

OMNI BAHRAIN NEWSLETTER #1, June 19, 2011, Compiled by Dick Bennett for a Culture of Peace

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US Exceptionalism
Bahraini Uprising
Uprising in *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*

OMNI recently sponsored an urgently needed (and well-organized) demonstration in support of the Syrians protesting their tyrannical government. It's exactly what a peace and JUSTICE organization should do.

But what about other countries engaged in a popular rebellion? Particularly, what about Bahrain, King Hamad and his Sunni minority rule, and the Shiite majority population? The question opens the door to another of the numerous contradictions of US imperial foreign policy and that leads us to the doctrine of U. S. "exceptionalism."

In *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, the editor, Michael Ignatieff, describes "three separate elements" of US selective disregard of international law: 1) The US signs treaties but then exempts itself from its provisions; 2) it maintains double standards for its "friends" and for its "enemies"; and 3) it denies jurisdiction to treaty law in domestic courts. J. William Fulbright entitled one of his books in reference to the history of US contempt for international law—*The Arrogance of Power*.

US double standards concerns me here. Our leaders are supporting the dissidents of Syria with sanctions against Bashar Assad and leading officials and the militants of Libya with bombs, killing Gaddafi's troops, members of his family, and civilians. But our leaders are supporting the rulers of Bahrain against their protesting citizens and gave its approval to Saudi Arabia to send troops into Bahrain to defend the rulers against the people. How can this contradiction be explained? Easily: The US Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain. A second key fact is that a minority of Sunnis rule the 70% population of Shiites. Of special importance is its recent political conflict. The first parliament, elected in 1973, was dissolved by King Hamad's father; but demands for its restoration increased during 1990s, "marked by bombings and other sporadic violence. The authoritarian government subjected the mostly Shiite opposition political activists to arrest, Torture and forced exile."

Here are additional facts about the "Pearl Revolution":

2011 Bahraini uprising

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

2011 Bahraini uprising
Part of the [Arab Spring](#)

Protesters camped out for days at the Pearl Roundabout, which functioned as the centre point of protests until it was torn down.

Date	14 February 2011–ongoing
Location	Bahrain

[26°01′39″N 50°33′00″E](#) / [26.0275°N 50.55°E](#) / [26.0275; 50.55](#)
Coordinates: [26°01′39″N 50°33′00″E](#) / [26.0275°N 50.55°E](#) / [26.0275; 50.55](#)

Status Ongoing

Causes Corruption, discrimination against [Shias](#), unemployment, slow pace of democratization,^[1]^[2]^[3]

Goals Constitutional monarchy, Resignation of [King Hamad](#),^[4] rewriting the [Constitution](#), ending [economic and human rights violations](#),^{[1][2]} Deportation of foreign mercenaries,^[5] Liberalism, democracy, fair elections, freedom^[6] [Civil resistance](#), [Nonviolent revolutions](#), and [Demonstrations](#)

Characteristics [revolutions](#), and [Demonstrations](#)

Concessions given 1,000 [Bahraini dinars](#) (approx. [US\\$2,600](#)) per family,^[7] increased social spending^[8]

Lead figures

February 14 Youth Movement	
Al Wafaq National Islamic Society ^[9]	King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa ^[4]
Islamic Action Society National Democratic Action Society	PM Khalifa ibn Salman Al Khalifa ^[citation needed]
Nationalist Democratic Rally Society	CP Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa
Progressive Democratic Tribune	Bahraini security forces
Al-Ekha National Society	Bahrain Defence Force
Haq Movement	Al Fateh national union gathering
Al Wafa Islamic Party	Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsula Shield Force
Bahrain Freedom Movement	
Khalas Movement	

Casualties

Deaths 38 ^[10]

	66 missing ^[11]
Wounded	~1000 ^{[12][13]}
Arrested	~828 ^{[14][15]}
Layoffs	~1597 ^[16]

The **2011 Bahraini uprising**, sometimes called the **Pearls Revolution** (*Arabic*: ثورة الؤلؤ), is a series of demonstrations, amounting to a sustained campaign of [civil resistance](#), in the [Persian Gulf](#) country of [Bahrain](#). As part of the [revolutionary wave](#) of protests dubbed the [Arab Spring](#), the Bahraini protests were initially aimed at achieving greater [political freedom](#) and equality for the majority [Shia](#) population,^{[17][18]} and expanded to a call to end the [monarchy](#) of [King Hamad](#)^[4] following a deadly night raid on 17 February against protesters at the [Pearl Roundabout](#) in [Manama](#).^{[19][20]}

Protesters in Manama camped out for days at the Pearl Roundabout, which functioned as the centre point of protests there. After a month, the government requested [troops](#) and police from the [Gulf Cooperation Council](#), which arrived on 14 March, and a day later, the king of Bahrain declared [martial law](#) and a three-month [state of emergency](#).^{[21][22]} The following day, security forces violently confronted protesters at the Pearl Roundabout, drawing international condemnation.

The police response has been described as a "brutal" crackdown on protestors, including doctors and bloggers, many (though not all) of them unarmed and peaceful.^{[23][24][25]} The police carried out midnight house raids in [Shia](#) neighbourhoods, beatings at checkpoints, and denial of medical care in a campaign of intimidation.^{[26][27][28][29]} The state has demolished several Shia mosques that have been central points for anti-government activists. In response, protestors vowed to hold hunger strikes.^[30] More than 800 people have been arrested,^[31] and at least four people have been returned dead after being detained in custody.^[32]

Thousands of [Shia protesters](#) arose in [Iraq](#) and [Qatif](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), in opposition to the [Saudi-led](#) intervention in Bahrain. The [Gulf Co-operation Council](#) and the Saudi government have defended the action as necessary to restore stability and security in the country.^{[33][34][35]}

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[edit] Background

Further information: [Sectarian violence among Muslims](#), [Sunni-Shia relations](#), [History of Bahrain](#), [Human rights in Bahrain](#), and [Torture in Bahrain](#)

Bahrain's [Shia](#) majority has often complained of receiving poor treatment in employment, housing, and infrastructure, while [Sunnis](#) have preferential status.^[36] The [Bahraini government](#) has reportedly imported Sunnis from [Pakistan](#) and [Syria](#) in an attempt to increase the Sunni percentage.^{[36][37]} Shiite Muslims are blocked from serving in important political and military posts.^[37] Bahrain does have the [National Assembly of Bahrain](#), a popularly elected parliament, but it is not powerful.^[37] Occasional protests have flared up since the reign of [Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa](#),^[37] and, as of 18 February 2011, twenty-five Shiite activists were on trial for subverting state power.^[37]

Bahrain hosts the [United States Naval Support Activity Bahrain](#), the home of the [US Fifth Fleet](#), and is thus crucial to [US Department of Defense](#) attempts to counter [Iranian military](#) power in the region.^[37] The [Saudi Arabian government](#) and other [Gulf region](#) governments strongly support the [King of Bahrain](#),^{[37][38]} and Iran, a majority-Shiite nation, appears to have little influence on the protestors.^{[37][39]}

Bahrain was ranked 13th^[when?] in the [Economist Intelligence Unit Shoe-Thrower's index](#),^[40] which is an attempt to gauge "unrest" in [Arab world](#) countries.

An [election](#) to the parliament in 2010 was followed by controversy as well. However, the Shia-majority [Al Wefaq National Islamic Society](#) won a plurality^[41]

[edit] Overview

Some protestors have called for an end to King Hamad's monarchy

The date 14 February 2011 was chosen because it was the tenth anniversary of a referendum in favour of the [National Action Charter of Bahrain](#).^[42] Bahraini youths described their plans as an appeal for Bahrainis "to take to the streets on Monday 14 February in a peaceful and orderly manner" in order to rewrite the [constitution](#) and to establish a body with a "full popular mandate to investigate and hold to account [economic, political and social violations](#), including stolen public wealth, political naturalisation, arrests, [torture](#) and other oppressive security measures, *[and]* institutional and economic corruption."^{[1][2]} They referred to the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt as motivations for their appeal.^[2] [Al Wefaq National Islamic Society](#), which won a plurality in the recent parliamentary election,

participated in the planning for demonstrations on 14 February.^[9] The [Bahrain Centre for Human Rights](#) described authorities' preparations for the 14 February planned demonstrations as "a state of confusion, apprehension and anticipation".^[15] On 11 February, King [Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa](#) ordered that 1,000 [Bahraini dinars](#) (approximately [US\\$2,600](#) as of February 2011^[update]) be given to "each family" to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the [National Action Charter](#) referendum.^[7] [Agence France-Presse](#) linked the [BD1,000](#) payments to the 14 February demonstration plans.^[7]

On 12 February, the [Bahrain Centre for Human Rights](#) sent an open letter to the king, seeking to avoid a worst-case scenario by "releasing more than 450 detainees including [\[Bahraini\] human rights](#) defenders, religious figures and more than 110 children, dissolv[ing] the [security apparatus](#) and [\[prosecuting\]](#) its official[s] responsible [\[for\]](#) violations and to start serious dialogue with civil society and opposition groups on disputed issues."^{[43][44]} [BCHR](#) President [Nabeel Rajab](#) stated: "The dissolving of the security apparatus and the prosecution of its officials will not only distance the King from the crimes committed by this apparatus especially since 2005, such as systemic torture and the use of excessive force against peaceful protests, but will avoid the fatal mistake committed by similar apparatuses in [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt \[revolutions\]](#) which led to the loss of lives and hundreds of casualties and eventually resulted in the fall of the regimes who created these 'double edged swords'".^[43]

Following the raid against the Pearl Roundabout on 17 February, some protesters started calling for an end to the monarchy.^[4]

According to the [BBC News](#) on 14 March, most of the opposition protesters had said they did not want to overthrow the monarchy but want the ruling family to give up most of its powers to the elected parliament. Some, however, had said they wanted a republic. Though the King has offered dialogue with the protesters, some of them had refused saying they wanted the government to step down.^[45]

The Shia citizens also demand an end to the mass [naturalisation](#) of Sunni foreigners, primarily from Pakistan, which is seen as an attempt to shift the demographics in the population. The protestors claim that around half the security forces in the army and police force consist of immigrants from Pakistan, Jordan and Yemen.^{[46][47]}

Journalists who attempted to report human rights abuses were arrested or claimed to have received anonymous death threats.^[23]

READ MORE http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Bahraini_uprising

BAHRAIN IN THE *ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE*

Compared to reports on Libya, Syria, and Yemen, Bahrain has received very little attention. We can only guess why. It's a tiny country; the rebels employ little violence. But it seems odd that the looming presence of the US 5th Fleet there is never mentioned.

ADG Staff. "Bahrain" (6-2-11). Very brief section inside article on Middle East. Emergency rule in the capital, Manama, lifted, but "troops from Saudi Arabia and other Sunni-ruled Gulf countries will remain indefinitely in Bahrain."

ADG Staff. "Bahrain" (6-11-11). Bahrain's Shiites' most senior cleric rejected negotiations for equal rights and political freedoms "while security forces maintain their clampdown."

"Bahrain's 1st Rally in Months Draws More Than 10,000" (AP) (6-12-11).. "...the leader of the Gulf nation's main Shiite political party urged backers to press ahead with peaceful protests for greater political rights after fierce crackdowns by security forces." "The Sunni monarchy...allowed the rally in a bid to ease tensions" after 3 months of martial law now ended, "at least 31" .killed.

ADG's reporting on Bahrain is too brief (reporting of Syria and Libya is comparatively huge) to allow readers more than a meager understanding, and no critical comments are offered in these news reports, especially the contrast between US support for protesters in Libya and Syria and its support of the monarchy in Bahrain.

References:

- MacFarquhar, Neil. "In Tiny Arab State, Internet Is Tool to Fight Rulers." *New York Times* (Jan. 15, 2006) p. 1. An extended (newspaper) article covers a lot of ground, including Bahrain's history.
- Ignatieff, Michael, ed. *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*. Princeton UP, 2005.

LET US SEEK A WORLD FREE OF WAR AND THE THREAT OF WAR, A NATION RESPECTFUL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, A SOCIETY WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERY PERSON'S POTENTIAL MAY BE FULFILLED, AN EARTH RESTORED. GRASSROOTS NONVIOLENCE, WORLD PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIAL and ECONOMIC JUSTICE, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROTECTING SPECIES AND THE EARTH.

END OF NEWSLETTER #1 ON BAHRAIN