

SHOT BY GOVERNMENT FORCES OR VICTIM OF HIS OWN BOMB: HOW DID BAHRAIN TEEN DIE?

The situation in Bahrain continues to spiral out of control. As Human Rights Watch noted, Barack Obama even included a reference to sectarian tensions there threatening democracy and regional stability in his September address to the UN General Assembly, but the US ambassador promptly walked the statement back, extolling Bahrain's position as a "progressive outpost in the Middle East". More recently, a document has leaked in which Bahrain is seeking over a million and a half canisters of tear gas. That's more than one canister per citizen of the country. As the New York Times reports, the US has blocked shipment of tear gas to Bahrain (most likely because of all the photos that were posted of "Made in USA" stamps on the canisters used when the government first began cracking down and were still seen up to a year later, but the Times doesn't mention that bit).

Today, we learn of the tragic death of Ali Khalil al-Sabbagh, who was only seventeen. How he died is very much dependent on whose story you accept. Here is a video report from Reuters:

[youtuber
youtube='http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELD0VV7Z
Zuk']

Dead at the hands of his own bomb. Hmm. The last time bombs were an issue in Bahrain, there were a number of questions about whether "activists" or John Timoney's infiltrators were responsible. PressTV has a very different explanation for what happened, and they even have a gruesome photo that appears to support their contention that al-Sabbagh was shot in the head by government forces:

[youtuber

youtube='http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=118p0IF0
hnQ']

About the only issue on which the competing narratives agree is that the Bahraini government wanted to arrest al-Sabbagh. PressTV notes that his father now has been arrested, as well.

How the US responds to Bahrain's continuing human rights violations will be very interesting to follow as one of the many areas that could be impacted by the growing rift between the US and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis are the primary backers of Bahrain's minority Sunni ruling family. Iran, to whom the US may be at least partially pivoting, supports Bahrain's majority Shiite citizens. With US-Saudi relations cooling, the base for the US Fifth Fleet now becomes the only US tie to Bahrain's government.