

Political Repression in Bahrain

Exploring Bahrain's modern history through the lens of repression, this concise and accessible work spans the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, looking at all forms of political repression from legal, statecraft, police brutality and informational controls. Considering several episodes of contention in Bahrain, from tribal resistance to the British reforms of the 1920s, the rise of the Higher Executive Committee in the 1950s, the leftist agitation of the 1970s, the 1990s Intifada and the 2011 Uprising, Marc Owen Jones offers never before seen insights into the British role in Bahrain, as well as the activities of the Al Khalifa ruling family. From the plundering of Bahrain's resources, to new information about the torture and murder of Bahrain civilians, this study reveals new facts about Bahrain's troubled political history. Using freedom of information requests, historical documents, interviews and data from social media, this is a rich and original interdisciplinary history of Bahrain over 100 years.

MARC OWEN JONES is Assistant Professor in Middle East Studies and Digital Humanities at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, where his research focuses on issues of social justice and the Gulf. He is the co-editor of Gulfization of the Arab World (2018) and Bahrain's Uprising: Resistance and Repression in the Gulf (2015). In addition to his academic work, he contributes to the Washington Post, New Statesman, CNN, the Independent, PEN International, and appears frequently on the BBC, Channel 4 News and Al Jazeera.



Cambridge Middle East Studies

Editorial Board

Charles Tripp (general editor) Julia Clancy-Smith F. Gregory Gause Yezid Sayigh Avi Shlaim Judith E. Tucker

Cambridge Middle East Studies has been established to publish books on the nineteenth- to twenty-first-century Middle East and North Africa. The series offers new and original interpretations of aspects of Middle Eastern societies and their histories. To achieve disciplinary diversity, books are solicited from authors writing in a wide range of fields including history, sociology, anthropology, political science, and political economy. The emphasis is on producing books affording an original approach along theoretical and empirical lines. The series is intended for students and academics, but the more accessible and wideranging studies will also appeal to the interested general reader.

A list of books in the series can be found after the index.



Political Repression in Bahrain

Marc Owen Jones

Hamad Bin Khalifa University





CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi- 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108471435 DOI: 10.1017/9781108558822

© Marc Owen Jones 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Jones, Marc Owen, author.

Title: Political Repression in Bahrain / Marc Owen Jones, Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Series: Cambridge Middle East studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019060032 (print) | LCCN 2019060033 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108471435 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108458009 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108558822 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Political persecution—Bahrain—History—20th century. | Political persecution—Bahrain—History—21st century.

Classification: LCC JC599.B26 J66 2020 (print) | LCC JC599.B26 (ebook) | DDC 323/.044095365–dc23

LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019060032

LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019060033

ISBN 978-1-108-47143-5 Hardback ISBN 978-1-108-45800-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



Dedicated to my mum, dad and brothers





Contents

	List of Figures	page ix
	List of Tables	X
	Acknowledgements	xi
	List of Abbreviations	xiii
	Introduction: Political Repression in Bahrain in the	
	Twentieth and Twenty-First Century	1
	Bahrain: A Short Modern History	5
	Why Repression?	10
	Why Bahrain?	13
	The Book: Structuring Repressive History	16
1	Defining Political Repression	21
	Breadth or Depth?	21
	The Case for Historical, Fine-Grained Studies of Repression	24
2	The Repression Playbook	30
	Templates versus Typologies	32
	Political Statecraft	34
	Personal Integrity Violations	39
	Legal Repression	42
	Informational Control Stylized Relations between Repressive Methods and Their Effects	46 50
		50
3	Political Statecraft: Between Democratization, Discord	
	and Division	54
	Pacification of Internal Factionalism through Co-optation and the	
	Civil List Insulation	55 83
	Shaping Civil Society	100
	Co-optation	106
		105
4	Torture, Arrests and Other Personal Integrity Violations	135 136
	Policing: The Struggle between Force and Consent Failure of Policing 'by Consent' and the Resurgence of Collective	130
	Punishment	154
	Methods of a Mild Spanish Inquisition: Use of Torture and State Terror	167

vii



viii	Contents	
	Cutting off the Head of the Snake: Arresting Leaders	186
	The Shi'i Threat and the Rise of Mass Arrests	190
	Conclusion	197
5	Repressive Law and Legal Repression	199
	A Repressive Legal Structure	200
	Laws	204
	Legal Processes	230
	Selective Accountability and Asymmetric Justice	242
	Conclusion	254
6	Information Controls: From Surveillance to Social Media	
	and Fake News	256
	Censorship and Insulation	257
	The Rise of the Propaganda Machine	282
	Bad News Is Big Business: Western PR Companies	300
	From Fake News to Fake Journalists and Social Media	307
	Grassroots Conspiracies and Sectarian Discourses	312
	Surveillance	317
	Conclusion	326
	Conclusion: Between Retrograde Repression and	
	Repression	329
	Revisionism, Historic Injustice and Repressive Cycles	329
	Theoretical Implications	333
	Bibliography	342
	Inder	376



Figures

2.1	Heuristic illustrating interconnected categories of	
	repression	age 34
2.2	Summary of types of repressive action and how they	
	impact upon dissent	53
3.1	Graph showing percentage of Bahrain's national revenue goir	ng
	to the Privy Purse and Civil List between 1927 and 1970	62
3.2	Cartoon by the author showing how the BICI report was	
	used to appease the international community while shielding	
	the regime's continued human rights violations	114
4.1	Graph showing the cause of deaths of victims of political	
	crime in Bahrain between 1954 and 2017	175
5.1	Heuristic illustrating structure of police accountability	250
6.1	Cartoon lampooning the internet curfew in Duraz, titled	
	'Life in Duraz'	279

ix



Tables

2.1	Summary of methods of statecraft	page 39
2.2	Summary of methods of personal integrity violations	42
2.3	Summary of methods of legal repression	46
2.4	Summary of methods of information control	49
2.5	Summary of stylized categories of repression	52
3.1	Shi'a employment in the technical sector	86
4.1	Percentage of foreigners in the Bahrain police	146
4.2	Outline of the multiple modern security organs in Bahrain	148
6.1	Examples of Wikipedia edits	305
6.2	Summary of frames of how the opposition and government	
	were constructed	307
6.3	A sample of Tweets taken from #Bahrain hashtag on	
	22 June 2016	312

X



Acknowledgements

My acknowledgements section cannot possibly do justice to all those to whom I am indebted, both throughout my life but also across my academic studies at Durham, Tuebingen, Exeter and now Doha.

First, however, thanks to my Mum and Dad for tolerating me from a young age and giving me so much. I am also grateful to my wonderful siblings Owen and Gareth for allowing me to be the middle child, and Kate for being such an inspiration. As for my late grandparents Rhoda, Cyril, Charlie and Elsie, I am in awe of your wisdom and kindness. Cyril, aka, 'Little Grandad', your polemics on equal pay had such a formative influence. Zainah, you proofread this book in its nascent state and made me tea; enough said. I couldn't' have done it without you. Sooty, I miss you. Potem, you are acceptable as a cat.

My gratitude extends to the academics, activists, journalists and other human beings who prefer not to be labelled. As most of you are protagonists in this book, there is no need to mention you here – such is your incredible impact on the world.

As for the guys at Bahrain Watch – Ala'a Shehabi, John Horne, Luke Bhatia, Bill Marczak, Fahad Desmukh, Ahmed Ali, Maryam Al Khawaja, Reda al-Farhan, Ali Abdulemam, Travis Brimhall – there are few opportunities to work with such incredibly good and talented people. It has been a privilege.

The process of this research has made me lose a lot of friends but introduced me to some of my now closest, who have been unrivalled in their encouragement, understanding and tolerance. Thanks in particular to Ryaan, Alexei, Hussain, Mariam, Hasan, Nada, Mo, Esra, Huda, Kirstyn, Pep, and Siobhan. Michael B.; our burgers and BBQs, bunny patrols and road trips were restorative in the extreme. Special thanks to Dima – without your support, I do not even know if I would have finished.

I would also like to thank, for your various chats and inspiration, Abdulhadi Khalaf, Farida Vis, Kristian Ulrichsen, Marwan Kraidy, John Jewell, Marie Duboc, Ollie Schulmberger, Mirjam Edel, Christopher

хi



xii Acknowledgements

Davidson, Reem Abou al-Fadl, Claire Wardle, Una McGahern, Mokhtar, Sophie Richter Devroe, James Thomas, Clive Jones, Philip Robins, Steven Wright, David Kaufer and Lucy Abbott.

Since the conception of this manuscript at Durham to finalizing it in Qatar, I have spilled countless cups of coffee with countless wonderful people who have endured me. Noha, thanks for helping me settle so well into Qatar. Exeter crew, you are among the best people I know in terms of integrity and research but also as human beings. Marc Valeri, Ross Porter, Claire Beaugrand – you guys are a source of inspiration: kind, patient, intelligent and thoughtful. Katie Natanel, I miss you as my office neighbour. Isabel, thank you for helping me through a rough summer with Fortnite and *Love Island*. Thank you Eliza for making me a little braver. Ollie and Rhian, drinking tea and writing songs are some of my best memories. Sophie, Wajdi, George, Julie, Amal, Steven, Hassan, Dilek, Hendrik Abdulrahman, Fatema, Clayton, Richard, Doha Footballers, thanks for help making Qatar a home from where I can write!

Thanks to Ustinov College. Your collegiate environment and atmosphere has been a source of strength and inspiration, especially during difficult times. In particular, it has been a great place to study and unwind. Thanks especially to Siobhan and Michael; the cafe working group has been a source of levity, irreverence and procrastination. Carole and Leanne, your tea, muffins and breakfasts sustained me! Thank you to all the staff whom I bothered incessantly and who made Ustinov such a home: Jonathan, Gary, Alan, Faye, Sam, Robin, Margaret, Ian, Sarah C., Sarah P., Lynsey, Glenn, Maggie and Sheila. Trevor, you're a legend; I shall miss induction week! Brian, keep on snapping (photos that is). Ray, your patience and calm temperament are incredible. Paddy, don't let any bastards grind you down.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you Bahrain for your inspiration, tragedy, hope and hopelessness. No one could ask for a better home, nor better people but certainly a better government. Viva the revolution.



Abbreviations

AI Amnesty International

BCHR Bahrain Centre for Human Rights

BDF Bahrain Defence Force

BICI Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry

BNA Bahrain News Agency
BNC Bahrain National Congress

CID Criminal Investigation Department CNU Committee of National Union

GCCPS Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsula Shield

HEC Higher Executive Committee IAA Information Affairs Authority

IFLB Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain

HRW Human Rights Watch NLF National Liberation Front

SIS Security and Intelligence Services

SIU Special Investigation Unit MOI Ministry of the Interior NSA National Security Agency PSF Public Security Forces

xiii

