

## **BREAKING NEWS: Bahrain: Massive Pro-Democracy Rally Defies US-Backed State Terrorism**

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*One of the biggest pro-democracy rallies took place in Bahrain this week, defying claims that more than a year of US-backed brutal repression has crushed the popular movement against the unelected Al Khalifa monarchy.*

Crowds of up to 200,000 marched on the outskirts of the capital, Manama, on Monday for the funeral of well-known pro-democracy activist Salah Abbas Habib [see amateur video 1]. The 36-year old was killed last Friday by regime forces during protests held against the Persian Gulf island's staging of the Formula One Grand Prix over the weekend.

His body was found dumped on a rooftop on Saturday morning, the second day of the F1. The night before, Habib was detained along with several others, who had been protesting against the international sporting event. Witnesses confirm that his recovered body showed signs of physical assault as well as gun shot wounds.

In the week running up to the Grand Prix, large demonstrations were held daily in towns and villages across Bahrain, decrying the event going ahead amid ongoing state violence against the pro-democracy movement that began in February 2011. State security forces escalated repression against protesters with shotguns and firing even more massive amounts of tear gas than usual.

Dozens of civilians were injured and more than 60 pro-democracy activists arrested – contradicting claims by the F1 organisers and the regime that staging the race marked the “return to normalcy”.

Some 80 people from Bahrain's mainly Shia population have been killed over the past year by Saudi-backed forces supporting the Al Khalifa monarchy. Thousands have been injured or incarcerated, including doctors and medics, teachers, journalists, lawyers and clerics.

Bahrain is the base of the US Navy Fifth Fleet. Earlier this year, Washington approved the sale of \$53 million worth of military equipment to Bahrain, including armoured vehicles and teargas. The US government backed the invasion of Bahrain in March 2011 by Saudi forces, which have remained on the island to prop up the widely despised Al Khalifa dynasty.

While the Western mainstream media have largely ignored Bahrain's uprising, the regime's insistence on staging the F1 has backfired, bringing unwelcome international focus on the state's brutal repression and the legitimate demands of the population for the unelected Sunni rulers to stand down.

Despite unrelenting state violence, the people have grown more defiant in their demands for the Al Khalifa monarchy to surrender power. The crowds of 200,000 at the funeral of Salah Abbas Habib represent about one-third of the indigenous population of Bahrain. In the amateur video below, the rallying call of “Yascot Hamad” - “Down, down [King] Hamad” - has now become an implacable demand of the people - a demand that becomes evermore trenchant with every martyr that falls.

The relative paucity of Western mainstream media coverage of the ongoing anti-government protests in Bahrain also points up the double standards and deception of this media with regard to Syria. No such protest movement commanding anywhere near a third of the population exists in Syria, yet the mainstream media has given virtually non-stop coverage to events in that country. Moreover, whereas Bahraini protests have been largely peaceful, those in Syria championed by the mainstream media are the work of foreign mercenaries armed and supported by NATO and Arab states, which have committed widespread atrocities.

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**NOTES:**

[1] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NojQyTJlhQk&feature=youtu.be>

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**About the author:**

Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master’s graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during

## 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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