

## In the face of unbridled attack, a nationwide renewal of resistance in Bahrain

By [Ralph Schoenman](#)

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Friday, March 25th dawned in Manama as F 16 fighter jets, rocket launchers exposed, soared low over Pearl Square, across Manama and out over villages and towns throughout the island kingdom of Bahrain.

The spectacle of super-sonic war planes, bearing rocket cannons, soaring over unarmed civilians protesting for democratic rights against an autocratic regime pointed to the real relation of forces on display. U.S. imperial reach in the entire region is present in the form of the Fifth Fleet with its attack aircraft carriers, missile arsenal and supersonic attack jets at the ready.

Their presence in the skies over Manama and the villages of Bahrain provides an ominous display of how far U.S. rulers are prepared to go to crush resistance to the country-selling regimes on whose repressive force they have long relied.

Amongst the mass of demonstrators no one hurled grenades at the Royal Court in al-Rifaa in the centre of Bahrain, neither in east nor west al-Rifaa.

Despite the presence of government spies and provocateurs, such was the discipline among protesters that not one member of the Bahraini "security forces" or of the occupying armies was attacked or killed. The initial governmental claim that one Saudi soldier had died and two kidnapped was soon exposed as a lie. The sole policeman who was declared officially to have been killed turned out, upon investigation, to be a demonstrator – yet another victim of the government itself.

The fact that Saudi special forces and those of the Emirates of the Gulf have been required to amplify the crimes of the al-Khalifa kleptocracy in Bahrain reflects the shrinking social base and stability of the entire apparatus of U.S. domination of the peoples of the region.

In days previous, these forces conducted a bloody rampage against unarmed demonstrators and ordinary inhabitants alike. Royal Bahraini military assault units, occupying Saudi rangers and Gulf emirate elite squads accompanied local killer police and ubiquitous black masked mercenary goons, wielding their axes and clubs, throughout the night.

The wave of kidnappings, assassinations and beatings unto death was but the first line of attack. Any who tended to the wounded was at risk for kidnapping and death. Police and army units invaded hospitals, attacking doctors and surgeons on the spot, kidnapping others and seizing the wounded from emergency rooms. They were ripped from operating tables and pulled from intensive care units in Salmaniya hospital, al Sitra hospital, the International Hospital of Bahrain and from makeshift trauma units set up randomly in shops.

It was too dangerous to take wounded to the hospitals. People on the streets were in constant risk of being shot and seized. Tortured bodies of the disappeared turned up in ditches and dumpsites in Manama and in remote parts of the country.

Medical attention to the growing number of victims was now impromptu, informal – largely confined to couches and tables in homes and offices.

All components of the movement for democratic transformation of Bahrain agreed that Friday prayers and funerals for the many martyrs must be followed by mobilization – that passivity in the face of escalating terror would be fatal.

Army units had been ordered to Pearl Square when a rare sand storm descended on Manama. Originating in Kuwait, Manama became its epicentre. Powerful winds drove sand into eyes, ears and nostrils – penetrating every aperture. The army units were ordered to stand down. The people kept coming, scarves and handkerchiefs over nose, eyes and mouth.

To some, the scale of this sand storm was taken as an omen. The spectacle of a natural phenomenon compelling the forces of repression to retreat gave people heart. They poured out in great and increasing numbers in every village in Bahrain, mourning the dead and pledging continued resistance to the ruthlessness and brutal arrogance of the al Khalifas and the royal regime.

People in Bahrain feel they have been abandoned. No single government has spoken out against the brutal repression, the kidnapping and murder of medical personnel, the occupation of hospitals and medical facilities, the continuous reign of terror against an unarmed populace demonstrating peacefully for democratic rights.

With the important exception of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the voices of global organizations have been largely muted – notably that of the International Committee of the Red Cross – let alone those of the country-selling regimes that inhabit such bodies as the United Nations, the latter a continuing instrument of imperial conquest in the service of plunder.

Bahrainis take note that the government of Iran, invoked by the Saudis as a pretext for their occupation, is itself the prime target of the U.S Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain but has been relatively mute about the slaughter and repression of the population or of the pogrom visited upon the majority Shia inhabitants.

Two distinguished doctors, Dr. Ali Al Akri and Dr. Ghassan Dhaif, who have been kidnapped and held incommunicado by security forces, their fate unknown and their families unable to contact them, were trained at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. Although fully apprised, the Royal College of Surgeons has yet to issue a statement in their support or to demand their release.

If the people of Bahrain feel betrayed, they have in the face of such repression shown themselves no less determined to defend their rights and to honor their martyrs.

Jaffar Miaouf was one of those murdered on March 16th when soldiers assaulted Pearl Square at dawn. He had approached them with his arms held high, calling out to them “Selmiya! Selmiya!” (Peaceful, I come in peace!”

Jaffar Maiouf walked before the soldiers speaking to them one on one: "We are fighting for our rights, for jobs with living pay, to have a decent home, to be able to afford education, to have medical care for our families. We want these things for you. We want these rights for you no less than for ourselves. We want them for the people of Bahrain."

A command was heard. Guns blazed as if from a firing squad. Jaffar was hit in the back and both legs. He was shot from behind by special order and he died on the spot.

On Friday, March 25th, after prayers, the Shia village of A'Ali, near Riffa, home to Jaffar Maiouf, declared itself "Honored by his sacrifice." Everyone in the village was there. Just prior, a woman in A'Ali was shot in the head by police. Quickly secured by villagers before the police could take her away, they had to secrete her in a home for treatment.

Under the decree imposing martial law, all health services have been commandeered by the forces of repression, resulting in a license to kill, maim and kidnap anyone involved in medical care for the injured.

Taking her to a hospital virtually guaranteed that she would be treated as an enemy by police and subject to being kidnapped and killed.

Bahrain is an island nation composed of 33 separate islands united by connecting highways and bridges into one land mass. Meetings to mourn the martyrs and to pledge continued resistance took place in every village in Bahrain.

The total number of people who declared their defiance by their physical presence exceeded in number the largest protests to date, greater than the number of those occupying Pearl Square on February 16th or in the later protest camp in the financial district.

Solemn encomia to those murdered at the hands of the forces of repression, combined with impassioned speeches from family and friends of the fallen, resonated on Friday from Sitra, in the north east of Bahrain, to Manama in the north and across Bahrain to Duraz, Miqsha, Ma'ameer, A'aali, Bani Jamra, Karrana, Alekr, Samaheej, Daih, Sanabis, Jidhafs, Abu Saiba, Saar, Dair, Dar Kulaib, Boori, Nuwaidraat, Malkiya, Toobli, Karbabad, Karzakan and Balad al Qadim.

Several mosques were reported to us by contacts to have been targeted and attacked by military forces, as well as by the "unofficial" militia, comprised of army and police that are out of uniform. These are particularly brutal and are known locally as "Baltijyah."

Reports have just come into us describing attacks on Shia mosques in Manama, Hamad Town and, shortly ago, in Jid Ali. These were followed by attacks on Sunni mosques.

It is a blatant attempt by government forces to create internecine blood letting and to incite sectarian conflict, the strategic purpose of which is to divide the movement, turn the population on itself and provide a pretext and propaganda theme for ruthless repression.

These are classic devices, the touchstone of class dominion and the sine qua non of colonial control in the past. It is the pattern that plays out in capitalist states across the world: pitting Black against White, both against Hispanics, men against women, old against young, unionized workers against the disorganized and all sectors against the most highly exploited among recent immigrants.

Through virtual apartheid arrangements in which communities are separated physically from each other, region is marshalled against region.

The majority Shia population has cultural and religious ties and natural affinity with the Shia population of Iran – notably among the Arab minority of Khuzistan, the oil producing sector of Iran – even as it does with the Shia population across the causeway in that one third of Saudi Arabia in which Saudi oil is also concentrated.

The al-Khalifa ruling family invaded Bahrain over 200 years ago and imposed itself on the Shia population, never integrating itself within the population it had conquered. This is the abiding legacy of the autocratic regime and its pursuit of a virtual apartheid polity in Bahrain.

The Fifth Fleet is stationed in Bahrain to exacerbate these divisions and to deploy them as a rationale for ongoing U.S. and Israeli plans to attack Iran. These imperial strategic objectives define and inform the politics of subjugation in Bahrain.

Staged provocations are the standard operating procedure in order to maintain the fiction of Iranian “subversion” of Bahrain.

The morning of March 27th, we received the following eye-witness account:

Special police units took into custody a large group of civilians, forced them onto a ship and took them out to sea. The police proceeded to accuse them of “plotting too smuggle weapons from Iran to Bahrain.”

Saudi and United Arab Emirate troops assisted in filming this and in detaining the captives in order to prepare State and international propoganda accusing Iran of subversion and of being the real force behind popular agitation in Bahrain. Nineteen boys, as young as ten years of age, have been imprisoned.

In addition, in Karranah, six army jeeps carried young men arrested and paraded before cameras, as television reporters repeated police claims, without a scintilla of evidence, that these youth “were caught smuggling weapons to Bahrain from Iran.”

It is a pattern with a long history. In Karzahan in 2006 police burned to death a local policeman attributing the crime to local youth. After a short period, the village people discovered that the victim had a relationship with a young girl who was a member of the Royal family. Police burned and killed him, concealed the orders from the Royal family and deployed his charred body to round up and imprison at random local Shia youth.

These methods are being replicated at this moment in Dimistan where the army, accompanied by helicopters, has rounded up people in the area, charging them with “smuggling weapons from Iran,” utilizing the very film made by the Special police units of kidnapped civilians forced out to sea, as set forth above.

These criminal methods have a long and continuous history in Bahrain. In the north-eastern village of Ma’ameer, center of the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) shut down by the unlimited General Strike by the General Federation of Workers’ Trade Unions of Bahrain, a Pakistani worker died from burns all over his body in 2006.

Seven local youths, workers from Ma’ameer, were framed for the crime and convicted in July

2010. They are serving life sentences. Evidence shows that the victim was murdered by State agents while he was in the hospital being treated for severe burns and other injuries. He was never out of police custody.

In 1994, an identical operation was carried out by police who burned a Pakistani man and proceeded to arrest a local youth, Essa Qamber, for the police crime. Similar events occurred in 1975, 1980, 1990 and 2010, closely following the emergence of popular protests and demonstrations against ubiquitous oppression.

The conditions of the working population of Ma'ameer are a distillation of the reign of terror visited upon the population of Bahrain and will be addressed in detail in a report soon to follow.

Ordinary Shia citizens, seized days before in villages and hospitals, have been assimilated to government contrived "plots." This cynical operation follows the State pattern with respect to Salmaniya hospital and medical complex in which noted surgeons, doctors and medical attendants have been attacked, rounded up and detained.

Official television news reports that the hospitals have been a "center of subversion and agitation" in which Shia militants terrorize the hospital staff and have turned all medical facilities into centers of political agitation.

A video was just sent us of a female reporter for Bahain TV reporting from Salmaniya hospital shortly after the State massacre at Pearl Square on February 17, while orchestrating these claims. As she speaks into her microphone, the shrieking wounded can be heard in the background. The reporter, eyes darting nervously, shuts off her microphone to conceal the cries. Moments later, the camera switches to the main television studio and the images are cut off as well, while a studio commentator repeats the official fiction of medical agitators having "seized control" of Salmaniya, taking over and terrorizing other medical personnel.

Bahrain TV earlier carried a report following the state massacre of protesters at the Pearl encampment on February 17-18 that putatively showed weapons that the reporters claimed "had been stored in tents by the protesters." Several astute observers noted that the firearms and bullets displayed on Bahrain TV did not match in calibre.

This state propaganda, repeated constantly on official print and electronic media, serve to facilitate the reign of terror in the streets of Manama and the villages of Bahrain as doctors, nurses and ambulance drivers are shot, arrested and disappear.

Repression in Bahrain continues unabated. As international communications are closely monitored and controlled, extreme care has been required in obtaining on-site reports. Activist friends and associates of impeccable reliability and scrupulous regard for accuracy have been as ingenious as they are courageous in keeping us apprised:

"We have been advised that Dr. N is safe in hiding with family/friends. Not in State custody. Great news! Massive military blockade of all main roads around Manama. People stopped trying to make their way to central protests such as at Bab al Bahrain. People now moving to hold protests in their own areas and villages - that is, not a central protest such as planned last night."

“K” alerted us: “Today, evening, twelve boys were arrested. Two of them are known by name: Mohammed Abu Edris and Mahdi Sayed Abu Edris. They and the ten others, god knows what will happen to them. Given the brutality of the regime and the agreement signed by the Saudi and Bahraini governments, the Saudis have taken full control of Bahraini security. They are free to do anything anywhere and to use any methods.

“The situation is out of control across Bahrain. People are being killed at will. We are all under constant threat. Tonight, I returned secretly to my house with my family. If god allows, we shall go back tomorrow to my relatives again.

“Abdul Rasul Al Hujairi was going to repair the receiver to enable him to receive all channels near Hamad. They caught him, tortured him throughout the day and killed him. Where is the world? Where is humanity? Where is the United Nations?

“People are thinking about retaliation and I think we should. No one is safe. Nobody feels safe any more. These forces of repression are killing for fun! Yes, killing us for fun, killing us for fun. They destroy our cars, our houses, our property. They kill and kill our people.

“The inquiry you made, yes, he is a custodian at Salmaniya Hospital. He was thrown in a heap at Awaali sports racing area near the traffic police station on the west side.

“All the medical team working with my daughter have gone missing – four of them. No one knows where they have been taken. I am sure they will be killed because they have a lot of evidence regarding the crimes of the regime. I know their first names only: Hussain, Ali, Ghassan. I don’t know the fourth man.

“Please do your best to help us stop this killing. They caught one of our friends going to work. He was beaten badly and thrown away. Lucky they didn’t take him with them or he would be killed. This happened this morning. His picture is attached.

Regards, K.”

These wrenching exchanges unfold daily.

“Thank you. Can you confirm the details of the death of Abdul Rasul Al Hijiri? He was reported dead on March 21 near the oil fields of Al Awaali, his body badly beaten and his neck broken. We understand that he was taken by government forces from Salmaniya hospital where he worked as a custodian.”

“The missing number has increased to 150, mostly at check points to prevent attendance at the demonstration or the funeral ceremony of Hani. Regards, X”

March 25: 11:34 p.m:

“Massive capture of youth at all check points. They are directed to unknown destinations.”

These communiqués illuminate the daily ordeal of the people of Bahrain.

Our report, “Pervasive Brutality Engulfs Bahrain” (March 24, 2011) described the fate of Hani Abdulaziz, taken by security forces in the town of Bilad Qadeem into a concrete structure where his knees and elbows were blown out with shot guns.

Kidnapped by security forces from the operating table of the hospital, he disappeared. His father was informed by police that there was no record of Hani Abdulaziz.

On Thursday, March 24, the police who had denied knowledge of the whereabouts of Hani Abdulaziz, notified his family that he had been killed in “an auto accident” and that his body would be released to the family.

His father rejected the police fabrication. His village of Belad Al Qadim held a funeral for him on March 25th. At midnight, we received the following email:

The pattern of official murder and state concealment is generic. Bahia al Aradi was a nurse killed on March 16th during an armed military assault on Pearl Square. The government declared that she “died in an automobile accident.”

She had been shot three times in the head. The government then released a statement claiming that “she had been shot accidentally” claiming a random unattributed shot had struck her.

Her family and colleagues asked “How can you be shot by accident by three high powered bullets to the head?”

Bahia al Aradi was a nurse. She was shot while driving the car of a prominent doctor sought by the authorities. Her funeral was attended by her family and became itself a rallying point for the movement in Bahrain. Speakers bore witness to the fact that a targeted assassination of the doctor whose car she had driven that night had claimed her life.

Moments ago the following alert reached us: “Good morning: This morning, three hours ago, Shaikh Jalil Moqdad was arrested. He is one of the most important figures in opposition to the government. Things are really going bad here in Bahrain.”

Thirty minutes ago, we were alerted to a squadron of helicopters over the Hooraa area of Manama near Ras Rumman as another police operation unfolds.

The resistance, for all the repression, remains undeterred. The multiple martyrs of this heroic movement in Bahrain are among the world’s soldiers for justice, their suffering and sacrifice forever shared and forever all their own.

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