

RELEASE IN PART B5

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2011 7:14 AM
To: H
Subject: Update from bahrain

Latest from our charge Stephanie williams in bahrain

Per your request, here is comprehensive update on where we are in terms of the developing situation in Bahrain. In addition to the timeline below, we've heard that a GCC extraordinary Foreign Ministerial is being held this afternoon/evening after which the Foreign Minister will hold a press conference. I heard from the Minister's office that the call with S is confirmed for 1530 our time and we understand that SECDEF will be speaking with the Crown Prince an hour later.

In our view, the next 24 hours will be critical given that the funerals of those who died today will most likely be held tomorrow and there were already plans underway for a mass rally after Friday prayers.

In terms of points for calls, I would recommend that

B5

A timeline of events so far:

- 0315: MOI dispersed demonstrators at Pearl round-about using tear gas and batons. Heavy police presence remains at this location. Many vehicles in the area damaged.
- 0515: Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Highway, the major road artery running North into Manama, was closed by Police
- There are reports of two demonstrator deaths.
- 0620: RSO Manama reports that a crowd of approximately 500 is gathering at Salmaniya Hospital (approximately one mile North of Chancery), one police officer has also been reported injured and SD reports gas being utilized by MOI in at least three locations.
- 0730: There are confirmed sightings of armor (tanks and APCs) moving into central Manama. U.S. Naval Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) reports unconfirmed information that BDF has responded to Pearl round-about to restore order, has no plans to move further at this point. BDF has taken control of Pearl round-about scene from MOI but there are also reports of armor in other areas of the city .
- 0830: there were confirmed multiple reports of violent clashes between protestors and security forces in various parts of the city, and unconfirmed reports of 3 fatalities overnight.

- Embassy is operating on essential staffing only--will hold EAC at 0900. The Bahrain School (DOD school) has closed for the day.
- 0845: Post has issued a warden notice advising all American citizens to limit their movements and avoid Manama completely, warning of spontaneous demonstrations and violence to be expected throughout the next several days. Wifaq chief Sh. Ali Salman told Aljazeera that "things will get much worse."
- Other than traffic disruptions due to major road closures into Manama, normal business traffic is continuing throughout city.
- 0900: EAC held--no tripwires have been crossed, Navy is not elevating their Force Protection level.
- 0945: Charge reached MFA U/S Abdullah Abdellatif to express concern about the violent break-up of the demonstration and the presence of military armor on the streets. The U/S indicated that the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs will issue statements regarding the situation. (See classified reporting for further information).
- 1000: Embassy has accounted for all personnel-- Consular section is open for ACS services, and is currently contacting hospitals and inquiring about any Americans injured.
- Confirmed report of an ABC journalist who was present at Pearl round-about this morning having his camera confiscated by security personnel, he claims to have been roughed-up somewhat, but is safe in his hotel now. Charge raised this incident with the MFA, expressing concern about the report of mistreatment and requesting that his equipment be returned. There are journalists from multiple news outlets in Manama today including: Washington Post, NY Times, L.A. Times, Time magazine, AP, AFP, WSJ, FT, ABC, CNN, Reuters, Possibly NBC
- 1030: Embassy has observed MOI confiscating camera phones from individuals suspected of photographing affected areas.
- Embassy contacts who live near the Pearl round-about report there are two bodies currently laying in the street. Various human rights activists claim the death toll has now reached five.
- BDF reports that security forces found a pistol with ammo, swords, daggers, and iron rods at Pearl round-about.
- 1045: Approximately 100 demonstrators have gathered near Salmaniya Hospital, visual confirmation of a group of 15-20 carrying stones.
- Commercial traffic around the embassy remains normal, there is no discernable evidence of unrest in the vicinity.
- 1145: Ministry of Interior (MOI) has posted a statement on their website stating that the Pearl round-about gathering was dispersed for public safety reasons following complaints of residents and businesses in the area after attempted dialogue with protesters failed to change their behavior.
- MOI states that there no curfew is planned at this time. BDF states that MOI is in charge of the situation at this time.
- 1200: BDF HQ has closed their gates and guards are now in body armor and helmets.
- 1245: Confirmed report--there is no demonstration occurring at Salmaniya Hospital (roughly one mile north of the U.S. Embassy)--area is currently clear.
- Numerous Bahraini contacts have contacted their Embassy counterparts demanding and pleading that the U.S. put pressure on the GOB.

· Social networks alive with rumors of various government figure resignations—most have been confirmed false at this time but post continues to follow-up.