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the world...  
shouldn't we?*

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***Praying for the World  
One Country at Time***



**Bahrain  
March 20th, 2011**

# BAHRAIN

## Full Name

Kingdom of Bahrain

## Capital

Manama

## Location

Middle East, archipelago in the Persian Gulf, east of Saudi Arabia, 26 00 N, 50 33 E.

## Leadership

King HAMAD bin Isa Al-Khalifa (since 6 March 1999); Heir Apparent Crown Prince SALMAN bin Hamad Al-Khalifa (son of the monarch, born 21 October 1969)

## Overview

In 1783, the al-Khalifa family captured Bahrain from the Persians. In order to secure these holdings, it entered into a series of treaties with the UK during the 19th century that made Bahrain a British protectorate. The archipelago attained its independence in 1971. Bahrain's small size and central location among Persian Gulf countries require it to play a delicate balancing act in foreign affairs among its larger neighbors. Facing declining oil reserves, Bahrain has turned to petroleum processing and refining and has transformed itself into an international banking center. King HAMAD bin Isa al-Khalifa, after coming to power in 1999, pushed economic and political reforms to improve relations with the Shia community. Shia political societies participated in 2010 parliamentary and municipal elections. Al Wifaq, the largest Shia political society, won the largest number of seats in the elected chamber of the legislature. However, Shia discontent has resurfaced in recent years with street demonstrations and occasional low-level violence,

## Population

1,214,705

## Religion

Muslim (Shia and Sunni) 81.2%,  
Christian 9%, other 9.8% (2001 census)



## Economy

Bahrain is one of the most diversified economies in the Persian Gulf. Highly developed communication and transport facilities make Bahrain home to numerous multinational firms with business in the Gulf. As part of its diversification plans, Bahrain implemented a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the US in August 2006, the first FTA between the US and a Gulf state. Bahrain's economy, however, continues to depend heavily on oil. Petroleum production and refining account for more than 60% of Bahrain's export receipts, 70% of government revenues, and 11% of GDP (exclusive of allied industries). Other major economic activities are production of aluminum - Bahrain's second biggest export after oil - finance, and construction. Bahrain competes with Malaysia as a worldwide center for Islamic banking and continues to seek new natural gas supplies as feedstock to support its expanding petrochemical and aluminum industries. Unemployment, especially among the young, is a long-term economic problem Bahrain struggles to address. In 2009, to help lower unemployment among Bahraini nationals, Bahrain reduced sponsorship for expatriate workers, increasing the costs of employing foreign labor. The global financial crisis caused funding for many non-oil projects to dry up and resulted in slower economic growth for Bahrain. Other challenges facing Bahrain include the slow growth of government debt as a result of a large subsidy program, the financing of large government projects, and debt restructuring, such as the bailout of state-owned Gulf Air.

## Prayer Concerns

The unrest in Bahrain continues based mainly on economic disparity and the denial of civil rights. Bahrain's population is 70% Shia and yet Bahrain's rulers, the majority of the government, military, and business leaders are Sunni. Shia represent the majority of pro-reform, anti-government protesters because the government actively discriminates against them by shutting them out of housing, healthcare and government jobs. Corruption, crony capitalism, and a lack of transparency add up to uneven development and a vast disparity in wealth. By and large, Bahrain's Shia are losing out in the country's economic boom. They demand a transition from a system of privileges for a few at the expense of the many towards a system of greater rights for all. In February 2011 thousands of demonstrators gathered for several days in the centre of Manama, inspired by the popular uprisings which toppled the leaders of Tunisia and Egypt. Several people were killed and many more injured in clashes with security forces, and the king responded to public anger by releasing some political prisoners. Lately, Bahrain's royal rulers have been saying that they are willing to talk with what has proved to be a resilient opposition movement. They have made little headway so far. The situation remains unstable.