

The 2010 Mideast People of the Year: The Oppressed.

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The 2010 Middle East People of the Year are:

The Palestinians in Gaza, desperate to let the world know that nearly two years after the end of the 2008-2009 war, the cruel embargo on the territory persists; the siege by air, land and sea continues; and the impoverished population is still held captive in their land.

The Bahraini Shia, the island's indigent and marginalized majority, ruled by the wealthy Sunni al-Khalifa royal family who routinely orders an imported security service to round up and torture democracy and human rights advocates. Excluded from government, the public sector and law enforcement by overt sectarian discrimination, they have risked life and limb to protest their disenfranchised state.

The Egyptians, who have suffocated under a repressive U.S.-backed regime that has governed by Emergency Law for 30 years and stifled the freedom of expression, assembly and press. The inability to replace their parliamentary representatives by a fair ballot this year makes voting a cruel reminder that the "status quo" is the only candidate ever up for election.

The Iraqis, who endured seven years of occupation and a few daily hours of electricity under a blistering summer sun as unrelenting as the explosions, bombings and suicide attacks that wracked cities and killed thousands. The simple will to stroll on neighborhood streets, take a trip to the market, drop the children off at school or attend Friday prayers are testaments to bravery that should put Iraqi politicians only interested in retaining power to shame.

The Saudi Ismaili, Shia and Sufi Muslims, harassed, arrested and jailed for practicing their religion or demanding the right to do so. The doors of their mosques have been sealed shut by the Interior Ministry as has the potential for civic and socioeconomic advancement. They are the "apostates" denied basic dignities enjoyed by other citizens.

The Yemenis of Saada governorate, who became the malnourished "internally displaced" refugees caught in the country's long civil war. Pummeled by Saudi airstrikes to the north and shelled by Yemen's army from the south, they suffered famine and destruction in a humanitarian catastrophe ignored by the world.

The 2010 Mideast People of the Year? The Oppressed.

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