

Bahrain Cracks Down on Freedom

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The ruling Al Khalifa monarchy is one of the world's most brutal dictatorships. It's also a valued US ally. Bahrain is home to America's Fifth Fleet.

Imperial priorities matter most. Washington backs Bahraini harshness. State terror is policy. Murder, torture, lawless imprisonments, and daily atrocities get tacit support.

Bahrain ruthlessly wages war on freedom. Fundamental human and civil rights are spurned. Activists, protesters, medical professionals treating them when injured, independent journalists, and others supporting right over might are brutalized and imprisoned.

Nabeel Rajab is one of Bahrain's best. He's a prominent human rights leader. Activism got him targeted. His resume includes many impressive credentials. In 1999, he and others co-founded the Bahrain Human Rights Society.

In 2002, he, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, and others co-founded the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). Authorities terrorized its members for years. Nonetheless, it remains viable.

It promotes civil, political, and economic freedom, ending racial discrimination, and universal human and civil rights. Bahraini despots equate these principles with terrorism.

Last August, Bahrain's Lower Criminal Court sentenced Nabeel to three years in prison. Supporting right over wrong in the emirate is dangerous. Expressing democratic views is criminalized. So is championing social justice publicly.

King Hamad calls peaceful protests "foreign plots." Nabeel and others like him put their lives on the line for years. Bahraini activists face arrests, harsh interrogations, torture, and imprisonment. The mainstream media largely ignores it.

Nabeel's been in prison since July. He's charged under Article 178 of Bahrain's penal code. It prohibits unauthorized gatherings of five or more people for the "purpose of committing crimes (or) undermining public security, even if intended to achieve a legitimate purpose."

His lawyers appealed. A Bahraini court delayed proceedings. Its ruling won't be known until around mid-December. Peaceful protests are criminalized. State courts tolerate no challengers. They give kangaroos a bad name.

Bahrain banned protests earlier. On July 20, 2006, King Hamad ratified Code 32 on "Public Gatherings, Processions and Assembly." Doing so amended the 1973 Decree No. 18. Human rights groups condemned the action. It lawlessly targeted free expression and peaceful gatherings.

Unauthorized public meetings and seminars were prohibited. So was anything thought

potentially threatening monarchical rule. Activists were targeted. Arrests and prosecutions followed. Bahraini repression is brutal and longstanding.

On October 30, public gatherings were again prohibited. Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa said “rallies and gatherings will be considered illegal, and legal action will be taken against anyone calling for or taking part in them.”

That’s how police states work. Fundamental rights are criminalized. Daily nonviolent protests continue nonetheless. Participants face tear gas, rubber bullets, beatings, arrests, and at times death.

Anyone challenging regime harshness faces arrest and brutal imprisonment. Even The [New York Times](#) noticed. On October 30, it headlined “Citing Violence, Bahrain Bans All Protests in New Crackdown.”

Protesters refrain from violence. Security forces commit it against them. Banning public gatherings “drew swift condemnation from human rights groups and opposition activists who said it was intended solely to stifle criticism of the ruling monarch in the tiny Persian Gulf nation.”

Activists accused the monarchy of “methodically blocking all avenues for dissent.”

“In recent weeks, activists have been prosecuted for postings on social media, and doctors, charged with illegal gathering and other crimes after treating protesters, have been sent to jail.”

It’s gone on repeatedly since early last year. The Times and other Western media gave it scant coverage. They still do. Reports exclude important information readers most need to know.

Dozens of deaths, hundreds imprisoned, torture, and kangaroo court justice go largely unnoticed.

On November 10, a [Washington Post](#) editorial headlined “Bahrain’s broken promise,” saying:

Last November, King Hamad promised 26 reforms. “That promise has gone unfulfilled.” At best, only three were partly implemented. “The most important ones – on the release of political prisoners and relaxation of controls on free expression – have been ignored.”

The Post exhibited a rare moment of candor. It should have done more much sooner. Nonetheless, it said “convictions of leading regime opponents (were) reconfirmed.”

It mentioned Nabeel’s imprisonment. It excluded his activist history and harsh treatment. It said public protests were banned.

Without explanation, it said “five bombs exploded around the capital of Manama on Monday, killing two people.”

Protesters spurn violence. Despite brutal security force crackdowns, they remain peaceful. Bahraini authorities called Monday’s explosions “terrorism.”

They were state-sponsored false flags. Expect more of the same ahead. Four suspects were

arrested. They won't be treated kindly or fairly. Bahrain's head of public security blamed Hezbollah elements. No evidence whatever suggests it.

Minister Samira Ibrahim bin Rajab said opposition groups use Iranian tactics. He blamed pro-Iran television stations for supporting Bahraini protests. Press TV reports them accurately. So do Russia Today and independent journalists.

The Post downplayed what's happening. "Bahrain is no Syria," it said dismissively. Editorial policy belligerently attacks Assad for doing his job. Bahraini state terror over the same time frame got scant coverage.

The Post said the emirate is home to America's Fifth Fleet. Implied is its presence legitimizes harsh security. The editorial admitted that Washington supported a Bahraini nominee for "an advisory position at the UN Human Rights Council."

Congress approved military sales and aid. "Such action(s) damage US credibility across the Middle East."

On the one hand, Washington lawlessly challenges Assad's independence. On the other, it supports Al Khalifa despotism. It not only largely ignores its worst repression, it condones and encourages it.

The Post editorial went so far but no further. What readers most need to know was omitted. What's going on in Bahrain, why, and who benefits wasn't explained. Readers know little more now than earlier.

A [Bahrain Center for Human Rights](#) report headlined "The BCHR Holds the King Responsible for the Spread of the Culture of Impunity which Has Claimed the Lives of Tens of Victims."

Facts don't lie. Disturbing truths were revealed. BCHR compiled compelling evidence. Ruling Al Khalifa despots remain unaccountable.

Security forces commit daily "gross violations of human rights." Bahraini and international laws are violated. Extrajudicial killings, arbitrary execution, torture, mock trials, and excessive force are commonplace.

"(I)mpunity is still entrenched in the doctrine of the Authority and its security institutions as a basic prevalent culture.

It operates as an instrument of state terror. Authorities get away with murder, torture and other atrocities. Ordinary Bahrainis wanting equal rights face brutalizing repression.

BCHR expressed special concern about a "systematic policy of impunity and of providing immunity to criminals and enabling them to continue with their duties and their security positions without accountability."

Innocent people are shot and killed. Some are executed in cold blood. Others are beaten, arrested, and imprisoned. Justice is a four-letter word.

Principles relating to Effective Prevention and Investigation call for careful examination of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary executions, and other security force violence. Authorities whitewash state-sponsored crimes instead of prosecuting offenders.

King Hamad bears full responsibility. Bahraini law is what he says it is. Equity, justice and freedom don't have a chance.

Activists challenging state repression may end up dead by gun shots, lethal gas or slit throats. Obama wholeheartedly endorses what legitimate leaders condemn. Fundamental human and civil rights don't have a chance.

A Final Comment

On November 7, Bahrain revoked the citizenship of 31 activists. An interior ministry statement announced it. Doing so coincided with more state-sponsored violence and arrests.

Prominent opposition figures affected include:

(1) Saaed Shehabi, a London-based Bahraini political activist and Bahrain Freedom Movement member.

(2) Former MP Jalal Fairouz.

(3) Hasan Mushaima, Haq Movement head. It's a high-profile Bahraini opposition group.

Revocations were ordered for violating Article 10 Bahrain's Citizenship Act. It permits targeting individuals accused of threatening state security.

Justice in Bahrain is none at all. Activists wanting to live free may end up dying for it. That's how police states operate. Bahrain is one of the worst.

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