

BAHRAIN

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Eight year of Revolution: victory in the horizon

The advent of the eight year of the Bahraini Revolution has been accompanied by dramatic events that will ensure its longevity and steadfastness. First came the marking of the seventh anniversary. The popular participation in the protests, pickets, rallies, seminars and graveyard visits have demonstrated to the world the determination of the people to achieve the goals of those who sacrificed themselves in the past seven years. On 14th February there were at least 60 demonstrations in the towns and villages, accompanied by strikes by the shop owners. Statements were issued by the various groups encouraging people to take part in those events. The atmosphere boosted the morale of the pro-democracy movement which has been subjected to intensive crackdown at the hands of the ruling tribe and its supporters. Despite seven years of news blackout by the international media which is influenced by the politics of the rich, the intensity of the flare up of the people's Revolution forced many mainstream media outlets to report on the protests and demonstrations. But it must be said that the era of truly liberal media has been compromised both by the backtracking of the West on the issues of democracy and human rights and the influence of the petrodollars which have compromised large media conglomerates.

Then there was the tragic news that four natives were martyred in the sea as they were fleeing the Alkhalifa savagery. The indications show that they could not have been killed either directly by regime's marine forces of those supporting them. It was professional killings that left very little traces. The people were extremely angered by this criminal behaviour by the regime. It was seen as replication of a similar crime one year earlier when three native Bahrainis were slaughtered by regime's forces in the sea. The Alkhalifa were criticised for their extra-judicial killings. This time they wanted the people to receive their message of savagery but without the clear signs of their involvement. There were symbolic funerals by the people inside and the Bahrainis in the diaspora. Yet the extension by the Alkhalifa of their killing spree to the high seas has exposed the extent of Alkhalifa state terrorism. Three years ago they assassinated a prominent banker who had challenged one of their figures when he expropriated large funds from a local

bank. The banker, Hussain Nejadi, was brutally treated for demanding the return of the funds. He was first jailed for five years and then killed when he fled to Malaysia.

The third event was the confirmation of the tribal rule of the dissolution of Al Wefaq society. It was the final process of appeal. The message was clear; Alkhalifa would not tolerate any dissent of any kind. Despite Al Wefaq's participation in the flawed political process for five years prior to the Revolution, they have not been spared the wrath of the Alkhalifa dictators. The decision by Bahrain's tyrant to draw the curtain on the marginal pluralistic experience has been welcomed by the revolutionary opposition that has always opposed and engagement with the illegitimate tribal rule. The situation has now been cleared for the all-out efforts to achieve total transformation to parliamentary democracy based on the will of the people. Yet the ramifications of the decision to dissolve the "moderate" political societies are likely to reverberate in the corridors of power of their western supporters. Their unquestioning support for the autocratic monarchies of the Gulf is becoming a harmful liability. The proposed visit by Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) to London is attracting the attention of activists especially the anti-war and human rights bodies. They intend to disrupt the visit with protests and demonstrations as well as media and political campaigns. At a time of internal discord and lack of unanimity on the Brexit strategy, the UK government prefers not to be side tracked. More importantly the anti-MBS activism will re-focus the public attention on the fundamental principles of democracy, human rights and freedoms which the establishment hopes to dilute after the UK has left the EU.

To complicate the situation further, the case of Nabeel Rajab is likely to poison the atmosphere for the Conservative government which is seen propping up one of the most vicious dictatorships in the world. The five-year jail sentence imposed him by the ruling tribal rule has already pushed the FCO to issue statements that has angered the Saudis and Alkhalifa dictators. More action and clearer stands are demanded by MPs,

human rights and political bodies from the UK government to dissociate UK from those antiquated regimes. While the US was more forthcoming in demanding the immediate release of Mr Rajab the UK has been tethering in its stands, but is being pushed to declare unambiguous position with regards to human rights and democracy in the Gulf. The UK has remained silent as thousands of Bahrainis were being punished for their peaceful expression of opinion. The case of Nabeel Rajab has laid bare the real nature of the tribal despotism. When a person is denied his/her freedom for five years simply because of expressing an opinion, then there is no hope for any kind of freedom, dignity or human value for the people.

Despite these reversals the people's power is gradually eating into the fabric of the regimes of doom represented by those rogue tribal statelets. In addition to the continuing resistance to their hegemonic evil oligarchies, the Bahrainis have scored a direct and painful hit against those evil powers. They challenged one of the most prominent of their mouthpieces which was used by the torturers to interrogate a prominent opposition figure. Two years ago Al Arabiya satellite channel aired what it said was an "interview" with him inside prison. It was seen as more attempt to smear the character of Mr Mushaima. His family protested to the Ofcom, the UK regulator of satellite channels. Last month it ruled against the channel imposing 120,000 Pounds in fines and the airing by the channel of an apology to Mr Mushaima. While the plundered billions of petrodollars were available to pay the fine but the apology meant an open defeat not only for the channel but its backers and the Alkhalifa torturers. The owners of the channel decided it was too much to concede defeat and decided to opt out of Ofcom. This means they cannot broadcast in UK or Europe. It is one of the worst defeats of the counter-Revolution forces led by the Saudis. This is just an example of their defeats. More violations are expected as they continue their aggression on Yemen and their military intervention in Bahrain. As they foolishly their evil policies, the end of these tyrannies appeared on the horizon. That is good news for the all especially their victims of torture, execution or beheading.

Calls to cancel MBS's UK visit, AI condemns making Bahrainis stateless

No sooner had the news that Saudi despot-ic crown prince would visit UK spread than the opposition to this visit went viral. Anti-war and human rights activists started a massive campaign against the visit, petitioning the Prime Minister and planning big protests and demonstrations. Also, two British human rights lawyers have asked for Saudi Arabia to be suspended from the UN Human Rights Council over 61 people "arbitrarily detained or disappeared" by the kingdom's authorities. Ken Macdonald and Rodney Dixon submitted their report to the council in Geneva last week, stating that the arrests of prominent clerics, human rights activists, journalists, poets and academics were "in breach of both Saudi and international law". The report was commissioned by family members of some of the detained Saudis.

In its editorial on 1st February The Guardian addressed the visit: The 32-year-old is now in control of a kingdom where flogging, torturing and not electing a central government are seen as building blocks of society. Little wonder there's already a campaign to stop him from coming... The war in Yemen, which was the brainchild of the crown prince, is now the world's worst man-made humanitarian crisis. It is one where, shamefully, British arms and British servicemen are providing support to prolong the war and increase civilian suffering. British arms sales to Saudi Arabia are running at £200m a month, something that seems to weigh on Mrs May's mind more than the deaths of children in faraway places. Britain should not trade away its principles and values. The crown prince's anti-corruption crackdown is clearly less about graft than a purge of royal rivals. Mrs May should raise the issue of freedom of expression with the crown prince, even if the lecturing grates. Wednesday 31st January will go in Bahrain's history as the moment when human

rights were massacred by Alkhalifa dictators. Their "courts" sentenced 58 people on trumpeted charges, condemning two of them to death and stripping citizenship from 47. The ruling is the latest in a series of scores of harsh penalties in the Western-allied Gulf kingdom for defendants who are mostly peaceful opposition members. Alleging they were part of a terrorist cell trained in the use of heavy weapons and explosives, the court jailed 19 for life and 37 for terms up to 15 years. Among the victims of that notorious court are: Abdulla Moosa, 10 years, Ahmad Al Sha'ir, 10 years, Hussain Al Sha'ir, 10 years, Mazen Hassan, 5 years, Ali Hassan AlTabaqa, 15 years, Mohammad Fayed, 15 years, Muhsin AlNahham, 10 years, Ahmad Hassan Radhi, 5 years, Mohammad AlNahham, 10 years. These citizens had their citizenship revoked also. A London-based Bahraini activist rights group, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), condemned the ruling: "Today's ruling is the latest episode in Bahrain's travesty of justice, and likely one of the most cruel. The authorities have further proved their willingness to exploit the vulnerability of its citizens," Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, director of advocacy at BIRD, said in a statement.

Within two days last week three native young Bahrainis were condemned to death by Alkhalifa regime. The total number of those given the capital punishment has now risen to 22. In addition, 72 citizens had their nationality revoked raising the total number of citizens to 572. More than 15 citizens have, so far, been banished. On 31st January four native Bahraini women were sentenced to five years each. Amira AlQash'ami (from Barbar), Fatin Hussain (from Manama), Muna Habib (from Arad) and Hamida Juma' AlKhor (from AlMaqsha) were accused of giving refuge to young boys pursued by foreign mercenaries. All had been subjected to horrific

torture including sexual abuse. On 2nd February the prominent scholar, Sheikh Hassan AlQassab was arrested and taken to unknown location. Hassan Mohamed Hassan AlSheikh had been kidnapped at the age of 15 when armed mercenaries raided his home at Karranah Town in 2015. Now he has been sentenced to 15 years citizenship revocation in the so-called "Karranah Bombing" case, raising his sentence to a total of 40 years. Jamil Abdul Ghani who was released eight months ago after spending three years at Alkhalifa torture chambers, has been given a new jail sentence of three years. He has been falsely accused of assaulting one of the "mercenaries" in jail during his previous detention!

Last week eight native Bahrainis were banished by Alkhalifa occupiers. Three brothers; Mohammad Ali, Sayed Amir and Sayed Abdul Nabi Al Mousawi and his wife, Maryam Redha were forcibly deported to Iran. These are in addition to four others deported earlier. On 31st January Lynn Maalouf, Middle-East Research Director at Amnesty International said: "The Bahraini government is using revocation of nationality – rendering many of its citizens stateless in the process - and expulsion, as tools to crush all forms of opposition, dissent and activism," said. "It is doing so with little to no pushback from the international community, including key allies such as the United Kingdom that could use their leverage to publicly condemn these actions." "Turning citizens into stateless people and banishing them by forcing them to leave the country is a violation of international law. Bahrain's authorities must immediately halt all planned expulsions and allow those it has already expelled to return to the country and reinstate their nationality."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
7th February 2018

Elliott Abrams: Is Bahrain Finished

Newsweek, 23rd February

This article first appeared on the Council on Foreign Relations site.

On February 20, the government of Bahrain condemned a leading human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, to five years in prison.

His crime: tweeting.

Rajab has been in and out of prison for years for such "crimes," all of which involve the government's effort to eliminate freedom of speech and stop all criticism of the government.

Freedom of speech is supposedly guaranteed by the Bahraini constitution, which also says. "No person shall be subjected to physical or mental torture, or inducement, or undignified treatment." Rajab wrote that there was torture taking place, for which he was prosecuted; he had violated a law against "insulting" a government agency.

Nothing Rajab has done would be a crime in any free country.

His conviction is tragic for him and his family, but it is also tragic for Bahrain.

Since 2011, when protests arose in the context of the Arab Spring, the government has reacted to them with repression.

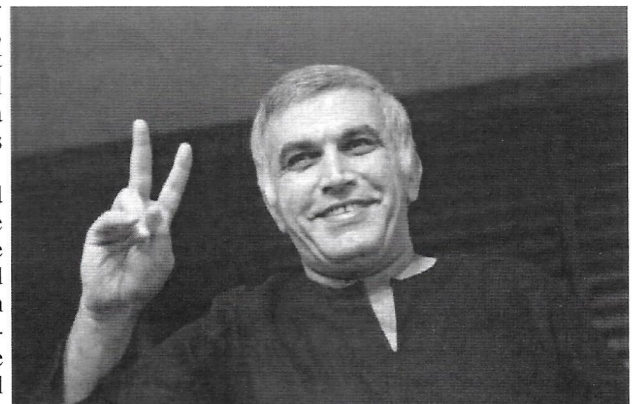
It will not work. Resentment of the royal family, which is Sunni while most Bahrainis are Shia, will only widen among Shia citizens and all citizens who want a free society.

The worst fears expressed in 2011 and after—that the repression would create disaffection, which would lead to more repression and then Iranian meddling—have been borne out. Today, there is real

Iranian subversion including shipping weapons into Bahrain. Bahrain is in a downward spiral.

Whether it can be stopped is not clear, at least to me. The current path will lead to more and more repression, more and more Iranian subversion, and more and more violence.

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Pakistanis join Saudi quagmire in Yemen, Rajab given 5 years for tweets

The Saudi-led war on Yemen is bringing the aggressors to their knees. Yesterday at least 12 UAE troops were killed in an attack by the Yemeni forces. This is in addition to the political backlash resulting from the changing objectives of the war on Yemen. The Saudis and Emiratis are now seen by most Yemenis as occupiers while the government of Abd Rabbo Mansoor Hadi is becoming irrelevant. The Saudis are showing signs of fatigue. Despite the support from several other countries, they have now asked Pakistan to send troops to replenish their forces which are suffering huge losses. The prospect of a Pakistani deployment to Saudi Arabia has been under discussion for some time between Saudi Arabia's ambitious Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), the primary mover behind the Yemeni campaign in March 2015, who met with General Bajwa in Riyadh earlier this month. The Army's announcement has spurred a domestic political crisis, with the opposition accusing the government of defying the parliament-sanctioned neutrality declaration. Defense Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan has been threatened with "contempt of parliament" proceedings, after refusing to clarify the contours of the new deployment. Pakistan's powerful military has historically steered the country's foreign and security policy, especially with Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile preparations by activists to disrupt MBS's visit to London in March are gathering pace.

Four Bahraini young men were summarily executed and their bodies dumped at sea. Sayed Qassim Darwish, 23, Maitham Ali Ibrahim, 22, Sayed Mahmoud Kadhem, 22 and Hassan Ali Abbas Al Bahraini, 25 had left Bahrain in a small boat two weeks ago, but the bodies of three of them were

found recently at Iranian shores. Their boat was found in the vicinity with bullet holes on its sides. The cause of the death has not been established. They are believed to have been caught by Bahrain's coastguards who summarily executed them before escorting them to the international waters. One year earlier, three young native Bahrainis were killed in their boat; Redha Al Ghasra, Mahmoud Yahya and Mustafa Yousuf. There is an outcry in the country at the spate of killings and bloody violence perpetrated by the Alkhalifa tribal rule.

The 7th anniversary of the 14th February Revolution has been marked with country-wide protests, strikes and demonstrations. In one day alone there were 66 protests and more than 150 human rights violations by the regime. Lights were switched off in most places and shops were closed. At least seven protests were attacked with shotguns, chemical and tear gases. Nine people sustained shotgun wounds at Abu Saaiba, Sitra, AlMusalla and AlDaih. The Revolution has been re-invigorated as the fortunes of Alkhalifa and the occupation forces of the Saudi and Emirati armies began to dwindle. Exiled Bahrainis have also marked the occasion with protests, press conferences and seminars in London, Berlin, Brussels and Washington.

Today, the most prominent human rights activist in the Middle East has been sentenced to five years jail. Nabeel Rajab is accused of three "crimes": rejecting the Saudi-led aggression on Yemen, criticizing the Saudis for their crimes and exposing Alkhalifa crimes at the notorious Jau prison. The decision by the dictator to persecute Mr Rajab brings the total sentence to seven years. The human rights world has been united in calling for Mr Rajab's acquittal but the regime has not heeded these

calls. Bahrain's tyrant has been emboldened by the US-UK support of his dictatorial rule. At least 25 UK MPs have openly asked Boris Johnson to demand Nabeel's release. In the past few weeks 16 million people signed petitions calling for Mr Rajab's release in 177 cities and 45 countries.

The family of one of the first martyrs of the 14th February Revolution has appealed to the world to take steps to protect his family from liquidation for refusing to forgive his killers. Yesterday the father of Abdul Redha Bu Hamid said that he feared for the lives of his family members after two of his sons had been abducted by masked members of Alkhalifa Death Squads. Last week his son, Ali, was detained. The other son, Hassan was snatched yesterday. Fathers of other martyrs are in hiding or exile.

An international media watchdog group says the Arab Gulf state of Bahrain has revoked the citizenship of seven journalists and social media activists since a wave of anti-government protests broke out seven years ago. Last week Reporters Without Borders said, on the anniversary of the 2011 uprising, that Bahraini authorities have used this form of penalty with the aim of pressuring media outlets to essentially "toe the government line." More than 550 people have been stripped of their citizenship since 2012, according to rights groups. Bahrain's government has tried dozens of activists on the island with 15 journalists and citizen-journalists currently imprisoned in Bahrain. Authorities have also shuttered the independent Al Wasat newspaper. RSF ranks Bahrain 164 out of 180 countries on its World Press Freedom Index.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21st February 2018

Bahrain's Revolution enters 8th year, activists to disrupt MBS's visit

Today marks seven years since the largest-ever revolution had taken place in Bahrain. The people feel victorious despite the enormous repression and human rights violation by an ailing tribal regime. The ruling tribe owes its survival over the past seven years to the presence of six armed forces in the country; Saudi, Emirati, Jordanian and Pakistani in addition to the American and British naval bases. Within a month of the eruption of the 14th February Revolution in 2011, the regime lost control and appealed to its neighbours for immediate help. The presence of these armies is a clear infringement of Bahrain's sovereignty. It is time the UK has abandoned the sinking Alkhalifa boat to the fate of despots and dictators.

The 7th anniversary of the 14th February Revolution has been marked by the people inside and outside Bahrain. Despite pre-emptive crackdown by regime's forces over the past two weeks, most of the areas witnessed protests and demonstrations last night. From the early hours of this morning, the people have engaged in country-

wide civil disobedience with many shops closed, protests roaming the alleyways and roads and online social media outlets mobilized to highlight the situation in the "kingdom of silence". The counter-revolution forces led by Saudi Arabia have been dismayed that their seven years occupation of Bahrain has failed to stem the rise of anti-regime sentiments or the main slogans calling for its downfall. Live ammunition has been used by regime's forces in addition to chemical and tear gases and shotguns.

In London the Bahrain Opposition Block organized a meeting at the Parliament on Thursday 8th February, hosted by Francie Molloy, MP. It was addressed by notable speakers and a clear message was sent out for the UK Government to stop supporting the regime. On Saturday a protest was held outside Downing Street to call for a change in the UK's policy on Bahrain. A rally was held at Marble Arch on Sunday 11th and a photo exhibition was organized at Trafalgar Square on Monday 12th. In USA there were several events at universities and a protest outside the Bahraini Embassy. In

Berlin there was a special meeting to commemorate the martyrs and a protest at the Bahraini Embassy.

To pre-empt the activities to mark the seventh anniversary of the Revolution, regime forces have committed heinous crimes against the people. Children were snatched from their homes in the middle of the night. On Friday 9th February, Sayed Aymaan Sayed Hashem Jaffar AlMahfoodh was detained from his home at Saar Town. Mohammad Ali Jaffar and Daniel Hasan AlSayegh were snatched at Bani Jamra Town. A day earlier, two youths were arrested; Hussain Abbas Ahmad and under-aged Mohammad Abdul Karim Fateel from Bani Jamra. Last week scores of prisoners at Jaw notorious jail, including inmates on death row were attacked by officers for no reason except revenge and intimidation. Ali Hakim Al Arab and Hussain Al Shakar were attacked by those officers. Their bodies show extensive wounds as a result. Another inmate; Ibrahim Ghuloom suffered a stroke, taken to hospital but returned with his partial paralysis worsening.

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Seven Bahraini journalists rendered stateless since 2011

Stripping its citizens of their nationality is a penalty to which the Bahraini regime increasingly resorts. A total of seven journalists and citizen-journalists have been rendered stateless in retaliation for their reporting since a wave of anti-government protests began exactly seven years ago today, on 14 February 2011. Statelessness has become a common penalty in Bahrain, in some cases with the aim of putting pressure on media outlets that might otherwise be tempted not to toe the government line. Of the seven journalists and citizen-journalists who have been the victims of this punishment, three are currently serving jail terms, and the other four are living in exile.

Three stateless journalists in prison

The photographer Ahmed Al Mousawi was arrested in 2014, mainly for taking photos of anti-government protests, and was sentenced on 23 November 2015 to ten years in prison and the loss of his citizenship.

The journalist Mahmoud Al Jaziri and the blogger Ali Al Maaraj were stripped of their nationality on 30 October 2017 in a political trial in which they and five others were convicted of having links with an alleged terrorist cell. Some of the defendants said they were tortured during interrogation.

Employed by Al Wasat, a newspaper closed by the authorities in 2017, Al Jaziri was sentenced to 15 years in pris-

on. Al Maaraj, who had already spent 27 months in prison for “insulting the king” and “abusing information technology,” was given a life sentence.

“Punishing those who do their job as journalists with either imprisonment or deprivation of nationality is grotesque,” RSF said. “Bahrain has not signed the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness but it has signed the Arab Charter on Human Rights, which says: ‘Everyone has the right to nationality; no one shall be arbitrarily or unlawfully deprived of their nationality.’ Covering opposition protests or reporting what government opponents say constitutes neither terrorism nor a threat to state security.”

Four stateless journalists in exile

Fearing imprisonment, the other four journalists were already in self-imposed exile when they were deprived of their citizenship.

Ali Abdel Imam, the founder of the BahrainOnline news website, Ali Al-dairy, the founder and editor of the Bahrain Mirror newspaper, Al Nabaa TV TV presenter Abbas Busafwan and Hussein Yousef, a blogger, were all stripped of their nationality by the interior ministry on 31 January 2015.

No court ruling was required because, under a 2014 amendment to Bahrain’s citizenship law, the interior ministry alone can withdraw Bahraini nationality from anyone who is deemed to have helped an enemy state or whose loyalty to Bahrain is

questionable.

The children of those penalized in this way are also stripped of their nationality. Ali Abdel Imam has a son who was born stateless in the United Kingdom.

A total of 579 Bahrainis have been stripped of their nationality since 2012. Fifteen journalists and citizen-journalists are currently imprisoned in Bahrain in connection with their work. They include Nabeel Rajab, who is facing the possibility of an additional 15-year jail term on 21 February. Bahrain is ranked 164th out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2017 World Press Freedom Index.

Bahrain’s Revolution enters 8th year

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The scheduled visit by the Saudi crown prince to UK next month is gradually becoming more of an embarrassment to both sides than a step forward in their relations. Anti-war and human rights activists have stepped up their activism to stop the visit. They were heartened by a statement by the Shadow Foreign Secretary, Emily Thornberry, calling for the visit to be put off. A public petition on the Parliament’s website has attracted more than 10,000 signatures in less than two weeks, while a Parliamentary Early Day Motion (EDM) has been signed by at least 24 MPs. Protests are planned for the visit which is believed to be scheduled for 7-9th March. In an article published by The Independent on 7th February Andrew Smith of CAAT (Campaign Against Arms Trade) said: The Crown Prince may have convinced Theresa May and her colleagues that he is a “moderniser” and a force for liberty, but the UK public has not been so easily fooled. When the Crown Prince arrives he will be met with protests and opposition from across the political spectrum. Poll after poll has shown that the overwhelming majority of the UK opposes arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Next month, campaigners will take to the streets and send the message loudly and clearly that this visit is not in our name and that the Saudi Crown Prince is not welcome.

Woman human rights defender Nuha Al-Balwi, who is active online in supporting civil and political rights for women, was arrested in the last week of January 2018. She is a college student from Tabuk. On 5th February her detention was extended for another month. A Saudi court has jailed a prominent newspaper columnist after he criticised the country’s royal court, in the latest sign of the diminishing margin of free speech despite the kingdom’s push for more social liberalisation. Saleh al-Shehi, who writes for al-Watan, the daily paper, was sentenced to five years in prison followed by a five-year travel ban for insulting the royal court and its employees, state news television reported on Thursday.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14th February 2018



Is Bahrain finished? *Continued from Page 3*

Moving off that path would require courageous national leadership, from the Shia community to be sure but above all, and first, from the royal family. It has been absent. If it remains absent in the months and years ahead, Bahrain’s future will be darker and darker.

A joint effort by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE is the only solution I can imagine. Together these three governments have the influence to broker a solution—assuming it is not already too late.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry made an effort in 2011, but that was in essence a private effort and the

implementation of its excellent recommendations depended entirely on the royal family’s good intentions.

What is needed now is a higher-powered effort that takes into account both the fate of the Fifth Fleet (headquartered in Bahrain) and the likelihood of increasing Iranian subversion and the violence it can produce.

Such an effort may fail, but we will not know whether Bahrain can really be saved from increasing repression, subversion, and violence unless and until we try.

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