

## Syria/Libya versus Bahrain: A BBC Factoid

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

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*Facts are wonderful things, ignore them at all cost*

The BBC which makes much of its 'objective' and 'balanced' news coverage, when challenged by the facts of its biased coverage of events in the Middle East and elsewhere, cites examples of where it has given voice to all sides of the issue. This is debatable, but let's assume that the BBC does present all sides then it really comes down to numbers as the following example of the vast disparity, not only in numbers but also in content, between its Syria/Libya and Bahrain coverage.

Between 29 May and 21 June the BBC news website carried fifty-seven stories on events in Syria.

By comparison during the same period the BBC carried just *twelve* stories on Bahrain, eight of which were on the Formula One race (an indication of where BBC heads are at). This left just four stories on the Bahrain uprising itself and the headlines are telling:

Accused Bahrain medics 'tortured'

BBC News 20/6/11

The families of 20 doctors on trial in Bahrain for taking part in protests say the defendants were tortured into making false confessions

Bahraini medical staff charged

BBC News 6/6/11

Dozens of doctors and nurses who treated injured protesters in Bahrain appear in court charged with attempting to topple the monarchy.

Bahrain lifts state of emergency

BBC News 1/6/11

The authorities in Bahrain lift the state of emergency imposed since March's crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations.

Faltering spring

BBC News 30/5/11

Why the people of Bahrain are still waiting for change

Every story on Syria however deviated not one inch from the 'official line' that Assad is an evil dictator who has to go. It's worth remembering that during this time Obama met with the crown prince Al Khalifa but apparently the BBC didn't think this was newsworthy enough to cover.

The President met today and had a productive discussion with His Highness Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince of Bahrain, following the Crown Prince's meeting with National Security Advisor Tom Donilon. The President reaffirmed the strong commitment of the United States to Bahrain. He welcomed King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's decision to end the State of National Safety early and the announcement that the national dialogue on reform would begin in July. — [White House](#), 7 June, 2007

The following BBC stories on events in Syria contrast sharply with its Bahraini coverage:

Syria leader 'must reform or go'

BBC News 20/6/11

Foreign Secretary William Hague says President Bashar al-Assad must reform his regime or "step aside", as a violent crackdown on pro-democracy protests continues.

VIDEO: Inside Syria: 'A tale of horror'

BBC News 17/6/11

A BBC journalists who entered Syria and met displaced people on the border with Turkey says they are living in fear of their lives.

Hague urges UN backing on Syria

BBC News 12/6/11

Foreign Secretary William Hague says the UN Security Council must proceed with a resolution condemning violence by Syrian troops against its own people.

VIDEO: US: Syria creating refugee crisis?

BBC News 12/6/11

The United States says an ongoing military offensive in northern Syria has created a "humanitarian crisis".

MPs' 'horrified' at Syria deaths

BBC News 7/06/11

William Hague has said MPs would be "horrified" at the deaths of children in Syria – as the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad continues.

Note the difference between the headline and the content in the last story. The head tells us that Hague is "horrified at Syria deaths" but the content tells us that 'MPs *would* be horrified'. In other words the BBC (along with everyone else) has no idea whether children have been killed by Assad's government or even killed at all by anybody else.

The imbalance in coverage must surely be apparent. Rather than try and actually *report* events in Syria, coverage starts from the *a priori* assumption that Assad is an evil dictator, slaughtering his subjects, preferably from the air.[1]

But 'news' coverage actually consists of blurred shots of demonstrations, shootings, people running, none of which tells us what is *actually* going on. Who is doing what to whom? Attributions are ambiguous and most importantly, there is no context, no history, merely an evil dictator.

[VIDEO: Did Syria open fire from the skies?](#)

BBC News 11/06/2011

An eyewitness to Friday's violence in northern Syria has told the BBC of an army attack on a village, while amateur footage has emerged which appears to show a Syrian helicopter firing on people from the skies.

Compare this to the treatment the BBC handed out to Libya, where an incident of an alleged attack on civilians was examined closely by one of the BBC's foreign correspondents. The headline says it all:

[‘Dark arts of propaganda’ in Libya](#), 6 June 2011

“As Nato’s campaign continues in Libya, Tripoli has been accused of staging events in order to deliberately mislead the media.

“The BBC’s Wyre Davies was taken to a hospital and to the supposed site of a missile strike, but all was not as it seemed.”

That Libyan civilians are being killed by *our* missiles is undeniable, the evidence is available but even when the BBC was confronted with the evidence of civilian deaths as a result of NATO airstrikes, it first reported that it was *allegedly* a NATO strike (and no doubt also *allegedly* civilians). Later, it amended this to regurgitating pretty much verbatim NATO’s reason namely it was a “weapons malfunction” what did it.

However, the BBC has already set Gaddafi up, firstly by repeating *ad nauseum* that Gaddafi is a madman, unbalanced, a war criminal and so on. Thus the ‘Dark arts’ story sits within this context: Gaddafi can’t be trusted, he’s a liar. It follows that all stories emerging from Libya that *do not originate with the Empire* are suspect.

Furthermore, the issue of whether or not civilians are being killed by Nato airstrikes *replaces* the criminality of bombing Libya in the first place! Priorities are shifted and rearranged to suit. Endless repetition does the trick especially with a person like Gaddafi; larger-than-life; outspoken; dare I say it? ‘Eccentric’ (ironically, something the English are well known for). Ideal material for the propagandists especially if you dare not deal with the underlying events and their causes.

Note

1. The same accusation was leveled against Gaddafi’s Libya when the rebellion was launched.

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