

BAHRAIN: How the US Mainstream Media Turn a Blind Eye To Washington's Despotic Arab Ally

Study Reveals Corporate News Blackout On Democracy Uprising in Persian Gulf Kingdom

By [Colin S. Cavell](#)

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In her year-end summary of the Arab Spring revolts of 2011, Christiane Amanpour, the Global Affairs Anchor of ABC News as well as an anchor and Chief International Correspondent at CNN, highlights the rebellions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria but never mentions the uprising in Bahrain ("This Week," December 25, 2011). Apparently, Bahrain falls off the global map with Amanpour and ABC News [1].

In its year-end edition, the world's largest weekly news magazine with headquarters in New York City, *Time*, awarded its "Person of the Year" award to 'The Protester' heralding the millions who voiced their opposition to dictators and corruption in 2011 starting with the protests in Tunisia which spread throughout the Arab world on into Europe and across the Atlantic to the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the USA. In his cover story on "The Protester," *Time* magazine reporter Kurt Andersen praises activists in cities in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece, Britain, Israel, Mexico, India, Chile, the USA, Russia, Syria, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Jordan, Yemen, Libya, Algeria, and Morocco. Is Bahrain mentioned at all, our dear reader may inquire? Only once: to indicate that the "days of rage" had reached to the "softer monarchical dictatorships—Jordan, Bahrain, Morocco..." (Andersen, p. 72) [2]. Yes, that is it—one mention. In a 21-page article, one would think that a seasoned journalist would care to write a little more about the massive demonstrations and subsequent onslaught by regime forces against the pro-democracy protesters which occurred in Bahrain in 2011. Is this careless journalism or deliberate policy to exclude reporting on Bahrain?

Dr. James J. Zogby, founder and president of the Washington DC-based Arab American Institute, in his article "The 'Arab Spring' Effect," conducted a year-end public opinion survey in Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran regarding the effect of the 2011 Arab Spring and the publics' satisfaction with the pace of political change, and there is not one mention of Bahrain and no reporting on how Bahrainis feel about the pace of political change in their country (January 1, 2012). Is Bahrain just too small or too insignificant one may begin to ponder?

Noted commentator on Middle Eastern affairs, Professor Juan Cole from the University of Michigan, in his November 10, 2011 article entitled "Protest Planet: How a Neoliberal Shell Game Created an Age of Activism," writes of the factors that have motivated the Arab Spring rebellions including "the resulting corruption, the way politicians can be bought and sold, and the impunity of the white-collar criminals who have run riot in societies everywhere...high rates of unemployment, reduced social services, blighted futures, and above all the substitution of the market for all other values as the matrix of human ethics

and life.”

Though able to pinpoint many of the causes of the revolts, Dr. Cole—like others in the American mainstream—fails to mention Bahrain even once when he traces the path of the Arab rebellions thusly: “The success of the Tunisian revolution in removing the octopus-like Ben Ali plutocracy inspired the dramatic events in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, and even Israel that are redrawing the political map of the Middle East” (Cole, November 10, 2011). Excuse me, Professor Cole, but what about Bahrain?!

“Just like nothing ever happened”

In a rare exception to the near-national blackout of reporting on Bahrain by the USA’s top media outlets [3], National Public Radio reporter Kelly McEvers, in early 2012, tells, after several trips to Bahrain in 2011, of “Bahrain: The Revolution That Wasn’t” (McEvers, January 5, 2012). “Bahrain’s uprising didn’t get quite as much attention as some of the others in the Arab world last year,” she reports. “But it was one of the first, beginning on Feb. 14.” McEvers continues, “Bahrainis had protested before, mainly about the fact that the country’s majority Shiites remain poor [4] and disenfranchised by the Sunni monarchy. But they’d never protested like this.

“At first the protesters asked for things like an elected Parliament, a new constitution. But then when demonstrators started getting killed, tens of thousands of Bahrainis converged on a place called the Pearl Roundabout to call for the fall of the ruling Al Khalifa family.”

“Bahrain State TV called protesters traitors and agents of Iran, which is nearby and also has a Shiite majority.”

“In Bahrain, pro-government thugs attacked protesters, and protesters fought back. Just one month into the uprising, Bahrain’s ruling family authorized some 1,500 troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to enter the country.”

“Apache helicopters circled overhead as authorities cleared the Pearl Roundabout of all protesters. They never made it back” (McEvers, January 5, 2012).

McEvers further notes that Bahrain is the one Arab country where the government was able to definitively suppress a major uprising. She quotes Dr. Toby Jones, a professor of Middle East history at Rutgers University, who concluded this is because “the United States and its allies wanted it that way.” Bahrain definitely stands apart from the other Arab regimes implies Jones.

“If there is a place globally where there is not just distance but a huge gap between American interests and American values, it’s in the Persian Gulf,” Jones says. “And its epicenter is in Bahrain. Bahrain is ground zero for the Arab Spring in the Persian Gulf. And the United States has chosen sides. It has decided that it wants to see the Bahraini regime survive and endure. And that’s important not only for the American relationship with Bahrain but for Saudi Arabia.”

“The U.S. Navy’s 5th Fleet is based in Bahrain, giving the U.S. a major presence that has only increased in significance following the U.S. withdrawal of forces from Iraq.”

“In addition, Saudi Arabia didn’t want protests in its own backyard, Jones says. And it didn’t want a Shiite-led uprising to encourage its archrival, Shiite-dominated Iran” (McEvers, January 5, 2012).

An 11-week period of martial law in Bahrain, from March 15 to June 1, 2011, was imposed on the country following a series of demonstrations which included the largest marches in Bahraini history in late February 2011 with over 300,000 participants, i.e. more than half the citizens of the Kingdom. Unable to counter this massive show of opposition by the population, the monarchy, at the recommendation of the Saudi monarch, called in the GCC Peninsula Shield Force, composed primarily of Saudi troops and others from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, for an official total of 1,500 troops. With armored tanks and machine-gunned soldiers manning the major highways leading to downtown Manama, the Bahraini military, riot police, and paramilitary auxiliaries commenced a brutal crackdown which saw security forces attack “peaceful protesters in more than 20 villages with rubber bullets, stun grenades, shotguns and tear gas” (Zoepf, June 2, 2011).

The subsequent repression saw thousands of people rounded up, detained, tortured, and sometimes murdered. Members of Parliament, political society [5] leaders, doctors and nurses who treated protesters, journalists who covered the democratic uprising, lawyers who defended detained participants, students involved or suspected of involvement in the protests, and many others suffered the wrath of the dictatorial Al-Khalifa regime in its purge operations. The crackdown continues till this day, all with hardly a whisper from the major U.S. news media. “The monument at the Pearl Roundabout has been demolished [torn down by the regime on March 18, 2011].

All roads to it are blocked by armored vehicles. Protests are stopped before they make it out of the villages,” writes McEvers. And though sporadic protests against the regime continue, she concludes: “For now, the uprising appears to be over. As the sun goes down, it’s time for evening prayer. There is garbage on the streets, but somebody will come and clean it up. And then, life will get back to normal. Just like nothing ever happened” (McEvers, January 5, 2012). [6]

The Town Square Test

Historian Jeffrey Wasserstrom, in his article “OWS, Egypt Expose Limits of Town Square Test” (January 7, 2012), reexamines the “Town Square Test” first extolled by the former Soviet dissident-turned-Israeli-politician Natan Sharansky in his book, *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* (2004). In an interview with National Public Radio’s Ray Suarez, Sharansky explains: “If you can go in the center of the town square and you can express your views and you will not be punished for this, so you live in a free society. If you are punished for this, if you are afraid to express your views, you live in a fear society” (February 9, 2005).

Wasserstrom notes that the “Town Square Test” was bolstered when former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice praised the test in her 2005 “opening statement during her Senate confirmation hearings to be U.S. Secretary of State.” Notes Wasserstrom, “her boss, George W. Bush, extolled it as well” (Wasserstrom, January 7, 2012).

In late February and early March of 2011, the western international media, which was then focused on the Egyptian uprising against longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak centered in Cairo's Tahrir Square, began referring to the gathering place for the thousands of Bahraini protesters in their country's capital of Manama as the Pearl 'Square', albeit natives recognize it and refer to it as a 'roundabout', which, in fact, it is. In Bahrain, tens of thousands gathered at the Pearl Roundabout to express their opposition to the 228-year-old royal dynasty of the Al-Khalifa family and express their desire for democratic governance.

As Tony Mitchell, an Australian English instructor fired from his job at the Bahrain Polytechnic for posting his disapproval of the regime crackdown on Facebook and whose 10th-floor apartment in the Abraj Al Lulu (Pearl Towers) apartment complex directly overlooking the Pearl Roundabout reported: "My wife and I watched the last of the protesters flee the vacant lot on foot; the security forces were pursuing them too aggressively for them to have time to get into cars and drive away. It was obvious that the police were not content on merely clearing the area; they seemed hell-bent on injuring as many of the protesters as possible. Even after the last of the protesters retreated to the surrounding streets of Sanabis, the bangs continued, even though the primary aim of clearing the roundabout had been achieved" (Mitchell, December 14, 2011).

By this so-called "Town Square Test," Bahrain obviously falls into the status of a "fear" society and puts the country in the definitely 'non-free' category. Fear of arrests, imprisonment, and physical harm are certainties for anyone wishing to test the Bahraini regime's resolve to punish the democratic opposition and keep the Pearl Roundabout cleared. And the fear of regime reprisal is palpable as the Angry Arab News Service noted: "Everyone in Bahrain is silent now. No one is talking. Human rights activists, journalists and bloggers who under their real names have completely disappeared. Many have been jailed whilst others are in hiding. Mohammad Al Masqati, a human rights activist who is in his mid-20s, has been in jail for the past 5 days. He was first threatened by a member of the royal family on twitter and then he got arrested. His family has apparently only spoken to him once so far.

Businessmen and CEOs are also being interrogated and threatened for not firing striking workers and cutting their wages. Most are no longer in control of their companies and now mass firings have begun. Most are not willing to take any stance because they are too scared. Very few people are tweeting or posting on Facebook. Even those who are not using their real names are scared. Shia families living in mixed neighborhoods are moving out because they are being threatened either by letters sent to their houses telling them to leave or in checkpoints. People speak in code on the phone and constantly declare their loyalty to the government just in case..." (April 5, 2011).

In 2002, Bahrain was ranked #67 in Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index. By 2011-12, Bahrain's press freedom dropped significantly and now ranks #173 (out of 179 countries) in the world ("Press Freedom Index 2011/2012"). Press freedom is so restricted in Bahrain today that it is now listed by Reporters Without Borders as one of "the 10 most dangerous places for journalists in the world." As their report states: "The Bahraini authorities did everything possible to prevent international coverage of the pro-democracy demonstrations in the capital, Manama, denying entry to some foreign reporters, and threatening or attacking other foreign reporters or their local contacts.

Bahraini journalists, especially photographers, were detained for periods ranging from several hours to several weeks. Many were tried before military tribunals until the state of

emergency imposed on 15 March was lifted. After months of demonstrations, order was finally restored thanks to systematic repression. A blogger jailed by a military court is still in prison and no civilian court ever reviewed his conviction. Bahrain is an example of news censorship that succeeded with the complicity of the international community, which said nothing. A newspaper executive and a netizen paid for this censorship with their lives” (“The 10 Most Dangerous Places for Journalists,” December 21, 2011).

Neil Hicks, an activist with the New York-based nongovernmental agency, Human Rights First, sums up the current situation in Bahrain as follows: “In Bahrain, despite recommendations by its own Independent Commission of Inquiry, the monarchy continues to attack, harass, and detain human rights defenders who are calling for democratic reforms. Medics and peaceful protesters continue to receive unfair sentences in sham trials and international NGOs—including Human Rights First—are denied entry to document abuses. Yet the United States remains silent on these abuses” (Hicks, January 25, 2012).

Thus by any measure, Bahrain truly fails the Town Square Test, and Bahrain today is definitely a society living in fear. And, most importantly, as Hicks notes above, the United States remains silent. The mainstream media have all gotten the implied US Government memo: ‘Do not talk about Bahrain. The situation there is...complicated.’

Whither Bahrain?

Reporter Jim Lobe writes in his summary article about U.S. mainstream media news coverage in 2011: “The so-called ‘Arab Spring’ led U.S. network television evening news coverage during 2011, comprising a total of about 10 percent of all the news coverage provided by the three major commercial networks during 2011” (Lobe, January 3, 2012). Citing statistics from the latest annual review by the authoritative Tyndall Report [7], Lobe points out that “the two top stories—of both foreign and domestic news—for the three networks during the year included the NATO-backed uprising in Libya and the killing of its long-time leader Col. Moammar Gaddafi, and the ouster of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and its aftermath.” ABC, NBC, and CBS news coverage of the Libyan uprising garnered nearly 700 minutes of network coverage as compared to the 489 minutes of mainstream network coverage of the rebellion in Egypt. The third most heavily covered Arab Spring rebellion was on the ongoing conflict in Syria tallying 143 minutes. But what of the uprising in Bahrain our dear reader may inquire?

Before we reveal the statistics on U.S. mainstream news media coverage of the rebellion in Bahrain, let us first review some facts about this island kingdom in the Persian Gulf. Of a total population of some 1.2 million people, of which some 535,000 are citizens, over 50 Bahrainis were killed in the Arab Spring which broke out across Bahrain on February 14, 2011. The largest demonstrations in Bahraini history in late February saw over 300,000 citizens marching in opposition to the 228-year-old Al-Khalifa monarchy.

The harsh crackdown by the ruling regime in mid-March was aided by the invasion of the so-called Peninsula Shield Force composed of over 1,500 Saudi, Qatari, and UAE troops which led to over 1,500 arbitrary arrests with jail terms cumulatively of over 2,500 years, over 1,866 documented cases of torture and ill-treatment, over 208 civilians sentenced by military courts, including 20 physicians (i.e. nurses and doctors) for providing medical

treatment to demonstrators, to over 1,000 citizens charged with violating freedom of speech or assembly laws, over 2,710 workers fired for supporting, taking part, or suspected of having taken part in pro-democracy activities, over 477 university students expelled for the same reasons, over 40 Shia mosques destroyed, over 90 journalists targeted, over 500 prisoners of conscience, etc., all garnering Bahrain the distinction of having the highest number of political prisoners per capita of any country in the world (Amiri, December 30-32, 2011).

The numbers tell it all. Percentage-wise, for a comparable demonstration in Egypt to equal the 300,000 Bahrainis in the streets of Manama would require a minimum of 41 million people (i.e. at least half of Egypt's estimated 82 million population), and the gatherings in Tahrir Square to date have not even approximated that. In other words, though bursting forth from a tiny island nation, the Bahraini revolt continues to reflect the largest oppositional movement in the Arab world today. Unfortunately for Bahrainis, however, their country also happens to host the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, which means that the U.S. will do whatever it can to reign in the Bahraini insurrection. So now we can look at the statistics on the rebellion in Bahrain, and we find only 34 minutes of coverage on the rebellion in the Kingdom by U.S. mainstream news media (Lobe, January 3, 2012). Yes, only a little more than half an hour! One must remember that this compares to nearly 700 minutes for the uprising in Libya and over 489 minutes for the rebellion in Egypt by the US mainstream media in 2011.

But is the decision by the U.S. government, currently headed by the administration of Barack Obama, to side with Bahrain's monarchy in the face of traditionally espoused American democratic values and an indigenous majoritarian protest movement sustainable? At least one person thinks not. Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and a prominent activist in Bahrain came to Washington, DC in early December 2011 to receive the Woodrow Wilson Center's 2011 Ion Ratiu Democracy Award for his work "documenting human rights abuses conducted by the Bahraini ruling family's security forces since protesters took to the streets in the capital of Manama in February." Rajab stated that the Obama Administration's defense of the Bahraini monarchy and its current push to sell the regime \$53 million in weapons is "sowing seeds of distrust and resentment of the United States among the Bahraini people" [8]. Pressing the Administration to use its influence to improve human rights in Bahrain, Rajab said that the U.S. "was repeating the mistakes of the past by siding with a minority regime that has brutalized its Shiite majority population" (Rogin, December 6, 2011). For speaking out against the regime, Rajab was brutally beaten subsequent to his return to Bahrain while attending a peaceful protest (Parvaz, January 7, 2012).

This critical sentiment of US policy is echoed by Dr. Hussein Ibish, Senior Research Fellow with the American Task Force on Palestine, who writes: "In Bahrain, popular protests not only did not lead to a revolution, protestors probably did not seek a revolution (at least at first). The uprising thus far appears to have been contained by the royal family and its Gulf allies. However, the status quo is unsustainable and the potential for a campaign of urban terrorism by opposition or Shia extremists remains potentially a dangerous self-fulfilling prophecy" (Ibish, January 3, 2012).

Ibish takes a more nuanced view of the unfolding Arab revolts and concludes that it is impossible at this point to sum up their essence. He adds that the "convulsions are so multifaceted, with so many variables and so much that remains to be determined, that we must content ourselves simply with accepting that we are witnessing historic and

transformative events” (January 3, 2012). Indeed, we are witnessing, as well, the world’s foremost booster of democracy side hand-in-hand with the world’s most brutal dictatorial monarchs. In a more recent article, Ibish forecasts that “the situation in Bahrain is set to deteriorate significantly in the coming months.” Citing the failure of the so-called “national dialogue” last summer, the failure of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report to “to inhibit the use of tear gas and other suppressive measures,” and other unrelenting regime repressive measures, Ibish predicts that: “The stage seems to be set for February and March to be the scene of a significant intensification of tensions in Bahrain” (Ibish, January 24, 2012).

The 676-page “Human Rights Watch World Report 2012” succinctly describes the situation in Bahrain by reporting that: “Bahrain’s rulers, backed by security forces led by neighboring Saudi Arabia, have used a panoply of repressive tools—lethal force against peaceful protesters, torture and ill-treatment, unfair trials, abrupt dismissal of workers from jobs and students from universities—but have succeeded only in creating a divided population with many seemingly counting the days until the next opportunity to rise up. The success of the protest movements in these countries remains very much in play” (January 22, 2012).

As noted by Human Rights Watch above, the political situation in Bahrain remains far from settled. And, more importantly, it will be impossible—given the level of violence perpetrated on the Bahraini population in 2011 by regime forces—to ever go back to the relative calm which the country witnessed from 2001-2010 without some sort of political accommodation which addresses oppositional demands.

The Bahraini revolt is part of a larger regional political earthquake stretching across the Arab world where a seemingly intractable political order which had been “frozen in place since the death of Egypt’s Colonel Nasser 40 years ago finally thawed,” wrote Shashank Joshi of the British newspaper, *The Telegraph*. The rebellions “produced a torrent of uprisings, coups, standoffs, civil wars, and an orgy of state-sponsored bloodletting.” But, warns Joshi: “This was the earthquake; in 2012, prepare for the aftershocks.” He notes that: “Bahrain, where a Sunni minority has brutally squelched a pro-democracy uprising, will be one of the playgrounds of this rivalry. The beleaguered Shia opposition there, long accused of being nothing more than Iranian stooges, will become progressively more radicalised. The US and Britain may come to regret their feeble stance and continued arms sales” (Joshi, December 28, 2011).

Nevertheless, a virtual media blackout has descended upon Bahrain by the mainstream US media for the present, and Bahraini tolerance for US aversion to their cries for assistance cannot last forever. At some point, Bahrainis will acclimate themselves to whatever friendly allies will support them and declare hostility against whoever continues to support the royal regime [9].

The Political Tectonic Plates

Why, humanity asks, is the United States media—purportedly the most unrestricted “free” media in the world—largely silent on reporting on the Arab Spring rebellion in Bahrain? Three primary factors are at work in stifling the will and, hence, the voice of the American media:

- 1) U.S. dependency on oil;

2) the historical impact of FDR's deal with King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia on February 14, 1945; and

3) the legacy of Iranian independence.

PART II OF THIS ESSAY FOCUSES ON U.S. DEPENDENCY ON OIL (FORTHCOMING)

Colin S. Cavell, Ph.D. is a former Assistant Professor at the University of Bahrain. ccavell@gmail.com

Notes:

[1] An earlier version of this paper entitled "Silent Spring for Bahrain: US Media Remains Tight-Lipped As Regards Democratic Activists in the Kingdom of Bahrain" was submitted to the "World Cinema and Hollywoodism" conference as part of the international section of the 30th International Fajr Film Festival: People, Cinema, Awakening, organized under the patronage of the Cinematic Deputy of the Iranian Ministry of Culture and presented on February 4, 2012 at the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) headquarters in Tehran, Iran.

[2] Note as well the reporter's use of the adjective 'softer' to describe these autocracies.

[3] The only consistent and accurate reporting on the democratic uprising in Bahrain that this author is aware of has come from periodic updates by Maryam Al-Khawaja, Head of Foreign Relations Office of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, who is in exile due to threats on her life, an online blog by former Fulbright scholar (in Yemen and Bahrain) Justin Gengler about Bahrain (<http://bahrainipolitics.blogspot.com/>), and, more consistently, replete with daily updates, is *The Crooked Bough*, an online magazine published by New Mexico activist Randy Martin (<http://www.crookedbough.com/>). In addition, there have been an impressive series of articles about the ongoing political repression in Bahrain by Global Research correspondent for the Middle East and North Africa Finian Cunningham who was forced to leave Bahrain on June 18, 2011 by the Ministry of the Interior which did not appreciate his journalism as regards Bahrain. As well, as of February 2012, a new group called "Witness Bahrain" is rapidly becoming quite visible about political developments in Bahrain, though it is too soon to determine the impact of their activism.

[4] Citing a report by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, the *Lulu Newspaper* reports that over a quarter of Bahraini citizens live below the poverty level of BD 309 per month, or more specifically over 200,000 Bahraini citizens, nearly half the population (*Lulu Newspaper*, 2011).

[5] Note the terminology of "society" as political "parties" are illegal in Bahrain.

[6] Apparently assailed by criticism from pro-regime elements after the McEvers report, NPR host Robert Siegel conducted a fluff interview on January 18, 2012 with John Timoney, former New York cop and former Philadelphia and Miami police chief (who is also the Senior V.P. for Business Development and Senior Consultant for Police and Security Matters with Andrews International, a multi-service security service provider based in the US), who has been hired to train police in Bahrain. In the interview, Timoney tries to reassure the American audience by asserting that King Hamad Al-Khalifa has made recommendations to

give Parliament more power based on the Bassiouni Report (i.e. the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry led by Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni, an Egyptian lawyer, which was commissioned by and paid for by the monarchy). As well, Timoney attempts to inspire further confidence by informing the American audience that a new chief of police has recently been installed in the Kingdom who, he affirms, is “looking to do the right thing, looking to embrace reform” (Siegel, January 18, 2012).

[7] The *Tyndall Report* monitors the weekday nightly newscasts of the three major American broadcast television networks: *ABC World News* with Diane Sawyer (formerly Charles Gibson), *CBS Evening News* with Katie Couric, and *NBC Nightly News* with Brian Williams <http://tyndallreport.com/about/>.

[8] On January 27, 2012, it was reported that the Obama Administration is moving forward with its arms sale to Bahrain by using a legal loophole which does not require reporting the sale publicly. As reporter Josh Rogin writes: “Our congressional sources said that State [Department] is using a legal loophole to avoid formally notifying Congress and the public about the new arms sale. The administration can sell anything to anyone without formal notification if the sale is under \$1 million. If the total package is over \$1 million, State can treat each item as an individual sale, creating multiple sales of less than \$1 million and avoiding the burden of notification, which would allow Congress to object and possibly block the deal” (Rogin, January 27, 2012).

[9] In fact, on January 24, 2012, a group calling itself The February 14 Youth Coalition posted a communique on their social media Facebook site stating that it: “condemns international community silence over the countless crimes and violations, which have been committed by the regime in Bahrain and the invading Saudi Arabia forces (under disguise of GCC Peninsula Shield) since the beginning of Bahrain Spring on 14 of February last year....”

It concludes with the following: “For the last eleven months, we have repeatedly pleaded for the international community to stand up to its expectations and protect the people of Bahrain from the brutal and illegitimate regime of Al-Khalifa but to no avail. Our people have had enough and it is time for us to assert to our right for self-defense and give up on a community that has proven it acts only when its selfish interests are threatened.

Therefore, we hold the international community fully responsible for any dangerous escalation that might happen in the future” (“February 14 Youth Coalition Condemns...”, January 24, 2012).

Three days later, this same coalition issued a “Final Warning to The Mercenaries Hired by Al-Khalifa Regime” stating:

“Therefore, we advise you to heed our final warning for your own sake. Take your belongings and go back to wherever you have come from if you value your life, and do not accept for yourself to commit crimes for the sake of the illegitimate regime of Al-Khalifa. Our people have decided to bring an end to the illegitimate regime, and we have no doubts that you will be the first sacrifice Al-Khalifa will make to maintain their grip on power.

At the same time, we would like to make an honest call to the nations, governments and embassies to make the right decision and condemn hiring their people by Al-Khalifa regime as mercenaries, and call them back before it is too late. We shall take no responsibility for whatever might happen to the mercenaries after this final warning” (January 27, 2012).

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My former colleague and supervisor at the American Studies Center at the University of Bahrain, Dr. John Hillis, recently forwarded me your excellent article: "Tour d'horizon: An Iranian Optic on the Middle East and its Prospects" which appeared in *Veterans Today: Military and Foreign Affairs Journal*

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