



February 27, 2013

## Bahrain as a Target Preferred by Iran for Terrorism and Subversion



Sites in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, where IEDs were detonated (November 5, 2012). The Bahraini regime accused Lebanese Hezbollah of responsibility for the explosions.

### Overview

1. On **February 16 and 19, 2013**, the Bahraini authorities announced they had **exposed a terrorist cell run by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards**. The cell's operatives had been involved in shooting policemen and were planning to assassinate public figures and carry out terrorist attacks on various sensitive targets, among them **the King Fahd Bridge (which links Bahrain to Saudi Arabia), Bahrain International Airport and the ministry of the interior**. Two affairs preceded the exposure: in **November 2012** five suspects were detained on suspicion of placing IEDs which exploded in various locations in Manama, and at the beginning of November 2011 a terrorist cell was captured who members had been planning to carry out showcase attacks in Bahrain and attack important facilities. One of their

targets was **the King Fahd Bridge, which in our assessment is regarded as a strategic target by the Iranians.**

2. **Tariq al-Hassan, head of Bahraini general intelligence, said that the cell most recently exposed had been recruited by two men living in Qom, Iran. Its operatives were handled and funded by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, and trained by Guards proxies in Iraq and Lebanon.** In previous affairs Iran and Hezbollah were accused of handling terrorist cells in Bahrain, training them and providing them with weapons. In every instance Iran and Hezbollah denied the accusations.

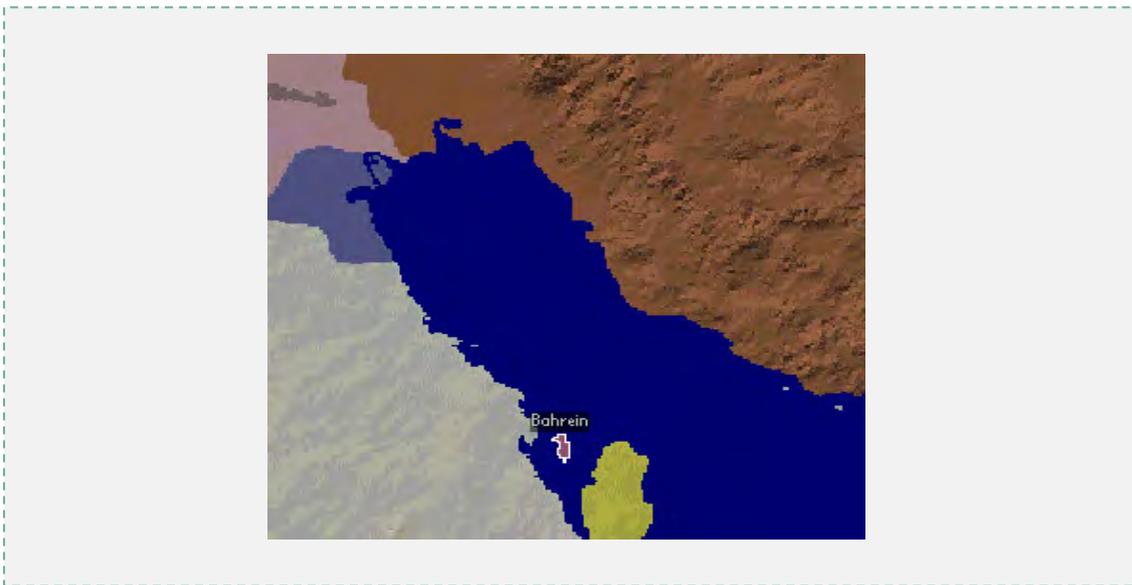
3. Actually, however, in our assessment the terrorist cells are part of Iran's comprehensive, ongoing efforts at subversion and terrorism, sometimes carried out with the assistance of Hezbollah, its Lebanese proxy. **Their efforts have accelerated in the past two years, the result of the upheaval in the Arab world and the intensified Iranian confrontation of the United States and Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf.**

4. **Since the regional upheaval began, there have been protests in Bahrain by its Shi'ite majority. The Shi'ites are supported by Iran, which exploits them to further its efforts to overthrow the Bahraini regime.** The regime has acted to contain the protests but the Shi'ites have become more daring and confrontations between Shi'ite demonstrators and the Bahraini security forces have become routine. **This explosive situation provides, in our assessment, fertile ground for the continuation and intensification of Iran's subversive and terrorist activities within the Bahraini Shi'ite population. The Iranians do that either directly or by using proxies such as Lebanese Hezbollah and the Shi'ite militias in Iraq as subcontractors** (the Iranian modus operandi in other Shi'ite communities throughout the Arab-Muslim world).

## Bahrain: Iran's Choice as a Target for Its Terrorism and Subversion

5. **Iran chose Bahrain as a target for terrorism and subversion because it is located** in the heart of the Persian Gulf, which is strategically important for Iran, and because of its **political-societal makeup**: it has a Shi'ite majority and is ruled by a Sunni monarchy which has Saudi Arabia as an ally and is oriented toward America. In concrete terms there are several reasons for **Iran's decades of terrorism and subversion in Bahrain:**

1) **The presence of the American army:** Bahrain hosts the United States' largest Persian Gulf naval base, Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, home of the Fifth Fleet. NSA Bahrain has been the seat of American army support for the wars in **Iraq** (ended) and **Afghanistan** (ongoing). As far as Iran is concerned, an American military force in Bahrain is capable of providing a response to an Iranian threat to the Gulf States and can threaten vital Iranian interests (most of Iran's commercial activity, including its oil exports, is channeled through the Straits of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf). In addition, from the Iranian point of view, if and when the time comes, **the American presence in Bahrain is liable to be used in an attack on Iran** (as it was in the attack on the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq).



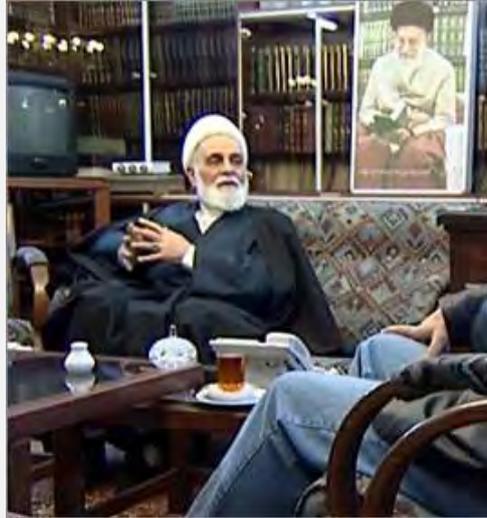
**Bahrain, a tiny country with a Shi'ite majority ruled by a Sunni monarchy. Its proximity to Iran and its basic geopolitical-societal conditions have made it an attractive venue for Iranian terrorism and subversion (Map from the watanee.com website).**

2) **Bahrain's politics and demographics:** An estimated 60%-70% of Bahrain's more than a million inhabitants are Shi'ites **ruled by a Sunni minority**. Bahraini Shi'ites have a long history of protesting, both nonviolently and violently, against various issues on the Bahraini and regional agenda. Iran, with Hezbollah support, intensively incites Bahrain's Shi'ite population to overthrow the monarchy. The regional upheavals **escalated both the Shi'ite protests and the Iranian efforts to subvert and destabilize the Bahraini regime**, which so far has been able to contain the protests.



**Bahraini supporters of Iran and Hezbollah demonstrate against the regime. The yellow flags are Hezbollah's. The pictures at the bottom of the left-hand picture are of Khomeini and Khamenei (Picture from the bahaneews.com website).**

3) **Iran's irredentist aspirations: Iran claims sovereignty over Bahrain** (calling it "Iran's 14<sup>th</sup> province") and has even claimed to have found "historical proof" for the claim. In February 2009 **Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri**, advisor to Supreme Leader Khamenei, said that until its independence in 1970, Bahrain was Iran's 14<sup>th</sup> province and even had representation in the Iranian parliament. At the time, the statement (not the first time it was made) **led to a storm of protests in Bahrain and gave rise to open expressions of solidarity with Bahrain throughout the Arab world.** In 1979, during the first months of Iran's Islamic Revolution, the Ayatollah **Sayyid Sadeq Rohani**, an important Iranian cleric, asserted that **Bahrain was an integral part of Iran and that it was illegal to separate it from Iran.** He called on the inhabitants of Bahrain and the other emirates to rise up against their rulers and to institute regimes of "justice and equality" (Shia-online.ir website).



**Ali Akbar Nateq Nuri, advisor to Khamenei (Al-Jazeera, February 22, 2013). His claim that Bahrain was Iran's 14th province led to tension between Bahrain and Iran and a storm of protests in the Arab world.**

4) **Iran's aspirations to hegemony in the Persian Gulf:** Iran regards the Gulf as strategically extremely important both in terms of its economy and its security. **Iran seeks hegemony in the Gulf** and to remove the presence of Iran's enemies, principally the United States, other Western countries, and Saudi Arabia and its allies. The Shi'ite communities in the countries in the Persian Gulf and at the entrance to the Red Sea, among them Bahrain, Yemen, southern Iraq and eastern Saudi Arabia are, in Iran's perception, **bridgeheads for Iranian influence and the advancement of its regional interests.**

6. Exploiting the Shi'ite community in Bahrain for subversion and terrorism **is a permanent part of the Iranian pattern, carried out by the Qods Force and with Hezbollah as a subcontractor.** The most recent example was in **Yemen**, where on January 23, 2013, a ship was intercepted and found to be carrying a large quantity of **weapons from Iran.** The weapons were en route to the Shi'ite Houthi rebels in north Yemen.<sup>1</sup> Other countries with Shi'ite communities which are targets for Iranian subversion and terrorism are **Lebanon** (a prominent example of Iran's success in exporting the Islamic Revolution), **Syria** (where Iran and Hezbollah support the Alawite regime, which they regard as Shi'ite), **Iraq** (where Iran established Shi'ite militias), **Pakistan** (where there is a large Shi'ite community) and **Azerbaijan** (a Shi'ite country which Iran has traditionally targeted for its subversion and terrorism).

<sup>1</sup> For further information see the February 11, 2013 bulletin "[Iranian subversion in Yemen: A ship with a cargo of arms originating in Iran and en route to the Shi'ite Houthi rebels in north Yemen, was recently intercepted.](#)"

7. Three appendices follow:

- 1) **Appendix A:** Iranian subversion and terrorism in Bahrain since the beginning of the regional upheaval.
- 2) **Appendix B:** Iranian subversion and terrorism in Bahrain in the 1980s and 1990s.
- 3) **Appendix C:** The Iranian-Hezbollah anti-Bahrain propaganda and incitement campaign.

## Appendix A

### Iranian Subversion and Terrorism in Bahrain since the Beginning of the Regional Upheaval

#### Overview

1. The following are three affairs of subversion and terrorism exposed in Bahrain during the recent years of regional upheaval:

- 1) The exposure of a Bahraini terrorist cell planning to blow up the King Fahd Bridge , which links Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (February 16, 2013).
- 2) Accusations that Hezbollah and Iran were involved in a series of explosions occurring in Manama (November 6, 2012).
- 3) The exposure of a terrorist cell handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards and planning showcase terrorist attacks in Bahrain (early November 2011).

#### The Exposure of a Bahraini Terrorist Cell Planning to Blow Up the King Fahd Bridge (February 16, 2013)

2. On February 16, 2013, the Kuwaiti authorities announced **the exposure of a terrorist cell handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards**. According to the initial announcement issued by **Sheikh Rashad Abdallah al-Khalifa, the Bahraini minister of the interior**, the eight cell operatives in custody had received training in using weapons and explosives in **Iran, Iraq and Lebanon**. He said that **the cell was linked to a number of recent IED incidents, an attempt to blow up the King Fahd Bridge (which links Bahrain and Saudi Arabia)**. It was also involved in **three instances of shots fired at policemen**, which killed one and wounded 75 (Al-Arabiya TV, February 16, 2013; AP, February 17, 2013).

3. **Tariq Hassan al-Hassan**, head of Bahrain's general security service, said that his forces had recently **neutralized an IED weighing an estimated 2 kilograms, or 4.4 lbs., near a mosque close to the Bahraini side of the King Fahd Bridge**. The IED, he said, **had been manufactured locally and contained high explosives, nails and shrapnel**. He said it was powerful enough to collapse a small building, or part of one. "Bahraini security sources" reported that the chemical composition of the IED was identical to explosives found in the possession of a Bahraini cell arrested in Qatar while **en route to Iran (Note: The cell operatives were arrested in Qatar and**

extradited to Bahrain on November 4, 2011. The King Fahd Bridge had been one of its targets) (Al-Arabiya TV, February 16, 2013).



**The King Fahd Bridge, a strategic target for Iranian terrorism: the bridge links Bahrain to Saudi Arabia and is an important route between the two countries (Photo from Wikipedia). Terrorist cells handled by Iran planned to sabotage it.**

**The IED discovered near the bridge (Al-Arabiya TV, February 16, 2013)**

4. On February 19, 2013, **Tariq al-Hassan**, head of Bahrain's general security service, held a press conference where he spoke at length about the plans of the terrorist cell, and their handling by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards. He said the following:<sup>2</sup>

1) **The cell planned to set up an armed military network called The Army of the Imam.** During interrogation members of the cell revealed that they were planning to attack military and civilian targets to undermine Bahrain's security and economy. Among their proposed targets were **the Bahrain International Airport and the Bahraini ministry of the interior. They had also planned to assassinate public figures.**

2) Intelligence indicated that the cell members came from Bahrain as well as other countries. **In all, eight operatives have been arrested so far, five with Bahraini citizenship and three foreign nationals. Three of them were arrested in Oman** in coordination with the local security forces. The Bahraini security forces were still searching for four operatives who managed to escape.

<sup>2</sup> The information about the press conference is based on a report by the Bahraini News Agency (BNA), February 19, 2013, with additional details from the Turkish Al-Anadolu News Agency, February 20, 2013.

3) Operatives of the terrorist cell admitted that they had been recruited by two Bahrainis living in Qom, Iran. The man behind the entire operation and the cell's handler was "Abu Nasser," who belonged to the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

4) The terrorist cell was trained in the use of weapons and explosives, in collecting intelligence and photographing various locations. The training took place at sites belonging to Iraqi Hezbollah in Karbala and Baghdad (Note: The reference was apparently to Iraqi Shi'ite militias operated in Iraq by Iran).

5) Abu Nasser, sent by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards to direct the operation, gave the cell a total of \$80,000.

6) The terrorist cell was taught how to collect intelligence in Bahrain, including photographing sensitive civilian and military installations. The terrorists were also instructed to prepare stocks of weapons, which would be smuggled into Bahrain by Abu Nasser.



Tariq al-Hassan, head of Bahraini general intelligence, at a press conference held February 19, 2013, where he exposed information about a terrorist cell handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards (Al-Anadolu News Agency, Turkey, February 20, 2013).

### Accusations that Hezbollah and Iran Were Involved in a Series of Explosions in Manama (February 6, 2012)

5. On February 5, 2012 five improvised IEDs exploded in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. Two Asian men were killed and another individual was seriously wounded. Four men were detained by the Bahraini security forces on suspicion of involvement

in terrorist attack. According to the Bahraini ministry of internal security, the police were searching for other suspects.



**The scene of one of the explosions (Picture from the redlinekw.com website)**

6. **Ms. Samira Ibrahim Rajab**, Bahraini minister of information, said in a statement that the methods and means used by those responsible for the explosions and the way they had been carried out **indicated the involvement of Hezbollah**. She added that the groups behind the explosions were the same ones who had been carrying out terrorist attacks in Bahrain for the previous ten months. According to the Bahraini authorities, **the five IEDs bore the trademarks of Hezbollah**. The Bahrain News Agency reported that their modus operandi proved the operatives **had been trained outside Bahrain and that "the hallmarks of Hezbollah are crystal clear"** (ITIC emphasis) (Reuters quoting the Bahrain News Agency, November 6, 2013).

7. As is their wont, Hezbollah and Iran rushed to deny any and all involvement in the explosions in Bahrain on November 5, 2012:

1) **Hezbollah's public relations office** said in a statement that "the Bahraini authorities continue their accusations and false claims..." "Hezbollah condemns any such s and is certain that Bahraini intelligence is behind the explosions, intending to harm the opposition, which is in favor of a peaceful [struggle], and as an excuse not to respond to [the opposition's] just demands (Al-Intiqad, November 7, 2012).

2) **Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs**, said that Hezbollah had not been involved in any explosion in

Bahrain. He said that if Hezbollah had been involved, "the situation would be entirely different" (Mehr News Agency, Iran, November 9, 2012).

**8. It was not the first time the Bahraini authorities had accused Lebanese Hezbollah of involvement of subversion and terrorism in Bahraini territory.** Hezbollah, which shows sectarian solidarity with the Bahraini Shi'ite protests, conducts an incitement and propaganda campaign against the Bahraini regime, and it is entirely likely that **Hezbollah is handled in Bahrain by the Iranian in its subversion and terrorism missions.** In the past, **the Iranian Qods Force used Lebanese Hezbollah** in a number of Arab-Muslim countries with Shi'ite populations (including Iraq and Yemen) for subversive, terrorist and guerilla activities.

### **The Exposure of a Terrorist Cell Handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards and Planning Showcase Terrorist Attacks in Bahrain (early November 2011)**

9. At the beginning of November 2011 a terrorist cell in Bahrain was exposed. It was handled by the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards, in our assessment by the Qods Force. The cell planned to attack the following targets:

- 1) **The King Fahd Bridge.**
- 2) **The Saudi Arabian embassy in Bahrain.**
- 3) **The Bahraini ministry of the interior.**

10. The Saudi Arabian media **accused the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guards** of directing the terrorist cell planning the attacks. On November 14, 2011, the Saudi Arabian daily newspaper Ukaz reported that **during interrogation members of the cell said Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guardsmen were behind the plot to blow up the Saudi Arabian embassy and the King Fahd Bridge.**

11. **Major General Tariq al-Hassan**, at the time spokesman for the Bahraini ministry of the interior, said that four cell members had been arrested in Qatar, having gone there from Saudi Arabia, and were extradited to Bahrain on November 4, 2011; the fifth was arrested in Bahrain. At the time of their arrest they were carrying documents and a computer with security-related information and details of several vital facilities. **They were also carrying dollars and Iranian rials.** During interrogation they admitted that they had left Bahrain illegally and **were en route to Iran to set up a network to carry out armed terrorist attacks in Bahrain** (Agence France-Presse, November 12, 2011).

12. Members of the Bahraini parliament said that the "terrorist plot" had not only been directed against Bahrain, but **was meant to harm the Arab identity of the Gulf States**. They thanked the Qatari authorities for their aid in exposing the cell and demanded they strengthen the supervision of Qatar's land, sea and air border crossings to prevent terrorist cells from infiltrating Bahrain. **The terrorists wanted to blow up the King Fahd Bridge, the parliamentarians said, to cut Bahrain off from Saudi Arabia and cause a reason for tension between the two countries.** In addition, the parliamentarians accused Hezbollah of having ties to the terrorist cell, after which Lebanese Hezbollah issued a sweeping denial (Al-Intiqad website, November 15, 2011).<sup>3</sup> Following the exposure of the cell the Saudi Arabian media strongly attacked Iran, claiming that "Iran was directly tied to the plot" and **that "Iran [was] a terrorist state" which sought to establish a Shi'ite base in Bahrain.**

**إيران دولة إرهابية!!**

يوسف الكوليت

لم يمض شهر على كشف الخلية الإرهابية الإيرانية بقتل السفير السعودي في أمريكا حتى تكرر نفس السيناريو من خلال خلية أخرى اكتشفت في قطر من عناصر بحرينية، لكن الوجود الإيراني كان ظاهراً، ولا يمكن تعريف الأمر بالواقعة السهلة عندما صارت أصابعها واضحة، والغريب أن يأتي الكشف عن الإرهابيين في دولتين متباعدتين، لكن استهداف السفارتين السعوديتين وجسر الملك فهد ومواقع حساسة في البحرين، يكشف عن الوجه الحقيقي لإيران كراعية للإرهاب وموقع حضانة للقاعدة، أي أنها لا تأخذ بالمذهب كذريعة، وإنما بما تعتقد أنه يزعزع أمن دول الخليج بصرف النظر عن الوسيلة إذا كانت تؤدي لنفس الغايات..

كشفت الواقعة جاء أيضاً باقتحام سفارة المملكة في دمشق حليفة إيران، وهذا يضعنا أمام عمل لم يأت مصادفة، وإنما ليمنح العالم رؤية إيران وسورية على حقيقتيهما، أي أن اتخاذ أي قرار في مكافحة الإرهاب ومعاينة الدولتين يأخذ دليله من الوقائع التي حدثت أمام مشهد لا تستطيع أي منهما إنكار ما حدث..

استهداف دول الخليج العربي، وتحديد المملكتين لا يوضع في دائرة الخلافات المذهبية، أو أن أمريكا لها تواجد على حدودها، بل ما يفهم من هذه التصرفات اعتماد الإرهاب كقاعدة حرب من قبل إيران، ولو تصورنا كيف ستكون الكارثة لو فجر جسر الملك فهد، وكم عدد الضحايا البشرية، وبمن ستلحق التهمة، وإبعاد شبح إيران عنها، كأن توضع في سلة القاعدة، لكن بعد الآن لا بد من النظر لحكومة طهران على أنها حاضنة إرهاب مع سبق الإصرار..

The article in the Saudi Arabian newspaper Al-Riyadh entitled "Iran is a Terrorist State" (From the alriyad.com website).

13. The attacks prevented in Bahrain were supposed to be **part of the campaign waged by the Qods Force against Saudi Arabia and its allies. They used a variety of methods, at the time including terrorism against individuals and subversion** (Qods Force also planned to assassinate Adel al-Jubeir, the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States (a plot which was prevented), and did assassinate a Saudi Arabian diplomat in Pakistan). In our assessment, **the motive and catalyst for the campaign were the entrance of Saudi Arabian military**

<sup>3</sup> According to Hezbollah's denial, the accusations against it were baseless and a feeble attempt by the al-Khalifa regime to disguise the truth behind the nonviolent civil revolution of the Bahraini people.

**forces into Bahrain under the aegis of the Gulf Cooperation Council** on March 14, 2011, and the Bahraini regime's containment of the Shi'ite protest. The demand of the protest, influenced by the regional upheavals, was that **King Hamad al-Khalifa institute political and social reforms**. In our assessment, the entrance of the forces marked Saudi Arabia as the leader of the struggle against Iran in the Persian Gulf in general and Bahrain in particular, and **resulting in a Qods Force subversion and terrorism effort directed at Saudi Arabia and Bahrain**.

## Appendix B

### **Iranian Subversion and Terrorism in Bahrain in the 1980s and 1990s**

1. In **1981** an attempt was made to overthrow the Bahraini regime, led by a network calling itself the **Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain**. The organization was founded by the **Ayatollah Modarresi**, an Iraqi cleric supported by Iran and affiliated with the Khomeini revolution. An opponent of the Saddam Hussein regime, he went into exile in Bahrain, **where he engaged in activities to subvert the Bahrain regime**. The attempted overthrow of the regime was foiled and more than 70 of the organization's activists were given long jail sentences, while many others were expelled from Bahrain.
2. The network also established a **military-terrorist wing** called **Hezbollah Bahrain**, apparently following Iran's aspirations to repeat the success of Hezbollah in Lebanon. The Bahraini Hezbollah operatives were trained in **Iran** (by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards) and in **Lebanon** (by the Lebanese Hezbollah), and were trained to prepare and detonate IEDs and use weapons. In **1994** the Bahraini authorities seized weapons smuggled by sea by Hezbollah in Lebanon to Hezbollah Bahrain, **directed by Iranian intelligence**.
3. In **March 1996** Hezbollah Bahrain joined the ongoing wave of civil disobedience and violent disturbances directed against the regime. It peaked with riots in Manama, during which hotels, stores, a garage, an automobile showroom and generators were burned (Hewarona.com). Iranian radio stations followed the events, calling for civil disobedience.



Car set on fire in the wave of arson in March 1996 (YouTube.com website)

Arson in Manama, Bahrain's capital, in the 1996 riots (YouTube and ejabat.google.com websites)

4. During 1996 the Bahraini security forces arrested 44 Hezbollah Bahrain operatives, accusing them of plotting to establish a regime in Bahrain like the one in Iran. An investigation revealed that they had been trained by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards at camps in Iran, and by Lebanese Hezbollah at camps in Lebanon. They admitted that in 1993 Iran had been behind an attempt to overthrow the Bahraini regime by means of Hezbollah Bahrain (Hewarona.com).



The weapons found in the possession of Hezbollah Bahrain in 1996. The article quotes one of the Hezbollah Bahrain operatives who admitted he was trained by Lebanese Hezbollah under the aegis of Iran (Hewarona.com website)

5. Since the 1990s no proof has come to our attention regarding the continued existence of Hezbollah Bahrain as a violent, Iranian-supported terrorist organization. Apparently, during the last decade, following the exposure of Hezbollah Bahrain, Iran changed its subversion and terrorism methods and **directly handles subversion and terrorism cells.**

## Appendix C

### The Iranian-Hezbollah Anti-Bahrain Propaganda and Incitement Campaign

#### Iranian propaganda and incitement

1. Iranian public figures and media (or Arabic media affiliated with Iran) regularly attack the Bahraini regime, accusing it of oppressing the Shi'ite population. Iranian public figures repeatedly claim that Bahrain formerly belonged to Iran and publicize the appeals of the Shi'ites in Bahrain to Iran's political-religious leadership. Examples are the following:

1) **Hossein-Ali Shahriari**, a member of the Iranian parliament and chairman of its health committee, gave a speech about the political protest in Bahrain. He said that the island of **Bahrain had belonged to Iran 50 years previously**. If there was a plan to annex Bahrain to Saudi Arabia, **it was more logical to annex it to Iran**, because in the past it had been part of Iran. **Ali Larijani**, the chairman of the Iranian parliament, supported Shahriari. Many Islamic organizations in Iran issued statements supporting the rebels in Bahrain and called for protest marches to be held throughout Iran (BBC in Farsi, May 16, 2012).

2) The **Iranian news agency IRNA** reported that a group of Shi'ites in Bahrain calling themselves "the disciples and sons of Iran's spiritual leader" had **sent a letter to Khamenei asking him to broaden his sponsorship of the Shi'ites in Bahrain**. The report appeared in response to a statement attributed to the Bahraini opposition, according to which it did not welcome Iranian interference in Bahrain's internal affairs (Farsi website of the German Deutsche Welle, April 7, 2011).

3) A Bahraini group calling itself "**the movement of the friends of the February 14<sup>th</sup> revolution**" issued a statement **expressing its deep thanks to Leader Khamenei** for calling for "the popular uprising of the Bahraini people" (Fars News Agency, Iran, early February, 2010). The Fars News Agency quoted Sheikh **Sadiq Kadhem al-Jamri**, called one of the group's leaders, as saying that they and Bahrain's younger generation stood ready to receive orders from "the Supreme Leader of the world's Muslims, Seyyed Ali Khamenei," and were ready for "jihad and sacrifice for the sake of Allah." He was also quoted as saying that "we gather in Shuhada Square in Manama and say we are prepared

to be killed trying to raze the [Pearl] monument of the al-Khalifa family's dictatorship..." (Fars News Agency, Iran, September 8, 2012).

## Incitement by proxy: the role of the Ayatollah Modarresi

2. **Ms. Samira Ibrahim Rajab**, Bahraini minister of information, accused the Iranian regime of carrying out subversive activities on Bahraini soil, hinting that Leader Khamenei was responsible. She said that those who had carried out terrorist attacks had acted according to the dictates of *velayat-e faqih* (the rule of the Islamic jurist [i.e., Khamenei] over the people), and that 19 pro-Iranian television stations had broadcast propaganda to incite Iran's supporters in Bahrain to destabilize the regime (Reuters; Al-Wasat, Bahrain, November 6, 2012).<sup>4</sup> She added that the bombings in Manama had been carried out after fatwas had been issued for violent opposition groups in Bahrain by a cleric considered a prime source of religious authority.

3. Ms. Rajab did not specifically mention the cleric's name, but it would seem to be a reference to the **Ayatollah Hadi Modarresi**. Modarresi is a senior cleric who was a prominent student of Islam in his youth and belongs to a family of senior Shi'ite clerics in Karbala who in the past opposed the regime of Saddam Hussein. During the 1970s he was forced to flee Iraq and found refuge in Bahrain, and from there conducted subversive activities against the Iraqi regime.

4. At the end of the 1970s, having gathered many followers among Bahraini Shi'ites, Modarresi established the **Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain with the support of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards and Iranian intelligence**. The Front, directed by Iran, attempted to overthrow the Bahraini government and institute a regime modeled after Khomeini's Iran (See below). At the time the Ayatollah Modarresi bore the title of "the Ayatollah Khomeini's personal representative in Bahrain," and publicly expressed support for the Iranian Islamic Revolution. When the attempted revolution in Bahrain failed, Modarresi fled to Iran, where he continued his subversive activities against the Bahraini regime (Modarresi.org, azzaman.com, Wikipedia.org, ingentaconnect.com, Hizb.dd-sunnah.net).

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<sup>4</sup> Iranian and pro-Iranian television channels broadcast propaganda against the Bahraini regime and call for its overthrow. Prominent among them are Al-Alam, PressTV, Sahar, Al-Kawthar, and QodsTV. In addition there are Hezbollah in Lebanon's Al-Manar TV, which serves Iranian interests, and Ahlul Bayt, the television channel of the Ayatollah Modarresi in Iraq (See below).



**The Ayatollah Modarresi speaks at a mass rally in Iran, 1979, the year of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Picture from the modarresi.org website)**

5. In Iran Modarresi also continued his activities to subvert the Iraqi regime. In 1982 he was a cofounder of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the main Iraqi Shi'ite opposition, established under Iranian aegis. The Iraqi regime tried – unsuccessfully – to assassinate Modarresi a number of times. In 2003, after the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, Modarresi returned to Iraq where he was welcomed by the Shi'ites with a mass reception. Since 2003 he has lived in Karbala and conducted intensive social and propaganda activity among the Shi'ite community in Iraq, using, among other means, **a satellite TV channel he founded called Ahlul Bayt** ("the family of the prophet," an important term in Shia Islam).



**The Facebook page dedicated Hadi Modarresi, calling him the "inspector [i.e. leader] of the revolution in Bahrain"**

6. **The Ahlul Bayt TV channel** is used by the Ayatollah Modarresi as a **platform for propaganda and incitement against the regimes of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia**, which he refers to as "dictatorships." Interviewed in 2012, he accused the Bahraini authorities of corruption and heresy, and called on the ruling al-Khalifa family to leave the country. He also appealed to the Bahraini populace to initiate civil disobedience which would include not paying taxes and boycotting the regime until it collapsed (YouTube.com).



Ahlul Bayt TV reports on the protest in Bahrain (YouTube.com)

Ayatollah Hadi Modarresi speaks via Ahlul Bayt TV (YouTube.com)

## Hezbollah's propaganda campaign

7. Hezbollah, which expresses sectarian solidarity with the Shi'ites in Bahrain, is well integrated into the anti-Bahrain regime propaganda campaign. Hezbollah's media give extensive coverage to the Shi'ite protest against Bahrain's "oppressive regime." Hassan Nasrallah repeatedly expresses support for the protest and has called on the Bahraini people to sacrifice and not remain silent until the "oppressor" has been removed.

8. However, Hezbollah systematically **rejects accusations of its involvement in the subversion and terrorism** in Bahrain, as it customarily denies its involvement in other arenas (even when its operatives are caught and brought to trial). In a speech given on February 16, 2013, Nasrallah praised what he called the outbreak of an intifada in Bahrain, but claimed that the revolution in Bahrain was nonviolent.

### Hezbollah's Propaganda War



Extensive documentation of the Shi'ite protest against Bahrain's "oppressive regime" at it appeared on Hezbollah's Al-Manar website (Almanar.com.lb)

Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader, appeals to the people of Bahrain to sacrifice and not remain silent until the oppressor is removed, March 19, 2012 (YouTube.com).