

***A Report on Focus Groups  
Conducted in the  
Kingdom of Bahrain***

Manama, Bahrain  
13-17 July, 2002

# **BAHRAIN: PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC REFORM PROCESS**

Focus Group Guidelines for Voters  
July 13 to 17, 2002

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## **Demographic profiles of groups**

*Saturday, July 13, 2002*

4:00 PM Sunni and Shia/ female/ ages 17 to 20/high school or university student

7:00 PM Shia and Sunni/ male/ ages 17 to 20/high school or university student

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5:00 PM Shia/ male/ ages 21 to 30/ completed technical school but no university

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5:00 PM Sunni/ female/ ages 30 to 55/ university graduate

7:15 PM Sunni/ male/ ages 25 to 45/ high school education

8:30 PM Shia/ female/ ages 25 to 45/ mixed education

# **BAHRAIN: PERSPECTIVES ON DEMOCRATIC REFORM PROCESS**

Focus Group Guidelines for voters

July 13 to 17, 2002

## ***I. Introduction (10 minutes)***

**Moderator.** Hello, my name is XXX, and I am the moderator for this discussion. My job is to move the conversation along and make sure that we cover several different subjects. There are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions that I will pose to you. The purpose of this research is to find out what the people of Bahrain honestly think.

Since the new constitution has been promulgated, and we expect that the people's voice will be heard and respected, my colleagues and I believe it is important to find out what the opinions of the people really are. This "focus group" in which you are participating today is one means of assessing public opinion. That is why there are no right answers or wrong answers. Every opinion is equally valid. In fact, you may find that you disagree with another person's opinion, and I hope that when that happens you will say so -- in a respectful and polite way, of course.

**Confidential/anonymous research.** This discussion is completely anonymous and confidential. There will no record of what you say with your name on it. We are not going to quote anyone specifically. I have this small tape recorder, like a journalist, so that I can go back and be sure that I capture your words accurately for the research, but no one will know which person here makes any specific statement. This way, I do not have to take notes while we talk and I can concentrate on you and on our discussion.

**Introductions.** Now let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Just use your first names and say one thing about yourself, like where you were born or how many children you have or your profession.

[AFTER INTRODUCTIONS:] OK, thank you. Now let us begin.

## ***II. Country Direction (5 minutes)***

A. First, tell me how are things going in the Kingdom these days? Are things going generally in the right direction, or have things gotten off in the wrong direction?

B. What is the best thing about the current situation in Bahrain at the present?

C. What is your biggest disappointment at this point?

D. What problem or issue should be the highest priority of the government?

### **III. Personalities (10-12 minutes)**

A. Now I am going to give you the names of some prominent people and I would like you to say the first words that come to mind. Positive or negative. Just a word or two, and quickly. Whatever comes to your mind first.

[MODERATOR SHOULD GO AROUND THE TABLE AND MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE RESPONDS TO AT LEAST THE FIRST THREE, IN ORDER TO GET PARTICIPANTS INTO THE HABIT OF SPEAKING UP.]

1. Adel Imam (Popular comedian)
2. Ibrahim Alarayed (poet)
3. Koffi Anan
4. Abdul Rahman al Nuaimi [National Democratic Action Society]
5. Sheikh Ali Salman [Islamic National Wafaq society]
6. Abdul Amir al-Jamri [formerly imprisoned Shi'ia cleric]
7. Sheikh Abdulatif al-Mahmood [Sunnir cleric]
8. "The three leaders"

A. .Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, the prime minister

Think of some positive and negative things. First, tell me the positive things that come to mind.

Now, tell me some things that a not so positive. What do you not like so much about the prime minister?

B. Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, the King of Bahrain

Think of some positive and negative things. First, tell me the positive things that come to mind when you think about the king.

Now, tell me some things that a not so positive. What do you not like so much about the king?

C. Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa (the Crown Prince)

Think of some positive and negative things. First, tell me the positive things that come to mind when you think about the king.

Now, tell me some things that are not so positive. What do you not like so much about the crown prince?

***IV. Democracy (10-12 minutes)***

A. Now, we will shift to another subject. When I say the word "democracy" what comes to mind for you? In just one word or a few words.

[MODERATOR SHOULD GO AROUND THE GROUP AND MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE SAYS SOMETHING ON THIS QUESTION]

B. What is the place of the individual person or citizen in a democracy?

C. What is your response to those who say democracy is a Western cultural invention that is not appropriate for other parts of the world, such as Islamic nations?

***V. Religion and democracy (10 minutes)***

A. Can Bahrain have both democracy and Islam? Is Islam consistent with democracy?

B. In what way should Islam influence the development of democracy in Bahrain?

C. Do Sunni and Shi'ia have equal religious freedoms/protections in this country?

D. Do Sunni and Shi'ia have equal political rights in this country?

E. Do Sunni and Shia have equal employment opportunities in this country?

***VI. Reform Process (13-15 minutes)***

A. What do you think about the new constitution the King presented to the nation in February this year, one year after the approval of the National Action Charter?

What are the best things about the new constitution?

What things about the constitution disappoint you?

B. Let's talk specifically about the Shura Council that will be one of the two chambers of the National Assembly, along with the elected Chamber of Deputies.

What is your reaction to the creation of this appointed chamber, with equal powers to the elected chamber?

Do you feel like it will protect certain aspects of democracy that might be endangered by the elected chamber -- or do you feel that it will limit certain aspects of democracy that might be strengthened by the elected Chamber of Deputies?

***VII. Groups in Democracy (10-12 minutes)***

A. What do you think of individuals or independent groups – civic groups or associations – that try to do things apart from the government on their own initiative? Is that basically a good thing, or not?

B. What are some examples of groups of citizens that are independent of the government?

C. What about the "political societies" that have been established recently in Bahrain – what do you think of them?

Can you think of the names of any of the political societies?

Who are the leaders of the various societies?

Probe: are the programs distinctive from each other? In what ways? Are there different kinds of people that support the various societies?

D. What do you think about political parties?

Are political parties necessary in a modern democracy?

What are the advantages of political parties?

What are the disadvantages of political parties?

Would a political party be different in any way from the political societies we have here in Bahrain?

***VIII. Municipal elections (10-12 minutes)***

A. Did you participate as a voter in the municipal elections in May?

Why did you vote in the municipal elections?

How did you decide which candidates to support?

Did you watch or listen to many alternative candidates before you decided which one to support, or did you know pretty much from the start which ones you preferred?

**Probe:** Did it matter if the candidate belonged to a political society?

B. Electoral process.

What was the aspect of the municipal election process that you were most satisfied with?

Was there anything about the municipal elections process that disappointed you?

C. Overall, was the municipal election process generally a fair one?

D. If you could advise the government on how to modify the municipal government structure or elections, what would you recommend for improvements?

### ***IX. Parliamentary elections (15 minutes)***

A. Are you mainly optimistic about the October parliamentary elections, or do you have some concerns about what might happen? (If so, what concerns?)

B. Do you expect the parliamentary election process to be a fair one?

C. Do you think that citizens of GGC countries should be permitted to vote in the October elections, as they did in the municipal elections, or should voting for the parliament be restricted only to citizens of Bahrain?

D. What factors will influence which candidate you will support in the October parliamentary elections?

### ***X. Priorities (5 minutes)***

A. Tell me what you think the highest priority should be for the parliament after it is elected in October.

B. What is the most urgent problem facing the country these days that needs to be addressed?

C. What is the biggest obstacle keeping the country from solving its problems?



*XI. Future (5 minutes)*

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about Bahrain for the next year?

About the next ten years?

Thank you. Those are all the questions I have for today.

## NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

**Focus Groups.** Focus groups are semi-structured discussions conducted by a trained moderator, intended to elicit opinions in a deliberately open-ended manner. This enables a researcher to hear the choice of words that are used unprompted to describe participants' views, to measure intensity and conviction (or uncertainty) and understanding. Focus groups are not scientific surveys of a population and do not constitute a random sample whose views necessarily reflect the opinions of the larger society. Indeed, participants are often recruited selectively, in order to create homogenous groups, as was the case in this project.

**Homogeneity.** Focus groups are generally homogeneous for two reasons. One is to obtain information about that particular segment of the population and to compare it to other parts of the population (which depending on the purpose of the research, could variously be men versus women, young versus old, employed versus unemployed or members of different geographic, religious or ethnic communities). The other reason for homogeneity is to enhance the comfort level of participants by creating a group in which, to the extent possible, it is composed of a group of peers. In this manner, each participant is more likely to feel that everyone's opinion matters equally, that there is no need to defer to another person, and this encourages frankness and participation.

Accordingly, seven of the nine groups in this project were stratified by gender, age, educational attainment and religious sect. As the table in Appendix A indicates, groups were composed of one or another of the country's two principal religious communities – Shia, who comprise about 75 percent of the country's population, or Sunni, who constitute most of the rest. The two groups that brought together young adults – just below the legal voting age of 21 – each contained equal numbers of Sunni and Shia. One of these groups contained young men and the other young women, so – apart from religious affiliation – these two groups were also relatively homogeneous.

**Recruitment.** Recruitment of participants was done by Gold Mark, a multinational communications and public relations firm based in Bahrain, under the direction of the firm's general manager, Abdulnabi Almoosawi. Although the firm had not undertaken this sort of research before, the staff paid careful attention to the details and adapted the recruiting guidelines appropriately as difficulties were encountered.

Potential participants were contacted by telephone – the numbers having been randomly selected. A brief interview would ascertain whether a person fitting the desired demographic profile resided at the home contacted, and then they were invited to participate in the group discussion. Respondents were not told specifically the nature of the research; they were told only that researchers were exploring what various people think about current affairs in the Kingdom.

Recruiters encountered a good deal of reluctance, particularly among women, to participate. They were not offered incentives to participate – and this also may have

contributed to the fact that a number of those who agreed to participate failed to appear at the appointed time and place. As a result, the groups were as small as three persons on one occasion and no larger than seven (several were this big).

Public opinion research is not commonly undertaken in Bahrain, except for certain marketing surveys for commercial interests. To our knowledge, there has not previously been research done on political attitudes in Bahrain, so this was a new experience for virtually every one concerned.

**Political and programmatic context.** Since February 2002, NDI has been embarked on a program to provide information and advice to political actors in Bahrain about how to foster democratic habits and institutions under the new dispensation. A year after having ascended the throne in 1999, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa has instituted political and legal reforms. On February 14/15, 2001, the voters of Bahrain approved by a margin of 98.4 percent (with a turnout of more than 90 percent of those eligible) a referendum on the National Charter. A year later, on February 14, 2002, the King promulgated a new constitution that transformed Bahrain from an emirate to a kingdom and created a Legislative Authority consisting of two chambers: an appointed Consultative "Shura" Council and an elected Chamber of Deputies with an equal number of members and identical powers. Women and men alike are eligible to vote and stand as candidates.

Local council elections in May and parliamentary elections in October – the first time any such elections have been held in the country since the early 1970s – provide a specific incentive for candidates and other political leaders to know more about what is on the minds of potential voters. So NDI commissioned this research project.

Ideally, one conducts focus groups prior to a quantitative survey in part in order to develop issues and hypotheses to test subsequently in a quantitative survey. In a place such as Bahrain today, where potentially significant political restructuring is underway and little systematic research on public attitudes has been done, it is all the more necessary and valuable to begin by listening intensively to people's responses to open-ended questions. So focus groups would logically be conducted first, and would also help address the methodological difficulties that have to be overcome in order to conduct a credible quantifiable national survey. Perhaps national surveys will ensue.

**Geography and Demography.** Bahrain is a small place, encompassing just 268 square miles (about four times the size of Washington, DC). The population is about 600,000 people, of whom about 400,000 are Bahrainis. The work force, according to the U.S. State Department, include more expatriates than indigenous people. The others are temporary residents, some of whom have resided in the country for many years. After the capital city of Manama, the next largest town is Al Muharraq, which lies just across a short causeway from the capital. Participants were recruited for the focus groups from at least three of the five governorates, as all are within a short driving distance.

**Random Recruiting.** In addition to creating peer groups of about six or eight individuals, it is also important that the participants do not have personal knowledge of one another, so that they are less likely to hedge the expression of their views due to concern about what others will think. So the recruiters were instructed on how to draw from disparate towns and neighborhoods. The moderators and the translator also confirmed that the groups did not appear to contain individuals familiar with one another.

**Moderators.** Two moderators were recruited and trained. Although efforts were made by Gold Mark to identify a female moderator, that proved not to be possible in the time available. So two male journalists served as moderators, one a Sunni and one Shia. Each moderator was trained prior to the commencement of the project and then debriefed after each of the groups to review the conduct of the discussion. They conducted the discussions according to the Guidelines that were developed in consultation with NDI (see Appendix B). On a few occasions, notes with suggestions were sent in to the moderators, but mostly they were conducted without interruption. The discussions ranged from about fifty minutes to ninety minutes.

**Translation, Transcripts and Transparency.** In order to enhance the comfort level of the participants, and to remove any potential incentive to alter responses to suit the audience, it was determined to conceal the sponsorship of the research. While some time was invested in crafting ways to explain the purpose of the research that would be both truthful and not reveal the sponsors, this turned out to be unnecessary. Participants were not told that it was being conducted for NDI, and virtually no one expressed curiosity. They seemed more comfortable with the exercise than had been anticipated and pleased to be asked their opinions.

When participants arrived at the focus group site (Goldmark's offices in downtown Manama), they were offered tea and snacks and ushered into the conference room. A speaker phone connected the conference room to another office in the suite, where a translator provided simultaneous translation to a note-taker, who transcribed the English version of the discussion.

This simultaneous translation provided an opportunity for interventions in the groups, which was done on several occasions via written notes. The quality of this translation was very good, but necessarily incomplete. A tape recording was therefore made of each discussion. Afterwards, a second translator listened to the discussions and provided additional notes or clarification of things that may have been missed in the initial transcription. These notes were incorporated into the English versions of the transcripts that became the basis for the analysis.

**Thomas O. Melia**  
**August 30, 2002**

## A. Executive Summary

Citizens of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Sunni and Shia alike, are disappointed that the promise of political reform contained in the National Charter they voted overwhelmingly last year to endorse is not being realized in practice. They believe the democratic potential they had embraced is being thwarted by the very measures the government is enacting to structure the reform process.

Their frustration focuses largely on the Constitution promulgated earlier this year and extends to recently enacted laws relating to the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Many of the widely-touted reforms now appear to be superficial.

At the same time, many Bahrainis are mindful of the fact their country was until recently a much more repressive place than it is today. They appreciate that they now enjoy the freedom to speak their minds in public, to join associations and attend seminars on political topics -- and they are glad to be able to vote at all. Bahrainis realize they have considerably more political rights than their neighbors in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and this tempers their unhappiness with the fitful pace of political liberalization.

The people of Bahrain express quite modest aspirations regarding democracy. They associate democracy with the usual array of political rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and the right to form political parties. Yet democracy is seen to be less about who secures dominant political authority, or how, than it is about how people express themselves in a system in which the King will remain supreme. No one objects to the monarchy *per se*, or questions their Sheikh's elevation to King last year.

There is a widely shared sense that the government of Bahrain is not the people's government at all, but rather acts in the interests of the royal family and a small circle around it. Yet this leads not to a revolutionary impulse, but to a desire for more access to that circle. "Democracy" is thus seen by many as a *modus vivendi* between the people and the government -- rather than a process that creates government truly accountable to or representative of the people.

Bahrainis do not believe there is any incompatibility between Islam and democracy; Sunnis and Shia alike believe they can and should have both. Many say that Islam anticipates and in some respects may even depend on democratic expressions of the people's will. If forced to choose, however, many would opt for an Islamic society over a democratic one (with some describing the Koran as "our constitution").

Some Sunnis tend to be somewhat more comfortable than their Shia neighbors with the halting pace of reform ("you can't do everything overnight" says one young Sunni man), although older, better-educated Sunnis are more critical. Shia are generally more frustrated with what one describes as "one step forward, two steps backward." In fact, young Shia men without university educations are downright angry.

The biggest reason for that anger is the pervasive discrimination against Shia by the country's biggest employers, including government ministries – a practice that is acknowledged by Sunnis, as well. Many Shia note that they enjoy greater religious freedom in Bahrain than they would in other Sunni-governed countries, but they are frustrated nonetheless by the constraints they face economically because of their faith.

At a time when unemployment is seen to be the number one problem for the nation to address, men and women in both communities are perturbed by the official policy of recruiting foreigners for various jobs and professions – and in some cases granting them citizenship in the bargain. There is deeply felt desire for "Bahrainization" in hiring, by the government and others. This is shared by Sunnis, who acknowledge they are better off than Shia, yet who share the dismay that foreigners often receive preferential treatment for jobs. In an echo of this sentiment, the prospect that citizens of other Gulf states might be permitted to vote in Bahrain's elections meets with strong opposition from Sunnis and Shia alike.

May's municipal elections are seen to have been well-administered, but fundamentally flawed due to gerrymandering of districts to minimize the weight of Shia voters, as well as by limits to the authority of the elected councils themselves. Sunnis share the disquiet about the way that voting was skewed against their Shia neighbors and people in both communities (especially women) are troubled that the election process exacerbated the communal divide. Bahrainis in both communities nevertheless think of those elections as having constituted a step forward, albeit a small one, whose significance will ultimately be measured by what follows.

There is a sense of looming disappointment about the upcoming October parliamentary elections. The law announced restricting the role of political societies, after their conspicuous role in the May campaign, is part of the reason for pessimism. However, the most frequently cited complaint about the political process at this point is the structure of the parliament, in which a wholly appointed chamber, the Shura Council, will have legislative power equal to the popularly elected assembly. That this will dilute the power of their votes is quite clear to Bahrainis.

It is even more objectionable, however, that this major constitutional construction – like so much else – was presented to the nation without any public deliberation or consultation. Bahrainis are quite put off by the King's practice of granting political freedoms as if they were his to give, as "gifts" to the people, much in the same way he grants relief from state-managed mortgage payments or other pecuniary benefits. That laws advertised as "democratic reforms" have repeatedly emerged from the government in final form without any citizen input is the source of much unhappiness.

Political societies are widely seen as *de facto* political parties – which in turn are generally understood to be necessary components of a democratic society. At the same time, Bahrainis of both sects – and especially young people and women – complain about the negative role that the Islamic political societies played in May's municipal elections in actively discouraging votes for women candidates and others they opposed.

Young people not old enough yet to vote express the strongest misgivings about the conflictive behavior they witnessed by the political societies around the May elections.

Civic groups are viewed as valuable and constructive, although men think first of political societies and "oppositional" behavior when asked about independent groups, whereas women have a broader appreciation for the range of civic activities and social functions of civic groups.

A variety of explanations are offered for the poor showing by women in the municipal elections, though the specific role of Islamic political societies in discouraging votes for women is cited most often as having been a major obstacle in the May elections.

These are the major findings that emerged from a series of nine focus groups conducted in Bahrain in mid-July 2002. Most groups were stratified by gender, age, education and religious sect in order to create homogeneous groups conducive to frank discussion. The exceptions were two groups of youth, ages 17 to 20 (just below the voting age of 21), in which Shia and Sunni were brought together, young men in one group and young women in another. Most participants voted in the May elections and all groups were politically diverse, as participants voiced support for different political societies – although about half of the participants declined to name a political society they support.<sup>1</sup>

Other findings from this research include the following:

- In addition to unemployment, and the related matter of Bahrainization of employment practices, the issues that are most consistently raised as important to people include: corruption, poverty and (for women) the shortage of affordable housing.
- Men and women alike generally say that a candidate's personal qualities and integrity would matter the most in determining for whom they would vote, although they say that "other people" tend to vote more often on grounds of religious affiliation and succumb to "pressures" by political societies.
- The King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, is personally well regarded by his people. Indeed, he has surpassed the expectations of some. As noted above, no one objects to his recent elevation to king. He is, however, seen to have "stepped back" from democratic commitments made in 2001 in statements around the adoption of the National Charter. There is disappointment that he is not making the case to his people for what is widely understood to be his personal reform "project" – let alone consulting them about his intentions.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for additional notes on methodology and the composition of the focus groups.

- The Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa is viewed with distinctly less affection than his nephew the king. Though there is some respect for his management skills and business acumen, he is widely seen as a man whose time has passed. Sunnis and Shia alike say (albeit nervously) "it is time for him to retire".
- The Crown Prince, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, is regarded fondly, especially by young women, though he is not yet seen to be influential in public policy. Bahrainis are prepared to give him time develop a public persona, though some say he, too, like his father, has been less visible this year than last.



**B. There is broad disappointment among Bahrainis that the National Charter's promise of reform is not being realized.**

Bahrainis believe the democratic potential they had embraced so overwhelmingly in the vote for the National Charter last year is being thwarted by the very laws the government has enacted this year to structure the "reformed" political process. Shia, in particular, feel they offered an olive branch to the government and royal family by going out in large numbers to vote for the National Charter in 2001, and are frustrated that this good will is not being reciprocated in 2002. Indeed, some men say that the government has exploited the large vote for the National Charter by taking it as a *carte blanche* to follow through in ways that deliver much less than was promised in the National Charter.

*With the National Charter, it was kind of a trick that was played on us, and look at what is happening now. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*At the beginning, people agreed with the King, but generally the direction now – up to the National Charter, it was good, but the more recent changes, the constitution and the other laws, has emptied a lot of the hopes. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*People were sentimental and they voted for the Charter without knowing what was going on. Now because there was no serious study of the Charter and the government has 98 percent who voted for the Charter, they think they have the right to do any changes they want. (Shia man, 30s, technical education)*

The Constitution promulgated earlier this year, suddenly and ahead of the advertised schedule, is a particular source of anger – for both Sunni and Shia Bahrainis. The consistency with which Shia, in particular, refer to the 1973 Constitution as a touchstone is striking – although university-educated Sunni women also express a preference for the earlier constitution. The 1973 Constitution is held to have been the result of a compact between the people and their rulers, and is therefore seen as more legitimate and enduring, despite its suspension for more than a quarter century, than the recently promulgated constitution that is seen as merely "the government's constitution".

*For me, it should go back to the way it was agreed between the government and the people in 1973. That is what the people want. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*I have no problem with the constitution; it is OK. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

*The 1973 Constitution is much better. We need changes in the changes. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

Many of the highly publicized changes are coming to seem superficial, as it becomes more and more apparent that the same people still hold the levers of power, and benefit from the system.

*The government wants to have the opposition as a formality. They don't want an active or real opposition. (Shia man, 50s, university education)*

*We are the same as before the Charter... the richer classes will continue to soar; they will not yield their place. (Shia man, 30s, technical education)*

*There is a change. But we still have the same leaders as before. The same people who ruled before the opening are still in power and that is not right. (Young Sunni woman)*

**C. There is widespread appreciation for the expanded civil liberties people now enjoy, which are real, even while the larger political process falls short of expectations.**

Even as they voice their unhappiness with the political system that is emerging, many Bahrainis are mindful of the fact that their country was until very recently a much more repressive place than it is today. They appreciate that they now enjoy the freedom to speak their minds in public, to join associations and attend seminars on political topics -- and are able to vote at all. Even as they note that only time will tell how enduring these liberties turn out to be, Bahrainis embrace them.

*Women have more rights. We can be candidates and we can vote. We demanded some things and we have some of them. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*There is a kind of reform in education and it is getting better. Freedom of the press is improving, too. For the first time, a journalist takes a minister to court, so there are steps that are going in the right direction. Personal freedom is better; before, we didn't have that. There are unions and associations that didn't exist before. There are negative points but we shouldn't judge it as a failure this experience. (Male youth)*

*The limited freedoms, that is the best thing that has happened for me. The atmosphere is more positive than it was before two years ago. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*I am not frightened to say whatever, so this is a good thing. So there is a kind of freedom. Positive phenomena have been happening since the National Charter. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

*You can say your opinion now. Before there was fear to speak up or speak out. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*There is a kind of freedom of expression and talking in the seminars and other things and that is a good thing. Citizen participation in lectures and seminars is a good thing. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

**D. Aspirations for democracy in Bahrain are modest. People want to influence the government. They do not expect to control it.**

The people of Bahrain have quite modest aspirations regarding democracy. They associate democracy with the usual array of political rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and the right to form political parties. Yet democracy is seen to be less about who secures dominant political authority, or how, than it is about how people express themselves in a system in which the King will remain supreme. No one objects to the monarchy *per se*, or questions their Sheikh's elevation to King last year.

There is a widely shared sense that the government of Bahrain is not the people's government at all, but rather acts in the interests of the royal family and a small circle around it. Yet this leads not to a revolutionary impulse, but to a desire for more access to that circle. "Democracy" is thus seen by many as the way to a *modus vivendi* between the people and the government – rather than a process leading to a government that is truly accountable to or representative of the people. The truly representative parliament that Bahrainis want, therefore, is not seen as an institution that would be sovereign, but simply as an authentic voice of the people in their dealings with the government.

*(Democracy) is the middle ground between the government and the people. [Shia man, 20s, non-university education]*

*There is a need to establish effective co-governance between the people and the government. (Young Shia woman)*

*I feel there should be balance between the government and the people – 50-50. We cannot give the balance more to the government or more to the people. (Young Sunni woman)*

*The aim is participation; not just to control the government. [Male youth]*

*There should be red lines that we can't cross, but there should be ways to criticize government policies. The people should have a right to say things – not to have to take a weapon and have a coup to change the government, but through the parliament. If there is a democracy, the people will advise and pressure the government in a better direction. [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*

Whether these modest expectations reflect self-censorship rather than limited horizons is not clear, although all segments of the population in Bahrain discuss the political situation quite frankly; the climate of fear that once prevailed in this country seem in many respects to have dissipated.

**E. No incompatibility seen between Islam and democracy**

Most Bahrainis do not believe there is necessarily any incompatibility between Islam and democracy; they believe they can and should have both. Shia, in particular, say that Islam in some respects depends on democratic expressions of the people's will.

*They are like drinking water and eating; they go together. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*In the era of the Prophet, democracy was practiced there. (Shia man, 20s, non-university education)*

*I think democracy was always there. For instance, in the Shura at the beginning of Islam. But after the power was inherited, there was no democracy. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*There is common ground between them. Like in human rights – they both teach about this. (Shia man, 20s, non-university education)*

*Democracy is manmade rules, and Islam is God's rules, so naturally Islam will influence and inform democracy to make it suitable for our culture. (Young Shia woman)*

If forced to choose, however, many Shia would opt for an Islamic society over a democratic one (with some describing the Koran as "our constitution"), although they mainly believe that Islam is fully compatible with many democratic values and procedures – or at least is intertwined very thoroughly

*It is like asking which is more important, air or water. Both are important. But Islam is more important. Islam is holy. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*Islam is more important than democracy, if one has to choose. (Young Shia woman)*

*Islam is not good without democracy and democracy is not good without religion. I can see it now this way. An Islamic democratic country. (Young Shia woman)*

Bahrainis easily distinguish between the tenets of democracy and those things about Western society from which they are alienated. Many are quite clear that democratic practices are universal values and not the property or the product of a

particular culture. Some even say that the assertion that democracy is not culturally appropriate for Islamic countries is often voiced by self-serving dictators.

*Western democracy is probably different than our traditions and customs here. It's a product of Western civilization, but it is not bad. So we don't have to use everything that is there, but we apply it according to custom and tradition. (Shia man, 20s, non-university education)*

*They have Western democracy, but they also have it in eastern Europe and Germany, for example, where they used to have dictatorships. Even the socialist countries with dictatorships, like Albania. Now we can see that Malaysia has democracy – not perfect, but better than, say, some countries in Latin America. I believe democracy is appropriate for all civilizations. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*I think it is clear that countries that say that they do not want democracy in their system and to make changes, they are always trying to exploit religion and to say that democracy is a western thing because they do not want to open to the people. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*Only dictators talk about the inappropriateness of democracy in their countries. It is suitable for everyone. (Sunni man, 40s, university education)*

**F. Frustration about the uncertain pace and direction of political reform is concentrated among the younger Shia men**

Some Sunnis tend to be somewhat more at ease than their Shia neighbors with a halting pace of reform, although some of the older, better-educated Sunni women are critical. "You can't do everything overnight," says one young Sunni man. Shia are often frustrated with what one young man describes as "one step forward, two steps backward."

*I think the political changes are the best things happening now. If the changes continue to go in a positive way – I cannot make a final judgment yet – if it continues toward freedom then it is excellent. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university graduate)*

*You cannot change everything in one year. (Shia woman, 40s, university graduate)*

*This government, I say, will not accept democracy. So the potential for the citizen to influence things will be very little. (Sunni woman, 40s, university education)*

Rising expectations that are currently being frustrated leads to a gnawing sense (especially among younger Shia men) that things could get more conflictive, as if the

present relative calm is the quiet before the storm. Others are more resigned to a longer, slower process of reform.

*At the beginning, it was good, in the right direction. What we are now seeing is there is something wrong. People now know more of what is happening. ... Now there is a situation where the government is losing the trust of the people. (Young Shia man)*

*The way things are going, it is like a battle. The government can only see in one direction. But if it would open itself up, it would see a lot more. There is a frustration in that we are the ones who put a lot of hope in the project, even though we have a long history of being disappointed. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*The same; there is a lot of frustration. After the National Charter, we thought there would be a better era afterwards. I think we expected something, something more better than we have gotten. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*We are in a wait-and-see mode and no one knows what is going to happen. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

**G. Pervasive discrimination in employment against Shia is their major grievance and the top issue to be addressed.**

Young Shia men without university educations, in fact, are downright angry. The biggest reason for that anger is the pervasive discrimination against Shia by the country's biggest employers and government ministries – a practice that is acknowledged by Sunnis, as well.

*The real problem is the discrimination. It is like a nightmare. It should be resolved. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*There is sectarian discrimination which is fed by the government. (Young Shia man)*

*This will make you sick if you think about it. This is wrong. I don't mind that Sunni work. But there should be equal opportunities. (Shia man, 30s, high school education)*

Many Shia note that they enjoy greater religious freedom in Bahrain than they would in other Sunni-governed countries, but they are frustrated nonetheless by the constraints they face economically because of their faith.

*Bahrain is better than most other Gulf countries. There is a kind of pressure, but we can have our own religious festivals and traditions. (Young Shia woman)*

*I think there is freedom of religion, more than any country in the Arab world. . (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

*Mazzam and Hazara, in other countries they are not allowed. In Bahrain, we have it that people can practice their own religious practice.... But the Sunni are not complaining of the unemployment, only the Shia are – so that tells you something. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*I think there is only internal freedom. In the matams or in the mosque, yes they have freedom. But when they are outside, there is no freedom. I think you know what I mean. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

#### **H. Rising unemployment leads to a deep desire for "Bahrainization" in employment practices, especially on the part of the government.**

Unemployment is consistently seen to be the number one problem for the government to address and its biggest failing to date.

*This is not a country without problems. Unemployment is again very important. The government should have some laws to reduce unemployment, including addressing sectarian divisions. (Young Shia woman)*

*Unemployment here before was very limited. Now it is spreading all over and a lot of it is increasing and increasing. It will be like a volcano one day if it is not treated. (Shia man, 30s, technical education)*

*People here are broke and cannot raise their standard of living. This is a real problem for the citizens. The Ministry of Labor should take serious steps to solve the problem of unemployment. Our percentage of unemployed is very high compared to other countries. (Shia man, 30s, technical education)*

*Citizens should work. It would be better for them to organize courses or training for the unemployed. They apply to the ministries but they cannot get jobs. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

Many people are therefore bothered by the official policy of recruiting foreigners for a variety of jobs and professions – and often granting them citizenship in the bargain. The connection between high unemployment of local Shia and the continuing influx of foreigners, often Sunnis from other Arab states, is conspicuous. Moreover, the deeply felt desire for "Bahrainization" in hiring, by the government and others, is shared by Sunnis.

*Unemployment is getting bigger because of the citizenship policy. If there is a Jordanian person there to get a job in the Ministry of Education, they will always*

*give it to her before me. And she will probably send the money out of the country and not spend it here. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*Jobs at banks are more given to non-Bahrainis, and recently I heard it is the same for Gulf Air. They talk a lot about Bahrainization, but we don't see any tangible sign of that. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

*According to the Charter, unemployment should be a high priority, the Bahrainization of jobs, but we don't see that very much. We see that a lot of managers of companies are not Bahrainis even though they are not qualified. (Young woman)*

*Unemployment is the biggest priority. We have qualified Bahrainis but I do not see them working. The university graduates – I want to work after graduation, and I can see that there are more non-Bahrainis than Bahrainis in the companies. (Young Sunni woman)*

*If you want to improve the balance between the Shia and the Sunnis, they should find some jobs for the Shia. If you bring all these people in from outside, and you give them work when all these people who are born here and are living here all their lives, that's a problem. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

In an echo of this sentiment, the prospect that citizens of Gulf states might be permitted to vote in Bahrain's elections meets with strong opposition.

*This is a Bahraini thing; it should be only for Bahrainis. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university graduate)*

*I want it like Kuwait. Only the ones who are born there have the right to vote. (Shia man, 20s, high school education)*

*Only Bahrainis should vote, and not the ones that just got their passports. (Shia man, 30s, technical education)*

## **I. The municipal elections in May were a step forward, even though seriously flawed.**

May's municipal elections are seen to have been well-administered, but fundamentally flawed due to both the gerrymandering of districts to minimize the impact of Shia voters and by limits to the authority of the elected councils themselves. Sunnis share the disquiet about the way that voting was skewed against their Shia neighbors. Bahrainis in both communities nevertheless think of those elections as having constituted a step forward, albeit a small one, whose significance will ultimately be measured by what comes next.



*There was no forgery. ... The administration of the election was good. Before the elections, though, there were not equal opportunities. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*Give real powers to the councils. It is not right that the minister has more power than the elected councils. (Shia man, 30s technical education)*

*[Sunni and Shia] have the same voting rights, but in applying it there was discrimination. (Shia man, 20s, high school education)*

*I think the freedom for the Sunni is more than for the Shia. For example, the distribution of the electoral districts was unfair to the Shia – this is one example where it is not fair. The population of the Shia is greater, and so they should have more representatives. But they do not. (Sunni man, 40s, university education)*

## **J. Multi-faceted concerns about imminent parliamentary elections**

There is a sense of looming disappointment about the upcoming October parliamentary elections. As noted earlier, the biggest reason is the recently clarified bicameral legislative structure that diminishes the relative power of the elected assembly. The law limiting the role of political societies, compared to their conspicuous role in May, is another factor contributing to pessimism – notwithstanding the disquiet expressed by some about the negative role that societies were seen to have played then. The fact that military personnel were allowed to vote in the second round of the municipal elections, in order to bolster the Sunni vote, is another reason for pessimism about the integrity of the process.

*According to the latest law, other groups, including civil societies, are not allowed to do anything in the elections. It's a very negative thing, if it is applied. I am not very optimistic. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*Why do we have political societies if they are not allowed to play a role in the parliamentary elections? Why agree to permit them at all? (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*There is a general impression that the government is against the Shia and people feel that. For example, if there is a sense that the Shia candidate is going to win, then the military will be allowed to vote. So I don't think it will be fair. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Although military personnel were not permitted to vote in the May municipal elections, it is widely understood in Bahrain that during the second round of voting many did so, particularly in districts in which there was a closely contested run-off between Shia and Sunni candidates. There are no Shia in Bahrain's military.

**K. Shura Council is seen as renegeing on what was promised in the National Charter**

The most frequently cited complaint about the political process at this point is the structure of the forthcoming parliament, in which a wholly appointed chamber, the Shura Council, will have legislative power equal to the popularly elected assembly. That this will dilute the power of their votes is quite clear to Bahrainis.

*It is kind of a joke on the people. They don't trust us is why they have this chamber. [Shia man in his 20s, non-university education]*

*If you balance the people's representatives with the appointed ones, then there is no democracy. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*There shouldn't be appointed delegates in a democracy. They should be able to consult, but not to vote on the law and the proposals for the future of the country. That they can vote on laws is not right. This is not democracy. (Sunni man, 40s high school education)*

*It would be better if the elected people have more seats or more power. The appointees will be from the government; they will choose only the ones that agree with them. The elected parliament is the only way for people to get their message across to the government. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*Having the appointed chamber to be equal in the power to the elected chamber means that the government will control about 75 percent of the legislature. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

**L. Absence of consultation by the government with the people is alienating the people**

Even more objectionable, however, than the particulars of the parliamentary arrangements is the fact that this major constitutional construction – like so much else – was presented to the nation without any public deliberation or consultation. Bahrainis are quite put off by the King's practice of granting political freedoms as if they were his to give, as "gifts" to the people, much in the same way he grants relief from state-managed mortgage payments or other pecuniary benefits.<sup>3</sup> That laws advertised as "democratic reforms" have repeatedly emerged from the government in final form without any citizen input is the source of much unhappiness. Sunnis and Shia alike share a broad desire for

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequent to this research, in response to widespread criticism of the provision, the King announced (on September 13, 2002) that the new law's prohibition on campaigning by political societies would be suspended for the forthcoming parliamentary elections. While this was responsive to a popular outcry, the manner in which he effected the change, by decree, underscores the concern about the unilateral manner in which political changes are being implemented.

greater interaction between the government and the people over the changes that are occurring.

*Why didn't we discuss the constitution in detail before it was adopted? If you want to have democracy, why not get other people's ideas on how to do it? (Young Woman)*

*I don't like the way he 'gifts' us with things. These changes should be more systematic. (Shia man, 30s, university educated)*

*[My biggest disappointment] is the way the government deals with us. It is always imposing laws. So the latest four laws, on political status, etc. It seems like they think we don't know politics. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*Today I opened the newspaper and I saw the trade unions are going to be legal. The law is to be prepared and an amendment to the constitution. ... How can they present a law when the trade unions and the people don't have any say in it? I don't like it that the constitution and the laws come only from the government without the incorporation of people's opinions. There is a lack of involvement of citizens. (Young Shia woman)*

*[The King] should call on all people to discuss the problems and find the solutions, rather than just imposing his solutions on the people. (Sunni man, 40s, university education)*

*I wish they would listen to us – to the voice of the people, I mean. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

#### **M. Political societies are stand-ins for the banned political parties, necessary parts of a democratic system**

Political societies are widely seen as *de facto* political parties – which in turn are widely (but not universally) understood to be necessary components of a democratic society. That the articulation of different points of view must at present be done through the vehicle of political societies instead of parties is attributed directly to the particular formulation of Bahraini law, and is seen as transitory (and of course may be revisited by the parliament to be elected in October).

*As the law doesn't allow for parties, so they call themselves societies. So the leader of the party represents certain principles. Forming parties is for the sake of the people. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*They have different names now, but they are really parties. The problem is the law that governs the political societies. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

*The societies look at themselves as a party, though it does not have the legality and the facilities of a party. I think the societies reflect the parties. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*Some (political societies) are real parties, in fact. They work as parties, even though they are officially societies. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

Most but not all Bahrainis appear to be very comfortable with political pluralism – and the notion that organizations will naturally emerge that reflect the inevitable, and healthy, diversity of opinions that exists in society.

*If we don't differ, we don't improve. (Shia man, 30s, high school education)*

*It will strengthen the nation and the government if people are allowed to form their societies (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*I support the existence of political parties. It's a healthy thing in a democratic situation. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

*It is a very natural movement in any society that has democracy. There is not democracy without political parties. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

However, concern is expressed (by women, in particular) about the divisiveness they saw emerge in the May elections, and there is fear that political parties will be even more contentious than are the political societies – even though most people nevertheless believe they are necessary.

*We shouldn't form societies because they fight with each other; societies should have the national interests and not fight with each other. (Male youth)*

*Destruction of the country. If there are parties then we will have divisions. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*We see that in Palestine there are political parties, but they fight with each other all the time. (Sunni woman, 50s, university education)*

*That they conflict is fine; it is for the sake of the people. But it has to be moderate and you have to have several parties you can choose from. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*Societies educate people politically. If they head us toward parties, however, then that will be a problem. (Shia woman, 40s, high school education)*

Bahrainis in both sects – and especially young people and women – complain about the negative role that the Islamic political societies, in particular, played in May's municipal elections in actively discouraging votes for candidates they opposed. Anxiety

is also expressed about the potential for exacerbating communal differences by organizing politics along sectarian lines.

*I think it was the religious people who destroyed the local elections. (Sunni woman 30s to 50s, university education)*

*Most of the societies want the Shia to be in one and Sunni to be in another. We shouldn't say this is a Shia society and this other one is a Sunni society. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*The bad thing (about the municipal elections) was the religious people saying some candidates were infidels, and describing the candidates with bad things. It was really unfortunate. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

Voters say that they themselves tended look at the personal qualities of candidates rather than at their party affiliation, in deciding for whom to vote, although they believe that partisan and sectarian considerations often outweighed the particular virtues of individuals in the decision-making calculus of other people.

*[I decided] based on the candidate's program. If they wanted to achieve what I wanted, then I voted for them. (Sunni woman, 50s, university educated)*

*We saw between the Sunni and the Shia candidates, friends had to choose between them. The day before the election, a Shia said to a Sunni candidate, 'I am your friend, but now I have to vote for the person from my religion. So they didn't vote on the basis of the qualities of the candidates, but on the basis of sectarianism. (Young Woman)*

*Wefaq, for instance, said we should vote for a person not on his qualities, but because he belongs to Wefaq. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

#### **N. Civic groups and independent associations are seen as valuable and healthy for society.**

People in Bahrain believe that civic groups are valuable and constructive. Men tend to think of "societies" in an explicitly political and oppositional context, whereas women have a broader appreciation for the range of civic and social activities of civic groups.

*It is the right of any societies to form a group. And it is their right to be for the government or against the government. If we don't agree with this, then how will we ever improve? (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

*If it is the product of society, then it is good. In the short term, there will be conflict between the government and the people, but in the long run it will be good. (Shia man, 20s, technical education)*

*It is normal that there be groupings and to have people independent of the government. Now some of the societies are with the government and some are independent. Some of the women's societies, too, are with the government and some are independent. The same with human rights groups; the majority of these are independent. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*Civil societies, like the engineering society, are different than the political societies which are concerned with everything in the country. (Sunni woman, 50s, university education)*

**O. Wide range of reasons offered for why women did not fare better in the municipal elections, though the role of religious leaders is most frequently cited**

A variety of explanations are offered for the poor showing by women in the municipal elections in addition to an amorphous traditional cultural disinclination to respect women as competent leaders. Women tend to attribute the results to the negative influence of the religious societies among both the Sunni and Shia communities, men's "fear" of women, and successful efforts by men to suborn women in their families to vote as fathers and husbands dictated.

*They [candidates] were doing things to persuade the men to vote and then the men went home and forced the wife to vote for this candidate because of the promises they made. (Shia woman, 30s high school education)*

*In the society, they consider the women as lower class. Also that she will mix with the men and this is against Islam. That's what they said. Also they said it would be a 'haram' (sin) if you voted for a woman candidate. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*I knew one of the candidates personally. She went to all their places and I joined her in campaigning. But when they heard in the mosque that they should not vote for her, then the women did not. Lack of awareness was the problem. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*There was no independent voting by women. The men could force their sisters and wives to vote for the candidate the men preferred. Maybe in the future it would be different. But in the beginning, there was the imposing of the men's views on the wives. And especially because the mosques said it would be 'haram' to vote for women. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*Men do not have relationships with any women and do not know any women. (Sunni woman, 40s, university education)*

*The two main societies – the one from the Sunni side and the one from the Shia side – they agreed on not having any women. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

Men recite a longer litany, with fewer references to religious factors. They note that women often ran against one another and so divided any possible "women's vote," that women tended to run as independents and so were without the organizational support of any political society, and that women are "not qualified for the job."

*This is the way society looks at it. Even the women look down on women as candidates. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*Some of the women are independent and the societies wouldn't vote for her. (Shia man, 50s, university graduate)*

*The mullahs, for instance, said the women are not suitable for this position. (Sunni man, 40s, high school education)*

One university educated Shia man disputes the premise that men did not vote for women, saying "there are not statistics on whether more men or women voted for women." A Sunni man states that "only liberal men voted for the women; not the others."

**P. The King is popular, although disappointment is setting in as his visibility declines**

The King of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, is well regarded by his people as an empathetic and effective ruler. No objections were raised regarding his recent elevation to king. The King is, however, seen to have "stepped back" from democratic commitments made in 2001 around the adoption of the National Charter. Many also note the King's visibility has diminished in 2002. There is disappointment that he is not making the case to his people for what is widely understood to be his personal reform "project" – let alone consulting them about his intentions. This short-coming is seen by some to be due to constraints on him being imposed by others in the royal family and his predilection for thinking of friends and relatives before the national interest.

*He has ambition that his program for change, which he started late. He has a lot of big things and ambitions. But recently, when they got closer to the election, there was a kind of backing up. ... I wish his project would go ahead as before. [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*

*He cannot change the country overnight, because he has a family and the family does not want change. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*He is trying to bring the Shia and the Sunni together under the national unity umbrella. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

*He appoints some people who are not so well qualified just because they are his friends. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

*The changes are only talking. We should see it more in practice. The government should accept the opinions of the elite, not ignore it. They should be consulted, not ignored. Later on, we are surprised with a lot of things he has done. Like the citizenship issue. We were surprised about the constitution, as well. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*

**Q. Prime Minister is admired for his business acumen, though Bahrainis in both communities say it is time for him to retire.**

The Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa is viewed with distinctly less affection than his nephew, the king. He is viewed as an effective yet cold, businesslike person – responsible both for the modernization of the country over the last generation and for the fact that the country has not found a way to equitably distribute the benefits of that modernization. Usually with a bit of nervous laughter, suggesting they would not have dared voice this thought a few months or years ago, people in several of the groups say his time has passed and he should retire.

*As a businessman, he is excellent. Investment and development is there – he brought it directly from Thailand and elsewhere. But it goes directly, to, well, we don't know where it goes directly. [Shia man, 30s, university education]*

*The way that he ruled before, I don't think it will be suitable. And I don't think he will change because he has personal interests. For example, with his businesses and the public policy they don't go together. [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*

*I believe he is not the man for this stage. For me, I think he should retire from politics. [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*

*He could have done a lot, because he has been ruling the country for ages. He could have done a lot more than he did. (Shia woman, 30s, high school education)*

*Enough is enough. He should retire and give another person the chance. (Sunni woman, 30s to 50s, university education)*



**R. Crown Prince is popular, though untested**

Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, the Crown Prince, is regarded fondly, especially by young women, though is not seen to be influential in public policy yet. Bahrainis are prepared to give him time develop a public persona, though some say he, too, like his father, has been less visible this year than last.

*At one time, he was out and active in meeting with people. Now, like the king, he seems to have backtracked. He was going to be against corruption and for the changes, but now he has backed off. He was open at the beginning and he encouraged criticism, but now he has retreated from such stands. . [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*

*At the start, he had a serious approach, but now the same thing that happened to the king is happening to him. [Shia man, 50s, university graduate]*