country can be achieved. There is no wise person who believes that calm and stability come as a result of proactive measures and detentions. There is no wise person who sees the use of force is the way to solve the problems of the country and end its crisis”.

Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri announced that he was writing an open letter to H H the Amir.

Motivated by his religious and national duties, and abiding by the principles of reminding the nation for its benefit, and on the occasion of the National Day, he requested the Amir to look into the nation’s demands that had been brought to his attention. These were the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles and restoration of the National Assembly. By doing so, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri said, the Amir would assist the nation to reach its aims and would fulfill the aspiration of the people.

In another worrying development, Mr Ahmad Al-Shamlan, one of Bahrain’s most distinguished lawyers and writers, was summoned to the intelligence department in Manama on December 19. With him was Mr Hafedh Al-Sheikh, a well-known Bahraini journalist. Both had participated alongside many other professionals and thinkers from the Gulf countries in a live programme broadcast by Radio Qatar on December 7. The phone-in programme debated the problems faced by GCC countries and answered several questions about Bahrain’s pro-democracy movement.

Mr Al-Shamlan was subjected to intimidating treatment on December 19, starting at 08.00 and continuing until 22.30. The harassment continued the following day, December 20, in front of an investigating judge. Many lawyers volunteered to defend Al-Shamlan and Al-Sheikh. These lawyers included Abdulla Hashim, Hassan Bedaiwi, Ahmad Al-Thekair, Hassan Radhi, and Ali Al-Ayyobi. The investigating judge charged Ahmad Al-Shamlan and Hafedh Al-Sheikh with “inciting hatred to the political system in Bahrain”, though it is impossible to see how anything said on the radio would justify that charge. Both Al-Shamlan and Al-Sheikh were released on bail of 500 dinar (approx. \$1500) each and both were prohibited from travelling outside the country.

This attack on freedom of expression was extended further on December 20 by the arrest of Sheikh Hassan Sultan, one of the five leaders who negotiated with the interior ministry the release of political prisoners in return for calming down the situation and starting a dialogue on restoration of parliament. Sheikh Sultan was arrested from his home village of Dar Kulaib (west of Bahrain) around 13.00 (11.00 GMT). His fate is not known yet.

On December 18, the intelligence department summoned a religious scholar, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Rayyash and he said that he had been threatened that he would suffer a car accident or an attack by a maniac. Al-Rayyash returned to his mosque and delivered a sermon detailing the threats made by the intelligence department and declared that if anything happens to him it would be the responsibility of the government.

Events in Bahrain were reviewed at a press conference in the House of Lords, chaired by Nic Rea and addressed by leading Bahraini opposition figures, on December 14. (I was unable to attend, having had a major operation on December 5 as you may recall).

Nic Rea said that dialogue between the government and opposition is the only way out of the crisis in Bahrain, and I hope you would agree with that. He said he had received a letter from the Bahraini Embassy in London requesting him not to chair the press conference of the opposition which the embassy accused as a “group of terrorists”. Lord Rea said that he had invited the embassy to attend the conference and argue their case, but no member of the embassy staff appeared.

Mr Ala’a Al-Yousuf, member of the Bahraini Freedom Movement (BFM) and an economist who worked for the International Monetary Fund in Washington DC said that “there are two sides to the problem. The first is the developing internal situation in the past twelve months, and the second is what will happen in the near future. The Amir delivers his annual speech at the National Day (16 December) and we do not expect the Amir to declare his

intentions for restoring the constitution and parliament. We also do not expect the Amir to announce a general amnesty to reconcile the situation”.

Dr Mansoor Al-Jamri, speaking for the BFM, said that “what happened in Bahrain is a unique phenomenon that brought together all tendencies and sections of Bahrain society on a unified approach and agenda. The recent move by seven senior judges who demanded the establishment of a supreme judicial council in accordance with constitution as well as the recent moves by the Bahrain labour movement demanding their constitutional rights to unionise are but examples of how broadly based the pro-democracy movement is. On the other hand, the recent open letter to the Amir from about a hundred distinguished Kuwaiti personalities calling on him to fulfil the aspirations of the Bahraini people by restoring the constitution and parliament is another dimension adding to the strength of the popular drive for democracy”.

Dr Majid Alawi, a strategic analyst by profession and member of the BFM, stated that “the opposition well understands the strategic importance of the Gulf region as a major supplier of oil, but today the market power is in the hands of the purchasers and the pro-democracy movement does not affect market forces adversely. The rulers of Bahrain thought that they could play with time and matters would settle-back to the old days. We will continue to press for political reforms and the opposition will achieve its goals by all legitimate and peaceful means”.

Bert Mapp, the ex-Bapco (Bahrain Petroleum Company) employee who wrote a book on Bahrain stated “of the documents published during the year, none is as finely detailed as the 50-page report by Amnesty International. If only one of those pages was true and the other 49 false, it would be enough to condemn the Bahrain authorities for gross abuse of human rights, in contravention of the United Nation principles to which Bahrain claims to subscribe”.

When you do reply to my letters about Bahrain, you generally say you are referring the matters I raise to our Embassy in Manama, and that is the last I hear. There is never any feedback about the Embassy’s views, and you seem to have no opinions of your own as far as I can ascertain. Is it your policy to ignore the demands for democratic and constitutional reform, and the restoration of human rights, in Bahrain, for fear of offending the Amir? Have you taken the view that the hereditary dictatorships of Bahrain and other Gulf states are the best form of government for the peoples concerned, and if so, why do you think those peoples should be excluded from the benefits of democratic government which you urge on the peoples of eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia and even parts of the Middle East? You are ready to engage in a very costly exercise to monitor the Palestinian elections in the new year, and I have no quarrel with that. But it does seem to me that you could play a very important role, for a fraction of the effort, if you would simply make it clear that you are in favour of the mildest of constitutional and democratic reforms in Bahrain. Please bear in mind that resistance to change could be disastrous for Bahrain, and for the Gulf as a whole.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Douglas Hurd, who I understand is visiting Bahrain early in 1996.

Yours sincerely
Eric

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9522129

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

House of Lords

December 22, 1995

Dear Jeremy

Further to my letter of December 13 about recent developments in Bahrain, I thought you would like to know of the statement made by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri today in Al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, north-west of Bahrain, before a congregation of tens of thousands of people. He said:

“A nation with clear objectives and just demands has the capability to withstand shock waves. Yes, our nation entered into an experience that resulted in the falling of martyrs, the jailing of youth (men and women), the exiling of people and the fleeing of others, and yet our demands have not been obtained. We must not succumb to despair, we must not lose hope and we must not retract. Do not say that there is no use in continuing on this course with the government that does not listen to any thing but violence”.

“Violence is not our means. We should not also say that we sacrificed blood while our sons in jails or in exile and that we should retract. Turning back is not in our dictionary”.

“The people who raised the just demands and volunteered their youth for achieving these objectives, such people can not be defeated, and their demands will certainly be achieved. It is a matter of time. Steadfastness and patience are pre-requisite factors for attaining the objectives. Our belief in the correctness of our approach gives us the strength of will and provides us with hope. We do not bear any ill-feeling against anyone and we are not the enemies of the government, despite the shedding (by the government) of blood, despite imprisonment and despite exiling of our people. We will never succumb or turn-back until we achieve our targets. We will remain sincere to our martyrs, to our jailed youth and to our forcible-exiles. Our objectives will remain to be the release of all political prisoners, the return of exiles, the activation of the constitution and the restoration of parliament”.

“There are students who have been dismissed and not yet returned to their classes while some of them remain in detention. The ministry of education doesn't seem to care. Why is all this? Aren't these students your children? Why do you ignore their case? I understand that parents are circulating a petition with this regard to be submitted to the minister of education. I support this and any other peaceful action. Educational establishments have problems and these should not be referred to security authorities. I suggest the formation of a committee of parents to follow-up on this issue”.

“As for freedom of expression, I refer to Article 23 of the constitution which states “Freedom of expression and research is guaranteed. Every person is free to express his/her views and is free to publish such views in accordance with the law”. We see the clear violation of this constitutional article against persons expressing their views on certain political issues. In the past few days, both Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan (lawyer) and Mr. Hafedh Al-Sheikh (journalist) were made to pay 500 dinars (\$1500) each, after expressing their views. Similarly, Sheikh Hassan Sultan was detained and made to pay 500 dinars, pending trial, allegedly for his sermon last Friday. Before these people and after them many others were detained and made to pay 500 dinars for expressing their views. Where are we heading to in this country? Does this mean that any person with a different point of view should prepare 500 dinars before expressing his/her views?”

“We expected something special on the National Day. Something special to solve the problems related to freedoms, related to freeing of prisoners, related to the return of exiles. Some releases took place while detentions were continuing. Every morning we wake-up to hear that this person and that person have been detained. Do these people who declared their peaceful approach deserve such treatment?”

Last Friday, the first anniversary of the reform movement, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri also delivered a notable Friday sermon at Al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, north-west of Bahrain. Again, a massive crowd of tens of thousands of people gathered to hear this speech on the eve of the National Day of December 16. Sheikh Al-Jamri said:

“God Almighty said in Quran, Sura 51, Verse 55: But remind them, for reminding benefits the believers. Every matter that influences the nation is a subject for reminding ourselves so that we seek the right path. The aims of the reminder should be concerned with the following”:

“Reminding for documenting history: The nation has roles to play and through its history many events take place. These might be war or peace, victory or defeat, sweet or bitter, and all must be documented for a nation that does not remember its history may neither have a past nor a future”.

“Reminding for reform: The reminder must also aim to solve problems and plan for the future. Mistakes of the past should not be repeated. Previous viewpoints of the ruler and the ruled ought to be studied and re-assessed”.

“Those whose blood was shed did not die in vain. They suffered because they raised legitimate demands. Those men and women who went to jail and those who were forcibly-exiled suffered because they raised just demands. These demands are the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles and restoration of the National assembly. These are the demands and the people want to achieve them through dialogue”

“These demands are compatible with those demands raised by the seven judges who recently submitted a letter to His Excellency the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs demanding the formation of supreme judicial council and demanding the independence of the judiciary. All these voices are demanding political reforms”.

“The people’s movement is spontaneous and raises legitimate and rational demands. The people have chosen the means of dialogue for achieving their aims, despite the fact that their blood was shed (by security forces) and despite the many who were detained and forcibly-exiled. For all these factors, it is no surprise that such a movement gained the support of many in the outside world”

“For example:

- In the US, some congressmen wrote letters (to the Government) requesting the restoration of the constitution and the fulfillment of popular demands.
- In Britain, parliamentarians submitted petitions supporting our aims and demands.
- In our sisterly country Kuwait, 96 personalities comprising parliamentarians, businessmen, professional, felt that their duties and concern for security of the country and the region necessitated the submission of a petition to HH the Amir calling on him to release political prisoners, to allow exiles to return home and to restore parliamentary life”.

“O Great Peaceful People: let us always remember those who stood with us and let us thank them, because so they deserve”.

“Reminding for action: remembering these events ought to result in a better understanding and ought to provide us with lessons for steadfastness, truthfulness, hope for success, insistence, continuation and preparedness to sacrifice for the right path. The aim however is not to agitate for anarchy but for solving the problems and preventing their re-occurrence”.

“For the aims stated above, may I remind of the following events on the (first) anniversary of the popular reform movement”:

“First: The sacred blood that was shed last year is the greatest proof of the depth of the crisis in the country. We ought to commemorate the martyrdom of those whose blood was shed so that such thing may not to re-occur. It is not in the interest of the nation, both the ruler and the ruled, for the crisis to return”.

“Second: We must remember the young and the old, the men and women who were packed in miserable jails without crime, and yes, we must remember those many hundreds who are still suffering in these inhuman conditions. They suffer torturing conditions in cells that do not protect them from winter or summer. They are tortured if they keep quit and they are tortured if they go on hunger strike demanding the improvement of their conditions. Above all these things, there is someone sentenced to death. Would it be wise to leave this painful episode without a solution”.

“Third: Let us remember those who were forcibly deported when the crisis peaked. Let us remember Sheikh Ali Salman, Sheikh Hamza Al-Deiri, Seyyed Haider Al-Setri, Sheikh Adel Al-Shu’ala and the others who were forcibly-exiled under the pretext of agitating the situation. Many others have fled the country fearing for their safety and have since been separated from their parents, wives and children. Hundreds are experiencing the painful exile conditions and are waiting the day they return home with dignity. Until when will they remain in exile?”

“Fourth: Let us remember those who were dismissed from their positions not because they failed their functional duties but because they raised the popular demands and refused to back down. Let’s remember. Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood, Dr. Monira Fakhro, Saeed Al-Asbool, Hussa Al-Khumeiri, Aziza Al-Bassam and others. These people deserve respect not dismissal”

“Fifth: Let’s remember the students who were expelled from their class rooms”.

“This crisis must not be forgotten. There is no justification for the riot police to storm schools, beat students and detain them. There is no justification for expelling the large number of students. Any problem, major or minor, can be controlled and solved without the intervention of police force”.

“Let us remember, the martyrs, the prisoners, the exiled and the dismissed, so that the crisis might be solved. Matters can not be solved by force. The use of force (by government) will only exacerbate the situation and enflame events. If there is a solution then we need to control nerves and utilize logic rather than muscles”.

“The peaceful and dialogue-based approach is the means by which security of the country can be achieved. There is no wise person who believes that calm and stability come as a result of proactive measures and detentions. There is no wise person who sees the use of force is the way to solve the problems of the country and end its crisis”.

Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri announced that he was writing an open letter to H H the Amir.

Motivated by his religious and national duties, and abiding by the principles of reminding the nation for its benefit, and on the occasion of the National Day, he requested the Amir to look into the nation’s demands that had been brought to his attention. These were the release of political prisoners, the return of exiles and restoration of the National Assembly. By doing so, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri said, the Amir would assist the nation to reach its aims and would fulfill the aspiration of the people.

In another worrying development, Mr Ahmad Al-Shamlan, one of Bahrain’s most distinguished lawyers and writers, was summoned to the intelligence department in Manama on December 19. With him was Mr Hafedh Al-Sheikh, a well-known Bahraini journalist. Both had participated alongside many other professionals and thinkers from the Gulf countries in a live programme broadcast by Radio Qatar on December 7. The phone-in programme debated the problems faced by GCC countries and answered several questions about Bahrain’s pro-democracy movement.

Mr Al-Shamlan was subjected to intimidating treatment on December 19, starting at 08 00 and continuing until 22.30. The harassment continued the following day, December 20, in front of an investigating judge. Many lawyers volunteered to defend Al-Shamlan and Al-Sheikh. These lawyers included Abdulla Hashim, Hassan Bedaiwi, Ahmad Al-Thekair, Hassan Radhi, and Ali Al-Ayyobi. The investigating judge charged Ahmad Al-Shamlan and Hafedh Al-Sheikh with “inciting hatred to the political system in Bahrain”, though it is impossible to see how anything said on the radio would justify that charge. Both Al-Shamlan and Al-Sheikh were released on bail of 500 dinar (approx. \$1500) each and both were prohibited from travelling outside the country.

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When you do reply to my letters about Bahrain, you generally say you are referring the matters I raise to our Embassy in Manama, and that is the last I hear. There is never any feedback about the Embassy’s views, and you seem to have no opinions of your own as far as I can ascertain. Is it your policy to ignore the demands for democratic and constitutional reform, and the restoration of human rights, in Bahrain, for fear of offending the Amir? Have you taken the view that the hereditary dictatorships of Bahrain and other Gulf states are the best form of government for the peoples concerned, and if so, why do you think those peoples should be excluded from the benefits of democratic government which you urge on the peoples of eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, Asia and even parts of the Middle East? You are ready to engage in a very costly exercise to monitor the Palestinian elections in the new year, and I have no quarrel with that. But it does seem to me that you could play a very important role, for a fraction of the effort, if you would simply make it clear that you are in favour of the mildest of constitutional and democratic reforms in Bahrain. Please bear in mind that resistance to change could be disastrous for Bahrain, and for the Gulf as a whole.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Douglas Hurd, who I understand is visiting Bahrain early in 1996.


James Mackenzie

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH

From Lord Avebury



P9523127

House of Lords

December 23, 1995

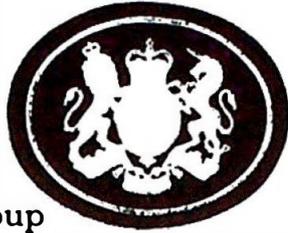
I gather you are visiting Bahrain in the new year, and thought you might like to see the latest instalment of my correspondence with the FCO, enclosed.

Ministers seem extraordinarily reluctant to enter into any discussion of events in Babrain. If I raise specific violations of human rights, they reply saying that my letter is being referred to the Ambassador in Manama and that is the last I ever hear. If I write about the demands of the reform movement, they sometimes go as far as saying they encourage the government to engage in dialogue, though not with whom, or on what subjects. I am in the dark as to whether the FCO consider that the consultations with nominees of the Amir are adequate.

Would you be prepared to meet any members of the opposition during your visit?

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9607014

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk · House of Lords
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 7, 1996

Dear Jeremy

On the night of January 5, there was a renewal of the use of violence by the security forces against peaceful demonstrators in Bahrain. In Nuaim, a district of Manama, the riot police attacked a mass gathering at around 21.20 (18.20 gmt), without prior warning. Mr Hassan Mushaima'a was delivering a speech when the attacking forces fired tear gas and rubber bullets. Clashes erupted and about a hundred people, including Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, took refuge in a nearby small house. Half an hour later, the security forces stormed the house and clashed with the people inside. Sheikh Al-Jamri was injured and police started beating people at random and began hand-cuffing them. Seyed Ibrahim Al-Alawi (a prominent cleric) was severely beaten.

Sheikh Al-Jamri tried to discuss matters with the riot police but the officers could not speak Arabic. Their chief (a Bahraini by the name Isa Al-Qattan) later appeared on the scene and Sheikh Al-Jamri warned him of the grave repercussions likely to follow these events, and asked for the release of the hundred people who were hand-cuffed. After some argument, this group was released while many others were taken prisoners.

Sheikh Al-Jamri then saw a young man outside the house lying face down and only partly conscious. The victim was given water and recovered slightly. Asked what happened, he said that he had nothing to do with the gathering but his house was stormed and he was pulled out from his bed, still in his night clothes. He said that he suffered from a heart condition.

Scores of people were detained and many injuries were reported some of them serious. Seyed Ibrahim Al-Alawi was summoned yesterday to the intelligence department. A loud explosion was heard yesterday morning in the Sanabis area. The situation is almost certain to get worse, amid threats from the security forces that they are preparing for a "blood bath".

This is not the first time I have warned you of the dangers of supporting the status quo in Bahrain (and the same argument applies to other hereditary dictatorships in the Gulf). In my opinion you are not looking after Britain's interests when you give unquestioning support to medieval autocracies, whose actuarial life span cannot be much longer than your own government's.

Yours sincerely
J. Hanley

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From: THE RT. HON. DOUGLAS HURD, CBE, MP.



HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

12 January 1996

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric

Thank you very much for your letter of 23 December. I am sorry not to have replied before I went to Bahrain.

I was there on 3 and 4 January. I had a private talk with The Amir, and a longer talk with the Foreign Minister, who is an old friend.

No members of the Opposition asked to see me - and I would have been surprised had they done so. I was, of course, simply in Bahrain as a private citizen delivering a speech to The Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies.

For the time being the situation in Bahrain is obviously calm. I think that there is scope occasionally for British friends of Bahrain to give advice, but I am sure that this is best done in private.

Yours,

Douglas

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9614016

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk House of Lords
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 13, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I don't know whether you bother to read my letters about the deteriorating situation in Bahrain, but I continue to give you updates from time to time, and you will not be able to say that you were not warned about the dangers arising from the political impasse, and the unrest of the people in the face of the al-Khalifas' implacable resistance to moderate reforms.

A mass demonstration took to the streets of Sanabis on the evening of January 9, protesting against the violence of the security forces in the previous two weeks and the detention of many people including a leading cleric, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Rayyash.

The demonstrators started after 19.00 and marched towards Daih where another demonstration had already started. The two marches headed towards the main Budaya Highway and merged with another one coming from Jedhafs. Demonstrators raised slogans demanding the restoration of parliament and release of political prisoners.

Security forces arrived a short time later and attacked the demonstrators with tear gas and rubber bullets. Many people were injured.

Wakh news agency, Manama, reported on January 9 that "an official source at the Bahraini Interior Ministry said that members of a group, which hurled a home-made percussion grenade [Arabic: qunbulah sawtiyah] at 1830 local time on December 31, 1995 at a shopping centre and at another site in Manama market, had been arrested. Members of the group gave detailed and full confessions to an investigating judge; their confessions were recorded. The group includes: Rida Abdullah Khalil Muhsin, student at the Mechanical Engineering Department of Bahrain University; Abd al-Rida Muhammad Ahmad al-Shuwaykh, salesman; and Rida Mansur Abd al-Nabi al-Khawajah, supervisor at a construction company".

"In a statement to Wakh, the source said that, immediately after the two incidents, the public security agencies began extensive investigations that resulted in the arrest of members of the terrorist group. Their confessions revealed their methods in preparing and planning these crimes and the role each of them played in implementing the crimes, which were aimed at stirring up fear among both citizens and residents in public places. They also said in their confessions that they had been trained by terrorist elements abroad on how to produce home-made bombs. The investigating judge ordered that the suspects be remanded in custody until they face trial".

"The source concluded his statement by saying that the public security agencies were continuing their investigations to reveal all dimensions of this incident and to determine

all the elements that had instigated and been involved in it. The source underlined that the Interior Ministry, out of its concern to preserve law and order and protect the safety of citizens and residents, stressed that it would decisively face all actions that sought to disturb security and stability”.

On January 12, security forces attacked the grand mosque in Qafool (a district of Manama, and clashed with people heading for prayers in the evening (around 17.30, 15.30 GMT). This was the second time security forces had attacked the mosques. On Friday evenings, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri leads prayers in the grand mosque. Two weeks before, the chiefs of Manama and Khamis police stations threatened Sheikh Al-Jamri after his refusal to abandon praying in the mosque.

Earlier in the day, at noon, Sheikh Al-Jamri addressed a mass gathering in al-Sadek mosque in Duraz, northwest of Bahrain. He said:

“The nation as a whole is not only responsible for participation in the political process but also in observing the process and correcting mistakes. It is the right of the nation to freely express views and opinions for that purpose. I have followed what the Minister of Information stated to the BBC when asked about closure of mosques. He said "we are an Islamic Government and mosques are open and we do not close them. But mosques are for prayers and we reject their use for agitation". Would the minister excuse me to let him know that two weeks ago on Thursday night , we were in Zain al-Abidin mosque when riot police used tear gas and rubber bullets. Would not this be considered a violation of a sacred place? Then, on that night and from 7.30 pm to the next day 2.00 pm both Bani Jamra and Duraz (villages) were besieged together with my house. Are not these acts considered to be disturbing peace for citizens and de-stabilizing for the country? Last Friday the grand mosque in Qafool was besieged, I had been prevented from attending, the people who headed to the mosque were fired at using rubber bullets and tear gas. Was this because of an agitation”?

“May the minister excuse me to ask: What is meant by agitation? Why is it now that we are termed "agitators"! Now after we established calm in the country! This is a fact acknowledge by the security department and by those observing events. How come that now we are accused to be agitators? Do you mean that calling for reactivation of constitution and restoration of parliament by peaceful means, do you call these agitation? We have asked for dialogue and we still call for it. I believe that attacking villages and mosques is the true agitation for violence”.

“What is happening to our local press? Why are they silent? The country underwent acrisis that cause the shedding of blood, the imprisonment of hundreds, the deportation of others and all people lived under fear. Where was our press? We never saw the press reporting the submission of a historic petition in 1992 calling for restoration of the parliament! Wasn't there another petition in 1994 signed by 25,000 people? Why aren't attacks on mosques reported”?

“Sheikh Mohammed Al-Rayyash was arrested last Friday in front of the

people in the mosque. Why is such a distinguished person arrested? What is the crime that he committed? Is calling for constitutional reforms a crime? We demand the release of Sheikh Al-Rayyash and all other political prisoners)). The thousands of people attending the gathering chanted slogans in support of the raised demands”.

The attack on Al-Qafool grand mosque began when at 15.00 (18.00 gmt) about 300 riot police encircled the area and blocked access from all directions. Police started attacking people heading towards the mosque to perform evening prayers. There was a traffic jam on the busy Sheikh Salman Highway, seen by many foreigners and tourists.

When people withdrew in the face of the police onslaught, the security forces chased them into the surrounding residential areas of Zenj and Bilad al-Qadeen, using tear gas and rubber bullets as usual.

Later, in Bilad al-Qadim, Sheikh Jasim Al-Khayyat (a cleric) and three of his brothers were arrested. Security operations were mounted in Southern Sehlah where Seyed Faisal Al-Talibi (a cleric) had earlier in the day been arrested.

Security forces also raided Al-Zahra mosque in northern Qafool and confiscated equipment and the platform used for delivering sermons. This is the mosque which had been attacked the previous Friday while Sheikh Mohammed Al-Rayyash was delivering a sermon. Al-Rayyash was arrested on the spot and remains in detention.

The editor-in-chief of the Jordanian newspaper "Al-Majd", Mr Fahad Al-Remawi was arrested in December following the publication of an article last February criticising abuse of human rights in Bahrain and calling for the removal of Ian Henderson. When relations between Jordan and the Gulf states improved last November, the Bahraini government demanded that Mr Al-Remawi must be punished. Mr Fahad Al-Remawi's trial will begin on January 15.

In a further attack on freedom of expression, the airport authorities confiscated a shipment of copies of a book by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri. No reason was given for the confiscation even though the book is not political.

Three boys aged 7 and 8 were arrested on January 9 in Barbar. The three children are Yasir Ammar (7 years old), Ali Mahdi Hammood (8 years) and Seyed Majid Hasan (8 years old). They were reported to have been ill-treated in custody, but were later released on bail to appear before a political court on January 13.

On the same day, riot police stopped a bus in Duraz taking pupils (all are children and teenagers) to school. The police entered the bus and beat the children with batons. They claimed that a pupil whistled at them. When the bus arrived at Duraz schools, teachers declared their solidarity and implemented a one day strike.

Today, January 13, eight opposition leaders were summoned to the Interior

Ministry at around 10.00 (13.00 gmt). The eight are Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, Mr Hassan Mushaimaa, Sheikh Hussain Al-Deihi, Seyed Ibrahim Al-Alawi, Sheikh Hassan Sultan, Sheikh Ali bin Ahmad Al-Jedhafi and Sheikh Ali Ashor. After waiting for an hour in a hall, the eight were brought in one by one to a circle of 15 senior security officers, including the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior.

The 15 officers used foul language and threatened each person that they must sign a pre-prepared statement undertaking that the signatory "must not issue any political statement, must not use worship places for political purpose and must not call on people to demonstrate". Sheikh Al-Jamri was taken in first, and after an argument he left the room. Then each person was brought in and threatened in the same way. Later Sheikh Al-Jamri was admitted to hospital suffering from high blood pressure as a result of the intimidation by the 15 bullying officers.

This is the latest in a series of encounters between the security forces and opposition. The general opinion is that the security forces are trying to provoke the opposition into some rash action, so as to justify even tougher repression. This confrontational policy is extremely foolish and dangerous. I have repeatedly asked you to use your influence in favour of restraint and dialogue, without eliciting any reaction. It seems to me that you are doing nothing towards preserving the peace and stability of Bahrain, even though it is of great importance to us that disorder and anarchy do not occur in Bahrain or in the region as a whole. By urging moderate reforms on the Ruler, you could have helped to prevent the instability now occurring, and likely to get worse if the al-Khalifas play the Canute, and attempt to stop the incoming tide of democracy.

*Yours sincerely,
E. Hanley*

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9620015

House of Lords

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 20, 1996

Dear Douglas

Thank you for your letter of January 12 about your visit to Bahrain. I would very much like to see a copy of your speech to the Guif Centre for Strategic Studies, if it is a public document.

Your letter arrived this morning after being forwarded from the House, and the news from Bahrain was in stark contrast with your observation that 'for the time being the situation in Bahrain is obviously calm'. I think you could not have reached that conclusion if you had spoken with any of the opposition leaders, and I fail to understand why visitors to Bahrain from Britain never have any contact with the opposition, unlike any other country in the world. Surely if one aims to understand what goes on in any state, one has to consult as many representative leaders of opinion as possible.

The bomb which exploded in the Meridien Hotel on the evening of January 17, fortunately without causing any injuries or loss of life, was a dangerous symptom of the volatility of the situation, beneath the recent appearance of calm. Although this act of terrorism was condemned by the opposition, it is impossible to guarantee that everybody who wants reform will abide strictly by Gandhian principles of non-violence, and especially so, when many are on the receiving end of violence by the state's security forces.

Yesterday, the security forces engaged in indiscriminate acts of terror against persons and property. In Duraz, they attacked houses and mosques, detaining people in random and destroying the contents of mosques. At least 75 people were arrested, amongst them Hajji Hasan Jar-Allah the 60-year old person in charge of the grand Al-Sadek mosque; Jaffer Al-Durazi and his brother Saleh; Adel Abdul Rahim; Sheikh Sadiq Mohammed Jaffer; Husain Ali Makki and his two brothers Adeeb and Hashim; Abdul-Hussain Al-Mutghawwi; Habib Al-Nashaba and his four sons Adel, Mirza, Hassan and Ali. Nidal Al-Nashabah, another of the sons of Habib Al-Nashabha, was killed by security forces last May.

In Bani Jamra, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri was put under house arrest starting from 03.00 January 20. Some 20 members of his family and relatives were prevented from going out. Only children were allowed to go school. A garrison is surrounding the house comprising 3 lorries packed with riot police, 4 jeeps and one civilian car. An old man who attempted to enter the house was beaten and kicked by these forces. Food can only be brought-in by a relative who must hand everything from a distance.

Arrests in Bani Jamra include, Sheikh Abdul Mohsin Mulla Atteya, Omran Hussain Omran, Ali Abdul Wahhab (whose two brothers Jamil and Abdul Amir were arrested few days ago).

Sanabis suffered another ferocious attack. Houses were raided, youth were taken away from beds and contents of mosques were destroyed. A person by the name Abdul Amir Darweesh was hit by a bullet in the chest and lies in critical condition at the International Hospital. Others arrested include Abbas Sahwan, Abdul Shahid Al-Thor and Hussain Ali Ahmad.

In Zenj, a district at the outskirts of Manama, people resisted attacks on their homes by other units of the security forces and clashes continued until after midnight. Similar clashes took place in Bilad al-Qadim, Shahrakkan, Karzzakkan, Malkiya, Dair, Samahij, Sitra and Nuweidrat.

The government indicated today that they were thinking of declaring martial law, according to AFP. This would be, no doubt, an excuse for even worse intimidation and terrorism against the people. What I find very difficult to understand is how you were able to urge the virtues of 'pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles' - to use the words of your address to a conference organised by the Overseas Development Institute in London on June 6, 1990 - everywhere else in the world, yet in the Gulf, and in Bahrain in particular, you and your successor have not been prepared to do a thing about the ruling family's adherence to the practices of the Bourbons. You will not be able to escape a share in the responsibility for the disasters which are overtaking Bahrain and other Gulf states, if you continue to encourage their Rulers to sit tight and hope the 21st century will go away.

Tours
Eric

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9620015

House of Lords

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
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January 20, 1996

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Tours

Eiri

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords

P9620013

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 20, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I very much regret having to write to you again about the situation in Bahrain, even though you have ignored all my other recent letters on the deterioration of the situation there. It is really unfortunate, considering the 150 years of association between the UK and Bahrain, and the close ties that continue to link us together, that apparently you have not been willing to lift a finger to help reduce the tension and promote the dialogue which Douglas Hogg told me you hoped would be held between the government and the opposition.

The government's bad faith, in renegeing on the undertaking given to opposition leaders when political prisoners were released in September, and their implacable refusal to hold any talks with opposition leaders who evidently command the support of large sections of the population, probably amounting to a majority, have led to increasing tension and frustration, and sooner or later this was bound to give rise to disorder.

The bomb which exploded in the Meridien Hotel on the evening of January 17, fortunately without causing any injuries or loss of life, is a dangerous symptom of the people's resentment. Although this act of terrorism was condemned by the opposition, it is impossible to guarantee that everybody who wants reform will abide strictly by Gandhian principles of non-violence, and especially so, when many are on the receiving end of violence by the state's security forces.

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old man who attempted to enter the house was beaten and kicked by these forces. Food can only be brought-in by a relative who must hand everything from a distance.

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The government has today declared martial law, according to AFP. This is no doubt an excuse for even worse intimidation and terrorism against the people. What I find very difficult to understand is how you can preach about good government, democracy and the rule of law everywhere else in the world, yet in the Gulf, and in Bahrain in particular, you are not prepared to do a thing about the ruling family's adherence to the practices of the Bourbons. You will not be able to escape a share in the responsibility for the disasters which are overtaking Bahrain and other Gulf states, if you continue to encourage their Rulers to sit tight and hope the 21st century will go away.

Yours sincerely

Jc

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

WRITTEN ANSWER

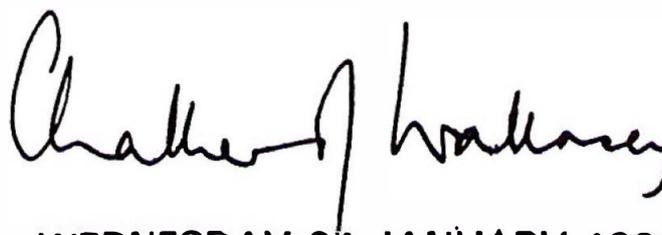
The Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government:

what matters were raised by the Foreign Minister of Bahrain, Sheik Mohammed bin Mubarak al-khalifa when he saw the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 13 January 1996; what was understood by his request, reported in Al-Hayat newspaper, 'to assist in maintaining security of the Gulf' and what information they have about the arrest on 15 January of Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain. [15 January]

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY: Several issues of bilateral and regional concern were discussed, including Gulf security.

The article in the Al-Hayatt newspaper of 13 January makes no reference to a request to assist in maintaining security of the Gulf.

I understand that Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain's arrest reportedly followed a warning from the Bahraini authorities not to use mosques for political activities which might lead to civil disorder.



WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 1996



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your Ref: P9513121, P9522129 and P9607014

25 January 1996

London SW1A 2AH

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0AA

From The Minister of State

Dear Lord,

Thank you for your letters of 13 and 22 December and 7 January about Bahrain.

I was pleased to hear that Bahrain's National Day passed peacefully. I understand that, as is customary, a number of prisoners (some of whom were detained in connection with the 1994/95 disturbances) were pardoned.

In his National Day speech, the Amir announced a decree allowing the return of some Bahraini exiles and hinted that the Shura Council would be further developed. On 14 December, it was announced that a loans package worth BD14m had been approved to provide adequate housing for 808 Bahraini families, as part of the National Day celebrations. The Government is also giving prominence to vocational training for Bahrainis. I understand that the Government sector is now 90% Bahraini.

Contrary to the suggestion in your letter, and as I have made clear to you a number of times, we have always encouraged the Bahraini authorities towards genuine reconciliation. The above moves are evidence of their efforts to address some of the concerns of the community as a whole. But it is for the Bahraini authorities themselves to judge how best and within what timescale to manage these matters.

You claim that there has never been any feedback from our Embassy on the points you have raised with me in the past. This is incorrect. All your letters are passed to the Embassy and where it has been useful to do so, the points in them have been discussed with the Bahraini authorities. Their responses are relayed back to you in my letters. I am replying separately to your letter of 20 January with a more up-to-date assessment.

I hope you are now fully recovered from your operation.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9628014

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 28, 1996

Dear Tony

In advance of our meeting to discuss Bahrain on Tuesday, I write to draw your attention to the further escalation of the crisis.

Last week a number of people estimated by the opposition at over 2,000 were arrested in dawn raids and during clashes in the daytime. Police sources in Bahrain gave the number as 554, according to Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran external service, Tehran, in Arabic 17.30 gmt January 26, 1996. Any person who had delivered a speech or a sermon during the past months was detained and taken to an unknown location.

Over a period of a week to ten days up to January 21, the security forces arrested eight leading opposition figures headed by Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, an extremely provocative act as you will appreciate by now, I hope. These were the people who established calm and stability last August when the security forces failed to stop street protests. These were the people who delivered weekly sermons and circulated them calling on their followers to pursue all peaceful means for the restoration of the parliament and constitution, a policy you would applaud anywhere else in the world.

On January 23, there another attack on Al-Ghadeer mosque in Sitra, where a high ranking cleric Sheikh Abdul Hussain Al-Setri was leading prayers. The opposition believe this was ordered by Mr Ian Henderson, the British Officer in-charge of the security forces. Riot police attacked the people praying behind Sheikh Al-Setri, removed all posters inside the mosque and confiscated most of its contents. They also ordered Sheikh Al-Setri to attend for interrogation the next day, Wednesday January 24.

All over the country the contents of mosques have been confiscated. When at 10.30 on January 24 the house arrest imposed on the family and neighbours of Sheikh Al-Jamri was lifted, the security forces had already confiscated all microphones, equipment and books from Zain al-Abedin mosque located in front of Sheikh Al-Jamri's house in Bani Jamra, north-west of Bahrain.

On the night of January 23, loud explosions were heard in Sanad, Zenj, Nabih Salejh and other areas. A demonstration in Nabih Saleh was put down by security forces deploying the harshest measures.

On January 24, a women screamed, in the old market area of Manama when she saw two Indian security men starting a fire near al-Khawajah mosque in Manama. Several people gathered and extinguished the blaze. People who helped extinguish the fire were arrested by police. The security forces had smashed private cars and damaged private properties as part of their plan to justify their attacks on the peaceful movement demanding the restoration of the dissolved parliament.

The same day, two jeeps surrounded Momin mosque in the capital Manama. After filming the posters on the wall they confiscated all the contents of the mosque. Similarly, the security forces raided Al-Anwar mosque in Daih, Sheikh Khalaf mosque in Nuweidrat and Al-Sadeq mosque in Duraz. The attackers brought with them some items and photographed them outside and inside the mosques. The items were believed to be explosive devices, planted in order to justify the campaign of deception to portray the opposition as violent.

Mr Ahmad Mansoor Ali, a 45-year old businessman and a well-known activist was detained yesterday in a dawn raid on his home in Jabalat-Habshi. Dawn raids on Shahrakkan village on January 24 resulted in the arrest of Samir Salman Tawwash, (32), Ahmad Marhoon Shabib, (18), Abbas Marhoon Shabib, (20), Jaafer Ibrahim Abo-Ruwais, (14) and Hassan Yaquob Saleh. The interior ministry said that they had detained 544 people. This opposition estimated that there were 2,000 detainees.

Mr Nasser Wahhab Nasser, (40), from Malkeyya was hit in the stomach by a rubber bullet and Ali Khalil Al-Helaiw, (26) from Malkeyya was hit by another rubber bullet in the head last week. Mr Makki Ali Abbas, (30), from Sitra was tortured during a detention lasting a few days.

The Saudi media have been enlisted in the propaganda war by the Al-Khalifas. The Saudi Al-Hayat newspaper claimed that "Washington supports Bahrain's steps" implying that the US administration backs the Bahraini government crackdown against the pro-democracy activists, whereas the State Department had made a general comment urging of peaceful solutions.

Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain and Mr Hassan Mushaimaa were transferred to the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) hospital, on January 26, for force-feeding after going on hunger strike. Also, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and Hajji Hassan Jarallah were transferred to the BDF hospital after the deterioration of their health conditions.

Either on January 25 or 26, the security forces confiscated the safe at Sheikh Al-Jamri's house containing donations for many poor families. Last April when the house was raided, the security forces sealed-off the safe, but this time they opted for confiscation.

Arbitrary detentions continued. Four people were arrested on Sitra bridge on January 24 at 04.00. These are Sayed Majid, Hussain Huweedah, Hussain Saif (Manama), and Hussain Al Sitri. Other detainees include Hussain Ali Mohsin, (17), Ahmad Ibrahim Maitham, (23), Hassan Mohammed Ali Saleh, (20), Abdul Jalil Hassan Al-Mutawwa, (45). A group of people who gathered in Karzakkan to read Ramadan prayers, were attacked by security forces and many of them were detained.

Press releases issued by the interior ministry alleged that members of the opposition are detained on suspicion of arson and sabotage. The opposition claim that foreign-staffed security forces raid residential areas and damage private properties as a form of collective punishment and revenge against the unarmed and peaceful people of Bahrain.

Sources inside Bahrain confirmed the news of the hunger strike by the jailed opposition leaders as another person, Sheikh Ali bin Ahmad Al-Jedhafi was taken on January 27 to the military hospital for force-feeding. The interior ministry claim that the jailed leaders can be visited by their families, but relatives said they were only allowed to take some clothes to Manama (Al-Qala'a) prison, and that no meeting was allowed. Lawyers defending the jailed leaders have been denied access to them.

On Friday, January 26, most Friday prayers were banned after the jailing of scores of clerics and confiscation of microphones from mosques. Sheikh Hassan Al-Saati led the Friday prayer in Momin mosque and denounced the detention of opposition leaders and the lies being spread by the government against a peaceful movement. He was arrested on Saturday January 27 at 13.00 local time. The security forces waited for him in his house for 2 hours until he returned. He was not even allowed to see or speak to his family who were inside the house. On Saturday January 27, all mosques and religious places in Karzakkan were raided and had their contents confiscated. Sheikh Majeed Al Toblani, who led Friday prayers in Tobli, was also arrested to prevent any future prayers. An elderly taxi driver (from Tobli) Mr Abdul Hussain Saleem (Sheikh Ali Saleem's father) was also arrested on January 26. Riot police attacked a small mosque in Manama near Gold Market (Souk al-Dahab) located in Sheikh Abdullah Road. They used batons to beat the people while they were praying and chased them out of the mosque.

On Friday, January 26, at around 02.00, 4 lorries packed with riot police encircled the old Manama central area near Mattam Zabar (a religious gathering place). An elderly shop-owner Mr Jawad Al Halwachi who sells rice, sugar, and similar stuff was arrested in the dawn raid. His home was searched and later on the police took the old man to his shop for a similar search. He was released later but it is not known yet why he received all this attention.

I believe that you never make the slightest attempt to listen to what the opposition are saying in Bahrain, but I think you ought to pay some attention to an interesting interview with Mr Sa'id Sayf, secretary-general of the Bahraini Popular Front, published by the Jordanian newspaper 'Shihan' on January 26, excerpts from which I give below:

['Shihan'] Mr Sa'id Sayf, what about the confrontation between you and the government and what about the situation in Bahrain?

[Sayf] The government recently exacerbated the situation and is attempting to accuse foreign parties so that it can use this as an excuse to attack the opposition. The members of the Initiative Committee were arrested again. Shaykh Abd al-Amir al-Jamri, Abd al -Wahhab Husayn Hasan Khalil, Shabar al-Alawi, Hasan al-Dihi and Hasan Shumay are on this committee.

These leaders have played a basic role in the popular movements over a period of a year. While in prison last year, the members of this committee negotiated with the Interior Ministry in the person of Mr Henderson. They reached an agreement to calm things down in exchange for releasing the detainees and suspending the trials.

[Q] Where is the problem, if you and the government have reached an agreement?

[A] The government did not abide by the agreement and did not release all the detainees. It kept more than 1,000 detainees in prison. The government officially admitted this. During the recent confrontations, the government arrested more than 2,000 in a large -scale search operation throughout the country.

[Q] What will happen? Will Bahrain see further escalation?

[A] The government has stepped up the arrests and escalated the confrontation. It threatens to strike against any popular move. The government has prepared a plan to draw out the opposition and deal it a blow.

[Q] What is the nature of your relations with Iran, and do you receive assistance from it?

[A] There is an attempt to make the people believe that Iran supports the opposition so as to divert attention from the real causes of the crisis. The government accuses Iran because some of the opposition members received their education in the Iranian city of Qom. The government considers everyone who studied in that city as suspects, even if they have nothing to do with the opposition.

[Q] What are your demands? What do you think are the causes of the crisis?

[A] The real cause of the crisis is the refusal to restore parliament and allow the more than 500 deportees to return to the homeland, and the refusal to reactivate the constitution that has been paralysed since 1973. The National Assembly was replaced by an appointed shura [consultative] council that pledges allegiance to the government and has no prerogatives.

[Q] What will be your reply to the government's escalation?

[A] The issue will not be settled by martial law. If the government persists in the escalation, the people will have no other choice but to defend themselves. The people have been using stones and Molotov cocktails. We do not know if the confrontation will take more violent forms in the future, God forbid...

[Q] Have you recently tried to hold a dialogue with the government?

[A] The government refuses to hold a dialogue with anyone or to receive any party. Henderson works to achieve his own interests because any accord between the government and the people will be against his interests. People like him do what they can to create a rift between the government and the people, and the big powers try to increase their military presence in the region.

The situation in Bahrain will not stabilize. This will be the main feature of 1996 unless the government announces a general amnesty and holds elections.

I am looking forward to seeing you at 16.30 on Tuesday in your office at the FCO, and I must say I am very curious to learn why you seem to have been content to look on as passive spectator all the time the crisis has been boiling up, as I have repeatedly warned. I certainly hope I shall learn a bit more from you than I did from Douglas Hogg, who was determined to say as little as he could when I went to see him almost a year ago, though I am not optimistic when I look at the lopsidedness of our correspondence.

Yours sincerely


The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

29 January 1996

London SW1A 2AH

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

From The Minister of State

(By fax)

Dear Eric.

Thank you for your letter of 20 January about Bahrain. I hope by now you have received my previous replies.

I understand that Shaikh Al Jamri and six colleagues were arrested following warnings from the Bahraini authorities not to use mosques for political activities which might lead to civil disorder. In the authorities' view the clerics have acted in bad faith by pursuing actions which have raised the tension and undermined the stability of Bahrain. Martial law has not been declared.

We continue to encourage the Bahraini authorities towards reconciliation and dialogue with the community. It is a pity that similar advice appears not to have been advocated to those perpetrators of the current unrest. We condemn any act of terrorism and cannot accept any excuse for it.

I look forward to discussing this further tomorrow.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP

From: THE RT. HON. DOUGLAS HURD, CBE, MP.



HOUSE OF COMMONS,
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

30 January 1996

Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 20 January about Bahrain.

I note what you say. Letters such as yours have been written about the Gulf Governments for nearly 30 years. I remember them well during the ^{East or} Suez controversy when I worked for Ted Heath in the late sixties. Yet they have survived and flourished.

This is not to say that all is well in Bahrain, or the other States. You and I differ, as we have always differed, on the balance between the public stance and the private advice.

There is no text of my speech to the Gulf Centre, since I spoke from notes. I talked almost entirely about the need for collective security in the Gulf and my disappointment that it had not moved faster. As regards internal affairs, I emphasised on familiar lines, but without being specific, the need for dialogue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'D' followed by 'ouglas' and a flourish.

From Lord Avebury
P9630013



Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

January 30, 1996

Dear Tony

Thank you very much for giving me so much of your time to discuss Bahrain this evening. I am very glad to accept that you have been making strenuous efforts to promote the dialogue we both want to see, although it was not altogether clear to me whether you felt it appropriate to urge that the government should resume talks with the five main leaders, who are now detained without charge. It ought to be obvious that a dialogue with the shura, or any other hand-picked group of individuals such as the Sunni and Shi'a 'notables' assembled for the purpose last year, is going to do nothing to reduce tension and achieve political stability. I think we are doing our friends no favours if we refrain from saying this much, and from suggesting that the conversations initiated with the leaders in August 1995, which did secure temporary calm, should be resumed where they left off. Nor do I think it would be likely to cause any offence if we made the equally obvious point that the misunderstanding about what undertakings were offered and accepted during those talks should be cleared up as a start.

I was extremely concerned, as I told you, about the Bahrain Foreign Minister's visit, and the renewed attempt he made to twist your arm on the cases of Sheikh Ali Salman and his two colleagues. As I mentioned, in a letter from Ann Widdecombe about the case of Professor al-Mas'ari, she says that although there are no plans to repeat the dose for others, "*that does not mean, of course, that we would not do so again*", and I fear that Sheikh Ali Salman would be fairly high up on the hit list. Of course, he would be entitled to draw your attention to any proven criminal acts committed by an asylum-seeker from Bahrain, just as, you told me, we had on one occasion drawn the attention of the Dutch authorities to the criminal acts of a person from Britain who sought asylum there. I am sure that Sheikh Ali Salman has not done anything that we would view as criminal, and if the Foreign Minister simply made allegations, you should bear in mind that charges could have been preferred against him during the month he was in custody. They must have had a really weak case if they had no confidence of obtaining a conviction before their own docile courts!

I am sorry to add still further to your burdens on top of the 90 letters I had already written you since you became a Minister, and the two I brought with me this afternoon, but I found the enclosed fax from Mrs Jay Jaffar waiting for me when I arrived back in the office this evening. (If its any consolation, I also write to Lynda

Chalker, Nicholas Bonsor, and David Davis, but you have the largest empire, with a lot of troublesome customers in it, as we agreed).

May we take it that the only obligation the Saudis have in respect of a British subject arrested in their country is the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations? Does this Convention provide only that the prisoner has to be produced before a consular representative, and not that the representative can view the conditions of detention at first hand? Does the Convention not allow the prisoner to communicate with his family by letters?

To what extent, if any, are the Saudis bound by the UN Standard Minimum Rules on the Treatment of Prisoners? Surely, customary law must allow a prisoner to have reading material, and to listen to radio broadcasts in a language he understands?

It may be that under Saudi law, Mr Jaffar can be detained indefinitely as part of an investigation, without any charges being made against him. One cannot but agree with Mrs Jaffar, however, that if we are so friendly with the Saudis, it ought to be easy for them to give us some ball-park indication of the time their inquiries will take, before Mr Jaffar is either charged or released.

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your ref: P9628014

London SW1A 2AH

6 February 1996

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 28 January, which was received prior to our meeting on 30 January.

I found our discussion most useful. It was good to know that we appear to share the objective of peace and stability in Bahrain. We will continue to encourage the restoration of dialogue between all parties.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



P9607027

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

February 7, 1996

Dear Douglas

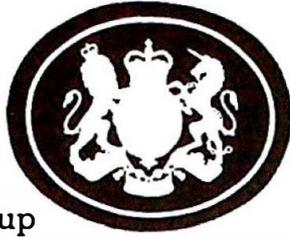
It was very kind of you to share your thoughts on Bahrain and the Gulf with me. I agree that thirty years ago, predictions of change in the Gulf were premature, just as predictions of the downfall of the Bourbons would have been in 1820, or of the Soviet communists and the apartheid régime in South Africa in 1960. Your considerable knowledge of history will have taught you that every system of government has its time, and at a moment which is not always easy to predict, gives way to some different form. Recently there has been a trend towards democracy almost everywhere - in Latin America, Africa, eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and even southeast Asia - and this is in marked contrast to the sixties, when dictatorships were common throughout the world. Even in the Gulf, there are stirrings, particularly in Kuwait and Qatar. I think we do have a choice between discreet encouragement of change, and a policy of trying to maintain the status quo.

Please don't bother to answer. I may remind you of our exchange on some future occasion!

Tom
Eur

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9608023

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House of Lords

February 8, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I hesitate to write to you, particularly about Bahrain, as I realise that on your calculations, this must be the 94th letter I have written to you since you became an FCO Minister, but I just heard that Ahmed al-Shamlan (53), a distinguished human rights lawyer, was arrested yesterday morning at 08.00 from his home. Having spoken to Mr al-Shamlan twice on the telephone and communicated with him also in writing, I find it inconceivable that he could have incited arson and destruction, as the authorities are alleging. I only hope that they are not referring to me as one of the 'known foreign terrorist organisations' with which he is supposed to have been in touch.

This follows the cancellation by the Intelligence Department of a seminar on "Democracy and Shura" organised by the Al-Orooba Club in Manama for Tuesday night (February 6), which was to have been addressed by Mr Ahmad Al-Shamlan, as well as Dr Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood and Dr Ali Al-Oreibi.

You may also have heard that Eight Kuwaiti MPs and more than ninety Kuwaiti personalities have been banned from entering Bahrain after writing a letter to the Amir of Bahrain calling on him to restore parliament and fulfill the aspirations of the Bahraini people. The eight MPs are Adnan Seyed Abdul Samad, Dr Ismail Al-Shatti, Jamaan Faleh Al-Azmi, Dr Naser Surkhoo, Abdul Mohsin Jamal, Abdulla al-Nibari and Dr Ahmad l-Khateeb. The Bahraini Ambassador to Kuwait, Mr Abdul Rahman Al-Fadhel has protested to the Kuwaiti government about the coverage of events by Al-Taleea newspaper which sides with the people of Bahrain. The Kuwaiti information ministry wrote to Al-Taleea stating "*the ministry wishes that you look after our country's and nation interest*", urging the editor to stop covering Bahrain events (shades of the al-Mas'ari affair!). The editor refused to do so.

In another on freedom of expression, the Bahraini government was behind a trial before the Jordanian State Security Court last month of Mr Fahad al-Remawi, editor-in-chief of Al-Majd newspaper. The trial came one year after the publication in Al-Majd of an article written by a leading Bahraini opposition figure, Mr Abdul Rahman Al-Nuaimi.

On February 3, the Bahrain "Committee for Popular Petition" issued the following statement:

Events in our country (Bahrain) have recently been escalated as a result of the political crisis reaching a dead end. The escalation came as an inevitable result of foreign pressure imposed by some countries on the government of Bahrain.

Such pressure comes whenever there looms in the horizon a rational understanding between the government and the opposition seeking political reforms. The latter's objectives

do not go beyond the return to 1973 constitution, the reinstatement of suspended articles and restoration of the legislature (National Assembly) through election as was specified by the constitution of the country.

We have evidence that severe foreign pressure has been brought about on our country's government which resulted in sacrificing public freedoms, preventing the raising of any voice calling for the return to democracy and neglecting the sacrifices of the people of Bahrain which prove their loyalty and honesty for the constitutional legitimacy as represented by the present governing system. On the basis of this constitutional legitimacy, broadly-based groups took the initiative to address the problem with the political leadership, by submitting two petitions. The first was submitted on 15 November 1992 and the second one is still waiting for the appropriate time for submission which the events have made difficult. These events inflicted grave damages to the homeland and to the democratic reform process which has no other aim but to restore the 1973 constitution.

The delegation (responsible for submitting the petition) was not given the opportunity or channel of communication to establish dialogue with the political leadership. Our country and people have suffered immensely for more than a year as a result of the closure of channels of dialogue and the spread of violence waves (from whichever source) that have no justification and which have been rejected and condemned.

Several outsiders have meddled and complicated the crisis by holding the patronizing view that it is too much for Bahrainis to have an elected parliament and to enjoy political freedom based on civil society concepts and bound by constitutional legitimacy. Every misery and pain the country suffered for more than a year had never been expected. Also no one expected the "invention" of a dramatic end full of frustrations and ridicules.

The mass Arab media intervened without mentioning for once that there is a problem caused by the suspension of constitution. The parliament was suspended twenty years ago and no one is allowed to call for its return. Instead of mentioning this fact, the untruthful Arab media spoke about a "conspiracy" staged by preachers in mosques instigating violence. The conversion of truth by Arab media resulted in the false accusation of respected religious scholars who have been calling for calm and have requested the public to abide by law and to stick to legitimate means for restoring the parliament.

The question is now raised about the rationale behind this intentional media attack. Those with a conscience are asking who benefits from falsifying events by Arab media. Why did they falsify the legitimate and peaceful demands of our people? Who benefits from the competition of Arab governments to support the suppression and confiscation of freedoms (in Bahrain)? Why do not these ever give an advise (to the government of Bahrain) to put an end to the policy of punishing those who demand their rights? On the contrary, we see them attacking our dear friends in Kuwait who supported our legitimate demands through a letter they submitted to HH the Amir of the State of Bahrain calling on him to listen to the just demands of people. What do these media attacks and supports of Arab media and governments mean?

The Committee of the Popular Petition denounces falsifying charges against respected religious scholars and our colleagues in the Committee who were detained administratively and the Committee denounces those who imply that there is a link between these jailed opposition figures and some foreign countries. These attempts have one aim: to divert attention of the world public opinion from the reality of the political crisis.

The reality is that there exists in Bahrain a broadly-based national opposition and all these manoeuvres are aimed at obstructing the path for achieving its legitimate demands. This is the same crisis which the government attempted to solve by speaking to what was known as the Group of the Initiative (Sheikh Al-Jamri and his colleagues) and this is why some of this group were freed (last August and September) and allowed to travel abroad to calm the opposition outside the country. This confirms that there is a political crisis more than being a security problem or acts of violence.

The Committee of the Popular Petition, while denouncing violence and security abuses, urges all people of conscience in the world to intervene for putting an end to the escalating cycle of terror which primarily aims at extinguishing calls for restoring the Bahraini constitution and National Assembly. We also urge all honest people in the world to do their best to convince the political leadership in Bahrain to initiate dialogue, to release the political prisoners and to save the country from possible disasters.

Let us go forward with our national unity which characterize our experienced people. Let us declare our total rejection of violence from whatever source and under any pretext. Let us call for the abolition of all measure that prevent citizens from returning to their home and let's call for the release of all political prisoners.

We hope that normal peaceful life would return to our country and amongst our people after this critical and testing period so that our great people continue with their civilized and distinguished contributory role.

Please note that the Committee denounces violence, and advocates peaceful constitutional reform. As you may recall, the CPP was formed in October 1994 and comprises all tendencies and sections of Bahrain society. It included Shia Islamists such as Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain both of whom are now in jail, Sunni Islamists such as Dr Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood and Sheikh Isa Al-Joder, and patriotic activists such Mr Ahmad Al-Shamlan and Mr. Saeed Al-Asbool. The CPP and its supporters gathered 25,000 signatures from the public in support of the petition calling for restoration of the constitution and parliament dissolved in 1975. The arrest of Mr Al-Shamlan serves only to emphasise the broadly based character of the opposition, and we may surmise that his immunity up to now arose from the authorities' reluctance to confirm this, by jailing one of the most prominent Sunni lawyers.

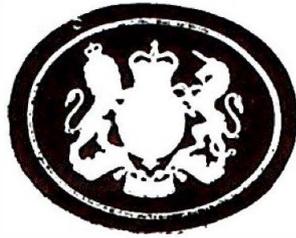
I know that, although you have assured me that you read all my letters and pay careful attention to what I say in them, you will not deviate from your policy of refraining from taking up any human rights issues in Bahrain. You will observe, however, that the repercussions of events in Bahrain are beginning to have effects in Qatar and Kuwait, and I would respectfully suggest that you may be open to criticism for your failure to act on the many warnings of disaster. Douglas Hurd wrote to me the other day saying that he could remember clearly in the late sixties that people warned of the fragility of the Gulf kingdoms, yet there they were still intact. What he, and the FCO, may have overlooked, is that since then eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have thrown off communist dictatorships and are struggling to achieve democratic and human rights reforms; the white racists in South Africa and Namibia have given way to majority rule; in the southern cone of Latin America, military dictatorships have given way to democracy; even in Palestine, elections have just been held. Is it really possible that the Gulf will remain totally cocooned in its mediaeval past, immune to the winds of change and the opening of frontiers resulting from the use of new technology?

James Hanley

JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9602038

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House of Lords

March 2, 1996

Dear Jeremy

Further to my previous letters on Bahrain, I hope you have seen the articles by Robert Fisk in The Independent, by Ian Black in The Guardian, and by Jon Swain in the Sunday Times. It is going to be increasingly difficult for us to pretend that nothing is happening in Bahrain, as we have done since December 1994. As I have repeated ad nauseam, Britain could have influence with the al-Khalifas if we chose to exert it, and the fact that they are persisting with their disastrous policies is in no small measure due to our failure to take a stronger line on reform.

The security forces attacked several villages simultaneously in the early hours of February 29. Dair, Abo-Quwa, Jannossan Duraz and Bani Jamra were amongst the worst hit areas. Bani Jamra was surrounded at 01.30 on February 29, and door-to-door break-ins started immediately. Two mosques were ransacked, one of them the Zein al-Abdin mosque. The daughter-in-law of Sheikh Al-Jamri, Mona Habib (34 years old) was also arrested. She is a mother of three children and her husband, Mohammed Jamil is in jail since 1988.

Nine other women were also arrested from other parts of the country.

Zahra Helal² Salman (30) and her sister Iman, 26⁴, were arrested during a dawn raid on February 29. Zahra's husband is in jail since January 1995. Seven other women from Duraz, Sanabis, Karbabad, and Jidhafs were also detained.

At 02.45, other security forces units headed by the notorious Khalid Al-Wazzan attacked Jannossan again. They attacked the house of Mr Ali Khamis and arrested his son Saeed, 20. Saeed was snatched from his bed while his mother screamed "God is Greater". Khalid Al-Wazzan ordered the ransacking of the house. Several other arrests were also made.

Mr. Abdulla Fakhroo, 70 years old (who comes from the Sunni and wealthy Fakhroo family) was also arrested. Others taken into custody - without charge, needless to say - included:

From Bani Jamra: Abdullah Ali Ahmed Al Kais, 33, Mohammed Jaffer Ahmed, 25 (disabled), Abdulshaheed Marzooq, 35 (mentally disabled), Husni Jaffer Ali, 27, Ahmed Mohammed Ibrahim, 18, Hussain Jameel Abdul Wahab, 14, Sayed Jaffer Sayed Ali, 35, Raed Mohammed Hussain, 18, Abbas Saleh Mansoor, 20, Hamza Hussain Isa, 28, Mohammed Hussain Ali, 54, and his sons, Nabeel, 33, Sadiq, 31, Abdulamir, 26.

From Duraz: Sayed Jawad Al Murshi, 17, Sayed Ibrahim Khalil Jawad, 22, Sayed Mohammed Sayed Hashim, 15, Sayed Sadiq Sayed Qassim, 15, Fadhel Abbas, 10-12, Sayed Ibrahim S. Khalil, 23, Sayed Jaffer Sayed Taher, 22, Sayed Ali S. Saeed, 26, Sayed Jaber Ahmed Hassan, 22, his brothers Esam, 19, Sayed Mahmood, 15, Abdulzahra Abdulla Ahmed, 23 (very sick person), Mahmood Abdulla Ahmed, 17, Abdull Adheem Maki's sons; Jaffer, 35, Taqi, 28, Shaker, 25, Hafedh, 17, Hussain, 15, and Zakareya, 19.

Twenty seven persons were arrested from Ras Roman (Manama), amongst them: Naser Ali, Mahmood Dhahi Abdulla, Mahdi Abdulhadi Khalifa, Shaker, Hisham, Mohammed, Hussain.

Mohammed Reda Eid was chased by security forces in Karzakkan and hit by a live bullet. He was taken to the military hospital.

On Friday March 1 at 20.30 local time the security forces attacked the small village of Abo-Gowa, 5 km west of the capital Manama. The siege by 400 fully-armed riot police continued until 03.00 Saturday, March 2. Houses were broken into and many young people were arbitrarily detained. Screams of women were heard as the undisciplined forces attacked houses and started beating children in front of their parents. This must be part of the "preventive measures" referred to by the prime minister in his recent statements.

This latest wave of arrests, and gratuitous assaults on private houses, is hardly likely to produce a calm atmosphere, in which political solutions could be sought to the problems of Bahrain, in a spirit of cooperation between all sections of the people. The conduct of the authorities is calculated to polarise the situation still further, between the al-Khalifas and their diminishing band of acolytes on the one side, and the democratic forces on the other. The violence and intransigence of the state is making it a great deal harder for the moderates to stick to their demands, and is encouraging those who say the only solution is to get rid of the al-Khalifa family entirely.

After many rounds of correspondence with you, I know better than to expect any analysis of the political situation in Bahrain from your end, or any comment on the points I raise. Unlike in other countries, you will not make inquiries about attacks on citizens and their property, or seek explanations of why the authorities resort to violence. All I can say is that I am sure these matters will be raised at the Human Rights Commission, and I hope that when Nicholas Bonsor speaks in Geneva on March 26, he will not ignore Bahrain altogether.

Tom Mundy,

Li

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9603038

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phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk

House of Lords

March 3, 1996

Dear Jeremy,

Having only written to you yesterday on the subject of Bahrain, and not yet posted the letter, I am nervous about writing again so soon and only do so because I learned just now that the Crown prince, HH Sheikh Hamid bin Issa al-Khalifa, is in London en route to Washington, and I assume that he may be calling on you tomorrow. I shall therefore fax this letter, and yesterday's, to you, in the hope that you may find time to look at them before you meet the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince was also Defence Minister, but he relinquished this post because of the difficulties it caused for protocol between him and his uncle, the Prime Minister. As Defence Minister, he was junior to his uncle, but when the Amir was out of the country, the Crown Prince stood in for his father and would have been senior to the uncle, who therefore used to leave the country with the ruler to avoid being put in what was seen as an embarrassing position. The Prime Minister controls the security forces, while the Crown Prince controls the army from behind the scenes, even though he is no longer the Defence Minister. The two men are rivals, and this is one reason why force is being used against innocent civilians. The Crown Prince would like to demonstrate his toughness by bringing in the army against unarmed demonstrators, and the Prime Minister cannot allow it to be suggested that he is unable to control the situation using his security forces.

If you have an opportunity of discussing the internal security situation with the Crown Prince, therefore, it would be useful if you could say that violence should not be used against peaceful demonstrators, as it has been in the past, with the loss of a number of lives. In the event that the army is used, please say that we would be extremely concerned if UK-supplied weapons were to be turned against unarmed civilians. Nor should unnecessary force or intimidation be used in the arrests of citizens, and the way the arrests of women were conducted on February 29 is an unfortunate example. We now have the names of six women, who were summoned using gratuitous force in the middle of the night of February 29-March 1.

I mentioned Mona Habib, 31, who has three children, the eldest of whom is 13; Zahra Salman, who has four children, aged 2, 4, 7 and 9, and her sister Iman, who has two children aged 3 and 5. The husbands of the first two ladies are also in jail, but the officers who summoned them at 02.00 said they had to report at 08.00 at the Criminal Investigation Department at Al-Adiya in Manama, warning them that if they failed to attend, they would be punished. So they had about five hours, in the middle of the night, to make arrangements for the care of their children.

The security forces came to the houses where the women were staying in large numbers, and after banging on the doors - at 01.30 in the morning - without waiting to see whether anybody would answer, they broke down the doors.

The other women whose names we now have are Huda al-Jallawi, 38, with four children, from Manama; Nazi Kerimi, 32, from Manama (the second arrest for her), and Zahra Abd-Ali, 19, unmarried, from Sitra.

As far as we know, none of the women arrested have been charged with any offence, but this inhuman treatment, and the lack of any consideration for the welfare of the children, is absolutely intolerable, and quite out of tune with Bahrain's tradition of respect for women. Please could you tell His Highness that we very much hope these women may be released on bail, particularly those with family responsibilities.

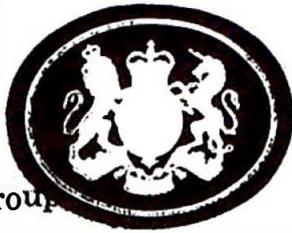
Last Thursday Ian Black in The Guardian reported a conversation he had with the Bahraini Foreign Minister, who inveighed against the presence of dissidents in Britain, who according to him were causing all the trouble. One day it is the Iranians, and another it is a handful of exiles in London who are masterminding the democratic opposition, the al-Khalifas profess to believe. They cannot stomach the fact that the ordinary people are acting spontaneously against their tyranny, as journalists like Robert Fisk, Christopher Walker, Ian Black and Simon Ingram have shown. I have talked to some of the courageous individuals in Bahrain who have stuck to their demands for reform, and I can assure His Highness they are not the sort of people who are going to dance to anybody else's tune. It may be impossible for the ruling élite to understand, but everybody in Bahrain is beginning to think for themselves.

If, however, the Crown Prince does raise the question of the exiles, and asks you why we can't dispose of them to some remote Caribbean island, as we are attempting to do for Dr al-Mas'ari, I wonder what you will say. You can't refuse on the grounds that we don't treat asylum seekers like that, when the only difference between Dr al-Mas'ari's case and that of the Bahraini dissidents is the size of the contracts their two governments can use to blackmail us. We shall learn that it doesn't pay to give way to blackmail, because the same demands can be made again and again, and the victim's power to refuse disappears with the first capitulation.

You might tell the Crown Prince, however, that ministers here are still subject to the law, and that your treatment of Dr al-Mas'ari may yet turn out to be unlawful. If that does happen, as I fervently hope, you will have no power to do the same to anybody else in his position, and the freedom of speech enjoyed by everybody within these islands will still apply to those who came here because they were deprived of the right in their own countries. In the meanwhile, in spite of Ann Widdecombe's threats, I hope you would agree that no similar action should be taken against any other asylum seeker until the lawfulness of Dr al-Mas'ari's removal has been determined by the courts.

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



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House of Lords
March 5, 1996

Dear Mr Rifkind

Al Hayyat reports that at your meeting with the Bahrain Crown Prince, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister yesterday, the Crown Prince criticised "the distortion of the Bahrain situation in some British news media", and that you replied "We are also concerned by the exaggeration we see" in presenting these events. You were reported to have added that your government supports Bahrain fully.

I gather that no press release was issued after the meeting, and that your press office did not authorise any direct quotation. They did say that you told the Crown Prince we had been perplexed by some of the reporting, which was considered a little alarmist. So apart from the use of the quotation marks, Al Hayyat was not far out.

I wondered which of the many reports on Bahrain over the last few weeks you considered alarmist, and which particular sections of the reports. Robert Fisk, for instance, wrote a great many words, and the other journalists I mentioned in Sunday's letters also spilled quite a bit of ink. There is room for some differences of perception, but I would say that on the whole the coverage was quite balanced, and I was surprised that you found it necessary to assent to the general attack launched by the Crown Prince. It would have been more fitting if you had called the attention of the Crown Prince to the freedom of expression we have in Britain, and the resulting diversity of viewpoints in our media. This is not a matter for concern, but rather of pride in the maintenance of certain principles, though I sometimes wonder if your government's feeling is not more often one of exasperation, when the results of applying our principles are economically or politically inconvenient.

May I in turn express concern, that you apparently expressed unqualified support for the government of Bahrain, if Al Hayyat has reported accurately what was said. In the past, Ministers have said that dialogue should be encouraged, but all the main protagonists are behind bars. Was nothing at all said about the detentions, and particularly the treatment of women? Do you also support the expulsion by Bahrain of its own citizens, the violent raids in the middle of the night, the denial of freedom of expression, and the régime's implacable resistance to the mildest of constitutional reforms? Have we now abandoned the policy laid down by Douglas Hurd, speaking to a conference organised by the Overseas Development Institute in London on June 6, 1990, when he said:

'Countries tending towards pluralism, public accountability, respect for the rule of law, human rights and market principles should be encouraged. Those who persist with repressive policies, with corrupt management or with wasteful and discredited economic systems should not expect us to support their folly with scarce aid resources which could be better used elsewhere'?

Yours sincerely,

The Rt Hon Malcolm Rifkind MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



House of Lords

March 7, 1996

Your Highness,

As a friend of the people of Bahrain, it has grieved me to witness the problems which have arisen in the country, and on becoming aware that Your Highness is going to be here again next week, I am writing to offer my services in attempting to break the impasse you are facing.

I know that Ministers at our Foreign Office have urged that the current problems of Bahrain should be addressed by dialogue, and this must surely be the route towards the restoration of harmony and unity between the people and their rulers. The question is, who should participate in the dialogue, and what subjects should be on the agenda.

With regard to the first part of the question, it would be logical to conduct the talks with the same leading citizens who were involved in the discussions of June to September 1995. Those persons are all in detention, but as a preliminary step, it may be expedient to discuss a proposed agenda with Bahrainis in exile. Even if the exiles are not considered to be fully representative of the whole of the people, they are all committed to peaceful solutions, and are aware of the policies of the various groups within the community and would know how they would react to any proposed agenda.

The framework I believe would command support would be based on confidence-building measures, leading to a substantive dialogue later on. As a tentative sequence, I would propose the following steps:

- The release of all women and minors from detention.
- A statement by the opposition welcoming this conciliatory gesture.
- A decree allowing all the political exiles to return, within a period to be decided.
- Initiation of a wide debate on means of repealing the state security law and restoring the constitution.
- Repeal of the state security law on the National Day in December 1996, and the promulgation of a decree permitting freedom of political activity, subject only to limitations required for the preservation of public order.

- When the Consultative Council comes to the end of its term of office in December 1996, preparations to begin for the election of a new Parliament in December 1997.

These proposals are not meant to be definitive, but are based on what I know of the petition signed by 25,000 citizens of Bahrain, and the conversations and correspondence I have had with prominent citizens, both inside and outside Bahrain. If you have any observations to make on them, I would very much welcome them, and they could be refined in the consultations I would initiate, if I have your authority to do so. The one thing of which I am certain is that the viewpoints expressed by a substantial, and influential, section of the population, cannot be totally ignored without serious risk to the security and stability of Bahrain.

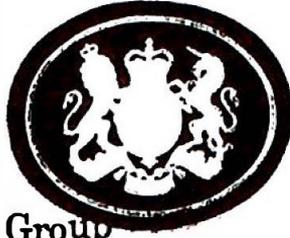
I have no axe to grind, no hidden agenda, or financial interest. My only concern is the peaceful development of Bahrain, in the interests of all its citizens, and taking into account the principles of good government. The services of a dispassionate outside observer could be of some help in resolving the present crisis. I would be grateful for an audience with you next week, so that we could discuss the general principle of a dialogue, how it can be initiated, and the assistance I might be able to provide.

*I have the honour to be,
Your Highness's most humble and obedient servant,
Archiy*

H H Sheikh Hamid bin-Issa al-Khalifa,
c/o Embassy of the State of Bahrain,
98 Gloucester Road,
London SW7 4AU

c the Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



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March 12, 1996

Dear Jeremy

It is reported that there was an explosion in the automatic teller of the National Bank of Bahrain in Isa Town on March 6, killing Mr Mohammed Hassan Taher (22) from Iskan-Jedhafs (the new residential area of Jedhafs). His two companions, Mr Mohammed Al-Mukhtar and Mr Aqeel Naji, both from Iskan-Jedhafs also, were injured, the former seriously. According to their families, the three had decided to go together to withdraw some money at about 21.30, and their car was parked opposite the bank, in a street which was busy at that time of the evening.

Following the explosion, Mr Naji took the other two men to a hospital (we are not sure which one), and from there he telephoned his own family and the families of his friends, to let them know what had happened. The families rushed to the hospital and arrived there at the same time as officers of the State Intelligence Service. Mr Naji just had time to say to the wife of the deceased 'They killed your husband', before he was taken away. Mr Al-Mukhtar was not seen by his family, but they gathered that he was seriously hurt.

Later the same night, members of the intelligence department raided the houses of the three persons. Ibrahim Naji (brother of Aqeel Naji) was wanted for arrest but since he had not been there, another brother, Ibrahim, was taken hostage until the next day when Ibrahim gave himself up. The families of the three insist that their sons had nothing to do with the explosion.

The family of the dead man, Mr Taher, had been calling at the headquarters of the SIS every day since the incident, asking for the body of their son for burial, but were told that the SIS had no knowledge of him. They got the same answer at the hospital. Then, just after midnight last night, the SIS contacted the family and said that if they attended at Sanabis cemetery at 04.00 this morning, they would be allowed to bury their son there, but nobody except the immediate family would be allowed to participate in the burial.

The family said they could not accept these arrangements, and this morning they were notified that their son had been buried secretly by the authorities, at al-Hura cemetery in Manama. The family then went to al-Khamis police station near their home, but were referred to al-Hura police station. They went there and there was an exchange of words, culminating in a threat by a police officer that the members of the family would meet the same fate as their son if they didn't leave the station at once.

The family then returned home, where neighbours began to gather as the news spread. The police then attacked and dispersed the crowd.

It has always been the practice of the authorities to hand over the body of any person who dies in custody to the next of kin, even where the deceased may have committed a serious criminal offence. It is mandatory for the dead to be buried as soon as possible under Islam, and there must have been some very unusual factors in this case, to have caused a departure from this religious obligation.

We understand that the families of the two survivors of the explosion have not been allowed to see them, and are not aware of where they are being held. When any detainees are held for prolonged periods without being brought before a court, and without access by family or lawyers, there is a risk of torture, and there have been a number of cases of torture in Bahrain over the last 16 months. The authorities have published a statement claiming that Mr Naji has confessed to planning sabotage and arson, and to having links with overseas organisations; we fear that if he did make such a statement, it may have been extracted from him by torture, and that the reason for denial of access is to stop this becoming known.

You have told me that whenever I draw such matters to your attention, you ask our Embassy in Manama to inquire into them. I have refrained from troubling you recently, because these procedures always draw a blank. The circumstances of this case are so unusual, however, that you may think they need to be explained. Certainly the people in the area of the dead man's family have shown their concern, and they do not believe the sketchy accounts published by the authorities.

If this, and the other mysterious explosions which have occurred recently, were part of a conspiracy to destabilise Bahrain and undermine the ruling family, the perpetrators have chosen some odd targets. An unoccupied lavatory in the Meridien Hotel, and a cashpoint at a bank outside the capital, are not the obvious choices for the supposedly foreign-inspired terrorist organisation, and there may be other explanations for these phenomena. The way this episode has been handled shows that there is something the authorities want to hide.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9620031

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

House of Lords

March 20, 1996

Dear Mr Davies

Please may I table the following for written answer:

Lord Avebury to ask Her Majesty's Government

How many British citizens were arrested and detained in Saudi Arabia in 1995; in respect of how many were the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations not fully complied with; how many of them have since been charged, and how many have been the subject of unsupported allegations but released 'as a gesture of goodwill', without the allegations being rescinded.

What information has been provided to them about the arrest and detention without trial of women in Bahrain; about attacks by security forces on schoolchildren, and about the taking of hostages from the families of persons sought by the security forces; and whether, as part of our policy of helping to ensure the security and stability of Bahrain, the government will urge the authorities there to refrain from provocative acts, and to enter into a dialogue with the democratic opposition.

Whether they will intercede with the Ruler of Bahrain, H H Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman al-Khalifa, to commute the death sentence on 'Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar, which was upheld by the Court of Cassation on March 17, bearing in mind the concern expressed by Amnesty International that the trial did not comply with the 1984 United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty (paragraph 5), and their fears that the defendant may have been convicted on the basis of a confession extracted under torture.

Whether they will ask the Commonwealth Secretariat to conduct an inquiry into the compatibility of changes proposed to the Zambia Constitution with the Harare Declaration.

Whether they are aware that the indefinite detention of Fred M'membe, editor in chief of the Post and Bright Mwape, managing editor of the Post, on charges of contempt of Parliament, is being justified by the Zambian authorities on the grounds that their Parliament inherited these powers from the United Kingdom; whether they will ask the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association to conduct a seminar on the use of contempt powers by Parliaments, and if, in the meanwhile, they will ask the Zambian Parliament to suspend the detention of the journalists, pending clarification of the precedents.

Yours sincerely
Eric Mackay

Michael Davies Esq,
Clerk Assistant,
Fax 0171-219 0246



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9620031

House of Lords
email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

March 20, 1996

Dear Mr King

As promised, I give below the text of the report in Al Hayyat, as repeated by the BBC's Summary of World Broadcasts:

Defence minister says UK, USA support measures "to safeguard security"

Source: 'Al-Hayat', London, in Arabic 15 Mar 96

Text of report by London-based newspaper 'Al-Hayat' on 15th March

Manama, 'Al-Hayat': Shaykh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifah, the heir apparent and commander in chief of the defence force of the state of Bahrain, has said that his talks with officials in the United Kingdom stressed "the importance of stability in the Gulf region and the rejection of any kind of interference that threatens the security and stability of this vital region".

Shaykh Hamad pointed out upon his return to Bahrain yesterday after an official visit to Britain and the United States and after his participation in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit that Britain had "expressed once again its support for the measures taken by Bahrain to safeguard its security and stability and to protect its cultural achievements".

He said that "our talks with British Armed Forces Minister Nicholas Soames were useful and fruitful. We agreed, within the framework of the Bahraini-British military committee's annual meeting, on a number of points, including increasing joint exercises and the number of places allocated to the defence force's personnel at British military colleges and institutes, in addition to supplying the Bahraini defence force with their military needs".

On his visit to the United States, the Bahraini heir apparent said that "the meetings with senior politicians and military officials emphasized the strengthening of the foundations of friendship and alliance between the two countries, which are bound by deep-rooted cooperation in protecting Gulf security".

Shaykh Hamad added: "We encountered in various US executive and legislative circles US understanding of the wise measures taken by Bahrain to safeguard its security and achievements against subversive and violent actions."

He pointed out that the meeting with Defence Secretary William Perry and his senior aides at the General Staff and the US Central Command resulted in an agreement to reinforce military and strategic cooperation between the two countries. The Americans stressed "the importance of Bahrain's role in safeguarding security and stability in the Gulf region, in addition to US appreciation for and pride in the staunch relations with the state of Bahrain because of this vital role" .

He added: "We encountered every support from the Americans with a view to enhancing prospects for military cooperation between the two countries and bolstering the capabilities of the Bahraini defence force's units by providing them with the latest equipment and weapons."

He said: "To confirm this, the following was agreed:

"1. That the Bahraini navy would be supplied with an advanced frigate to enhance its combat capability;

"2. that the Bahraini defence force would be supplied with an advanced air defence system, which will be put into service soon;

"3. that joint exercises would continue in view of their positive results, in addition to the stepping up of the work of the military committee, which will convene its next meeting in the state of Bahrain."

In a reference to his participation in the Sharm al-Shaykh summit, Shaykh Hamad stressed that recent terrorist incidents in the Middle East and the world "have proved the soundness of the principled and fixed position adopted by Bahrain on this epidemic phenomenon that is threatening peace and stability everywhere in the world. They have also confirmed the soundness of Bahrain's warnings about the dangers of being lenient in any way with this phenomenon."

I wondered whether Mr Soames had made any statement to the newspaper, or whether any communiqué was issued about the talks.

James Ince

Eric Arden

Doug King Esq,
Office of the Hon Nicholas Soames MP,
Fax 0171-218 7610



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

20 March 1996

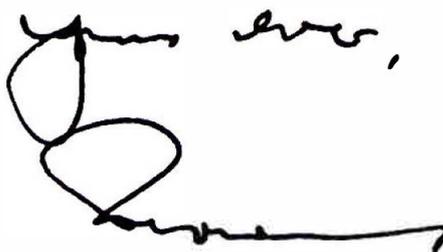
From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

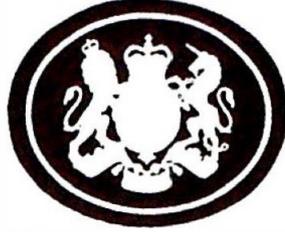
Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 2 March about Bahrain, which has been copied to our Embassy. I have read the articles you mentioned. You might be interested in the enclosed copy of a letter to The Independent by Hugh Tunnell, our former Ambassador. This sets out a more balanced view, with which I agree.

We continue to follow the situation in Bahrain closely and were dismayed at the recent violent incidents there. I have told you that we remain ready to offer what advice we can to assist Bahrain in finding a lasting peaceful solution to its current difficulties. But it is for the Bahrainis themselves to find the path which is right for them.

Yours ever,


THE RT. HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9625034

100275,1565
phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk

House of Lords

March 25, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I wrote to you on March 3 (Ref P9603038) asking if you would raise human rights issues with the Crown Prince of Bahrain, HH Sheikh Hamid bin Issa al-Khalifa, who I assumed you would be meeting during his visit to London en route to Washington, and I do not appear to have had a reply.

Among other issues, I mentioned the cases of six women, who were summoned using gratuitous force in the middle of the night of February 29-March 1. The details are as follows:

Mona Habib, 34, who has three children, the eldest of whom is 13; she is the wife of Mohammad Jamil al-Jamri, who has been in custody since 1988.

Zahra Salman Helal, 32, who has four children, Maryam, 2, Ma'ali, 4, Baqer, 7 and Hawra, 9, and her sister Iman, who has two children aged 3 and 5. Her husband Ahmad Mahdi Salman has been detained without charge or trial since January 18, 1995. She was detained herself between April 1 and May 29, 1995 and was tortured. One of her teeth is missing, and she has continuing pains. During her two month ordeal she was not allowed to wash or change her clothes, though the temperature was continuously above 40C. For one week of her detention she was hospitalised, and when she came out she weighed a mere 38 kilos, though she is 5' 10" tall.

The officers who summoned these two women at 02.00 said they had to report at 08.00 at the Criminal Investigation Department at Al-Adiya in Manama, warning them that if they failed to attend, they would be punished. So they had about five hours, in the middle of the night, to make arrangements for the care of their children.

Iman Salman Helal, 24, has two children, Ahmad, 5, and Walaa, 3. She was also summoned by the security forces in 1995 and beaten up in front of her mother.

The security forces came to the houses where the women were staying in large numbers, and after banging on the doors - at 01.30 in the morning - without waiting to see whether anybody would answer, they broke down the doors.

The other women whose names we were given are Huda al-Jallawi, 38, with four children, from Manama; Nazi Kerimi, 32, from Manama (the second arrest for her), with two children, and Zahra Abd-Ali, 19, unmarried, from Sitra.

As far as we know, none of the women arrested have been charged with any offence, but this inhuman treatment, and the lack of any consideration for the welfare of the children, is absolutely intolerable, and quite out of tune with Bahrain's tradition of respect for women.

The women listed above have been held in an unknown place of detention, and have not been allowed visits by any relative or lawyer.

When I came to see you about Bahrain, you assured me that all the matters I draw to your attention are thoroughly investigated, and I pointed out that there was never any feedback. Here is a good example. Have you made inquiries about these women, and specifically about why they are being held incommunicado, without charge or trial? The answer to this question must be yes or no. If it is no, please just say so, and I will see if I can get the American Embassy in Manama to help. At least the State Department, in its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1995, is prepared to acknowledge that

Government security forces used the State Security Law regularly to detain persons engaging in antiregime activities, and those attempting to exercise their rights of free speech, association, or other rights in opposition to the Al-Khalifa regime.

It would be helpful if you would also admit this, and do something to dissuade your friends from picking on women, especially those with the responsibility of caring for several children.

Yours sincerely,

JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your reference: P9612034

London SW1A 2AH

25 March 1996

From The Minister of State

Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Thank you for your two identical letters of 12 March about Bahrain.

As I am sure you know, there are a number of different accounts of the circumstances surrounding the bomb attack on the National Bank of Bahrain on 6 March. The version in your letter is wholly at variance with the account given by the Bahraini authorities, which we have no reason to doubt. I might add that your suggestion that the Bahraini Government was responsible for this and other attacks strikes me as totally implausible. It is hardly in Bahrain's interest that such incidents should take place.

Whatever the motives of those responsible, I hope you would agree that such terrorist acts should be condemned by all responsible individuals and organisations. The recent summit at Sharm El-Sheikh symbolised this Government's determination to resist terrorist activities by all means in our power.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY .MP

WRITTEN ANSWER

The Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government:

what information has been provided to them about the arrest and detention without trial of women in Bahrain, about attacks by security forces on school children and about the taking of hostages from the families of persons sought by the security forces and whether, as part of their policy of helping to ensure the security and stability of Bahrain, they will urge the Bahraini authorities to refrain from provocative acts and to enter into dialogue with the democratic opposition. [20 March]

LORD CHESHAM: We receive information on events in Bahrain from a number of sources and continue to follow developments closely. It is for the Bahraini authorities themselves to judge how best and within what timescale to address concerns there. We condemn violence and encourage political solutions.

Chesham

TUESDAY 26 MARCH 1996

WRITTEN ANSWER

The Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government:

whether they will intercede with the Ruler of Bahrain, His Highness Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman al-Khalifa, to commute the death sentence of 'Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar, which was upheld by the Court of Cession on 17 March, bearing in mind the concern expressed by Amnesty International that the trial did not comply with the 1984 United Nations Safeguards guaranteeing the protection of the rights of those facing the death penalty (paragraph 5) and their fears that the defendant may have been convicted on the basis of a confession extracted under torture.
[20 March]

BARONESS CHALKER OF WALLASEY: Mr Qambar was executed on 26 March.

He had been convicted by the Bahraini High Criminal Court for the murder of a policeman. Our Embassy in Bahrain followed this case closely and on the basis of the information they obtained, we did not consider that there were any grounds for intervention.

Chalker of Wallasey

MONDAY 1 APRIL 1996

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9603041

House of Lords
email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

April 3, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I enclose a copy of our report on Bahrain, which was published yesterday.

As you will have noticed from the reports of our press conference, I was obliged to make some criticisms of the FCO's attitude towards the human rights violations in Bahrain. Your practice is to say that you will draw the matters we raise to the attention of our Embassy in Manama, but we never get any feedback on the specific allegations, except when you say point blank that you disagree, without citing evidence, or that you do not think any intercession was justified. As I have said to you during this correspondence, there is a glaring contrast between the reaction of Ministers to human rights violations in Bahrain, and in other countries such as Nigeria, Guatemala, Vietnam or Sudan, where we do get proper replies dealing with the facts as the FCO sees them. In other countries you attend trials (eg Yasar Kemal in Turkey); accept that allegations need to be investigated (eg the visit by the European Union representative to parts of Oromia in Ethiopia); criticise the excessive use of armed force against civilians (Chechnya) etc. During the whole of our correspondence, and the exchanges with your predecessors, I have not seen a word of criticism of the authorities in Bahrain, or any recognition of the dangers of their intransigence.

Britain could have deflected the ruling family from its policy of confrontation, I believe, and has chosen not to do so. The consequences of your fainéantisme are apparent already, and you will have to shoulder the responsibility for the destruction of the very security and stability which you profess to be aiding.

Yours sincerely

JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9611048

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

House of Lords

April 11, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I enclose a faxed copy I received of a letter to the Foreign Secretary from Mrs Masooma Salman Helal, whose two sisters have been detained incommunicado in Bahrain since they were roused from their sleep at 03.00 on February 29 and told to report within five hours to the Criminal Investigation Department. I drew these cases to your attention, and also failed to elicit any response from you.

Will you please ask the Bahrain authorities

- ◆ why they are detaining these women;
- ◆ where they are being held;
- ◆ why they are being held incommunicado;
- ◆ when they will be either charged or released;
- ◆ when they will be allowed to see their children;
- ◆ when they will be granted access to lawyers.

If you were prepared merely to ask these simple questions, I am sure it would have the effect of concentrating their minds on the problem. What the authorities are doing is completely outside the boundaries of civilised behaviour, and I am really ashamed that by our silence, we are accomplices in the inhuman treatment of these women.

I shall be in Geneva next week, and I intend speaking to some EU Ambassadors there in the hope that I can get more action from other governments than I have managed from my own.

Yours sincerely

Eric

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your ref: P9625034

London SW1A 2AH

15 April 1996

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Lord Avebury,

Thank you for your letter to Mr Hanley of 25 March about Bahrain. I am replying in the Minister's absence on duty overseas.

Unfortunately, we do not appear to have received your letter of 3 March (Ref P9603038). I have sent a copy of your latest letter to our Embassy in Bahrain the Minister will write to you as soon as we have any news.

As you are aware from my earlier letter, the Embassy in Bahrain do their best to obtain information on the cases you raise. It may take some time to gather the varied information requested, but the Embassy remain in close touch with the Bahraini authorities, who are being helpful.

Yours sincerely
eh SS

C P Skilton
(Assistant Private Secretary to
The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP)

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



House of Lords

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

P9619042

April 18, 1996

Dear Tony

I wrote to you on February 8 about the arrest of Ahmed al-Shamlan, among other matters, and I cannot trace any reply. I attach a copy for ease of reference.

We have now received an Urgent Action from Amnesty International, saying that Mr al-Shamlan appeared before the State Security Court on April 17, charged with 'possessing and acquiring literature containing false information abroad'. The charge sheet was given to the defence one hour (sic) before the proceedings started, and the defence asked for an adjournment to prepare the case. Unusually, this was granted, and the resumed hearing is on April 22.

/// Could our Embassy please try to send an observer to the resumed hearing on Monday? ///

Yours sincerely

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

P9623041

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

April 23, 1996

I wrote to you last week about the trial of Mr Ahmad Al-Shamlan. Apparently the hearing was on April 21, not 22 as I had informed you, but I would be grateful if you would let me know whether our Embassy did in fact try to observe the proceedings as I suggested.

We understand that the hearing of the State Security Court on the case of Mr Al-Shamlan was adjourned until next month. His lawyers asked for bail, and the court agreed to release him, but our information is that the intelligence department has not yet complied with the court's decision. However, the crude attempt to frame Mr Al-Shamlan on absurd charges has backfired. He is of course a prominent Sunni liberal, so the case has underlined the fact that the democracy movement extends to all religious and political sections of the community.

The case of Mr Al-Shamlan has put the government in a no-win situation. If they can get a conviction in the State Security Court - which may still be possible because these 'courts' have never allowed the lack of evidence to stand in the way of a prison sentence - then Mr Al-Shamlan will become a powerful symbol of the unity of the people against the Ruler. If on the other hand, he is acquitted, this would cast doubt on the convictions secured against other defendants behind locked doors.

You have always sought to avoid making any substantive comment on Bahraini questions I have brought to your attention. On this occasion I hope you will depart from your usual practice and give me your assessment of the Al-Shamlan case. I hope you will also suggest to the authorities that if a defendant is not even released when the State Security Court makes an order to that effect, the rule of law is not being observed.

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your ref: P9603041

24 April 1996

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 3 April, enclosing a copy of your report on Bahrain.

I am grateful to you and your colleagues for your report, which we have studied carefully. Your letter and report once again make clear that we differ in our approach to this issue.

We do, of course, share your concerns about recent problems in Bahrain. Bahrain is a good friend and ally whose stability is a matter of great concern to us. We stay in close touch with the Bahraini authorities and offer them help and advice in a wide range of areas. We draw the attention of the Government of Bahrain to reports we receive about alleged human rights abuses, and know that they take these seriously. We also encourage them to have a constructive relationship with organisations such as the International Committee for the Red Cross.

As you are aware, our view remains that this kind of quiet diplomacy is the best way forward with the Bahrainis.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

30 April 1996

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

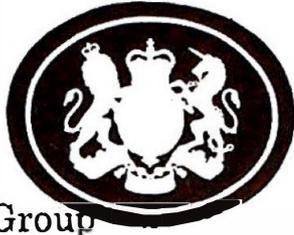
Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letter of 18 April about Mr Ahmed al-Shamlan, a Bahraini national, enclosing your letter of 8 February, which we had not received.

I understand that Mr al-Shamlan was released on 22 April pending a final judgement which is due on 5 May. The Bahraini authorities have also informed us that Hoda Al Jallawi was released on 16 March and that the other ladies mentioned in your letter of 25 March were due to be released during the past few days, pending final judgements.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9601053

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk House of Lords
Compuserve 100275,1565

May 1, 1996

Dear Ms McAlvey

This is just to confirm my telephone call, when I told you that we had telephoned Bahrain this morning, and there was no sign of the release of the women mentioned in my letter of March 25, who were 'due to be released during the past few days', according to the Bahraini authorities. (See Mr Hanley's letter of April 30).

As I also mentioned, we were surprised by the mention of 'charges' against these women. The families know of no charges, though I must emphasise that no relative has seen the women since the day they were taken into custody. Could you ask our Embassy to inquire why it has been thought necessary to deprive them of all contact with the outside world, including their own children?

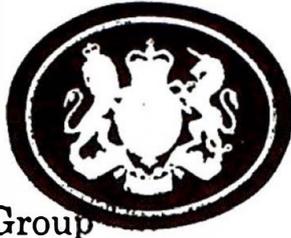
On the case of Mr al-Shamlan, it would be greatly appreciated if our Embassy could at least ask permission to attend the proceedings on March 5 when he will be sentenced. I am sure the authorities would not agree to such a request, but this would underline the total lack of transparency of the State Security Courts.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Avebury

Ms Diane McAlvey,
Office of The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9604057

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk House of Lords
Compuserve 100275,1565

May 4, 1996

Dear Ms McAlvey

Further to my letter of May 1, about the women detained incommunicado and without charge in Bahrain, the latest we have is that Mona Habib and Iman Salman were released, but Zahra Salman and Nazi Kerimi are definitely still in custody, and we have no news of Zahra Abd-Ali. As you may recall, Zahra Salman has four children aged 2, 4, 7 and 9, so it is particularly brutal to have kept her from them without a word of explanation or contact.

I very much hope the Minister will remonstrate with the Bahraini authorities for having misinformed us about the release of these women, and will make a renewed appeal for them to free the remaining detainees forthwith.

At the same time, perhaps our Ambassador could inquire what are the 'charges' said to have been preferred against the women. They have not been told of any charges, though Mona Habib and Iman Salman had to pay 'bail' of 200 dinars (about \$500). It would be useful to know how a person who has not been charged can be made to pay bail none the less.

Iman Salman is six months pregnant, so her incarceration has been a terrible ordeal for her.

Yours sincerely,

Eric Burdett

Ms Diane McAlvey,
Office of The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

7 May 1996

London SW1A 2AH

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
LONDON
SW1A 0PW

From The Minister of State

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letters of 20, 23 and 25 April about Bahrain.

The Bahraini authorities have told us that defendants involved in either State Security offences or normal criminal offences have the right to appoint lawyers to represent them at any time after their arrest. In practice, many wait until their case is heard in the trial court, at which time the court is bound by law to appoint a defence lawyer, free of charge. We also understand that at least one relative may be present at hearings in either court.

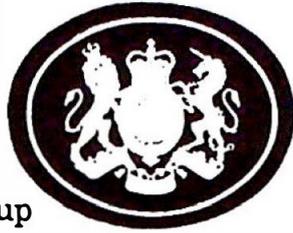
As you are aware from my letter of 30 April, we have been advised that Mr Al Shamlan was released on 22 April pending a judgement on 5 May. We have certainly heard nothing to suggest that Mr Al Shamlan has not been released. We shall be following the developments in his case.

I have already made clear that we consider quiet diplomacy to be the best way forward with the Bahrainis. Given our limited resources it would not be reasonable to expect the Embassy to verify all of the diverse events contained in your letters. But the Embassy have been active in bringing cases, and your concerns, to the attention of the authorities.

I take great exception to the final paragraph of your letter of 25 April. The Government deplores all abuses of human rights, wherever they take place. We treat all allegations of human rights abuse seriously. The promotion of human rights is an area of policy to which I am personally very committed. I had hoped that this would have been made clear to you in our meeting in January.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9609051

House of Lords
9 May 1996

Dear Donald

Thanks for your letter about Bahrain, and the copy of Derek Fatchett's question. It is indeed useful to have this promise of representations on the record, but it would be even better if we could be assured that the FCO were conscious of the nature and scale of the violations. As we see it, they fall into the following categories:

- The arbitrary detention of hundreds of people, including women and children, incommunicado and in some cases accompanied by torture.
- Security force raids on villages, involving unnecessary battering down of doors, destruction of household property, and intimidation of residents, as a form of collective punishment.
- Closure of Shi'a mosques, arrest of preachers, and now, the assumption of control over the appointment of Imams which strikes at the heart of Shi'a customs.
- The total boycott by the ruling family of the recognisable leaders of the opposition. Every one of them is in prison, and the government have refused to speak to them or to discuss their modest demands.
- Use of disproportionate force when, in frustration, people have taken to the streets to voice their demands.
- Criminalised the transmission overseas of any information about the activities of the democracy movement inside the country, and rigid control of the media within Bahrain.
- Forcible exile of dissidents.

Instead of supporting the anachronistic monarchy through thick and thin, as we always appear to be doing, we should be firmly encouraging the Ruler and his family to share power, and move towards constitutionalism, democracy and freedom of expression.

*Yours
Li*

Donald Anderson Esq MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group



P9609056

House of Lords

May 9, 1996

Dear Jeremy

Thank you for your letter of May 7 about Bahrain.

I heard this morning that Zahra Salman was released yesterday, and we think that all five of the women referred to in my letter of March 3 have now been freed. The fact is, however, that their arbitrary detention, incommunicado, was a gross violation of human rights. To part mothers from their children in this way is absolutely inhuman, and even if they had been accused of serious offences - which is not the case as you know - they could have been given bail without any risk that they would abscond, deserting their children.

As to Mr Al Shamlan, we knew that he had been released on bail, and I can also tell you that he was acquitted on May 5. As far as we are aware, the prosecution offered no evidence on the serious charges made against him, and it is clear that his arrest and imprisonment were politically motivated.

If we can receive reports on all these events in Bahrain, I don't understand why the British Embassy, which is on the spot and has a great deal more resources than I have. If they can't verify what we say, then they can ask the authorities whether the allegations made are true or not. Since I first wrote to you about the arrest of the women, you have not said whether you accept the accounts we have given or not, and I still don't know whether the details of their treatment as reported to us have been put to the Bahraini authorities. The best way you can demonstrate your commitment to human rights would be by positive action, and you can still put specific allegations to the authorities in a restrained and moderate tone of voice, consistent with your belief in quiet diplomacy. After all the many letters we have exchanged, I am still in the dark as to whether you put them at all, and if so, whether you ever have any response from the government.

Yours sincerely

JH

The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Your ref: P9601053 and P9604056

London SW1A 2AH

14 May 1996

From The Minister of State

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

Dear Eric,

Thank you for your letters of 1 and 4 May about Bahrain.

I understand that a number of detainees have been released. The Embassy are in the process of obtaining further information about the women you have mentioned in your letters. I will write to you again once I have news.

The Bahraini authorities have informed us that Mr Al Shamlan has been acquitted.

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



P9618051

From Lord Avebury
Chairman
Parliamentary Human Rights Group

email phrg@phrg.demon.co.uk
Compuserve 100275,1565

House of Lords

May 18, 1996

Dear Jeremy

I hope you managed to view Sue Lloyd-Roberts' programme on BBC2 last Saturday, or to read her article in The Times on that day. She reinforces what had been said before, with film of the security forces and of the gratuitous attacks on peoples' homes.

On May 10, residents of Daih took to the street and clashed with the security forces. In the course of the evening, a young mentally disabled person, Abdul Amir Hassan Rustum, 25, was severely beaten. The following morning his mother said she was going to take him to the hospital but he was afraid of any contact with the authorities, and fled home to a neighbouring shop, where he collapsed and died. People in the neighbourhood concluded that he had succumbed to the injuries he had sustained the previous day, though as usual in these cases of violent death in Bahrain, there was no post-mortem.

On May 8, security forces besieged a mosque in Karzakkan and severely beat the religious scholar, Sheikh Khalil, together with others who were in the mosque at the time. Clashes continued in Karzakkan, as the security forces tried to stop the family of Fadhil Abbas Marhoon - who was killed on May 6 - from holding funeral rituals in the Hooraa cemetery where he had been buried without their permission or presence.

The following were known to have been arrested:

From Sar: Seyed Hussain Mahfoodh, 20; Seyed Hassan Saleh, 18; Hussain Mohammed Saeed, 19; Yahya Abdul Rasool, 19; Idris Abdul Rasool, 22; Mohammed Jaffer; Moslem Jaffer, 21; Seyed Ghazi Abdul Nabi, 24; Seyed Ali Salman, 20; Seyed Jaffer Salman, 27; Yonis Mansoor; Seyed Fadhil Ahmad, 15.

From Bani Jamra: Mahmood Jaffer Ahmad, 18; Ali Ahmad Al-Tureifi, 21; Hussain Abdulla Al-Serh.

From Manama: Hussain Huwaida.

On May 15 the State Security Court was due to try Mohammed Sahwan, from Sanabis, and Jaber Al Shuala, from Manama, on charges of causing the death of a police officer in December 1994, at the start of the uprising. The group of people accused of setting fire to the Zayton Restaurant in Sitra (where 7 Bangladeshis died) were to appear for the second time before the SSC, and it was feared that defence lawyers would not be given adequate time to prepare these cases, or be able to call witnesses.

As you may know, in March the ruling family issued an unconstitutional decree transferring jurisdiction over more than eighty offences from the ordinary criminal courts to the SSC. It was of course the creation of the SSC in 1974 by the Amir that led to the dissolution of the Parliament in 1975. According to the constitution, any decree issued without the consent of Parliament is illegal. Nevertheless the SSC has now been enlarged to four departments located inside jails and other fortified locations. Prisoners are brought before the courts for summary trials lasting sometimes no more than half an hour, in which arbitrary sentences are handed down.

On May 8, this illegal court jailed 11 people for one to five years for anti-government protests. The SSC, whose rulings cannot be appealed, sentences four men to one year each, plus a 500 dinar (\$1,300) fine. Six others received three years each, and one received five years. The effect of these proceedings is seen to be the exact opposite of the ruling family's intentions; instead of being intimidated, young people are hardened by these injustices, and more unrest can be expected.

Five people who were arrested on April 7, 1995, and charged with arson of a villa belonging to the President of the Shura Council, Mr Ibrahim Humaidan, appeared before the ordinary criminal court in mid-February and were acquitted. Now the five - Hamad Isa Sahlan (22), Hussein Isa (21), Abdul-Shahid Isa (19), Ali Hassan (21) and Monir Hassan (18), all from Ekr village, have been charged with the same offence before the SSC. This contravenes two universally agreed judicial norms: that a person cannot be tried twice for the same offence, and that no law can retrospectively increase penalties.

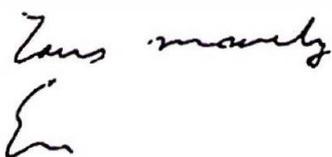
On May 8, official newspapers reported that the explosion in Sanabis the previous day, which demolished a three-storey house, killing a mother, father and five year old boy as well as injuring four others, was caused by the family themselves, while they were handling illegal explosives. The story changed a day later, when the Ministry of the Interior said that "*the lab tests conducted confirmed that the explosion that took place at a house in the Sanabis area.... was caused by a strong gas leak near a heat spark*".

The explosion occurred at about 16.00 on the afternoon of May 7, killing Salman al-Taitoun (33), his wife Sadheela and their little boy, Ali. Mysteriously, the proprietor of the samosa shop on the ground floor had not opened the shop on the day in question and has since disappeared. Nobody believes the story about a gas leak, because in Bahrain they do not have mains gas. It is said that there were gas cylinders on the ground floor of the building, but they were undamaged by the explosion. It is very rare, though not entirely unknown, for a propane cylinder to explode, and certainly not for it to cause a whole building to collapse. Nobody believes the official account, and conversely they think that the explosion was caused by the security forces, as a warning to the people that terrorism can be used against them.

The change of story was being linked to Ashora (due to start today and lasting until May 27), when the Shia of Bahrain commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed. The security forces were believed to be planning a confrontation for this occasion, with the aim of inflicting the maximum damage on the Shia community, derailing the pro-democracy campaign and painting an image of sectarianism.

I know from all our previous correspondence that you do refer my letters to our Embassy, but you avoid making comments except when you have something favourable to say about the authorities. For instance, concerning the detention of the women arrested at the end of February and held incommunicado, you made no comment on the 2 am raids on their homes, the short time given to make arrangements for the care of their children, or the inhuman refusal to let them see their children for the whole time they were detained, but you wrote to say that the authorities had released them before it had actually happened! Similarly you wrote to inform me of Mr al-Shamlan's acquittal in your letter of May 14, after I had already given you that information in my letter of May 9. It would be useful if you did have something to say about the practice of arbitrarily detaining the mothers of small children, or of bringing manifestly false or ill-founded charges against a lawyer to shut him up.

I enclose lists of detainees, given to us by the Bahrain Human Rights Organisation.



The Rt Hon Jeremy Hanley MP,
Foreign & Commonwealth Office,
Whitehall,
London SW1A 2AH.



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

31 May 1996

London SW1A 2AH

The Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

From The Minister of State

Dear Eric,

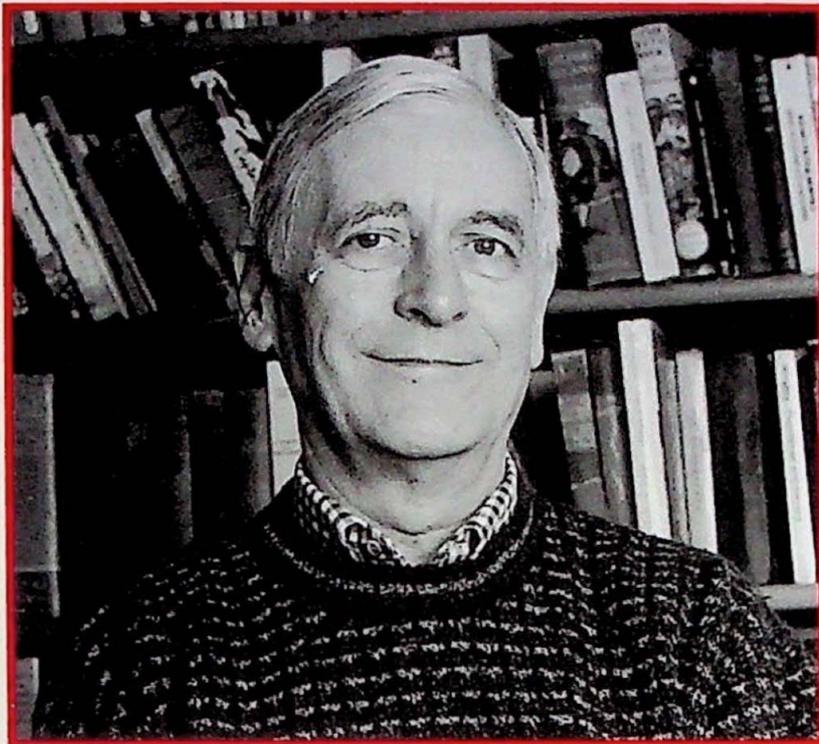
Thank you for your letters of 18 and 24 May about Bahrain which I have sent to our Embassy.

Our view of the situation in Bahrain is well known to you.

We cannot confirm the reports of detention and torture of the individuals who spoke to Sue Lloyd Roberts. I have asked the Embassy to try to establish the facts from the authorities and will let you know of any news I receive.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON JEREMY HANLEY MP



AVEBURY, 4th Baron. Eric Reginald Lubbock, b. September 29, 1928. Educated Upper Canada College and Balliol College Oxford (BA Engineering, 1949); Welsh Guards (Second Lieut) 1949-51; Rolls Royce Ltd 1951-56 (technical assistant to the foundry Manager); Production Engineering Ltd 1956-60; Charterhouse Group Ltd 1969-62; Liberal MP for Orpington 1962-70; Liberal Chief Whip 1963-70; Chairman, Parliamentary Civil Liberties Committee 1964-70; Member, Mr Speaker's Conference on Electoral Law 1963-5; Member, Select Committee on Science and Technology 1968-70; President, Data Processing Management Association, 1972-75; President, Fluoridation Society, 1972-84; President, Conservation Society, 1973-83; President, London Bach Society, 1984- Member, Royal Commission on Standards of Conduct in Public Life. 1974-76; Chairman Parliamentary Human Rights Group 1976-; Liberal Spokesman on Immigration and Race Relations, 1971-83. Member, Institution of Mechanical Engineers (MIMEchE), Member British Computer Society (MBCS).

Chairman, Parliamentary Human Rights Group since its inception in 1976. In that capacity has been on missions to Sri Lanka, Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, South Africa, Guyana, Uruguay, Turkey, northern Iraq, Abkhazia, and Armenia.