25th January 2012

BAHRAIN MEDIA ROUNDUP

Arrests in Bahrain as Shiites protest - 25/01/12

Bahraini police dispersed anti-government protesters who blocked roads in several villages, an official statement said on Wednesday, as tensions in the Shiite-majority Gulf kingdom continue to rise.

Public Security Chief Major General Tariq al-Hassan said "vandals blocked roads" and threw petrol bombs during Tuesday night clashes, according to a statement published on the official BNA news agency website.

Hassan said security forces made "several arrests" in Shiite villages, but gave no further details on the exact location of the clashes or if there were any injuries.

Former opposition MP Matar Matar told AFP that protesters clashed with security forces in at least four Shiite villages, leaving several people injured, including one who remains in serious condition after being hit on the head with a tear gas canister.

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Police under attack in Bahrain - 24/01/12

Violence has flared up in Bahrain in the wake of a leading Shia cleric's call on Friday to "crush" police.

Several people were wounded as protesters attacked security forces in Shia villages outside the capital.

Protesters from the Shia majority have faced a crackdown in the past year, as the Sunni monarchy attempts to cope with their demands for reform.

In his sermon Sheikh Isa Qassim said: "Whoever you see abusing a woman, crush him." **Read More**

Nabeel Rajab, Bahraini Human Rights Activist: Tunisia's Support is a "Moral Obligation" - 24/01/12

At the Arab Free Press Forum, a conference hosted by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) at the Ramada Hotel in Gammarth, Bahraini pro-democracy activists Nabeel Rajab and Khalid Ibrahim spoke with Tunisia Live extensively about the situation in Bahrain.

Nabeel Rajab is the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights – a human rights organization banned by Bahrain's government since 2004 and a member of International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX). Rajab is also a member of the Advisory Committee of the Middle East Division of Human Rights Watch.
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Bahrain police injure several protesters - 24/01/12



Several Bahraini anti-government protesters have been injured in attacks by the Manama regime forces on demonstrations against the ruling Al Khalifa family, Press TV reports.

Local sources said on Tuesday the demonstrations were held mainly in the village of Ma'ameer, about 15 kilometers (9.5 miles) south of the capital Manama, and the village of Dair, located on the northern coast of the Muharraq Island.

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2 Bahrainis die of toxic gas, injuries - 25/01/12

At least two anti-government protesters in Bahrain have died from injuries sustained in a protest and inhaling toxic teargas fired by Saudi-backed regime forces, Press TVreports.

Hajj Ali Al-Sukari died after inhaling teargas fired at him during an anti-regime rally outside the capital, Manama, on Tuesday.
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Press freedom index 2011/12: Syria, Bahrain and Yemen get worst ever rankings - 24/01/12

The Arab world was the motor of history in 2011 but the Arab uprisings have had contrasting political outcomes so far, with Tunisia and Bahrain at opposite ends of the scale. Tunisia (134th) rose 30 places in index and, with much suffering, gave birth to a democratic regime that has not yet fully accepted a free and independent press. Bahrain (173rd) fell 29 places because of its relentless crackdown on pro-democracy movements, its trials of human rights defenders and its suppression of all space for freedom. **Read More**

UK arms to the Middle East: Back to business - 25/01/12

The UK government makes a great deal of its support for the democratic awakening of the Arab Spring, yet continues to support repressive regimes through arms sales and trade missions.

By April 2011 the UK government had officially revoked over 160 military licences (i.e. for arms and weaponry) to Bahrain, Egypt and Libya. This gesture neatly hid the fact that many licences remained in place. Some of the revoked licences were for weaponry with such repressive potential - such as sniper rifles, tear gas and crowd control ammunition - that MPs questioned why such licences had been granted in the first place. **Read More**

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Freedom House Delegation Denied Entry to Bahrain - 25/01/12

The Bahraini Government's refusal to allow a Freedom House delegation to visit the country calls into serious question its stated intent to engage in meaningful reform.

On January 19, just days before a delegation of Freedom House staff were scheduled to travel to Manama, it received a letter from the Bahraini government indicating that it would not be allowed entry into the country at this time. In the letter, Bahrain's Ambassador to the U.S. wrote that a trip should be delayed until the end of February. The staff had already obtained visas and were in possession of a letter from the U.S. Embassy confirming a scheduled meeting when they received word of the cancellation.

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Telegraph

Bahrain Grand Prix again in doubt as US State Department moves staff due to political unrest - 24/01/12

The 2011 Bahrain Grand Prix was initially postponed and then cancelled altogether after anti-government protests last spring led to at least 35 deaths but Ecclestone, Formula One's chief executive, said over the weekend that he was confident this year's race would go ahead.
"Everyone talks a lot about this part of the world, but Bahrain is the country in the region where there are the fewest problems," Ecclestone said.
His confidence was shared by Damon Hill, who was vehemently against the race taking place last year, but whose views have mellowed in the wake of a visit to the country with FIA president Jean Todt. **Read More**

NOW LEBANON

Bahrain court says emergency rule was legal - 25/01/12

A Bahraini court ruled on Wednesday that King Hamad acted lawfully when he declared a quasi state of emergency in March ahead of a crackdown on Shia-led democracy protests.

The constitutional court "rejected the appeal into the constitutionality of the articles of the [state of] National Safety," the official BNA news agency reported.

National Safety is the first of two categories of exceptional measures that the king can resort to in times of emergency. The second is a full state of Martial Law.

An independent commission King Hamad tasked with probing the bloody clampdown on a month-long protest in mid-March had recommended that the constitutional court review the royal declaration of a three-month State of National Safety.

The commission found 35 people were killed in the crackdown on protests, including five security personnel and five detainees who were tortured to death in custody. **Read More**