

# Bahrain

## *Ethnicity in Bahrain*

### *Group selection*

In 2005 over 800,000 inhabitants including expats (485,000 Bahraini citizens).

In 1990: 503,000 inhabitants (Gleditsch, 2002).

Relative population figures of the two ethnic groups are disputed. The International Crisis Group (<sup>115</sup>), the Library of Congress (<sup>116</sup>) and the State Department (<sup>117</sup>) report 70% Shiites in the country. Wikipedia puts their relative number at just over 60 per cent (<sup>118</sup>). Nasr even puts their relative size at more than 70% (<sup>119</sup>, 234-6).

<sup>115</sup> [International Crisis Group, 2007]

<sup>116</sup> [Library of Congress, 1993]

<sup>117</sup> [US Department of State, 2006]

<sup>118</sup> [Wikipedia, 2011]

<sup>119</sup> [Nasr, 2006]

### *Power relations*

*Sunnis:* Bahrain has been ruled by the "the al-Khalifa family, which belongs to Bahrain's Sunni Muslim minority" (Freedom House, 2010) since independence in 1971. According to Freedom House (2010), "the king appoints all judges, and courts have been subject to government pressure. Members of the royal family hold all security-related offices." Despite some reform efforts in 1973 and again in 2001, the power of the royal family remained untouched. As monarchies are by definition hereditary political systems, only Sunnis of the royal family can ever attain executive political power. Therefore, a monopoly coding is legitimate.

*Shiites:* Since Shiites can never attain executive power under the current political system, even during the brief spells of constitutional monarchy, the only appropriate coding is discriminated since independence in 1971.

*2010-2013:* Bahrain is still ruled by the Sunni Al Khalifa family and the recent years have seen, if anything, a deterioration of the sectarian divide and repression against the mostly Shiite opposition. The Bahraini government and security apparatus are virtually exclusively populated by Sunnis from Bahrain and also other countries. There have been rumours that the government is conducting a “campaign of political naturalization of foreign Sunnis” to alter the country’s ethnodemographic balance in its favour <sup>(120)</sup>. Against this backdrop, the previous coding of Sunni monopoly rule and Shia discrimination are continued.

<sup>120</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2014]

## *Bibliography*

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Bahrain*

*From 1971 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Shi'a Arabs	0.7	DISCRIMINATED
Sunni Arabs	0.3	MONOPOLY

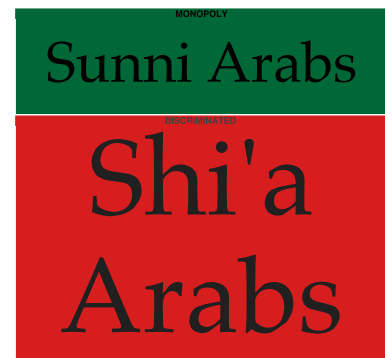


Figure 36: Political status of ethnic groups in Bahrain during 1971-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Bahrain*

*From 1971 until 2013*

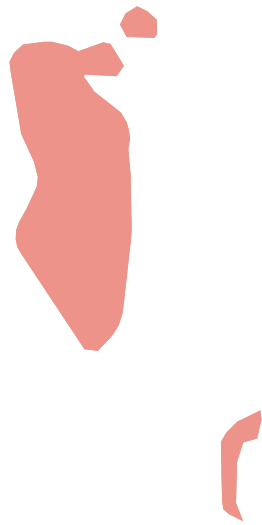


Figure 37: Map of ethnic groups in Bahrain during 1971-2013.

	Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
■	Sunni Arabs	641	Statewide
■	Shi'a Arabs	641	Statewide

Table 16: List of ethnic groups in Bahrain during 1971-2013.