

Editorial**Professionals are Rare Breed**

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Professionals of any community are the image of progress by which the community is judged. They are the cornerstones of advancement. They represent the crème de la crème of the society. These are the doctors, the lawyers, the engineers, the teachers and other professionals. These groups protect the civil rights of the citizen. These professionals usually, but not necessarily come from middle class. In the industrialized world, the community and the government protect these groups and are considered an asset by both; they should never live with fears of economic reprisal; otherwise, their creative ability is reduced to mere sustaining their daily living.

What makes medical profession reluctant to actively discuss and suggest a solution for their social and economic difficulties? The reluctance of medical community is based not only on fears, but also on mythical angelic image of the profession and fear of political and economic reprisal by power brokers.

In 1972, the ministry of health took a decision not to license any doctor for establishing private clinic if he is not a Bahraini. The ministry took the decision because the number of Bahrain doctors was increasing and it was taken in accordance with similar laws in all over the world including UK and USA. That law was protecting a great asset of this country, which is the professional in medicine.

What happened in 2004? Non-Bahraini doctors were allowed to establish their own clinics or polyclinic; although, the number of Bahrain clinics has reached..... compared to 3-4 in 1972.

Furthermore, why establish cheap medical establishment, which delivers cheap medicine, why not the 'The state of the art' establishment that would raise the standard of medical practice not lower it. No one denies the great contribution of highly qualified experts from Britain, Egypt, India and other countries brought by BDF hospital or SMC or IHB. Therefore, if the country is in need, we should always target such high expertise not less than that.

Open economy and encouragement of free investment does not mean destroying your most important assets: the professionals, for whom the community paid dearly to train and they invested dearly in themselves to achieve a good professional standard. Some of our professionals have become the pride of our nation and some others became worldwide names.

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Destroying the professionals in a society means destroying the middle class; therefore, destroying the creativeness and inventiveness of that community – what would remain afterwards except 'a consumer society'. Is it intentional to degrade the professional and make them kneel on their knees for living?

I am amazed with others why the ministry of labor does not license Private medical society to protect the private medical practitioners' rights. The most surprising that the ministry of health voiced its objection to the formation of such society as if the MOH in complicity against such establishment. Professionals like other citizen demand democracy, but they have no fear to practice oppression whenever the chance allows them to. Why a democratic society cannot embrace a private medical society, is it for the sake of totalitarian society or is it to make sure they tow the line?

Why we do not have a registration Council similar to UK? The members of that council are retired or semi retired members of the profession? It is independent council, which protect the public, the profession and the professionals.

Why many members of the licensing committee are in inexperienced in private practice laws, and why only one private practitioner is a member in that committee? In addition, why he is chosen by the MOH? In addition, why he was told that he represents himself not the private practitioners?

We need wise men in the licensing committee who can take a wise decision and who should not be overruled by the power holder. We need wise men who have knowledge of the licensing procedures in the civilized world not in the third world or the old communist block. We need members in that committee who can see the reality not the shadows. We need those that protect the interest of the public and the professionals

During the British rule of Bahrain, doctors are considered class “A” special and accordingly paid highly. Since the “ Independence” doctors' salary has been degraded, at certain time graduate of medical school in Bahrain were denied salary and other graduate from outside Bahrain were employed without salary for two or three years. Bahraini doctors' benefits were wiped out by successive Bahraini Ministers of health – to prove how much they are able to save for the government - compared to others professionals in the area and in Bahrain.

Is it because the British encourage professionalism for the sake of advancement and progress, while Bahrain loathes that? Some vindictive power holders think that doctors should not be excluded from social and civil injustice among other citizens. We must remember that a large part of the rest of the world’s people living in dreadful poverty; our profession might as well be included. To be quite and neutral is to do nothing and to submit to the status quo and to further deterioration.

Why many companies are encouraged to establish their own medical centers staffed by non-Bahrainis, while most of the private clinics owned by Bahrainis utilize less than 50% of their capacities? Why these companies are not encouraged to utilize the existing private clinics to satisfy their needs? We should be worried about our status and the status of our profession. We should be concerned about our profession and ourselves. Antagonism by the most powerful groups in this country should not deter

us from asking for our rights. The professional, as a citizen, should exercise his social and political responsibility to gain his rights.

We are one of the oldest profession and we have struggled so much to establish our worth and our uniqueness. We should not give up now and let our profession and ourselves to go down; maintenance of the profession is a never-ending struggle.

The society needs our profession, and the society cannot do without our profession. Nevertheless, the grades of professionals can be reduced, research funds can be withheld, the salaries can be reduced, some of us can be dismissed, and the others can be subjected to economic reprisal.

Economic reprisals against professionals had occurred and will continue because of envy. The extent of the reprisal is a measure of the deep hatred and jealousy to the productive group and effective way of degrading them.

In this way, the society is creating two classes in the community: power brokers and beggars. If a profession is pushing effectively against some special interest, that interest will push back, but in Bahrain, it seems general economic reprisals is the price we pay for fulfilling our professional obligations to the community.

Finally, let us unite as profession and protect our interest and the public alike. Let us abide by the medical ethics, which binds us together. Let us aim at raising the standard of medical practice and aim at "the state of the art in medicine".

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