

# BAHRAIN

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CENTRE FOR ARAB GULF STUDIES

## The Doomsday Scenario

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Qatar Antagonises Kuwait With Her Pro-Iraq's Policy; the Saudis Are To Blame

Friday the 18th was a bad day for the bilateral relations between the two states of Qatar and Kuwait. For on the evening of that day in February, the Qatari Television aired an exclusive interview with no one but the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Mohammed Saeed Al Sahhaf. In that interview, Mr. Al Sahhaf presented the case of his government especially on the issue of the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations. He attacked some Gulf states especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. One week earlier, the Qatari TV had also broadcast a programme about the sufferings of the Iraqi people as a result of the sanctions. The two programmes were enough to fuel a tense controversy in the Gulf especially between Kuwait and Qatar. The Kuwaitis feel that the Qataris were insensitive, to say the least, on the issue of the relations with Iraq. Being a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Qatar is expected to withhold the common stands on Iraq. In the last GCC summit in Riyadh, the Gulf alliance had reaffirmed its commitment to support Kuwait in her continuous call for Iraq to accept UN resolution 833 on the demarcation of the borders between the two countries, and for all prisoners of war held by Iraq to be released.

The Qataris maintain that their commitment to Kuwait's liberation had been unequivocal and that her subsequent foreign policies are geared to her national interests. After the liberation of Kuwait, she does not feel bound to continue the boycott of Iraq. In December 1992, the Qatari ambassador to Iraq returned to Baghdad in a step that created an uproar in the Gulf capitals. Since then, the Qataris have improved the relations with Iraq despite numerous protestations from Kuwait. Last summer, the Qatari football club of Al Wakra signed an agreement to hire two Iraqi players. The head of the national team of Qatar had also visited Baghdad and held high level talks. Last month, Qatar's Chief of Staff also called on the Iraqi capital to be received by senior Iraqi officials including Saddam Hussain himself. These gestures could not go down well with the Kuwaitis who are now witnessing the crumbling of the alliance that had helped her regain her liberation three years ago. There is a growing signs of unease in Kuwait whose foreign policy has, so far, failed to keep the lid on Baghdad. Apart from Saudi Arabia, the anti-Saddam alliance has almost ceased to exist. Oman, another GCC member has all along maintained her relations with Baghdad. At the peak of the crisis, the Iraqi foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, was received by Omani officials in Muscat to the annoyance of the Kuwaitis.

Why is it then that the situation has reached

this level of disunity among the GCC states? Perhaps one of the most dramatic events in the months that followed Kuwait's liberation was the sudden flare-up of the border dispute between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Up and until that moment in June 1992, the GCC alliance appeared to be solid enough to withstand the calls for the lifting of sanctions on Iraq coming from various corners of the Arab world. The Saudis took the unpleasant move of occupying the Qatari border post of Al Khafous, killing two Qatari soldiers in the process. The government in Doha reacted fiercely, and spared no effort in publicising her grievances against the Saudis. At the time, the Saudis seemed to have won the day. Since 80 percent of the Arab press has been either owned by the Saudis or under their influence, Riyadh managed to score enough points to maintain the upper hand in the conflict.

The Qatari government, headed by the Amir, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani, reacted angrily to what they saw as a flagrant violation by the Saudis of the most basic rules of good neighbourhood. Their press went on the rampage attacking Saudi Arabia, a development largely unexpected in the early days of the GCC. Their foreign policy shifted to a more liberal tendency, targeting the relations with both Iran and Iraq. The Qataris have calculated that their long term security could only be achieved through good neighbourly relations not with Saudi Arabia who had shown signs of aggression, but with the two most powerful countries in the region. Although the relations with Iran have been improving over the last three years, the flare-up of hostilities with Saudi Arabia have boosted them remarkably. Furthermore, Doha approached the relations with Iraq from a different perspective than her Gulf allies. She has been calling on Iraq to respect the UN resolutions vis-a-vis the Gulf crisis, but she also took positive steps towards the restoration of good neighbourly relations. Strategically, the Qataris view their security as being dependent on the establishment of harmonious regional relations. The Saudis seem to have lost the battle of hearts.

The Kuwaitis were the first victims of the Qatari-Saudi crisis. They were accused by the Qataris of not taking a principled stand when the Saudis attacked their borders. Their argument goes as follows; we stood up together against Saddam's aggression against Kuwait. With the same token, we should stand up against the Saudi aggression. If what Saddam did was wrong, then so is the Saudi action against the sovereignty. But the Kuwaitis were not forthcoming especially when they are asked for a

stand on an issue where the Saudis are involved. The Qataris accuse their Gulf brethren of not standing up to their principles and, hence, the whole alliance has become hopeless. If aggression could not be prevented within the GCC itself, the point is thus lost. This feeling has motivated the Qatari foreign ministry to adopt an active international mission to affirm the country's independence in foreign policy. The Saudis were snubbed immensely, and they feel they have lost the battle.

What has added to the problem is the crumbling of the oil prices, a development that has hit the Saudis hard. They have been forced to pump oil in quantities far beyond the need of the international market. The West wanted to maintain political as well as economic supremacy, through cheap oil imports especially at this time where recession is hitting the world economy hard. The foreign reserves of both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been halved by the Gulf crisis, but the West still wants more capital investment on western products. Last month, the Saudis were forced to sign a US\$ 6 billion deal with the two American aircraft giants, Boeing and McDonnell Douglas to supply 60 civilian aircrafts to the national carrier. The deal was forged after a personal intervention from the US president, Bill Clinton. The Europeans, who have been hoping to get the deal felt bad about it. They are saying that the intervention by the president is against the notion of the free trade spirit and contravenes the GATT agreement which calls for removal of all obstacles from the way of free trade. The Saudis could not refuse the US president's insistence that the deal should go to the American companies. He maintained that the US had stood up for your cause at time of crisis, it is now time for a similar goodwill gesture from you. Finally, he has won the day.

The future of the GCC is as bleak as the economic and political situation in the region. It is unlikely to survive the Qatari-Kuwaiti crisis which has surpassed all previous misunderstanding and disputes. Iraq has managed to invade the Gulf once again through the effective use of diplomacy instead of tanks and arms. Three years ago, Saddam Hussain seemed doomed. Today he is still alive and ticking. Rather, it is the Gulf regimes which are in crisis. The dispute between Kuwait and Qatar, as has been mentioned, is beyond repair, and is not confined to the two countries. Saudi Arabia and her policies are directly implicated in the whole episode. The director of the Qatari TV, Sa'ad Al Rumaihi has stated that he intends to continue covering Iraqi affairs. He says he

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## Mo'min Mosque: Government's Action Fails

Since the storming and closure of Mo'min Mosque on 19 January, the Bahriani authorities have been looking for a replacement to Mohammed Hassan Kadhem, the fifty-years old person now in jail after defying the Interior Ministry orders by opening the Mosque on 19 January. Mr. Kadhem was the "Qayyim" of the Mosque, ie the person in-charge of opening and closing the premises at certain times and looking after the tidiness of the place. Mr. Kadhem has been suffering from ill-treatment and torture as a form of punishment for disobedience.

On 3 February, the Mosque was opened and a new Qayyem was put in-charge. The new person, Mr. Jawad Al-Azraq, with a deputy by the name Nader Al-Hallay, declared that any activity that are not approved by the Interior Ministry and Religious Trust Department "Awqaf" will not be permitted. He also made it clear that the Mosque will be shut directly after completion of prayers in the evening, thus preventing holding any function after that time. On the opening of the Mosque, the security officer controlling access to the Mosque briefed Al-Azraq in a loudly heard voice saying: "Jawad: any person that moves here or there just report him to me".

Three days later some workers were hired by the Interior Ministry to replace the metal-grid surrounding the boundaries of the Mosque (which allows people inside and outside the compound of the Mosque to see each other) with a solid brick surround (which prevents people seeing each other). Moreover, the coloured lightings installed in the Mosque for switching-on during celebrations were replaced with plain ones. Several day later, Mr. Sadeq Al-Bahamah, Head of Awqaf, entered the Mosque and ordered the removal of a poster hung with the wall since the 19th of January.

However, Mr. Al-Azraq realised that he had been assigned an impossible task. He started his work by warning the youth that "the old days of your games are over". Within a fortnight, Al-Azraq resigned. Then Awqaf department contacted a respected elder, Haji Abdulla Al-Halwachi for taking over the responsibilities of "Qayyem". Al-Halwachi was furious, since his acceptance would mean his approval of the intimidation of the Mosque on 19 January and his carelessness about the continuing suffering of the jailed Qayyem, Mohammed Hasan Kadhem. Al-Halwachi has not only refused the offer, but also warned the authorities that interference with religious programmes would not stop him and others from holding such functions in other places.

On 24 February, people power was demonstrated. A major religious celebration was organised at Mo'min Mosque without compliance to Interior Ministry orders. The Mosque was packed with people while the speakers emphasised the sacredness of the place that was intimidated. Police kept out of the scene, while intelligence officers feared to show up.

The Bahriani opposition managed to expose the wrong doings of the government which resulted in an international condemnation. The Al-Khalifa have always assumed that they can do what ever the like. May be they are mistaken.

## The Government Refuses to Release Detainees

An oppressive crackdown on innocent Bahraini citizens has been going on since the storming of a grand mosque in Manama. On 19 January 1994 Bahrain's security forces stormed a peaceful meeting at Mo'min Mosque in the capital Manama. Gates were smashed, books were burnt, attendants were beaten, tear-gassed and many were arbitrarily arrested. The meeting was a traditional religious one, but the security forces provoked a confrontation in the hope of frightening those people organising or attending mass gatherings. Prison cells were packed with those arrested on the spot. It took many days to know the whereabouts of those missing. Some were known to have been released after intimidation and torturing at Al-Adleyya prison cells, only to be detained few days later. Others remain in Al-Adleyya detention centre for indefinite periods while being ill-treated. These are:

- (1) Mohammed Hassan Kadhem, 50 years old, from Manama; (2) Mohammed Mahdi Al-Zayer, 27 years old, from Abo-Sayba'a; (3) Majeed Milad, 27 years, Ras-Romman; (4) Hussain Al-Sairafi, 50 years, Manama; (5) Mohammed Al-Mahhari, 27 years, Moqusha'a; (6) Abd-Ali Sengais, 28 years, Sanabis; (7) Saeed Ahmed Abdul-Nabi, 28 years, Sanabis; (8) Ja'afar Al-Ekri, 27 years, Al-Daih; (9) Hassan Ahmed Al-Ekri, 22 years, Al-Daih; (10) Ali Hussain Omran, 25 years, Manama; (11) Redha Al-Shuwaikh, 25 years, Manama; (12) Tawfeeq Al-Mahroos, 26 years, Manama; (13) Jamil Ali Salman Al-Agaifah, Manama.

Mr. Milad has been admitted to the military hospital, reportedly suffering from torture. Messrs Al-Shuwaikh and Al-Mahroos were detained on 19 January, released after few days and subsequently detained indefinitely. Mr. Al-Agaifah was detained on 14 February.

On the other hand, the security forces are continuing their harassment of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, ex-judge and a member of the dissolved parliament between 1973-75. He has been summoned several time before and after the attack on Mo'min Mosque. He jointly sponsored a petition in November 1992 (signed by several hundred distinguished personalities) calling on the Amir (ruler) to restore the dissolved parliament and to re-activate the suspended constitution. On 22 January, a security investigating officer, by the name Farooq, informed him that he would be summoned after finishing with those in detention. This is a well-known tactic, effectively used in the Eighties, whereby a group of people are subjected to extreme torture until they sign prepared confessions accusing themselves and others, as may be ordered by the security officers, to have carried out subversive activities, thus preparing the ground for long-term jail sentences. Bahrain was monitored by UN Human Rights Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities between January 1992 and February 1993 under 1503 procedure. Since February 1993 human rights violations have intensified with more detentions and expulsions of Bahraini citizens. It is high time for the UN Human Rights Commission to re-consider Bahrain for monitoring.

## UK Parliamentary Group Condemns Bahrain

The Parliamentary Human Rights Group in the British Houses of Commons and Lords has voiced its disgust with the Bahraini government's violations of human rights. It is hoped that this would have an impact on the British decision makers in the Foreign Office. Although the official British position is supportive of the ruling family policy, it is becoming an embarrassing issue for the Foreign Office. Concerns are now voiced by human rights groups on the conditions of in Bahrain. This will result in more pressure to influence the official stand. Security and stability in the Gulf could not be achieved by propping-up dictators. Lord Avebury sent the following letter (dated 25 January 1994) to the Bahraini Embassy in London:

"Dear Ambassador,

You may recall that I wrote to you on May 9, 1993, about the application of the citizenship laws in Bahrain, and you kindly forwarded my letter to the Minister of the Interior, Sheikh Mohamed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, who replied on Jun 7, sending us a copy of the statement made before the Commission on Human Rights at the 48th session from January 27 to March 6, 1992. He also asked us to supply a list of the persons to whom our inquiry related, and I wrote to him on June 18 enclosing the lists (a) of citizens fearing to return in case they would be arrested and tried; (b) of those who tried to return and were allegedly denied leave to enter, and (c) of citizens of Persian origin said to have been deprived of their citizenship. I added that it seemed to us that although the Minister had emphasised that all Bahrainis enjoyed equal rights irrespective of their religion etc, as laid down in the constitution, the Shias and those of Persian ancestral origin felt themselves to be suffering discrimination through the citizenship laws.

On August 9, I wrote again to the Minister, saying that we had taken note of the lifting of monitoring under the special Resolution 1503 procedure of the human rights situation in Bahrain by the UN Human Rights Commission, and I repeated that we hoped to receive a full account of his Government's point of view on the matters raised, so that we could give our members a briefing which covered both sides of the picture.

Since then we have not heard from the Minister, but we have taken note of the Amnesty International paper Banned from Bahrain: forcible exile of Bahraini nationals, published in December 1993. This indicates that your Government had responded to some of their communications, and I very much hope we may expect an early reply to our own concerns. Otherwise, we may be compelled to distribute briefings to our 120 members which do not contain a direct account of the Bahrain Government's view on the matters raised. I certainly hope we would not have to rely on the description given by Amnesty International of your Government's responses to their inquiries, since the reasons given for exiling Bahraini citizens, or refusing them admission, were not valid under international law.

Yours sincerely, Lord Avebury".



## Human Rights Monitor

\* A child forcibly exiled. Mr. Mahdi Obaidat, his wife Masooma Hussain Al-Mutwa'a and their daughter Zoya returned to Bahrain on 30 December 1992. They were held at the airport, interrogated, issued with new passports (valid for one year) and deported to Kuwait. On 21 January 1994, the family sent the six-years-old child, Zoya, to Bahrain to spend sometimes with relatives. When the child Zoya arrived at the International Airport, the security forces confiscated her passport and interrogated her relatives in Bahrain. On 3 February, Zoya was collected by the security forces and re-deported to Kuwait. Bahrain's government scores the nastiest amongst all other inhumane dictatorships in the World

\* Ali Al-Jallawi was put on trial on 9 February before the Supreme Court of Appeal (State Security Court) and was sentenced to three months imprisonment. He has already spent four months in detention after attending a religious celebration.

\* On 31 January, Mr. Abdul Amir Radhi Abdulla Al-Qassab, was spotted by a policeman while extinguishing the burning of the national flag. The incident was caused by an in-house kids quarrel which degenerated and cause the fire in the flag. However, the case is now referred to the political police and Mr. Al-Qassab will be tried by the State Security Court. He is now on bail (since 9 February) awaiting trial.

\* A group of Bahraini families gathered in front of the Bahrain Embassy in London on Friday 4 February 1994 and protested against the attack on Mo'min Mosque. Reporters from AFP, BBC and others were present to document the event. The picketers distributed leaflets pertaining to the attack on Mo'min Mosque and recently published reports by Amnesty International exposing the atrocities of the ruling family.

\* AI: UA 18/94 Fear of Forcible Exile. Ahmed Hussein Akbar 'Abbas. Amnesty International has learned that Ahmed Hussein Akbar 'Abbas, a Bahraini national, was forcibly ex-

iled from Bahrain on 19 January 1994 after being held at the airport for 12 days.

Ahmed Hussein Akbar 'Abbas was forcibly exiled from Bahrain for the first time in 1982, when he was stripped of his Bahraini papers and forcibly expelled to Iran. On his return to Bahrain in September 1993 with his Lebanese wife and children, he was reportedly interrogated and beaten before being forcibly expelled to Lebanon, where he was also refused entry and sent back to Bahrain. The Bahraini authorities sent him once again to Lebanon where he was given temporary residence only. On 7 January 1994 Ahmed Akbar Hussein 'Abbas and his family returned again to Bahrain. This time they were all detained at the airport for 12 days before being expelled to Lebanon on 19 January. Before his expulsion, he was reportedly threatened that if he returned again to Bahrain he would be put in a boat bound for Iran.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Forcible exile of Bahraini nationals suspected of political opposition activities remains one of Amnesty International's concerns in the country. While dozens of Bahraini nationals were permitted to return to Bahrain after living abroad for many years, scores more have been denied this right and remain victims of forcible exile apparently for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression.

According to information received by Amnesty International, victims of forcible exile from Bahrain are frequently given no reason for the measures taken against them and are denied the opportunity to appeal the decision to expel them or challenge its legality through the courts. Not only is such practice in contravention of international human rights standards, but it would also appear to be in violation of Article 17 (c) of Bahrain's Constitution, which states that it is forbidden to expel or to prevent Bahraini citizens from returning to Bahrain.

For further information of forcible exile, please refer to Bahrain: Banned from Bahrain: Forcible exile of Bahraini nationals issued on 16 December 1993, (MDE 11/04/93).

## Justice Minister Admits Al-Khalifa's Mischief

Any person listening to the Justice Minister, Abdulla bin Khalid Al-Khalifa, delivering his lecture on modern history of Bahrain, at the University of Bahrain on 8 February 1994, would be amazed by the description of the ruling family. Initially, the minister spoke about how difficult it is to locate sources on Bahrain's history prior to the invasion of the current ruling tribe. Then he goes on complaining about those few remaining sources which describe the Gulf ruling families as pirates. The tone changes a little bit to describe some tribes which fought Al-Khalifa in the Gulf waters at that time, such as Bano-Ka'ab, Quasim (now rulers of Sharjah), sheikhs of Hormoz and Bandareeq. The latter are pirates, according to the minister, who attempted to defeat Al-Khalifa.

Then, the Justice Minister attempts to prove that the Al-Khalifa started their presence in Bahrain since 1700. The proof for the claim is self-damaging. He quotes a book about Bahrain "Lu'lualat Al-Bahrain". The quotation from the book use an old practice of constructing multi-purpose words which provide the structure and meaning of the sentence while at the same time giving the date of the event. The author was describing "the aggressive tribe (Al-Khalifa)... which shattered" Bahrain. Shattered in Arabic is "Shattatooha", and the date counted from it is 1700.

The Justice Minister spoke with proud about the word "shattered" and the implied date of 1700. Hence he concluded that the modern history of Bahrain starts by the shattering of Al-Khalifa in the year 1700. Paradoxically, "Lu'lualat Al-Bahrain" and other books, such as "Anwar Al-Badrain" were authored by or about great scholars of Bahrain, who had taught philosophy and religion and whose writings are considered authorities in their fields. Since the shattering of Bahrain by Al-Khalifa, no distinguished personality could survive and hence new editions of "Lu'lualat Al-Bahrain" or "Anwar Al-Badrain" cannot be re-published. It is clear that the "intellectuals" among the Al-Khalifa have failed to gain legitimacy for their tribe.

## Punishment of Reuters

Attack on Mo'min Mosque was reported by Reuters. The international news agency, was the only one amongst others to violate the official ban on reporting Bahrain's internal political events. The editor working for Reuters in Bahrain, Mr. Randol Palmer, interviewed many witnesses and analyzed the news in a report which was latter transmitted on Reuters world-wide network. All news agencies are restricted by the Information Ministry licence.

In 1984, some AFP editors were expelled. AFP decided to leave Bahrain altogether last January. In the case of Reuters this time, following the reporting of attack on Mo'min Mosque, the Information Ministry summoned the Dubai-based Reuters director. In a hostile meeting, the director was reminded that Reuters existed in Bahrain as long as they kept-out of reporting on Bahrain political situation.

An arrangement was then reached whereby

Mr. Randol Palmer is to be transferred to London, rather being expelled by the Bahraini authorities. Mr. Palmer is due to leave Bahrain in a short time of his annual holiday. After the holiday, Bahrain will not be his place of work. This is a striking example of how Al-Khalifa keep Bahrain under an iron curtain and how reputable news agency comply in one form or another. Mr. Palmer report dated 25 January appeared on Reuters telex line as follows:

"Manama, Jan 24 (Reuters) - Bahraini security forces fired teargas into a Shi'ite Moslem mosque compound last week where hundreds of people had apparently gathered illegally to mourn the death of a top Iranian clergyman, witnesses said on Monday.

They said the incident happened on Wednesday at Al-Mukhargha in the heart of the Bahraini capital, Manama. The forces sealed off the area during the evening and shut the mosque.

About two dozen people were apparently arrested at the time, the witnesses said. The mosque remained closed on Monday.

The crowd had gathered for traditional rites marking the 40th day since the death in Iran of Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Reza Golpaygani, regarded as the highest-ranking theologian of Islam's Shi'ite sect, which has many adherents in Bahrain.

The exact sequence of events was not clear but at some stage the security forces fired numerous rounds of teargas into the open area outside the mosque building, the witnesses said.

Official comment could not be immediately obtained, but the government position was understood to be that this had been an unauthorised gathering and that normal security measures had been used. It seems the normal security measures reached Mr. Palmer himself.



# The Art of Self-Censorship

## Why Newsagencies Comply Reports on Bahrain But Leave Them on the Shelves

The international news agency, the Associated Press, fears the expelling of their staff if they ever dared to transmit reports on political events in Bahrain. This does not mean that the news agencies are not aware of what goes on. Indeed, all stories are edited and archived without transmission. For example, on 13 September 1993, a major incident happened in Bahrain, when the premier, Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and his younger brother quarrelled with each other in the open market. The following is the full text of AP report (dated 15 September 1993) which was not transmitted in fear of being expelled from Bahrain:

"Manama, Bahrain (AP) - Police have cracked down on private businesses of Sheik Mohammed bin Salman Al-Khalifa, ending two decades of unruly perperations that have precipitated widespread discontent, local residents reported Wednesday.

Sheik Mohammed, one of the wealthiest men on the island state, is brother to the Emir, Sheik Isa, and the prime minister, Sheik Khalifa. He was briefly appointed interior minister in the early 1970's (correction by Voice of Bahrain: Mohammed was head of police in mid sixties, not early seventies).

A force armed with cranes, shovels and guns last Monday removed construction materials and equipment away from a shopping complex the sheik was building on Jastr road near Manama, witnesses said.

The force met no resistance from the Sheik's followers, who are usually armed with rifles, pistols and knives.

Merchants said Sheik Mohammed had ordered special exits carved off the main highway, into the complex compound, in what police rejected as violation of local laws.

"We acted on orders (possibly from Prime Minister Sheik Khalifa) to bring to an end once and for all practice of lawlessness", said one senior police colonel, who spoke on condition his name not be mentioned.

"There has been much grumbling among the citizens, and the leadership decided it was hightime Sheik Mohammed's rampant activities were curbed".

He said the bearded, husky Sheik was "in the habit of taking over private and public property, refusing to settle his electricity and water bills, and instigating his friends and dealers to ignore commercial registration laws".

"Sheik Mohammed has been a state within the state", he added. Mohammed has roused the ire of not merely private citizens but members of the royal family as well.

In recent years, the Sheik sprayed a Rolls Royce car belonging to the renowned Bahraini merchant Zayyani with rifle bullets for refusing to accept to raise the rent of the Victorian-style Delmon Hotel which he owned.

Local residents said the Emir has been compensating citizens for property requisitioned by the 53-year-old maverick brother.

Government official confirmed the Monday crackdown but refused to comment". AP knows what would have happened if they trans-

mitted the latter article to their subscribers. It is the usual dilemma, where Western news agencies apply self-censorship and restrain from practising the art of free press, especially as insistence on principles damage their countries' self-interests. Another report by AP reveals the following:

Another example of an unpublished report is as follows: "Manama, Bahrain (AP) - US Submarines in the shallow Gulf waters are operating more cautiously than they would in any other place in the world, a US Navy official said Tuesday.

"We operate slower here than we would in waters.. (which are) very deep," said Comdr. William J. Larson, commander of the USS Pasadena to a group of Bahraini reporters that were allowed on board at Mina Sulman port. "We have to be a little more careful here than in other parts of the world."

Larson said there were parts of the Gulf that were not deeper than the periscope depth. Other parts were deeper "but it is not like an open ocean" where the submarine could move very fast if it had to. The submarine, which has a speed of over 20 knots, can submerge to a depth of 400 feet (120 meters). Larson spoke of a submergence average of 150 feet (45 meters) while in the Gulf.

The Gulf, which aside from going shallow is a narrow water enclave, has "a lot of traffic," he noted. An average of 60 tankers and freighters are estimated to be coursing daily through the waterway.

But despite all that, said the 40-year-old commander, a native of Ashtabula, Ohio, "we are finding that we are operating here very well, I won't say very comfortably... (but) it is a place that (where) we can operate as well as anybody else can."

US submarines were strangers to the Gulf waters until the Persian state of Iran acquired its first - a diesel-powered one from Russia - late November, making it the first of the eight states on the Gulf littoral to have a submarine. It has since acquired a second one and has an option of the third.

The US Navy, which is committed to the protection of its Gulf Arab allies, began deploying its high-powered nuclear submarines in the Gulf only since November, outracing deployment of submarines in the region by Persian Iran.

The Islamic Republic acquired its first Russian-made Kilo-class submarine in November, and a second since with an option to buy a third. So far however, the Iranian submarines have been held at Bander Abbas, just off the Straits of Hormuz gateway to the Gulf, while the Iranians train on their difficult manipulation.

The Los Angeles-class Pasadena, homeported in San Diego, California, is the fourth nuclear submarine to come as part of battleships escorting aircraft carriers. Pasadena, with a 125-man crew, came with the carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in July. Before it came the Topceka, the Louisiana and the Birmingham.

The US Submarine kept a low profile as they probed the Gulf waters until Bahrain was se-

lected for the first exposure to the people of the Gulf. The central Gulf island state enjoys a close relationship with the United States, and has extended facilities to the US Navy for half a century.

"One of the reasons for the visit was to educate the local audience about US submarines and to build on the strong Arab-American relations, particularly with Bahrain because we have a long history and warmer relationship with Bahrain," said Lt. Comdr. Bruce Cole, regional spokesman for the Navy.

"We're looking forward to sharing our ship with you," said Larson as he welcomed the Bahraini reporters aboard, warning them that the submarine was "neither spacious nor designed for large number of people."

The crew members encountered on board the ship had one thing high on their minds - the goal telephone communication to back home.

"I can call home all the time," said Lt. Michael Gabriel of San Diego when asked it was to be serving in the Gulf".

## AFP Quits Bahrain

AFP, the French news agency, has been forced to quit Bahrain last January. The reason was a political rather than a technical one. Bahrain Information Ministry imposes many restrictions on the international news agencies. Reuters have reduced their operations some years ago and transferred many of their apparatus to Cyprus. AFP now decided to close down completely and transfer to Dubai. An AFP employee informed "Voice of Bahrain" that the conditions imposed by Bahrain's Information Ministry violates the charter of AFP. The international news agency found its reputation at stake if it continued to turn a blind eye to political events in Bahrain for the sake of keeping their HQ open. The solution was, therefore, to close down the HQ in Bahrain and be free from Tariq Al-Moayyad (the Information Minister).

## The Doomsday Scenario..

(.. Continued from Page 1)

respects the authorities in Kuwait but he does not want to be told how to perform his duties. He certainly seems determines when he promises his audience that his channel will broadcast interview Iraqi artists in the near future. The Kuwaitis have lost the battle with Iraq. This is true in light of the fact that the US administration is about to sanction the partial lifting of sanctions imposed on Iraq without any sign that Iraq will in due course ratify the border demarcation completed by the United Nations. The Kuwaitis have remained stagnant in their foreign policy since the war, whilst events have surpassed the whole crisis. They are in a desperate need for an overhaul of their foreign policy and especially their relations with their neighbours. But what is feared now is that the GCC as a political entity could be doomed before any programme of reforms could be taken.