

PUBLIC

ANNEX 9.73

NEWS BLOG

Bahrain in crisis and Middle East protests – live blog

- Bahrain: five killed in police raid on Pearl roundabout
- Libya: reports 14 killed across several cities
- Yemen: protesters clash with security forces
- Protesting in Middle East? [Send us a voice recording](#)
- [Read a summary of key events so far](#)
- [For all last night and this morning's coverage click here](#)

This page will update automatically every minute: [On](#) | [Off](#)



A protester holds a flower during clashes with police near Salmaniya Medical Complex, in Manama, Bahrain.
Photograph: Mazen Mahdi/EPA



1.48pm: Here's a **summary of events so far**:

• **Bahrain:** Five people are believed to have been killed and scores injured after Bahraini security forces raided peaceful protests in Pearl roundabout in the early hours of Thursday morning. Pictures have emerged showing brutal injuries sustained by protesters and, in one case, a young child. Riot police also targeted doctors and medics, while ambulances were prevented from reaching Pearl roundabout to collect the wounded.

Gulf Arab foreign ministers are meeting in Bahrain tonight to discuss the unrest in the country, according to reports. Bahrain TV, the state channel, has been broadcasting pictures of weapons supposedly seized from protesters at the roundabout in an apparent attempt to blame protesters for the bloodshed.

• **Libya:** Several hundred supporters of the Libyan leader, Muammar Gaddafi, have gathered in the capital to oppose online calls for an anti-government "day of rage". There are reports that 14 people have been killed in the country across several cities, while Human Rights Watch said 14 writers, activists and protesters who had been calling for protests have been detained. Protests have been reported in Benghazi, Zentana and al Bayda, where an opposition group says four people have been killed.

Gaddafi's regime is reportedly sending out text messages to Libyans in an attempt to quell protests, in a similar move to that seen in Egypt. "Libyan regime sending SMS to citizens threatening them with live bullets if they continue to demonstrate," @libyanfsl tweeted this morning. There will be a demonstration against Gaddafi, expected to be countered by supporters of the Libyan leader, outside the Libyan embassy in London at 3pm.

• **Yemen:** Security forces have clashed with anti-government protesters in Yemen for a seventh consecutive day. In Sana'a Associated Press reported that 6,000 protesters marched towards the centre of the city, being forced to fight off attacks "by police and government supporters swinging batons and daggers". A dozen protesters and an unknown number of policemen have been injured, while security officials said police arrested about 50 protesters. Clashes have been reported in several other towns, including the port city of Aden.

1.49pm: We are looking for your first-person accounts of protests where you are.

Now you can record your own Audioboo voice recording and send it straight to us.

[Click here to record an Audioboo.](#)

Log in using your Audioboo or Twitter account.

If you don't have one, log in using these details:

Username: GuardianMEaudio

Password: GuardianMEaudio

Then click "start recording/upload file".

Once you have recorded your file, we will listen to it and post the most interesting ones on this blog.

1.54pm – Libya: [Dima Khatib](#), an al-Jazeera correspondent who has been tweeting tirelessly for weeks, has this:

Day 1 of Libyan Wrath: in Benghazi police is already reported to be using live ammunition against protesters #libya #feb17

2.04pm – Iran: Peter Beaumont is following reports from Iran:



This from [Tehran Bureau](#):

"After the calls this week for the executions of Green Movement leaders Mir Hossein Mousavi, Mehdi Karroubi, and Mohammad Khatami, hardliners in the regime have apparently added another big name to the death wish list: Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, president of the Islamic Republic between 1989 and 1997. Radio Zamaneh reports:

Two days after the February 14 protests, supporters of Ayatollah Khamenei,

Iran's Supreme Leader, shown on national TV chanting slogans in Qom calling for the death of Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani. The moderate cleric is the chairman of Iran's two major governing bodies, the Assembly of Experts and the Expediency Council.

The attacks against Hashemi Rafsanjani have come despite firm condemnation of the February 14 protests by the Assembly of Experts. The Assembly of Experts has accused the protests of falsely using the recent Arab uprisings to further "seditious" objectives.

The Assembly of Experts is the body that selects the Supreme Leader and (nominally, at least) supervises his activities. The Expediency Council advises the Supreme Leader and, in Iran's complex governing apparatus, adjudicates conflicts between the Majles (parliament) and the Guardian Council, the body charged with vetting the Majles's legislation for conformity with the Iranian Constitution and Islamic law.

Meanwhile Iranian opposition leader [Mir Hossein Mousavi's Kalame website](#) is calling for new protests for Sunday, February 20 to protest the death of two opposition supporters and to show support for Iran's Green Movement leadership.

2.09pm – Libya: [A protest is planned for 3pm outside the Libyan embassy in Knightsbridge, London, today](#) (the press release says 1pm but it's been changed) by the British Libyan Solidarity Campaign For Freedom And Human Rights (BLSC). A counter-demonstration is also planned by Gaddafi supporters (such pro-government demonstrations tend to be organised by the embassy) and in the past [Gaddafi supporters and opponents have clashed in London](#).

2.17pm – Bahrain: Two people are in critical condition in Bahrain's Salmaniya hospital, a doctor has told al-Jazeera's correspondent in Manama. He said he fears they could die. The doctor also told the correspondent, whose identity is being kept secret, that there was a refrigerated truck outside the hospital, which he fears the army used to remove more dead bodies, meaning that the death toll could be higher than reported so far.

2.29pm – Libya: The Libyan youth movement [has more updates](#) on the anti-Gaddafi protests:

benghazi: the protesters now have the upper hand in the area where tomb of omar mukhtar was, security forces leaving the area #Libya #Feb17

Confirmed Reports from #Benghazi, 6 people killed today in the city #Libya #Feb17 and the news still show pro #gaddafi protests.. shocking

There is some footage said to be of the latest protests in Benghazi [on Facebook](#), although it doesn't show any clashes.

2.42pm – Bahrain: More from Peter on Britain's arms trading with Bahrain – he says the weapons supplied included the sort of arms which were used to clear Pearl roundabout this morning.



Following up on Denis McShane's figures about arms sales to the Bahrain police force, I've just spoken to Sarah Waldron at Campaign Against the Arms Trade who has dug out some additional UK arms export licences to Bahrain.

My earlier post talked about the export licences approved for just the third quarter of last year, around the time the government was rounding up 250 opposition members in the run up to elections.

Here's a better picture of what arms exports were approved. In 2010, equipment approved for export included tear gas and crowd control ammunition, equipment for the use of aircraft cannons, rifles, shotguns, sniper rifles and sub-machine guns. No requests for licences were refused. In addition Bahrain was invited to attend the UK arms fairs: the Farnborough Airshow in 2010 and Defence and Security Equipment International in 2009.

Here's the first and second quarter license approvals. It includes the kind of weapons that judging by the pictures of the injured and dead in Bahrain's hospital's that we've seen today that were used to clear the Pearl Roundabout, in particular shotguns.

Here are quarter one and two:

Q2, 2010

assault rifles (2); components for submachine guns; crowd control ammunition; equipment for the use of aircraft cannons; equipment for the use of small calibre artillery; gun mountings; non-sporting shotgun ammunition (2 licences); small arms ammunition (4 licences); tear gas/irritant ammunition (2 licences); wall and door breaching projectiles; weapon sight mounts; weapon sights. No refusals

Q1, 2010

all-wheel drive vehicles with ballistic protection; equipment for the use of sniper rifles; gun mountings; gun silencers (2 licences); rifles (1); shotguns (2); small arms ammunition (3 licences); sniper rifles; submachine guns (2); submachine guns (3); technology for the use of sniper rifles; weapon sight mounts; weapon sights

And here's what Sarah Waldron had to say: "Government ministers claim they wish to support open and democratic societies in the Middle East but at the same time are aiding authoritarian regimes and providing the tools for repression. They don't just approve the sale of this equipment - they actively promote it.

"There should be an immediate arms embargo – but more importantly we should be asking why these exports were ever licensed in the first place."

3.05pm – Bahrain: The deputy chairman of the Bahraini parliament, Adel al-Moawda, told al-Jazeera there were "mis-calculations on both sides". He also repeated the claims on Bahrain TV that protesters were armed: "It [the protest] was peaceful, we have to admit. but we have seen swords, guns ... There are some people who want the clashes, who don't want the situation to be calm."

3.06pm – Libya: Owen Bowcott writes:

Difficult to gauge the scale of the Libyan protests but Twitter is now carrying messages about more serious clashes and demonstrations calling for Ghadafi's departure in towns such as Shahat near the ancient Roman city of Cyrene.

metzada3833:

RT @ShababLibya: Benghazi: protesters clashing with security armed with

weapons where the tomb of Omar Al Mokhtar once was #Libya #Feb17
#qaddaficrimesless than 20 seconds ago via web

AliLePointe:

RT @ShababLibya: BREAKING: Ajdabiya Interior security building burning, smoke covering the sky in the city#Libya #Feb17 1 minute ago via web

3.09pm – Libya: Mark Tran is at the Libyan embassy in Knightsbridge, London. He says there are "hundreds" of protesters, who have come from as far as Glasgow and Manchester to voice their discontent at Muammar Gaddafi's rule.

Half way through the audio Mark passes over to Abdu Razek, a Libyan currently living in Glasgow who has travelled down to protest.

—

3.08pm – Yemen: Video of violence at Yemeni protests.

3.14pm – Yemen: A gallery of protests in Yemen.

3.15pm – Libya: Libya's regime must now fear its people's anger, writes Muhammad min Libya.

Today, 17 February, is the Libyan "day of anger". It coincides with the anniversary of what started as a peaceful demonstration in 2006 being met with various forms of repression, including live bullets and tear gas. The Libyan youth have chosen this day to express their anger and demand their rights, despite the very real threat of violence.

The Libyan regime has tried to preempt these protests to salvage anything that can be salvaged and to discourage Libyan youth. The regime, after all, has the best knowledge of the deteriorating conditions of Libyans and their lost rights.

3.19pm – Bahrain: Mark Tran on possible worries the Bahrain situation might cause for the US and its fifth fleet:

US navy officials have said there is no sign that crowds intend to direct their hostility toward the roughly 4,200 service members who live and work there.

"The protests are not directed at the US military presence," Jennifer Stride, a spokeswoman for US Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, told the Stars and Stripes, the official paper of the US armed forces. The protests were not taking place in the vicinity of the naval base, she said.

NSA Bahrain occupies 24 hectares (60 acres) in the centre of Manama, the capital. It has 2,250 personnel and civilians who live off the base. There are no plans to withdraw them to the base.

3.21pm – Bahrain: UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon has described the violence in Bahrain as "deeply troubling":

Violence should not be used against peaceful demonstrators ... Those who were responsible must be brought to justice ... There should be no violence from any quarter ... I urge all parties to exercise restraint.

Ban also said the UN had been urging leaders in the region "to listen attentively to the people and to listen to their legitimate concerns". He said: "I will say once again the situation calls for ... reforms not oppression."

3.23pm – Libya: A caller, who gave his name only as Abdullah, has just been on al-Jazeera from Benghazi, Libya, saying six people were shot dead just "five minutes ago". He said: "The police are shooting at everyone and six of the protesters, they've got killed right now."

He said criminals had been released from jails specifically to attack Gaddafi's opponents.

"They have knives and they have swords and guns. They're killing everyone."

3.24pm – Bahrain: Here is Ian Black's full report on Bahrain's security forces, large numbers of whose personnel are recruited from other countries.

3.37pm – Bahrain: Reuters has a useful round-up of reaction to the violence in Bahrain:

Hillary Clinton, US secretary of state: Clinton telephoned her Bahraini counterpart to express deep concern after police stormed a protest camp in central Manama, killing three people, the state department said. "She expressed deep concern about recent events and urged restraint moving forward. They discussed political and economic reform efforts to respond to the citizens of Bahrain," a senior state department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said.

US military officials: The Pentagon called Bahrain an important partner but also urged restraint after police stormed a protest camp in central Manama, killing three people. "As a long-time ally and home to the US navy's fifth fleet, Bahrain is an important partner and the department is closely watching developments there," Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said. "We also call on all parties to exercise restraint and refrain from violence."

Ban Ki-moon, UN secretary general: Ban called on the leaders of Bahrain not to use violence against civilians and journalists. "The reports from Bahrain overnight are deeply troubling," he told reporters, adding that he was disturbed by the violent methods being used to disperse demonstrators.

William Hague, British foreign secretary: "We are greatly concerned about the deaths that have occurred and ... stress the need for peaceful action to address the concerns of protesters, the importance of respect for the right to peaceful protest and for freedom of expression. I have also said to the foreign minister that it is a time to build bridges between the different religious communities in Bahrain and I've also said that we would strongly oppose any interference in the affairs of Bahrain by other nations or any action to inflame sectarian tensions between Bahrain's Sunni and Shia communities."

Michele Alliot-Marie, French foreign minister: "We regret the excessive use of violence by security forces when breaking up the demonstrators at the Pearl roundabout." She said she was also concerned by latest developments Yemen and Libya and reiterated the need for the freedom of expression and right to protest. "It is vital that the political systems and governments listen to the expectations of their people."

3.41pm – Libya: Mark Tran is at the Libyan embassy, where pro- and anti-Gaddafi demonstrators have massed. He said:



There are two sets of demos. The pro-Gaddafi contingent are about 400-500 strong; they have a big banner of Gaddafi and are waving green flags, but they don't seem as animated as the anti-Gaddafi lot; they are just standing around looking quite subdued.

There are around 200-300 anti-Gaddafi protesters. They're waving their version of the Libyan flag, which is green, black and red.

An Englishwoman called Sharon, married to a Libyan man, is here with her daughter. I asked whether there was any prospect of reform in Libya with Gaddafi's son in the wings. She said: "I don't think Libya with a younger face would be much of a difference. It's a total dynasty ... Libya has 40 years of grievances. There is so much money going out of the country. For an oil-rich country to be so poor is criminal."

A pro-Gaddafi demonstrator called Mohammed was unimpressed with the anti-Gaddafi protesters. "They are idiots; they are stupid," he said. "They don't know what Gaddafi has done for us."

Another pro-Gaddafi demonstrator said "before Gaddafi we were an Italian colony, now we're free", which isn't how most historians view the country's history.

3.51pm – Yemen: Reuters is now estimating that at least 40 people on both sides in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a today "after around 800 government loyalists armed with daggers and clubs confronted about 1,500 protesters, who responded by hurling rocks".

4.07pm – Egypt: The Egyptian military's call for an end to labour unrest continues to fall on deaf ears. There are 1,500 workers from the Suez Canal Authority on strike in three cities straddling the strategic waterway, [the Associated Press reports](#).

Reuters says factories have been idle today because a nationwide bank shutdown stopped manufacturers buying supplies and selling their goods.

4.33pm – Bahrain: [Earlier Peter Beaumont](#) referred to Britain's role in arming the Bahraini region. Britain also has a Royal Navy presence in Bahrain. Bahrain is home to the the UK Maritime Component Command, which supports Royal Navy warships (there are 12 warships in the Gulf, [according to the Plymouth Post](#)), aircraft, and out-stations in the region. There are also Royal Navy personnel within the Bahrain-based Combined Maritime Forces, a 25-nation naval partnership committed to maritime security in the Middle East through anti-piracy and counter-terrorism operations. The defence secretary, Liam Fox, [visited the United Kingdom Maritime Component Command \(UKMCC\) HQ](#) last year.

4.08pm – Bahrain: [A gallery of pictures from Bahrain](#).

4.42pm – Yemen: A protester has been shot dead in Yemen, Reuters reports:

A protester was killed by "random gunfire" as police tried to disperse an anti-government demonstration in southern Yemen, a local official said on Thursday.

"At least one person has been killed and there reports are eight others that were wounded by random gunfire," said the official, who is a member of the municipal council, declining to be named.

4.48pm – Tunisia: The former Tunisian president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali is in a coma in Saudi hospital following a stroke two days ago, a source close to him has confirmed to French agencies.

4.55pm: A worrying tweet has been posted by the [Libyan youth movement](#):

URGENT if anybody can make contact with AJDABIYA city please message me or any news agency Reports of a massacre #Libya #Feb17

4.57pm – Lybia: Of all the countries we are covering today, Lybia is the most difficult to report. In Bahrain, correspondents were already on the ground; photographs and first-hand accounts are plentiful. But there is very little independent media presence in Libya, and there's virtually nothing outside the capital, Tripoli.

There are only a small number of Twitter users publishing in English, and their reports are frantic in tone and have an unreliable feel to them. But it's clear there have been flashes of trouble all day.

We reported earlier about a confrontation in Baida between government supporters and relatives of two young men killed during a protest yesterday. Fighting broke out soon after the two were buried.

Reuters says snatches of information are trickling out from parts of the country on an Arabic-language Facebook page used by opposition activists, but it said the sources were not clear and it was not possible to verify the details.

One post said that protesters in Ar Rajban, near the border with Algeria, set fire to a local government headquarters. In Zenten, south-west of Tripoli, protesters shouted: "We will win or die," said another post, which also had a photograph of a building on fire. Sky News is also reporting clashes in Zenten.

5.08pm – Libya: There are reports that anti-government protests are happening in Tripoli now. Earlier, it seemed that there were only pro-Gaddafi forces out in strength in the capital as opposed to other Libyan cities like Benghazi, Zentan, Ajdabiya and Al Baida but all that could be changing:

- [@bintl Libya](#) #tripoli has joined #benghazi in the protests against #Gaddafi LETS DO THIS!!! #Libya

- [@ShababLibya](#) confirmed: 400 in the streets of #Tripoli, come on guys let it snowball #Libya #Feb17

5.20pm – Libya: Mark Tran is back in the office after his trip down to the Libyan embassy. Here's an extract from his report, which we are preparing for publication:



The ripples from the unrest in Libya reached Britain today as pro- and anti-Gaddafi supporters held simultaneous demonstrations outside the Libyan embassy in London.

By mid-afternoon in Knightsbridge, the police estimated the pro-Gaddafi contingent to be 400-500, mostly young male students, and the anti-Gaddafi camp, at about 300. While they were slightly more numerous, the pro-gaddafi supporters, holding green flags and a huge banner of their leader, were noticeably less animated, standing around quietly as they listened to an organiser, helped by a loudspeaker system, castigate the rival demonstrators.

The anti-Gaddafi group, a much more diverse crowd with women, schoolgirls, older and younger men, waved the pre-Gaddafi Libyan flag – red, green and black – and shouted: "Down with Gaddafi" and "Gaddafi is a murderer". A white police van separated the rival groups on the edge of Hyde park.

"Things are happening in Libya as we speak," said Abdurazek, a 53-year-old anti Gaddafi protester, who had come from Glasgow. "People are coming out to protest in cities in Libya and we are waiting for Tripoli to come out. It is

important that the capital is on our side."

5.28pm – Libya: Issandr El Amrani on the Arabist blog has had consistently good analysis of the situation across north Africa in the past month. He's posted another good piece, this time about Libya. He writes:

My gut feeling is that the most important protests now taking place in North Africa are those in Libya. I say this with no disrespect to those in Algeria, where the regime certainly deserves to be brought down, or my own native Morocco, where the palace and Makhzen need a wake-up call that the status quo (and indeed, the regression of the last few years) is not acceptable.

But Libya shares something important with Egypt and Tunisia: an aging leader (41 years in power) faces a looming succession crisis in which the leading candidates are his own sons. I simply don't think that's an acceptable outcome for any republic in the 21st century, and was a key aspect to the revolt against Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and to a lesser extent in Tunisia (with the rumored heir apparent being his nephew).

5.42pm – Libya: Ian Black has been speaking to people in Libya, and has this round-up of the day's events:



Libya's government brought out its supporters to express their loyalty today to try to stifle a planned "day of rage" but sporadic violence continued in the east of the country, far from Tripoli.

Unconfirmed reports said 15 people in all had now died in the unrest. Clashes were reported for a second day between supporters of Muammar Gaddafi and the relatives of two young men killed during a protest in al-Bayda on Wednesday, when unrest also erupted in Benghazi, Libya's second city and opposition stronghold.

Snipers were reported today to have killed four more protestors in Ajdabiya, south of Benghazi, where six dead were reported by the Libya al-Yawm news website. "There are thousands of people in the centre of town, and it is spreading, and they are being repressed," Ramadan Jarbou, a leading local journalist told the Guardian. "Libya is free and the colonel can leave," crowds chanted outside the city's central court.

Libyan state media maintained a news blackout, but opposition groups used Facebook, Twitter and other social media networks to send out reports and images of demonstrations and clashes.

On the eve of the planned protests, SMS messages were sent to mobile phone subscribers saying: "From the youth of Libya to all those who are tempted to touch the four red lines: come and face us in any square or street in Libya."

Helicopters were reported to have killed five demonstrators in al-Bayda, now said be running short of medical supplies. Libya al-Yawm reported security forces firing automatic weapons. Internet access was blocked.

5.59pm – Yemen: A protester was killed in Yemen today, Reuters is reporting. The death is the third in the last two days of demonstrations in the country.

Thousands took to the streets in Yemen on Thursday and a third protester was killed, as unrest spread and demonstrators called for an end to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's three decades of rule.

In a seventh straight day of protests in Yemen, 3,000 people marched in the southern port town of Aden and police tried to disperse the crowd.

"At least one person has been killed and there are eight others that were wounded by random gunfire," said a local official who declined to be named.

It was the third death in Aden in the last two days of rallies. On Wednesday, two protesters were killed in gunfire.

"No to oppression, no to corruption, the people demand the fall of the regime," demonstrators chanted. They had rallied on Thursday afternoon in protest against what they said was excessive police violence the previous day, when two men were killed by stray bullets as police fired in the air.

In Sanaa at least 40 were wounded as hundreds of Saleh loyalists, some armed with guns, charged around 1,500 protesters, who hurled at rocks at them. Several journalists told Reuters they were beaten by loyalists, and the streets of Sanaa, where clashes took place, were stained with blood.

6.12pm – Yemen: Giles Tremlett, the Guardian's man in Madrid, emails:



Angeles Espinosa, a correspondent for Spain's El País newspaper, has posted a photograph [on the paper's Eskup service](#) of Yemeni regime thugs with their pistols out.

The Yemeni journalist who took the photograph had his glasses broken – presumably by the same people – just after taking the picture. Espinosa says the picture was taken this morning. The time and date code on the bottom show it was taken shortly after 1pm.

6.29pm: Twitter user [@lbnOmar2005](#), who has been pretty reliable so far, has posted [this video](#) apparently showing a man who has been shot in the arm.

[@lbnOmar2005](#) says this shows "Gaddafi's men are using live rounds against protesters".

6.54pm: Tom Finn is in Sana'a, Yemen, where there have been clashes between pro and anti-Saleh demonstrators at the capital's university.

[Tom reports](#) that some of the pro-Saleh protesters, dressed in civilian clothing, produced Taser-like devices and used them to disperse some of the anti-Saleh crowd. He says the fact protests are continuing tonight is significant – the first time it has happened since demonstrations began seven days ago.

7.11pm: Bahrain's foreign minister has said the crackdown on anti-government protesters this morning, which left four people dead, was "regrettable", AP is reporting.

Bahrain's top diplomat says the pre-dawn crackdown on anti-government protesters was justified because the demonstrators were pushing the kingdom to the "brink of the sectarian abyss."

Foreign Minister Khalid Al Khalifa said Thursday the violence that occurred during the raid that swept away a protest encampment and left at least four people dead in Manama's central Pearl roundabout was "regrettable."

Speaking to reporters after meeting with his Gulf counterparts, al Khalifa said the protesters were pushing the Sunni-ruled, Shiite-majority nation to

the "brink of the sectarian abyss" and "polarizing the country."



7.16pm - Bahrain: This is **David Batty**, I'll be taking over the liveblog for the rest of the evening.

Two senior figures in the Obama administration, secretary of state Hilary Clinton and defence secretary Robert Gates, have spoken to their counterparts in Bahrain, expressing their concern and alarm over the violent crackdown on anti-government protesters.

Clinton said she "directly conveyed our deep concerns about the actions of the security forces" to Bahrain's foreign minister Sheik Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa. She also expressed hope that funerals and prayer meetings tomorrow would "not be marred by violence", AP reported.

"We call on restraint from the government to keep its commitment to hold accountable those who have utilized excessive force against peaceful demonstrators and we urge a return to a process that will result in real meaningful changes for the people there."

Meanwhile Gates "discussed the current security situation" with Crown Prince Salman of Bahrain, deputy commander of Bahraini defence forces, on the phone this morning, said Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell.

7.47pm - Bahrain: Reuters is now reporting that three people have been killed and 231 injured in Bahrain today.

Opposition leaders said dozens of protesters were detained and about 60 were missing, the news agency added. "They are killing us!" said one demonstrator.

7.53pm - Egypt: Two former ministers from the Mubarak government, including an official from his NDP party, have been arrested, security officials have told AP.

8.06pm - Egypt: Reuters has more on the arrest of two ex-ministers from the Mubarak regime.

A prosecutor who deals with financial crimes said the former tourism minister, Zuhair Garana, former housing minister Ahmed el-Maghrabi and steel magnate Ahmed Ezz had been detained for 15 days.

8.28pm - Bahrain: More details on the news that Britain is to review its arms export licences to Bahrain in light of the brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters.

Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt said tonight that hundreds of cartridges of tear gas and other riot control equipment have been licensed for export to Bahrain in the past nine months.

He said they and other licensing decisions now face being "urgently revoked" if they are found to breach UK and EU export criteria.

"We closely consider allegations of human rights abuses. We will not authorise any exports which, we assess, might provoke or prolong regional or internal conflicts, which might be used to facilitate internal repression, or which would in any other way be contrary to the criteria.

"In light of events we are today formally reviewing recent licensing decisions for exports to Bahrain. We will urgently revoke licences if we judge that they are no longer in line with the criteria.

"In the last nine months we have approved a range of licences for Bahrain. These include two single export licences for 250 tear gas cartridges to the Bahrain Defence Force and National Security Agency that were for trial/evaluation purposes. In addition there are a number of open individual export licences that have been approved. One of these includes equipment that can be used for riot control.

"The approval of these applications were judged to be consistent with the criteria at the time and followed precedents set by previous governments. As with all export licences for Bahrain, these are being urgently reviewed."

8.37pm - Egypt: Amnesty International says protesters detained by the Egyptian military during the unrest that led to Mubarak's departure were forced to strip to their underwear, whipped and subjected to electric shocks.

The human rights group has urged the military to release all protesters still in detention and halt their mistreatment.

Amnesty's regional director, Malcolm Smart, said: "The Egyptian military authorities have committed publicly to creating a climate of freedom and democracy after so many years of repression. Now they must match their words with direct action."

Those protesters held in military detention centres told the human rights group that they suffered harsh mistreatment in the days before Mubarak's fall.

A 29-year-old man said he was detained on February 3 and initially held in an annex to the Egyptian Museum overlooking Tahrir Square.

"They called me a traitor and a foreign agent and forced me to take off my clothes except my underwear and to lie face down on the floor. Then they beat me with a whip and stepped with boots on my back and on my hands. They kicked me."

He said he was then moved to another location, subjected to electric shocks and threatened with rape before being transferred to a military prison northeast of Cairo where he was repeatedly beaten before being released a week later.

An 18-year said he was detained February 3 at Tahrir Square and released with hundreds of other protesters a week later.

"Then I was taken for interrogation where they insulted me and my family. They said things one should not say. They took off my handcuffs, because they ordered me to take off my clothes, except my underwear, but I remained blindfolded."

The teenager added that he was then tied by the legs and repeatedly dunked into a barrel of water. "They told me to confess that I was trained by Israel or by Iran. They also put electric shocks to my body and I fainted," he told Amnesty.

Mohamed El-Khatib, a 53-year old government employee from the city of Suez, told AP that he was interrogated at a military detention centre and accused of trying to overthrow the regime.

El-Khatib, who was arrested on February 2 for allegedly violating the nightly curfew enforced by the military before Mubarak's departure, said he was blindfolded, beaten with sticks and whipped and threatened he would never leave alive.

On February 10, he and dozens of other detainees appeared before a military court and were given suspended three-month sentences.

"It was as if they were telling us 'accept the sentence, so we can let you out. The honourable people in the military have to get our rights back. I will not be silent. I want my right."

8.51pm - Egypt: More on the arrest of some of Mubarak's former ministers. Reuters is now reporting that an Egyptian prosecutor has ordered the detention of three ex-ministers and a prominent businessman on corruption charges.

The prosecutor said former interior minister Habib el-Adli, former tourism minister Zuhair Garana and former housing minister Ahmed el-Maghrabi must be held for 15 days, along with steel magnate Ahmed Ezz. All four have denied any wrongdoing.

9.53pm - Libya: Here's [the Guardian's latest news story on today's protests in Libya](#).

The article notes that, while sporadic violence has continued in the east of the country, there was no sign of any organised protests in Tripoli, where state TV showed crowds waving green flags and shouting pro-regime slogans.

10.03pm: Here's the Guardian's latest news story [on the crackdown on protesters in Bahrain](#).

The story notes how there are fears that sectarian aspect of Bahrain's violence – its Shia Muslim majority is ruled by a Sunni monarchy – could fuel discontent among the Shia minority in oil-producing areas of eastern Saudi Arabia.

10.11pm - Tunisia: The former Tunisian leader Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali is [in a coma in hospital in Saudi Arabia](#) after suffering a stroke two days ago, according to French agencies.

French journalist and Tunisia expert Nicolas Beau reported that Ben Ali had been admitted to a Saudi hospital favoured by the royal family but had been registered under a false name for security reasons. He said that Tunisia's interim president had been informed of Ben Ali's predicament two days ago.

10.14pm: A Saudi Arabian prince has called on King Abdullah to step up the pace of reform or risk the unrest that has spread across the Arab world in recent weeks.

Prince Talal bin Abdul-Aziz, a half brother of the king, told BBC Arabic that the Saudi government still had time to take steps to avoid protests. He also said the king is the only person who can bring about major changes.

However, it seems unlikely that the king would pay heed to Talal's views as he holds no government posts and is considered something of an outsider within the royal family. He was forced briefly into exile in the 1960s amid reports at the time that he planned a revolt, AP reports.

10.58pm: In light of the government's decision to review its arms export licences to Bahrain, it's worth mentioning that the King of Bahrain is a Sandhurst alumnus and patron of the [Sandhurst Foundation](#). This Arabic website has [more details of the military relations between Sandhurst and Bahrain](#).

This report of the House of Commons' defence select committee has more information about [the UK's military links to various Gulf states](#). A number of Gulf states' rulers have been educated at the military academy, including the Emir of Kuwait, the Sultan of Oman, the Emir of Qatar, and various members of the Saudi royal family.

11.14pm - Libya: The latest report on the unrest in Libya from AP states that at least 20 demonstrators have been killed in clashes with pro-government groups.

Human Rights Watch also reports that Libyan internal security forces have arrested at

least 14 people.

11.18pm: That's it for the live blog today but join us again tomorrow for the latest updates on the unrest across the Arab world.

Here's a round-up of today's main developments:

•**Bahrain:** Five anti-government protesters have been killed and more than 200 wounded in violent clashes with the regime. Britain announced a review of licences granted for arms exports to the Gulf state.

•**Libya:** At least 20 demonstrators have been killed in clashes with pro-government groups in the east of the country.

•**Yemen:** There were fresh clashes between thousands of pro- and anti-government protesters in the capital Sana'a. Dozens of pro-democracy protesters have been injured, including two who suffered gunshot wounds.

•**Egypt:** Amnesty International called on the military to stop using torture and other ill-treatment, releasing a report of protesters allegations of torture.

•**Tunisia:** Former leader Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali is in a coma in hospital in Saudi Arabia.

[Next](#)

[Previous](#)

[Blog home](#)

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2011