

ORIGINS OF BOMBS MYSTERIOUS AMID CONTINUED RIGHTS CLAMPDOWN IN BAHRAIN

[youtube]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jqayb3EL>
Ais[/youtube]

There were five bomb blasts early Monday in Bahrain, but there are serious questions about who is responsible for their construction and deployment. Two street cleaners of South Asian descent were killed in the blasts, leading many to speculate that it is difficult to see how a protest movement that has been aimed at the government would suddenly start attacking civilians. The government's ban on all protests announced last week continues, and the head of monitoring for Bahrain's Center for Human Rights was detained under the guise of this ban when he went to investigate reports of a man who had not taken part in protests being shot in his home.

The YouTube above shows the arrest of Sayed Yousif Al-Muhafda (on Twitter as @SAIDYOUSIF), who is the head of monitoring for the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. From a report from the Center:

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) expresse [sic] grave concern about the systematic targeting, harassment and detention of Human rights defenders in Bahrain, and in particular the BCHR's members. After the arrest and severe torture of co-founder Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, the sentencing of the President Nabeel Rajab to 3 years on charges of illegal protesting; the Bahraini authorities

yesterday, on the 2nd of November, detained the Acting Vice President and Head of Documentation Unit Sayed Yousif AlMuhafdhah.

Arriving in Duraz after a protest had already been attacked using excessive force to document an injury, Sayed Yousif AlMuhafdhah was arrested by security forces (video) while he was getting the details of how a man was injured with shotgun at his door front while he was not part of the protests.

Said Yousif was interrogated at the police station about what he was doing outside the injured man's house. He was then led to believe by a police officer that he would be released within a few hours, but when colleague Zainab Al-Khawaja went to pick him up from Budaiya Police Station she was told by an officer: "Why have you come for him? I haven't decided what I want to do to him yet". The lawyer, Mohammed AbdulAmeer, then stated that AlMuhafdhah was to be held overnight and taken to the Public Prosecution today, 3rd November. The Public Prosecution, after making AlMuhafdhah wait for approximately 5 hours, decided to extend his detention to 7 days under investigation on the charge of illegal protesting in Duraz.

The arrest of the Acting Vice President of the BCHR comes 3 days only after the Center released a report holding the King of Bahrain responsible for the culture of impunity in the country. AlMuhafdhah had expressed to colleagues that he predicted that he would be arrested as he is the only known person working for the BCHR inside Bahrain.

Zainab Al-Khawaja, who went to try to retrieve Al-Muhafda from police custody, documented the police refusal to release him on her twitter feed, @AngryArabiya. Reuters via Yahoo has more

on the extension of Al-Muhafda's detention to seven days:

Bahrain has extended the detention of a leading human rights activist arrested last week for taking part in a demonstration in the Gulf Arab state by seven days, his lawyer said on Sunday.

Lawyer Mohammed al-Jishi said Sayed Yousif Al-Muhafda, a leading figure at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was being investigated on charges of illegally gathering and taking part in an unauthorized march last Friday, the day of his arrest.

/snip/

Jishi said Friday's protest took place in Diraz, a Shi'ite Muslim district west of Manama. Muhafda says he went there to follow up on reports of injuries after clashes, Jishi said.

The article goes on to document the harassment of prominent protest leaders:

Leading rights activists Nabeel Rajab and Zainab al-Khawaja were arrested in recent months. Rajab is appealing convictions for gathering illegally. Khawaja was jailed for two months in October for tearing up a picture of King Hamad bin Isa.

/snip/

Thirteen leaders of last year's protests – including opposition leaders, rights figures and clerics – remain in jail serving terms of between five and 25 years, after a civilian court retried cases originally heard in military courts last year.

Imagine that. @AngryArabiya tore up a picture of the king and went to jail for two months for

that offense. Contrast that with the report prepared by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights documenting murder and torture by government forces which has gone unpunished.

With that as background, today's bomb blasts are quite mysterious. Here is the Reuters report:

Five bombs exploded in the heart of the Bahraini capital Manama on Monday, killing two people, officials said, in rare attacks targeting civilians during the 21-month-old uprising against the kingdom's U.S.-backed rulers.

The blasts, one outside a cinema, could be a sign that radical elements of the opposition are escalating violence. They took place days after the government said it had banned all rallies and opposition gatherings to ensure public safety.

We get "targeting civilians" in the first paragraph and "radical elements of the opposition" in the second paragraph of the Reuters article, but it is not until the eleventh paragraph that we see an alternative explanation:

Opposition politician Matar Matar of Shi'ite party Wefaq said he doubted opposition activists were behind Monday's attacks, noting that leading Shi'ite clerics had called on followers to avoid escalating the conflict with the government.

He suggested the police or military may have been responsible, or a rogue unit.

"This incident is strange – why would anyone target workers?" he said. "I'm worried that police and military are losing control of their units or it is (preparation) before declaring martial law."

A BBC report never even gets around to discussing the possibility that the bombs might not have been placed by the protesters. I mentioned last week that John Timoney is known to send infiltrators into groups to goad them into acts they normally would not carry out. This bombing of street cleaners would fit very well into such a scenario, and I agree with the activists who fear that the bombs are merely setting the stage for declaring martial law.

Meanwhile, in “unrelated” news from the Reuters report on the extension of Al-Muhafda’s detention:

The kingdom is a base for the U.S. Fifth Fleet, which patrols oil shipping lanes in the Gulf region.

Yep, as long as that oil flows, Timoney and Bahrain have a free hand for suppression, murder and torture.