In Memory of Martyrs: An Examination of Persistent Protest Cycles in Bahrain

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Introduction

The crowd marches through the streets of what would otherwise be a sleepy evening on the outskirts of Bahrain's sprawling capital. Beginning with a men's group, protesters pour into the neighborhood of Manama, chanting their demands and waving posters of a late "martyr:" one of their killed comrades. The men walking in front are followed from a short distance by a group of female protesters who, all clad in black cloaks, form neatly organized columns of four. Women carry posters and candles that gracefully light their path. Both groups of protesters are filmed from an angle that makes their faces unrecognizable. This evening vigil commemorating a local martyr is just like the many others held since major political upheaval in Bahrain began during the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011.

The above demonstration was carefully documented and posted on an online social media channel promoting ideas of civil unrest.[1] What is surprising in these scenes is that, even without hope for their demands to be met by the authoritarian regime, communities continue organizing marches, persevering 13 years after the failed outcome. Their grief and determination are anchored in the urban landscape, with streets unofficially re-named after martyrs within their communities. Martyrdom is a central element of community mobilization that centers on the initial demands voiced at the beginning of the Arab

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Spring. In this regard, Bahrain stands out from among other Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries that experienced Arab Spring uprisings, as martyrdom continues to motivate persistent activism aimed at achieving the initial demands put forward in 2011.

Indeed, with another anniversary of the Arab Spring passing, few today remember the initial euphoria of the crowds inspired by ideas of freedom and hope for change. What seemed to be the most important wave of modern civil movements in MENA nations gave way to, what some have dubbed, the Arab Winter. The latter period was marred by armed conflicts, authoritarian upgrading, and simple failures of reforms as illustrated by the case of Tunisia, the poster child nation of the Arab Spring.[2] In some cases, like Egypt, it may be plausible to assert that those who participated in unsuccessful uprisings would want to push these events far behind them as failed experiments. However, few would expect that a failed movement of reforms would result in a deep reverence of their loss instead. Such is the often-forgotten case of Bahrain, where, despite crackdowns, activists continue to use social media to commemorate the religiously motivated martyrdom for their cause and document the long-lasting standoff with the ruling monarchy, in which the government overpowers the opposition. Analyzing these phenomena in 2024 reveals why such commemorations continue to be practiced today, as well as how social media helps communities that cannot use official channels of remembrance to mourn their dead, propagate their versions of history, and continue their activism.

Background

The Bahraini uprising in 2011 was inspired by other upheavals in the MENA region that are commonly grouped under the title of the Arab Spring.[3] It began on 14 February 2011—a date chosen to mark the anniversaries of the National Action Charter and the Constitution of 2002, which promised substantial reforms to the authoritarian regime. Nonetheless, Bahraini Government opposition groups were disappointed with the limitations of political liberalization carried out in the early 2000s. They resented the economic hardships, lack of power-sharing, naturalization of foreigners, and, above all, alleged sectarian and ethnic discrimination. Following the example of other countries such as Tunisia and Egypt, the opposition movement used social media—predominantly Facebook—to rally the crowds and coordinate an occupation of the Pearl Roundabout, the central area of Bahrain's capital, Manama. Despite some initial success in generating a widespread occupation movement, activists suffered a significant

setback when the authorities forced protesters to clear the area on 17 February 2011. The efforts to reclaim the Pearl Roundabout led to four protesters being killed and several wounded. The authorities withdrew two days later and the protesters returned.[4] Negotiations between the authorities and protestors followed. However, as some opposition groups became fragmented and others radicalized their demands, these negotiations did not yield any substantial progress. Given the prolonged standoff with the protesters, the Bahraini monarchy requested aid from the Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsula Shield forces, which entered Bahrain from Saudi Arabia on 14 March 2011 and ended the occupation of the Pearl Roundabout.

After their removal from the Pearl Roundabout, the opposition movement was confined to suburban districts, where regular activism against the government continued until 2017, when another major crackdown on anti-government political activism ensued. The opposition groups saw a wave of harsh incarceration wash over the nation. It remains unclear how many lives were lost due to the confrontations and how many offenders were incarcerated since the beginning of the unrest.[5] The ongoing confrontation also led to the formation of a Bahraini diaspora of activists who fled the country to seek asylum abroad. However, in the end, even a more heavy-handed response from the authorities did not fully stop the activists' zeal.

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Despite decades of setbacks, the opposition movement commemorates the anniversary of the uprising every year. The occasion has been regularly celebrated since 2012, with remembrance gatherings commemorating those who died and were imprisoned, and attempts at disruption. "Hacktivists," for example, took down the website of the Bahrain International Airport, the government website, and posted their articles in online newspapers.[6] Separate commemorations are held on other occasions, such as the death anniversaries or birthdays of those branded as martyrs. Rather than being a source of despair, the current situation is a motivating force being documented online with continued zeal. Consequently, the various messages spread over social media, from the initial rallying calls on Facebook accounts to X, YouTube, TikTok, and, to a lesser degree, Instagram, jointly chronicle the unsuccessful uprising and its aftermath up to this day.[7]

The perseverance of the opposition groups is remarkable and, while the Internet offers an easily accessible space to circulate information, the motivations behind these practices are deeply ingrained in the concepts of martyrology—for Bahrain specifically, these concepts are rooted in the Shia denomination of Islam. Through the Internet, religious traditions of mourning have transformed into a digital format. In addition, the Internet's global reach has facilitated the propagation of alternative readings of history that are not aligned with official government channels. Martyrdom narratives circulated online by Bahraini activists serve to promote such alternative interpretations. Individual broadcasters can weave a unifying narrative that provides a religious, political, and social meaning to the deaths and sacrifices of their community members. Remembrance of past losses enabled by alternative digital channels has become an essential element of community building and organizing resistance.

The Emergence of Digital Collective Memory

The commemoration of past events delves into the subject of collective memory. Philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945) argued that collective memory—an image of past events—binds individuals together into groups, such as families, social classes, and, ultimately, nations—the latter link being suggested at the end of the nineteenth century by philosopher and historian Ernest Renan.[8] A community exists due to a shared perception of the past, present, and future events that transcends the individuals, linking their lives to those of their predecessors and their successors in a way that provides a common point of reference for individual actions.[9] A collective memory is necessary for a community to thrive since it shapes the common understanding of the past, creates a sense of belonging, and projects the community toward future actions. Consequently, within a nation, professional agents inscribe the community in "sites of memory" through language but also in physical forms, such as through the creation of monuments, archives, memorials, and the changing of street names.[10] Theorists note that forgetting is as important as commemoration. Collective amnesia plays a fundamental role as nations seek to erase some events from their history, such as state-instigated violence and other divisive events within the community.[11] Theorists assume that the narratives of martyrdom, no matter the cultural region or the historical era, have been used to demarcate a clear boundary between the community and those who oppose it.[12] Martyrs, contrary to national heroes whose deeds are recognized by undisputed consensus, are markers of deep communal divisions. Interpretations of martyrdom are

conflicting as societies are unable to agree on whether an act was a sacrifice for the community, sheer folly, or a disservice punishable by law.

The role of media in creating collective memory is primordial. Political scientist Benedict Anderson suggested a link between print capitalism—mass media participating in the market—and the emergence of a national identity in what he calls an "imagined community."[13] The Internet revolutionized our approach to collective memory by fostering a "digital memory culture," an occasion for "capturing, storing, retrieving and ordering" memories.[14] Often referred to as the "memory boom," this phenomenon has clear political ramifications as marginalized groups advocate for their memories to be formally recognized through treaties, restitutions, and compensation.[15] The memories of marginalized groups sharply contrast official collective memories, politicizing the act of remembrance and recognition. Access to digital technologies can transfer control of a society's memory, which is characterized by the hierarchy of power and influences questions of legitimation.[16] The groups that are involved in the politics of recognition—those that have hardly any institutional bases to make claims to their versions of history—may promote their struggles on digital platforms to seek acknowledgment of their collective memories.[17] Their collective memories may then be constructed in the virtual world where memory sites record, interpret, and propagate uniting narratives. The collective commemoration of martyrdom by social movement activists in online formats has been noted for its potential to rally people to action.[18]

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In the context of the commemoration of martyrdom, it is also necessary to analyze the portrayals of death and dying on social media. Communication scholar Barbie Zelizer argues that images, even more than words, are "an effective mode of relay about the past and a key vehicle of memory."[19] As a result, photographs often become "the primary markers of memory itself."[20] Regarding death, two approaches exist. First, Western aesthetics encourage about-to-die images rather than actual images of death, given the negative perception of the latter as a voyeuristic violation of the privacy and dignity of the deceased, and the guilt associated with watching someone die. Contrary to this thought, the visualization of death—in which graphic details are exposed—is often employed by activists who were present at the time of tragic events, who share their trau-

matic memories, often recorded on devices in public domains. From their point of view, it becomes a moral obligation to expose such events as wrongdoings to showcase the suffering and the injustice that the community wishes to erase from the collective consciousness.[21] Consequently, the audience is compelled to watch graphic scenes of death to bear witness and become motivated into action. This provides a powerful tool for community mobilization as "suffering in common unites more than joy does. […] Griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort."[22] As a result, activists who brand killed protesters as martyrs expose their deaths online in graphic detail, thus placing the duty of carrying out the political project of the movement on those who remain. Online representations of death find a particular application in the Middle East, given long-standing traditions of commemorating religious martyrdom.

Portrayals of Martyrdom in the Context of Bahrain

Despite the non-denominational religious character of the Bahraini uprising in 2011, most activists involved in the opposition movement were members of the Shia branch of Islam—which has caused the uprising to often be portrayed in sectarian terms, as Bahrain's ruling dynasty is of the Sunni denomination. Nonetheless, when it comes to the commemoration of death, religious beliefs often provide strong motivating examples of dying for a cause. The religious element resurfaces as a powerful lens through which these events are interpreted. Furthermore, while the anti-government uprising was initially characterized by spontaneous mass organization, the religious leadership in Bahrain has been a guiding reference for political movements.[23] The disputes related to political and religious legitimacy among Muslims date back to the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD, which continues to cast a shadow on current international relations beyond Bahrain.

The initial disagreements about the succession to the Prophet Muhammad ultimately led to a split within the Muslim community. Those who became known as Shias (from shia-t Ali, meaning the party of Ali) supported the descendants of his son-in-law, Hussein ibn Ali. Hussein was challenged by an Umayyad caliph not related to the Prophet's family, whose followers would become known as Sunnis. As he was trying to claim his right to leadership, Hussein and his immediate supporters were severely outnumbered and killed at the battle of Karbala. His dignified death and the onslaught of his forces, who did not turn away from the battlefield even though outnumbered, provided Shias

with a powerful narrative of martyrdom. This story became the central event in Shia history and "the leitmotif of the Shi'ite interpretation of the world."[24] As a result of Hussein's martyrdom, which set an example to follow, Shias have "always seen themselves as the righteous few struggling against the unjust many."[25] In this context, Shias refer to themselves as ahl al bayt (people of the house of the Prophet), a term through which they establish and signify their superior spiritual position. Since the sectarian split, Shias have perpetuated the memory of martyrdom and oppression at the hands of Sunni rulers, being a minority sect in the Muslim world.[26]

These historical events have deeply impacted the development of a peculiar Shia psyche. The perception of injustice, suffering, and persecution as a community that believes themselves to be "the righteous ones" has become part of the branch's collective identity. The yearly religious festival Ashura, in which Muslims mourn the death of Hussein, often takes on intensified formats among the Shias. Examples include live re-enactments of his death and processions in which participants practice self-mutilations to alleviate their remorse for not having been able to prevent Hussein's tragic end. Looking through the lens of this powerful, foundational narrative of martyrdom, it is no surprise that the veneration of present-day martyrs would echo the events marking the very beginnings of the sect's existence.

In 2024, the depiction of martyrdom in Bahrain continues to be a focal element, uniting Shias in the opposition around a common narrative. The community's sacrifices and readings of events are inscribed within a larger interpretation of history dating back to the martyrdom of Hussein and expanding towards a victory in the indefinite future. Martyrdom also provides a basis for an easily adaptable interpretation of current events taking place beyond Bahrain, such as the Gaza-Israel conflict and the Gulf Cooperation Council intervention in Yemen. As 2024 unfolds, Bahraini social media has concentrated on uniting the narrative of their plight with the plight of the Palestinians. The depictions of the attacks on Gaza and death through "martyrdom" among Palestinians are often featured in online posts alongside the Bahraini "martyrs."[27] Similarly, demonstrations reflecting solidarity with the people of Gaza, against the occupation of Palestine, and against normalizing ties with the state of Israel merge with Bahraini opposition demands for human rights and the release of political prisoners. For the activists, both situations fit within this narrative of the weaker righteous group bearing the sacrifice against a stronger oppressor. The demonstrations subsequently take on an anti-Israeli and anti-American character: the conflict in Palestine is used by some activists to criticize the Bahraini and Saudi

monarchies for allying with Israel and the United States.

Similarly, Bahraini "martyrs" may be commemorated in other countries where their martyrdom is used to criticize the regimes in the region. Such is the case of Jaafar Sultan and Sadiq Thamer, who were executed in Saudi Arabia in 2023 under terrorism charges. A recording from Iraq posted in the same year shows protesters in Baghdad carrying banners with photographs of the two executed Bahrainis, accompanied by signs reading "our dignity [comes] from God of the martyrs," and slogans criticizing Saudi Arabia as a "terrorist state." The Iraqi protesters gathered under a large replica of the Pearl Roundabout. Given the regionalization of martyrdom under a collective narrative, the Bahraini opposition groups sought the dissemination of their plight abroad through communities that share similar sentiments under which they unite to promote their claim to righteousness against what they perceive as morally corrupt regimes.

The remembrance of martyrs plays a role in engraving their lives and their sacrifice in the collective consciousness of society. Their photographs are posted on social media, carried on banners, and hung as notices around the district, all to prevent society from forgetting these individuals and their sacrifices. In a similar vein, city landmarks have been unofficially re-named to reflect the names of martyrs, which serve as references in the daily lives of inhabitants. The Pearl Roundabout, for instance, is referred to as Martyrs' Square, while many streets reflect local martyrs by name. Additionally, activists carry out vigils and acts of disobedience on specific dates that are the anniversaries of martyrs' deaths. One example is a video of young men setting tires on fire on a main road in their district, closing the traffic on a large artery in memory of a martyr, Ahmed Farhan.[28]

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The culmination of such activities takes place on 14 February, which marks the anniversary of the uprising and has been celebrated since 2012 in opposition communities across the country. On this occasion, community members visit the graves of the martyrs, not only remembering but also consolidating a sense of loyalty towards their martyrs, whose sacrifices are thought to be a stepping stone to a future victory. In 2024, protesters wielded a large banner with photos of martyrs and the most revered spiritual Shia leader of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qassim, during demonstrations. The inscription reaffirmed the renewal of vows towards the martyrs, signifying the activists' commitment to

continuing the fight. These commemorations intensify during the holy month of Muharram, which marks the death of Hussein and his followers as well as the beginning of the Islamic New Year. During that time of mourning, local martyrs are celebrated, with community members taking the stage to invoke the martyr's life and death. The commemoration of martyrdom thus becomes a ritualized performance, and this perception of current events through the "Karbala Paradigm" results in a time collapse, given the cyclical nature of Shia sacred time in which Karbala embodies all injustices but also offers the opportunity of redemption.[29]

These commemorations are all the more important for opposition communities since the events surrounding the uprising lack official recognition given the unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation through the National Dialogue. Furthermore, the online documentation of martyrdom and its commemoration plays a role in setting an example, motivating further sacrifices, and continuing the resistance through a moral debt that the community must pay to those who have already sacrificed themselves.

The aesthetics of martyrs' representations online stand out in their explicit content: photographs of bodies sewed after autopsy, detailed visual accounts of injuries, mutilated bodies, and bodies awaiting funeral processions on morgue tables. The focus on the body is not accidental. As observed by anthropologist Veena Das: "because violence annihilates language, [and] … terror cannot be brought into the realm of the utterable … it invites us to constitute the body as the mediating sign between the individual and society, and between past and present."[30] The martyr's last journey is always documented in minute detail. Recordings from multiple angles show the grieving family bidding their farewells to the deceased without restraining their reactions to unveiling the body covered in a burial shroud. Male family members shed tears profusely as they take the body out of the morgue to the processing, leading up to the final resting place. The online viewer is thus invited to partake vicariously in the funeral ceremony, sharing the last moments of the martyr's path to paradise.[31] Furthermore, martyrs' photos are often accompanied by images of the Pearl Roundabout and the portrait of Sheikh Isa Qassim. A photo of the senior cleric who overlooks the martyrs in the background like a father figure gives religious legitimacy to the claims of martyrdom. At times, it is the faceless silhouette of Hussein that accompanies the martyrs.[32] These direct religious references have become more prominent with the sentencing of Sheikh Isa Qassim—which involved the revocation of his Bahraini citizenship and, ultimately, his permanent relocation to Iran in 2019—for serving foreign interests and money laundering.

Images also employ other elements, such as blood and red hues or white doves, to symbolize the souls of the martyrs.[33] Finally, while the loss of a community member is deeply mourned, martyrdom inspires hope for the future. "Martyr [is] victorious," "Death, blood of martyrs is part of February 14" read the slogans carried by protesters, while a poem posted to honor the martyrs addresses his persecutors, "[to] Whoever killed me, you did not kill me / I live in every breath of air ... and sunshine ... and... moonlight / ... I am the star that never dims out / ... I am the burning volcano that will take revenge / I am the martyr, whose deliverance will multiply to a thousand martyrs."[34] As a result, the community projects itself toward the future, reconciling collective traumas through the endless struggle for the victory of the righteous.

Conclusion

The situation in Bahrain exemplifies deep communal divisions. The powerful eschatological belief in Hussein's martyrdom as the path from injustices to future redemption of all mankind ingrained in the Shia faith has fueled relentless activist movements since the beginning of the Arab Spring uprisings. Opposition groups have socially constructed their own understanding of the role of martyrdom in their community, which is represented across city landmarks, commemorations of birth and death anniversaries of the martyrs, and the remembrance of the uprising on 14 February. Social media serves the purpose of an online repository of activism, also contributing to the preservation of collective memory. The commemoration of the martyrs provides an effective tool for coping with the traumatic events of loss. The more losses the community bears, the more vivid the memory of Hussein—who suffered injustice but will be redeemed in the future—becomes. This interpretation is extended to the current international affairs of the Bahraini groups who seek recognition of their struggle. Consequently, their narratives bear a mark of a parallel society that can take advantage of the Internet to propagate its interpretation of history.

The opposition movement in Bahrain, whose activism pre-dates the Arab Spring, is an example of involvement in the politics of recognition. Until the emergence of social media, their narratives remained confined within the community, passed from one generation to another but with no place in public circulation.[35] Within this context, the commemorations of martyrdom and their online remembrance are of utmost importance to the activist community in Bahrain. Yet, the figures of the martyrs serve as markers of a deep division within the community, given their antagonism to the official narratives that do

not acknowledge the legitimacy of their acts nor the demands that continue to be voiced by the opposition communities. The fact that the activism of the opposition communities was contained but not fully suppressed, despite the crackdown, testifies to a powerful religious belief in martyrdom's capacity to bring future deliverance. Through a merger of the religious and political spheres, Bahrain presents a peculiar case where political activism did not subside over time and is not likely to cease in the near future.

Notes

1. https://www.youtube.com/@RevolutionBahrain; see also https://x.com/COALITION14.

2. Raymond Hinnebusch, "Authoritarian Persistence, Democratization Theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique," *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (2006): 373–95.

3. The decade of 1990s saw another lengthy upheaval in Bahrain.

4. Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, (November 23, 2011), 259, http://files.bici.org.bh/BICIreportEN.pdf.

5. "Bahrain: Events of 2021," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/bahrain.

6. "How did Bahrainis commemorate the twelfth anniversary of the events of February 14?," *British Broadcasting Corporation*, February 14, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/arabic/trending-64641097.

7. Many defunct opposition accounts are still accessible online, left untouched by the authorities, but often frozen in time when their administrators made their last posts; See more:
Magdalena Karolak, "Online Aesthetics of Martyrdom: A study of the Bahraini Arab Spring," in *Cyber Islam: Global Media and the Boundaries of Religious Identity*, ed. Noha Mellor and Khalil Rinnawi, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 48–66; Magdalena Karolak, *The Social Media Wars: Sunni and Shia Identity Conflicts in the Age of Web 2.0 and the Arab Spring,* (Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2014).

8. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Trans. F. J. Ditter, Jr., and V. Y. Ditter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980); Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?," trans. by M. Thom in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. K. Bhabha, (London and New York: Routledge, 1882), 8–22.

9. Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

10. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," trans. Marc Roudebush, Representations, no. 26 (1989): 7–25.

11. Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?," trans. by M. Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. K. Bhabha, (London and New York: Routledge, 1882): 8–22; Maurice Halbwachs, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 38.

12. See among others: Steven J. Mock, *Symbols of Defeat in the Construction of National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 161; Yoannis Papadakis, "Nation, Narrative and Commemoration: Political Ritual in Divided Cyprus," *History and Anthropology* 14, no. 3 (2003): 253–70; Christoph De Splegeleer, "'The blood of martyrs is the seed of progress.' The role of martyrdom in socialist death culture in Belgium and the Netherlands, 1880–1940," *Mortality* 19, no. 2 (2004): 184–205.

13. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

14. Joanne Garde-Hansen, Andrew Hoskins, and Anna Reading, *Save as Digital Memories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 5.

15. Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

16. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

17. Barbara Hobson, *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

18. Thomas Olesen, "'We Are All Khalid Said:' Visual Injustice Symbols in the Egyptian Revolution, 2010-2011," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change: Advances in the Visual Analysis of Social Movements*, ed. Nicole Doerr et al., (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Group Ltd., 2013), 3–26.

19. Barbie Zelizer, "The Voice of the Visual in Memory" in *Framing Public Memory,* ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, 2004), 157–86.

20. Ibid.

21. Tamar Ashuri, "Joint Memory: ICT and the Rise of Moral Mnemonic Agents," in *On Media Memory: Collective Memory in a New Media Age*, ed. M. Neiger, O. Meyers & E. Zendberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 104–16.

22. Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" trans. by M. Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. H. K. Bhabha, (London and New York: Routledge, 1882): 8–22.

23. Such was also the role of clerics in the Bahraini upheaval of the 1990s.

24. Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shia: The Forgotten Muslim*s (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 13.

25. Daniel Brumberg, "Khomeini's Legacy: Islamic Rule and Islamic Social Justice," in *Spokesman for the Despised*, ed. Applebee RS (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 21.

26. Few Muslim countries present a Shia majority, such as Iran.

27. See https://www.youtube.com/@RevolutionBahrain.

28. An example can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCeYPWm6HoM&t=20s.

29. Parkes, Aidan. 2021. "The Ashura Assemblage: Karbala's Religious Urban Fabric and Reproduction of Collective Shi'i Identity" *Religions* 12, no. 10: 904; Amitai Abouzaglo, *The Exoteric Imamate as the Omnipresent Esoteric in Shi'a Hiero-History*, https://shiablog.hds.harvard.edu/blog/exoteric-imamate-omnipresent-esoteric-shi%E2%80%99-hiero-history%C2%A0.

30. Cited in Michael Humphrey, *The Politics of Atrocity and Reconciliation: From Terror to Trauma* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8.

31. An example can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSLxMAYJszw

32. As per the Islamic guidelines, drawing of religious figures is discouraged.

33. Ulrich Marzolph, "The Martyr's Way to Paradise: Shiite Mural Art in the Urban Context," *Ethnologia Europaea* 33, no. 2 (2003): 87–98.

34. "Martyrs Fedayee," *February 14 Youth Coalition*, May 23, 2020, https://14f2011.com/ar/news/409979/%d8%b4%d9%87%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d9%81%d8%af%d8%a7%d8%a6%d9%8a%d9%91%d9%88%d9%86/?fbclid=IwAR0ci3pU5QTFQO8Yvrh-m58D3Sm8ouNmtK5k5DcM9lgahjkhS-oy0QUeA5M.

35. Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics, Political and Religious Networks in the Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).