

Bahrain: 7 Years Later

Over seven years have passed from the first Bahraini cries for reform. Like any other attempt at a revolution, reflection becomes easier as time passes. Bahraini advocates and active members of the revolution are now beginning to evaluate the crisis at hand.

Blossoming of the Arab Spring in Bahrain began as a call for democracy by Bahraini's from all walks of life. People gathered around Pearl Roundabout and demanded increased rights from their monarch. The Shia majority demographic of Bahrain would naturally allow for more Shia revolutionaries, but the reform seeking demands were not a Shia versus the State- everyone sought to change.

However, as the government crackdown on protests increased and violence erupted, Shia Muslims stood stoutly while their non-Shia Bahraini peers succumbed to pressure. And now, seven years later, Shia Muslims have been the most affected. Arrests of under-aged minors, women, and children augmented anti-monarchy, and thus more protests were held. Anti-reform violence and civil demonstrations positively reinforced each other; each one step bigger than the other.

Now, Bahrain is no longer what it used to be. Massive recruitment of foreign workers from India, Pakistan, Syria, and Yemen along with profound denationalization and emigration of Bahraini nationals have changed the national demographics. Public institutions are operated by Shia Bahraini's, a proportion far less than that in Bahrain pre-Arab Spring.

Unemployment rates are the highest in Shia communities. Hundreds of educated Bahrainis are either jobless or forced to fill underpaid jobs they are overqualified for. The average retiree age in the monarch is 30 as many choose to live with primary retirement funds than life with no income.

Moreover, many Bahraini's are choosing to move out of Bahrain. Some leave because they are no longer considered Bahraini nationals due to citizenship revocation. Others go because they can no longer bear the glass ceiling supported by increased hatred and discrimination against individuals of the Shia faith.

Almost a decade after the strive for increased rights, life in Bahrain has yet to

improve. Looking back, it is now more than ever essential to remember the lives lost as a result of government-sponsored violence and to renew faith in those living undetermined terms in detainment. Humanitarian organizations must come together to work at grassroots, national, and international levels to ease hardships faced by Bahraini Shia. Most importantly, however, the global Shia community must stand together in empowerment.