



Formula One is a time to rethink

DAMON Hill's statement reported in *The Guardian* and *The Telegraph* newspapers is very important for the future of Bahrain and Formula One on so many different fronts.

It is about us seeking the truth and then making a judgement – principles of innocent before proven guilty, rather than the logic that seems to pervade the international media and celebrities.

For a sport so precise in its detailed analysis, what is very clear is that when it comes to Bahrain there is very little fact checking.

1] The picture portrayed by the irresponsible opposition leaders is wholly false. Bahrain is not living in a police state. A police state would simply not allow them to communicate as freely as they do; protest and demonstrate as they do; and allow the clergy from the pulpit to call for Islamic crusades. The fact is we are living in a society which is now camouflaging civil disobedience with political clothing.

Comparisons to Apartheid are an affront intellectually and

By **ANWAR ABDULRAHMAN**

emotionally to what happened in South Africa, which Damon's father Graham so steadfastly opposed.

The Apartheid government of South Africa did not subsidise fuel to a retail market price of 30 US cents a litre for all its population; nor provided low-cost housing for its nationals with maids' quarters under request from its downtrodden masses; nor continued to pay state salaries to dissident employees while they protested to bring down the government.

2] The death of Ahmed Ismail Abdulsamad was not down to the police or any security forces. It is important for F1 and the world to start to engage with facts. If not, then is it not fair for us to come to similar conclusions when a black teenager dies against a backdrop of racist attitudes in parts of America? What about the killing of Dalit villagers in India

or the systematic extermination of Tibet by China and the self-immolation of monks in protest against this? These parallels must be drawn across the globe to put the fixation with issues in Bahrain in proportion.

Sadly, young Ahmed died from a gunshot wound whilst taking part in a demonstration in Bahrain. The fact that he was shot in the back might suggest that whoever fired the gun did so from behind the demonstrators. Unfortunately, the bullet severed an artery and that – together with delays in getting him to hospital – ended this young man's life.

Was he supposed to be a "wounded hero" for the opposition (which tragically went wrong), or a victim of a high-profile government killing? These are two explanations being touted, but who would have the most to gain from this tragic incident? Continued disunity is the highest of motives in all theories.

The police and government in Bahrain are certainly aware of the high stakes of such an incident, so it makes no sense for them to do it. There are and have been daily demonstrations in Bahrain over the last year, so why a "sniper killing" now when Bahrain is turning the corner and being

lauded universally for accepting the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry.

When it comes to conspiracy theories in respect to the West, the Arab world is renowned for embracing some of the most outlandish explanations. Perhaps in this case the Western world, Damon Hill and the rest of Formula One should check the facts and then look more closely at the tragic story of Ahmed before asking the relevant question: who has benefited from this timely tragic death?!

Making a mockery of all the indignation and condemnation that has been raised against Bahrain in the previous weeks, it has now come to light that the "shooter" could have even been from within the protesters' camp.

This highlights the need to ensure time is given for facts to come to light, rather than a prejudged knee-jerk analysis.

Damon Hill is right that Formula One should rethink its position in Bahrain, but this rethink should also involve taking politics out of the Grand Prix and returning it to the sporting arena of precision engineering – rather than the world of Twitter and falsehoods.

Activist in good health says Interior Ministry

MANAMA: Inspector-General Brigadier Ibrahim Habib Ghaith affirmed last night that activist Abdulhadi Al Khawaja is in good health but that he had been transferred from the Public Security Clinic to the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) Hospital because the latter is equipped with more advanced medical services.

He added that the Directorate of Reformation and Rehabilitation conforms to all international human rights standards and that it is carrying out its duties professionally regardless of media or political pressure.

"The Interior Ministry cares for the health of Mr Al Khawaja just as it cares for the health of any of the other inmates at the Reformation and Rehabilitation Directorate," the Brigadier said.

"It offers the same level of professional, competent medical services to all inmates."

He went on to add that the human rights representatives that have visited the directorate have all recognised this fact.

Brig Ghaith said that Hassan Mushaima, who is also a convict, is being visited by family members and lawyers and is seeing a doctor regularly.

Within the last four months, Mr Mushaima was allowed nine two-hour family visits.

Some of these visits included as many as 12 family members. In addition, his lawyer visited him six times for an hour each time during the three months.

The Brigadier reported that Mr Mushaima's health is being monitored continuously and that he had been referred to a special tumour consultant at the Health Ministry he chose.

Mr Mushaima met the specialist on April 5 and was assured that all medical procedures that had been taken to that point were correct and internationally accredited.

Standards

The specialist also assured him that his general tests were normal but scheduled more specific tests, possibly unrelated to his previous disease, to be carried out in the near future.

The specialist advised Mr Mushaima to continue with his current medical treatment.

Brig Ghaith also said that Mr Mushaima was checked by doctors 24 times in the past four months and that he received all required medical treatments.

"The health care provided to all inmates is comprehensive and professional and complies with all international human rights standards," he said.

Meanwhile, independent

international experts appointed by the government Dr M Amr and Dr J J den Otter released a report on Mr Al Khawaja after visiting him at BDF Hospital on Sunday and yesterday.

They said that he appeared well and was co-operative, quite coherent, well-oriented in time, place and person.

They said he was also able to comprehend and respond to their conversation in a normal way. The doctors said he has not been continuously on total fast and took fluids orally and intravenously.

He did not complain of any symptoms related to the upper or lower gastro-intestinal tract and had neither vertigo (dizziness) nor diplopia (double vision) or blurring of vision, they said.

Blood tests showed normal renal function and blood electrolytes and a normal serum uric acid level, the doctors added. The computerised tomography of the brain, chest X-rays as well as sonography of his heart, abdomen (including liver and kidneys) were all normal, except for the liver which was fatty.

Chief Prosecutor Abdulrahman Al Sayed said late last night that the Cassation Court will issue a verdict in Mr Al Khawaja's case on April 23.

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BAHRAIN CITY CENTRE +973 17 11 27 14

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