

Slaughter in Bahrain

Nerve Gas Used against Protesters

By [Finian Cunningham](#)

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Manama. They turned over the limp, lifeless body of the young man,. His back was riddled with bullet wounds. His skull flopped open revealing a bloody mess and a gaping hole where the brain used to be before it was blown out by a high-velocity weapon at point-blank range.

A surgeon at Salmaniya Hospital in Manama said helplessly: “We could do nothing to save him.”

Ahmed Farhan was just one of several Bahrainis killed yesterday by state forces that went on a murderous rampage in mainly Shia towns and villages deemed to be supportive of the popular uprising against the autocratic

US-backed regime headed by King Hamad al-Khalifa.

Another doctor said: “This is all-out war against civilians who are simply demanding democracy.”

As hundreds of injured were ferried along the corridors of the hospital, there was an atmosphere of dread among medics that the Persian Gulf island regime had lost all restraint under international law.

This was less than 24 hours after a large convoy of Saudi-led troops arrived in Bahrain, with the ostensible aim of “restoring stability”. At the same time, the Bahraini rulers declared: “The government will never tolerate any disruption of social peace.”

Doctors said that the hospital at Salmaniya and elsewhere, such as Sitrah and Isa Town, have been labeled “disloyal” to the regime. They claimed that their personal details are being circulated on the internet and that they are now fearing for their lives.

Yesterday’s violence came after a weekend of mayhem unleashed by state forces, which saw as many as 1,000 civilians injured by live fire, rubber bullets and, according to senior consultants, the deployment of illegal nerve poisons.

“What we are seeing are crimes against humanity,” said a facial surgeon.

Among the injured yesterday was the chief of ambulance services, Mohammed Abdul Rahim, who lay unconscious from wounds after he was reportedly attacked by state forces while trying to help victims. He was hauled out of his ambulance and severely beaten by plainclothes militia, backed up by Bahraini police forces and the army, according to several witnesses.

Medics spoke of how three ambulances were hijacked by state forces.

“They are preventing us from attending the wounded,” said one nurse. “This is what this government is doing to its people. Please, the international community must do something to help us.”

There is little doubt among medics and anti-government protesters that the regime received clearance from political allies in Washington, London and the other Gulf states to step up its four-week old repression against the civilian population.

“The US Fifth Fleet is only one kilometre from this hospital. One phone call and this slaughter would stop,” said Arif Rajab, a surgeon at Salmaniya.

While the largely peaceful uprising has so far directed its enmity towards the royal family, there was, in the light of yesterday’s bloodshed, noticeable anger now against western governments for their support of the regime.

Many Bahrainis pointed to the unscheduled visit last Saturday to Bahrain by US secretary of defence Robert Gates, who had closed meetings with the regime’s top brass. Days earlier, Britain’s top national security adviser

Sir Peter Ricketts also had a private meeting with the Bahraini king.

Middle East analyst Ralph Schoeneman said: “This level of coordination does not result in full-scale invasion 24 hours later by virtual puppet regimes without taking their cues and instruction from their military suppliers and political overseers. The Fifth Fleet is centred in Bahrain as is US and British military intelligence. It is a vital launching point for the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, serving also as the staging ground for projection of western power against Iran.”

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