

# **Suicide Bomber Strikes Near Shia Mosque in Kabul, 4 Killed**

June 15th, 2017

Today, June 15th, there was an explosion in the al-Zahra mosque in the western outskirts of Kabul. The attack killed four, including the leader of Afghanistan's ethnic Hazaras, Hajji Ramazan Hussainzada and injured seven.

The attacker attempted to enter the mosque armed when police stopped him. An exchange of fire ensued between police and the attacker. The attacker took refuge in the mosque kitchen, and there he detonated his explosive device.

ISIS has claimed responsibility.

This is the third major attack in Afghanistan during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. On May 31st, a truck bomb killed more than 150 people in the diplomatic quarter of the city. On June 6th, a motorbike, parked outside the historic Jama Masjid mosque detonated killing seven people and wounding 15.

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## **Qatif Sniper Shooting**

Activists reported sniper fire occurring in the Saudi Arabian village of al-Awamiyah, located in the Shia populated Eastern Province. At least 31 civilians have been reported injured thus far, most of which have been transferred to the central hospital in Qatif. The majority of casualties were civilians, many being women and children.

For the past 36 days the town has been under siege by the Saudi government, with many road blocks and reported closed off areas.

Shia Rights Watch (SRW) calls on the leaders in Saudi Arabia to stop this attack against civilians and the Shia population within al-Awamiyah. SRW condemns the

actions of the Saudi forces holding the village under siege and the cruel attack on the Shia population. SRW urges the international community denounce these actions and the attack on civilian populations.

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## **ISIS in Iran, 12 Killed and 40 Wounded**

12 people killed and 40 injured as four attackers entered Iranian parliament, some of which dressed as woman. Security forces surrounded the parliament as people helped each other escaping from the window, witnesses report.

Although Iran is actively fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, this group has not, until now, carried out any attacks inside Iran. This attack is known to be first that ISIS took responsibility for in Iran.

SRW urges Iranian government to investigate the attack and prevent any future possibility of more ISIS activities in this country as Iran is a Shia country and ISIS is one of the main active anti-Shia terrorist groups.

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## **14 More to be Executed in Saudi Arabia**

Saudi court sentenced 14 Saudi Shia due to charges related to demonstrations in Qatif back in 2011 and 2012. Same court convicted 24 others with different charges.

Although Saudi Arabia had sought the leadership slot of the entire Human Rights Council of the U.N in 2015, this kingdom has the highest execution rates in the

world. Beside execution, arbitrary arrest, torture, home raids, violation to the right to education, assembly, protest, religion and speech is at its highest in this country.

Most violations are carried against Shia Muslims minority. The court uses any accusation, including charges of terrorist crimes to oppress peaceful protestors.

SRW condemns all violations toward Shia population and asks international committee to take actions to stop such violation in Saudi Arabia.

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## **Soon majority of Bahrain population will be in prison**

On Saturday, June 3rd, Bahrain's Supreme Court of Appeal upheld the five-year prison term against seven defendants charged with "unlawful" assembly, the gathering of 5 people or more; setting tires alight; and hurling petrol bombs at government vehicles in Juffair, a neighborhood in Eastern Manama, on August 2, 2013. Along with these sentences, the seven defendants will also have to pay a fine of 300 dinars or 795 USD for the burned tires.

Five other defendants were sentenced to three years in prison for "unlawful" assembly. Each of these investigations, though civilian, took place in a military tribunal in accordance with a constitutional amendment ratified by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifah on April 3rd of this year.

These two cases come in the midst of protests that have occurred almost daily since 2011. Bahrainis are calling for the Sunni Al Khalifah family to relinquish their power in favor of a political system that represents both Sunnis and the Shia majority, the Shia make up about 70% of the entire country.

Today, an over two hundred year old wealth disparity exists within the island state. Starting with the invasion of the Bani Utbah tribe, led by the of the Al Khalifah family, the dominating strategy in the 18th century was to take the

power from the indigenous Shia and re-appropriate the wealth to the Sunni. The strategy of wealth appropriation still remains. The small island state's economy remains largely undiversified, and the few major positions, both government and private, are strategically given to those close to the Sunni Royal Family and a select few Shia families.

The Bahraini government has responded to the discontentment with troops from both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to clamp down on protesters and activists.

Shia Rights Watch calls on both the Bahraini government and the international community to take action. The Bahraini government and the Al Khalifah family have the responsibility of security of the citizens. Acting on behalf of the minority in order to dominate the majority infringes on this responsibility and delegitimizes the government as a protector of the state and the people in it. The international community has the responsibility to defend the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established in 1948. Much of Bahrain's economy relies on its oil production, and the government has failed to diversify further. This weakness can be exploited in order to strong-arm the Al Khalifah family into protecting all Bahrainis rather than actively discriminating against them.

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## **Two Killed as Attacks to Shia Community Continue in Pakistan**

According to activists, "unidentified armed men opened fire and killed man and woman belonging to Shia community in south western city of Quetta."

Muhammad Ismail was one of the two victims shot while riding his motorbike, and he is also one of the many victims targeted in a wave of anti-Shiism in Pakistan.

In Quetta, the Shia are easy targets. Most belong to the Hazara sect, numbering in approximately 600,000. They speak a different language and are ethnically central Asian and Mongolian. Because of their differences, average Hazaras

make open targets for radicalized terrorists to pick off in an effort of a total racial purge of Pakistan. In 2012 an extremist group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, sent an open letter to the Hazaras of Quetta stating that “It is our religious duty to kill all Shia, and to cleanse Pakistan of this impure nation... All Shias are worthy of killing and the intention is to make Pakistan their graveyard.”

Shia Rights Watch implores Pakistan to uphold its sovereign laws and the Universal Declaration of Human rights, for which Pakistan voted in favor. The continuation of these attacks prove that Pakistan has no control over the extremist groups within its borders, invalidating its capacity or will to protect its people. These attacks also violate Article 1 under which “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Pakistan needs to show a genuine and honest effort to prevent Sunni Pakistanis from attacking more Shia Pakistanis for the sanctity of both state and its peoples.

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## **EGYPT, For the People or Against the People?**

While the history of Shia Muslims in Egypt is long and extensive, anti-Shiism is prevalent in this nation. Once called the forgotten minority, Shia Muslims in Egypt are lost amidst country’s political unrest. Shia numbers are always undermined in state-issued reports in aims of suppressing the population. Shia individuals that express their religious beliefs are arrested, detained and questioned by their identity. Even when Shia rights are violated by non-government entities, sources report a lack of police support. Officials will either not action in the prosecution or will give anti-Shia perpetrators the least punishment.

Local sources report discrimination in jobs and educational settings. Shia Muslims are frequently denied services in addition to being called derogatory names.

The biggest graphic display of anti-Shiism was in the case of Shaikh Hassan Shehata, a Shia cleric from the village of Zawya Abu Muslim in Giza. The village was raided by perpetrators of anti-Shiism, and Shehata and some others were beaten, stabbed and dragged into the streets.

Anti-Shia sentiment is spread through education at all levels. Clerics who educated at Al- Azhar University publicly promote sectarian beliefs by calling Shia Muslims infidels and encourage isolation and marginalization of Shia Muslims in Egypt.

In a video recently sent to Shia Rights Watch, Egyptian soldiers torture two Shia men. The video, over 2 minutes long, shows Egyptian forces calling the men by derogatory terms, kicking him and mocking them. The men look as if they has been running for an extended time frame as their feet are bloody and cannot stand or walk for long distances.

The video can be traced by the soldier's uniform and badges as well as their Arabic dialects to Egypt. Soldiers repeatedly the men infidels (KA FER) and announcing them as members of the "Mahdiya" Shia community center.

It is worth noting that Egypt does not allow Shia Muslims to congregate or have their religious center. Thus, Shia Muslims are forced to assemble in private community centers. Shia Rights Watch believes "Mahdiya" is one of the numerous underground Shia community centers in Egypt.

Increased anti-Shia sentiment in Egypt and the government's discrimination has marginalized Shia communities and forced them into hiding.

Shia Rights Watch demand the identification and prosecution of the Egyptian soldiers in the video. Further, SRW calls for restitution for the two men tortured. Anti-Shia sentiment perpetuated by the Salafi cleric and social organizations has led to sectarian violence in the nation. SRW warns the international committee that Egypt's lack of support for Shia Muslims fuels regional unrest. Cases of Anti-Shiism must be examined in the United Nations as crimes against humanity and justice must be served for this religious minority.

**WARNING: This video has graphic content that may be**

**disturbing to some viewers**

<http://shiarightswatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-06-01-at-3.16.47-AM.mp4>

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# **Incidents of Anti-Shiism in May, 2017**

## **May 2017 Monthly Analysis**

There were more than 128 deaths and over 50 injuries in the month of May. This month has also witnessed the first incident of direct violence against Shia in the nation of Madagascar. Anti-Shiism remains an urgent issue that needs to be addressed by the international community.

This report will analyze a data of Shia deaths, injuries, and arrests in the month of May. Data was gathered via international news sources as well as on the ground Shia Rights Watch advocates. Authenticity and relevance of news were evaluated via corroborations from Shia Rights Watch advocates on the ground.

In the month of May, Shia rights have been violated in seven nations: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Bahrain, and Madagascar. Incidents of vandalism and targeting of Shia have additionally occurred in Sweden, Philippines, and Syria. Violations include arrests, vandalism, deaths by unnatural means, and injuries. It is important to note that Shia rights violations listed in this report are a summary of incidents that have reached SRW. Violations are not limited to those in this report. More information can be found on [ShiaRightsWatch.org](http://ShiaRightsWatch.org).

Following the detainment of Shaikh Isa Qasim, sit-ins and protest continue in Diraz, Bahrain. Fear of social unrest has government forces limiting town members in resources as well as clashing with peaceful protesters. The ongoing

struggle for recognition makes Bahrain a location of concern for Shia Rights Watch.

The Saudi siege on the town of Awamiya remains ongoing, making it a highlighted incident, as well. As Saudi forces maintain their siege on the Eastern province, resources such that of water, food and medical resources deplete, leaving the town in desperate need of international support.

## **Saudi Arabia**

Early May, Saudi forces invaded the town of Awamiya beginning at 3 am. All entrances to the city were closed as forces began shooting at infrastructure. Sources report 400 houses and buildings have been demolished. With claims of renovation, the Saudi forces entered the Mosawara neighborhood with bulldozers, helicopters, and armored tanks. The Eastern province is historically home to Shia Saudi population. The area is rich in heritage centers and cultural landmarks. Despite the UN's warning against the demolition of historical sites in Awamiya, the Saudi government has made a point to remove the culture of "resistance," a memory of Shaikh Nimr al- Nimr, a leader in peaceful protest who was executed last year.



The death toll in Awamiya has risen to five. Over 14 people have been arrested. Those targeted and killed by forces are mainly youth within the community. Among those killed are Javad al- Dagher, a two-year-old along with his father.

On the 25th of May, 14 activists were sentenced to the death penalty due to their participation in the protests. Arrests were followed by psychological and physiological torture. Those prosecuted were denied access to lawyers. Names of defendants can be accessed on the Shia Rights website.



The siege has left the town without water and electricity. Restrictions on travel in to and out of town further limitations. One resident reports, "No one has been able to leave their houses to go to work, school or even get food as people are afraid to move" as a result of the numerous armored tanks and forces that roam the town.

## **Iraq**

The death toll in Iraq rose with yet another attack in Karrada Iraq. On Memorial Day, the explosion of two bombs in busy areas of Karrada led to the death of 80. Over 50 were wounded in the incidents. The first of two bombs was detonated in an ice cream parlor in the commercial district. The second explosion was in the form of a car bomb on the al-Shahada Bridge, near the public pension's office during rush hour.

Karrada is not a new target for terrorist organizations. In July of 2016, a car bomb in Karrada left 324 dead and was considered the largest single incident in Iraq in the past decade. The reoccurrence of attacks points to a lack of security by officials. Despite initial promises, officials have not increased security measures in Karrada. The fact that the second explosion was near a government building, one may claim, is a sign of escalation and perhaps taunting of government by ISIS.

In total, 115 people were targeted for their Shia identity. The death toll consists mainly of women and children as attacks were centered in public areas such that of markets, neighborhoods and, in the case of Karrada, ice cream parlors. The setting of these attacks points to a targeting of Shia civilians by extremist groups.

## **Syria**

Despite increased international attention on the case of unrest in Syria, targeting of Shia Muslims continue in this nation. The extent of anti-Shia sentiment within the Islamic state is publicized in an incident of anti-Shiism in Hama, Syria.

Fifty members of the Shia village were found dismembered in Hama- 24 of those killed were women and children. Coroner reports death by blunt force trauma to the head and dismemberment by blunt objects. Only a small number of bodies were retrieved as the state of the bodies left no room for recognition or recovery.

The aggression behind the deaths point to deliberate targeting and hate towards the group.

Shia Rights Watch emphasizes the need for recognition in the state of the Shia minority in Syria.

## **Sweden**

Imam Ali Mosque, the largest Shia mosque in Sweden was left in ruins after an arson attack. The exterior of the mosque was charred, sources report.

This incident of vandalism is not the first anti-Shia targeting in Sweden or Europe. In 2016, a mosque in Malmo, Sweden was vandalized and set on fire. While arrests were made, occurrence of hate-crime points to an increase in anti-shia sentiment in the nation.

Shia mosques are easy targets for anti-Shia propagators as they are open to the larger communities. However, the increase in targeting of Shia Muslims in the West calls for augmented recognition of the minority's status,

## **South East Asia: Philippines and Pakistan**

The month of May witnessed an increase in incidents of Shia targeting in the nations of Pakistan and the Philipines. Sarfaraz Hussain along with his guard were killed as they patrolled their post in Kurram Pakistan by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi militants, mid-May. Hussain's death is yet another targeting of Shia officials in the nation of Pakistan, where a surge in the targeting of Shia members in high tiers of society has been seen in the past few years.

Philipines alone has had four deaths as a result of explosions. In the case of Nasser Abinal, a bomb was delivered to his office by a delivery man, killing his aid and injuring six others. Abinal was a government tax official in the city of Manila. In a separate incident, five Shia were killed and six others were wounded.

While city officials reject extremist involvement, the Philippines have seen an increase in militants pledging alliance with the Islamic State. Incidents of anti-Shiism in this nation point to a spread of anti-Shia sentiment in the region.

## Bahrain

Anger at the sentencing of Shaikh Isa Qasim stirs unrest in the town of Diraz. Clashes between Bahraini forces and protestors has led to the death and arrest of tens of civilians.

After Sheikh Qasim's arrest, demonstrators assembled in sit-ins around the Sheikhs house. Protestors claim allegations against Sheikh Qasim are false and just another way to target and limit the Shia of Bahrain. Since the uprising in 2011, many have been stripped of their citizenship- Sheikh Qasim was revoked of his citizenship in 2016.

In addition to direct violence, Bahrain's government pressures dissent in many ways. Sources report that internet and phone lines were cut by government force, limiting those services to a few hours in the day. Further, pro-democracy activists living outside Bahrain report their family membered being harassed by officials. In a number of cases, family members were arrested with our due cause and forces to call activists and ask that they refrain from supporting democracy in or out of Bahrain.

Later this month, 17 were sentenced to imprisonment on grounds of involvement in dissent. Five were given life sentences, three were sentenced to a minimum of ten years in prison, while eight were revoked of citizenship. Discrimination against Shia Muslims in Bahrain extend post death as seen in attacks on commemorations held for Diraz martyrs. Sources report many bodies were not given to the deceased's family and were buried in an unknown location

Fears of escalation exist within the region after increased arms availability to Saudi Arabia and its Gulf associates. The Bahraini First High Administrative court has ordered the liquidation of assets pertaining to the National Democratic Action Society and the dissolution of the party. Actions against political parties in Bahrain are a sign of political and economic regression.

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Killed	Arrested	Citizenship Revocations
5	286	8

## **Madagascar**

Armed assailants kidnap Yanish Ismail, a prominent member of the Shia community in Madagascar. The incident took place as Yanish was making his way home from a funeral when he was attacked by masked assailants. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Madagascar is the site of newfound increase in the targeting of Shia Muslims. While anti-Shiism has been limited to education, Ismail's disappearance is the reason for concern as it may be their watch list in fear of a possible escalation in trends of anti-Shiism.

## **Conclusions**

In the month of May, anti-Shiism as a direct effect of international affairs was seen. New arms deal with Saudi Arabia instills fears of an escalation of direct violence in Gulf nations such that of Bahrain. In addition to the availability of weapons, the recent arms deal with the United States has projected a message that crime against humanity by Saudi Arabia will be regarded as insignificant by western democratic nations.

Incidents of anti-Shiism may be expected to rise in the month of Ramadan as ISIS leaders call for war on "unbelievers" on its supporters. A month of communal gathering, Muslims join in the month of Ramadhan, making this month a fertile time for mass targeting. Shia Rights Watch calls for increased security in Shia-populated areas and asks governments to be aware of the dangers that target their Shia constituents.

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# **Al-Shahada, Iraq Bombing, 11 Killed, 41 Wounded**

Following car bombing in Baghdad that killed around 17 people early on May 30th, a second blast occurred later that morning near the Al-Shahada Bridge. This explosion occurred during the morning rush hour in the area around the Public Pension Office and General Retirement Department in Baghdad. This attack killed at least 11 people and wounded 41. Neither the Islamic State (IS) nor any other organization has claimed responsibility for this second bombing, although IS did claim credit for the first attack at an ice-cream parlor only hours before. In total, around 27 people have been killed between these two attacks thus far, and the statement released by the group claiming credit revealed the bomber to have specifically targeted Shia Muslims.

This bombing, along with the previous attack at the ice-cream parlor, largely affected civilians, including women and children. The bombing occurred during the first few days of the holy month, Ramadan, where fasting is required during hours of daylight for all able Muslims.

This is not the first attack of this magnitude in the nation's capital. In 2016, a suicide bombing occurred in Baghdad with casualties measuring around 300 and was claimed by the Islamic State.

Shia Rights Watch implores the international community to push for increased tolerance and

the protection of the minority Shia population in Iraq and across the world. SRW calls upon the Iraqi government to increase the security measures within Shia populated areas within Iraq. SRW also calls for prudence in action on behalf of the Shia militias in order to prevent any possible flaring of sectarian violence and disintegration of division against IS.

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# **Alfaqma Bombing, 15 Killed and**

# 47 Wounded

## Alfaqma Ice Cream Shop bombing

Just after midnight on March 30<sup>th</sup>, a bomb detonated just outside Alfaqma Ice Cream in Karrada, Iraq, a predominantly Shia neighborhood. A police officer on the scene put the number at 15 killed and 47 wounded. ISIL claimed the bombing, strategically executing the attack to purposely target Shia Muslims who were breaking from their Ramadan fasts. Owing to the warm night and tradition of eating and going to cafés after sunset, the attackers chose the location to inflict maximum damage.

Shia Rights Watch calls on the Iraqi government to continue to pursue the military objectives against ISIL, but must increase the security of the Shia population as a responsibility of a state to its people. The Shia neighborhoods will be especially vulnerable the more territory ISIL loses. These efforts of division must be known to the broader international community in order to keep regional actors from falling into ISIL's trap.