

# Kingdom of Bahrain



## SUMMARY

The Kingdom of Bahrain contains mostly an Arab population within an archipelago of 33 islands, most of them desert. Bahrain contains a rich civilization and was one of the first states in the Gulf to discover oil and build a refinery. Despite this, it has not reached the levels of production of other Gulf states and therefore has diversified its economy. The divide between the Shia majority and Sunni rulers has led to a long-running tension. Bahrain was once viewed as a promising model for political reform and democratic transition, but a crushing popular pro-democracy protest movement in 2011, the monarchy has eliminated a broad range of political rights and civil liberties.

Chief of State: King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa (March 6, 1999) AND Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa (October 21, 1969)

Head of Government: Prime Minister Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa (November 11, 2020) AND Deputy Prime Minister Khalid bin Abdallah Al Khalifa (May 2011)

Capital: Manama

Other notable cities: Al Muharraq, Sitrah, Mina Salman, Madinat Hamad

Gov Type: Constitutional Monarchy

Population: 1,566,888

Colonial History: The Sunni Al-Khalifa family entered into a series of treaties with the UK during the 19th century becoming a British protectorate. It gained its independence in 1971.

## GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Bahrain is an archipelago in the Persian Gulf, east of Saudi Arabia. It is 760 sq km in total length, the entirety of it being land. It has 161 km of coastline. Bahrain consists mostly of low desert plains which rise gently to low central escarpment.

Bahrain's natural resources consist of oil, natural gas, fish, and pearls. 11.3% of its land is used in agriculture, with 0.7% being forest and the remaining 88% being used as 'other'. It is the smallest of the Gulf States, but its urbanization rate exceeds 90% it is also prone to periodic droughts and dust storms.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Bahraini(s)

Adjective: Bahraini

Ethnic Groups: Bahraini (47.4%), Asian (43.4%), other Arab (4.9%), African (1.4%), North American (1.1%), Golf Co-operative countries (0.9%), European (0.8%), other (0.1%)

Languages: Arabic (official), English, Farsi, Urdu

Religions: Muslim (74.2%), other (25.8% - includes Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Baha'i)

Bahrain has the smallest population of the Gulf States, but its urbanization rate exceeds 90%. Its largest settlement concentration is found on the far northern end of the island in and around Manamah and Al Muharraq.

## ECONOMY AND GDP

Bahrain has a growing economy, with a diverse island economy. It has major recovery and balancing efforts to fulfill Economic Vision 2030. It is a regional finance hub and is currently trying to increase its openness. Despite this, it suffers from high youth unemployment and water scarcity due to reservoir depletion.

Real GDP: \$76.342 billion (2022)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 4.86% (2022)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$51,900 (2022)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$44.383 billion (2022)

GDP Composition: Agriculture 0.3% (2017), Industry 39.3% (2017), and Services 60.4% (2017).

Inflation Rate: 3.63% (2022)

Industries: Petroleum processing and refining, aluminum smelting, iron pelletization, fertilizers, Islamic and offshore banking, insurance, ship repairing, and tourism.

Labor Force: 844,000 (2022).

Unemployment Rate: 1.34%, youth unemployment rate stands at 9.9% (2022).

Population Below Poverty Line: 7.5% (2019)

Public Debt: 88.5% of GDP (2017)

Exports: \$44.58 billion (partners include Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United States, Japan, and India) 2022 est.

Imports: \$33.066 billion (partners include China, United Arab Emirates, Brazil, Australia, and India) 2022 est.

## MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

Bahrain had adopted a distinct foreign policy, diverging significantly from the stances taken by other Arab nations. Bahrain currently stands out as the most closely aligned Western, particularly American, position in the region.

In September of 2023, Bahrain entered into the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement with the United States to meet the objectives of enhancing security and defense collaboration as well as foster economic ties and deepen scientific and technical cooperation.

During the period of 2023, the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council members seemed to be moving the opposite direction of Bahrain. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was pursuing reconciliation with Iran, while the Qatari regime did the same. The United Arab Emirates sought to reconcile with Iran as well. Bahrain, expressing dissatisfaction with Iranian interference in internal affairs, was targeted by the Iranian regime.

At the beginning of the conflict in Gaza, Bahrain condemned the actions of Hamas, aligning its position with the United Arab Emirates but contradicting the stances taken by many other Arab countries. In November of 2023, however, the Bahraini Parliament announced the Israeli Ambassador would leave the Kingdom and economic ties with Israel would be severed.

# Economy and Politics

# BAHRAIN: A TIMELINE

In May of 1981, Bahrain joined the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and that December seventy-three people that are rumored members of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain are arrested and accused of conspiring to overthrow the government. In April of 1986, Qatari troops occupy Fasht al-Dibal Island, but withdraw in June after mediation by Saudi Arabia. In January 1991, Bahrain participates in the US-led operation Desert Storm against Iraq as part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Peninsula Shield Force. In October 1991, Bahrain signs a defense cooperation agreement with the United States which provided for port facilities and joint military exercises.

**1981-1991**

In 1999, Sheikh Abd-al-Amir al-Jamri is sentenced to 10 years imprisonment, but he is pardoned by the new Emir, Sheikh Hamad. In 2000, Emir appointed the first non-Muslims and women to the Consultative Council, one of which was Christian and another a Jewish businessman. In 2001, the Al-Wefaq opposition movement is founded and by 2002 Bahrain becomes a constitutional monarchy and allows women to stand for office. Emir Hamad proclaims himself as King. In the first time in 30 years, Parliamentary elections are held with women voting and standing as candidates for the first time, but failing to win a seat. In 2004, Nada Haffadh is made health minister and is the first woman to head a government ministry. In 2005, protest marchers demand a fully-elected parliament.

**1999-2005**

In February of 2011, thousands of protestors gather in Manama and a security crackdown results in the death of several. Later in March, Saudi troops enter Bahrain and Authorities declare martial law and clamp down on pro-democracy activists. Protests continue, despite this and the focal point of demonstrations, the Pearl monument, is demolished. In April, the government bans two main political parties that represent the Shia majority. In 2012, protestors clash with riot police in Manama at the funeral of Ali Ahmed Mushaima, who died in prison after taking part in pro-democracy demonstrations. Authorities ban all protests and gatherings.

**2011-2012**

In November of 2018, opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman of the banned Al-Wefaq party is sentenced to life in jail on charges of spying for Qatar, although rights organizations denounce the trial as politically-motivated. Many mass protests continue throughout 2019 after the executions of 2 Shia men for terrorism-related charges. In 2020, Bahrain is placed on a Human Rights Watch and is still on this list as of today. Bahrain, at the moment, has currently aligned with Palestine and removed the Ambassador from Israel from the Kingdom.

**2018-Present**

Bahrain joins the League of Arab States in 1971. Bahrain also declared its independence and signs a new treaty of friendship with Britain in 1971. Sheikh Isa becomes the first Emir and the Council of State becomes a cabinet. Bahrain and the United States signed an agreement which permits the United States to rent naval and military facilities. In December of 1973, elections are held for a National Assembly advisory body, but following claims by the Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifah Bin-Salman Al Khalifah that the National Assembly was impeding the work of the government, the Emir dissolved the assembly and rules by decree.

**1971-1975**

In December of 1922, a 30-member Consultative Council, appointed by the Emir for a four-year term, is set up. In 1994, Demonstrations are held following the arrest of Shia cleric Sheikh Ali Salman who is deported and seeks asylum in Britain. In 1995, the Cabinet is shuffled to include five Shia ministers. In June of 1996, the government claims it has uncovered a coup plot by Iranian-backed group, Hezbollah-Bahrain and recalls its Ambassador. In 1998, Bahrain provides military facilities for the US-British bombing campaign against Iraq in Operation Desert Fox.

**1992-1998**

In November of 2006, the Shia opposition wins 40% of the vote in a general election and a Shia Muslim, Jawad bin Salem al-Oraied, is named deputy Prime Minister. In May of 2008, a Jewish woman, Houda Nonoo, is appointed Bahrain's Ambassador to the US and is believed to be the Arab world's first Jewish Ambassador. In April of 2009, King Hamad pardons more than 170 prisoners charged with endangering national security, including 35 Shias being tried on charges of trying to overthrow the state. But by 2010, 20 Shia opposition leaders accused of plotting to overthrow the monarchy are arrested in the run-up to elections. Despite this the Islamic National Accord Association, makes a slight gain.

**2006-2010**

In 2013, King Hamad appoints Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa as deputy prime minister as he is viewed as a moderate. In September, the main Shia opposition groups pull out of talks with the government in protest at the arrest of a leading member of Wefaq and in 2014 the Al-Wefaq is banned for three months. The leader of Al-Wefaq opposition is arrested and protests begin again. In March of 2015, Bahrain takes part in air strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen. In 2017, Bahrain executes three Shia activists who were convicted of killing three policemen in 2014.

**2013-2017**