

PUBLIC

ANNEX 9.78

Violence in Bahrain and Libya - Friday 18 February

- Bahrain: dozens injured as shots fired at protesters
- Libya: news blackout obscures reports of chaos
- Obama condemns violent attacks on protesters
- Egypt: massive celebration in Tahrir Square
- Yemen: crowds demonstrated in Sana'a and Taiz



Bahraini anti-government protesters carry the coffin of Ali Massour Khodier, 22, who died during clashes with riot police on Thursday, during his funeral procession in Sitra village, Bahrain, this morning. Photograph: Hassan Ammar/AP

1.35am GMT: Time to wrap up the live blog for the night after a day of violence spread across Bahrain, Libya and elsewhere.

- **Bahrain:** Military units fired live rounds against protesters near the Pearl roundabout, with 50 or more said to have been injured and an unknown killed, as the hospitals in Manama were filled with the wounded. Bahrain's king and crown prince appeared on state television and promised dialogue, while President Obama spoke with the king by telephone and urged restraint.
- **Libya:** Dozens of protesters were said to have been killed during attacks by security forces in Libya's eastern cities including Benghazi, with conflicting reports from the region impossible to verify because of the media blackout imposed by the Gaddafi regime.
- **Yemen:** At least four people were killed during the "day of rage", on the ninth day of the protests against the Saleh regime, with further violence in Aden.

Another busy day saw protests in Jordan and even Kuwait and a massive victory rally in

Egypt's Tahrir Square. Thanks for reading.

1.21am GMT - Bahrain:

The White House has released notes of a phone call between President Obama and the King Hamad of Bahrain tonight:

President Obama spoke with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain this evening to discuss the ongoing situation in Bahrain.

The President reiterated his condemnation of the violence used against peaceful protesters, and strongly urged the government of Bahrain to show restraint, and to hold those responsible for the violence accountable.

As a long-standing partner of Bahrain, the President said that the United States believes that the stability of Bahrain depends upon respect for the universal rights of the people of Bahrain, and a process of meaningful reform that is responsive to the aspirations of all Bahrainis.

1.08am GMT - Bahrain:

Reuters quotes anonymous US officials who are confident that the status quo will be maintained in Bahrain and that the government will eventually "restore order":

US national security and intelligence agencies expect Bahrain's government to ride out the protests and violence sweeping the Gulf kingdom, a small but vital ally to Washington in a volatile region.

A senior US official familiar with government reporting and analysis on the island nation said on Friday that Bahraini authorities believe they can handle the unrest, which has included security forces shooting and killing demonstrators.

US intelligence agencies agree, for the moment, that government forces will eventually restore order, the official indicated.

The upheaval in Bahrain, which hosts a major U.S. military base and borders the world's No. 1 oil producer, Saudi Arabia, appears rooted in discontent among the Shia Muslim community that is much larger than the Sunni minority dominating the monarchy and government.

But the senior US official said Bahraini Shia viewed themselves as "nationalists" and were therefore less susceptible to outside influences such as protests roiling other parts of the Middle East or attempted subversion from neighboring Iran.

CNN's Nic Robertson, on the other hand, reports that there is in-fighting within the administration between hardliners and those who want to make concessions.

12.52am GMT - Libya:

Now al-Jazeera says its broadcast signal is being jammed on several frequencies and its website has now been blocked in Libya. As with Egypt, the channel is able to offer alternative frequencies on the Arabsat, Nilesat and Hot Bird satellites.

12.33am GMT - Libya:

The TechCrunch blog confirms that there appears to be an internet outage in Libya. It quotes audience measurement expert Scott Julian as saying:

At around 10pm local time, Internet traffic dramatically dropped across the

board. Whilst not completely cut off it's clear it's a pretty concentrated effort, which in my opinion is unlikely to be the result of a random failure. The profile of the change in traffic is very similar to what we saw in Egypt, and leads one to conclude that this isn't the result of a group of random, unconnected events. It seems some ISP's are still up and running, which follows the same pattern as the first shutdown in Egypt.

What happens to the bit.ly domain shortening service then?

12.23am GMT - Libya:

It remains difficult to confirm the little news that does make it out of eastern Libya, but AP is still piecing together what it can:

New videos from Bayda showed bloodstained bodies of the dead in a morgue, protesters torching a municipal building and demolishing a statue for the Green Book, which outlines Gadhafi's "authority of the people." Protesters tore down a pro-Gadhafi billboard.

Two militiamen were captured by the protesters and were hanged in a square in the city after they reportedly opened fire on protesters, said one witness. A Switzerland-based Libyan opposition activist, Fathi al-Warfali, said he had reports of protesters lynching 11 captured mercenaries in Bayda, Benghazi and the town of Darnah on Friday.

In Zentan, a female resident said militiamen attacked the city after protesters set fire to police stations and sprayed graffiti on the walls that read: "Down with Gadhafi." Officials with loudspeakers offered money for residents to stop protesting, but then cut off electricity and water, the woman said, describing how she was standing on top of her building, watching the events.



Hisham Matar,

Photograph: Sarah Lee

11.56pm GMT - Libya:

The Guardian carries a commentary by Libyan writer Hisham Matar, the author of In the Country of Men, shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. He writes:

I appeal to Colonel Gaddafi and his security forces: for the sake of the mothers, for the sake of those who died, for the sake of Libya, please don't shoot and torture your people.

Hisham Matar's father, Jaballa Matar, was kidnapped from his Egypt home in 1990 by Libyan agents and believed to have been held in prison in Libya ever since.

11.41pm GMT - Bahrain:

Another distressing video from Bahrain tonight – a seemingly endless stream of hospital gurney with injured protesters being wheeled into a hospital.

11.25pm GMT - Libya:

Rumours about what's going on in eastern Libya continue to fly. The Associated Press tries to piece them together:

Forces from the military's elite Khamis Brigade moved into Benghazi, Bayda and several other cities, residents said. They were accompanied by militias that seemed to include foreign mercenaries, residents said. Several witnesses reported French-speaking fighters, believed to be Tunisians or sub-Saharan Africans, among militiamen wearing blue uniforms and yellow helmets.

The Khamis Brigade is led by Gadhafi's youngest son Khamis Gadhafi, and US diplomats in leaked memos have called it "the most well-trained and well-equipped force in the Libyan military." The witnesses' reports that it had been deployed could not be independently confirmed.

Police and protesters appear to have teamed up:

In Bayda, residents said troop reinforcements entered the city along with militiamen. The soldiers appeared to keep their distance, at times using snipers to try to disperse protesters, while militiamen led the direct assault on protesters with knives and automatic weapons, residents said.

Several witnesses said local police, who belong to the same tribe as the residents, joined the demonstrators to fight the militias, driving them out of many neighborhoods. The protesters demolished a military air base runway with bulldozers and set fire to police stations.

"These mercenaries are now hiding in the forests. We hear the gunshots all the time," one witness said. "We don't have water, we don't have electricity. They blocked many websites."

11.24pm GMT - Libya:

There are multiple reports of police stations and government offices being set on fire in the eastern region around Benghazi, with al-Jazeera Arabic also reporting that the state radio station in the city has also been set alight.

11.15pm GMT - Bahrain:

This is **very graphic footage** said to be of the Bahraini army opening fire on a group of protesters, with several then shot.

11.07pm GMT - Libya:

Al-Jazeera English is now reporting that security forces have fled from Benghazi and other cities in the eastern part of the country, including from the border with Egypt. It carried an interview with a doctor in Benghazi that more than 70 people had been killed.

10.49pm GMT - Bahrain:

The Los Angeles Times photographer Rick Loomis is in Bahrain and has posted a set of photographs, many of them graphic, of the unrest there, and this account of events today:

In the evening, just after sunset, I heard that a group of thousands was heading to the Pearl roundabout to try to return to the area they had been

forcefully removed from the day before. As I packed up to leave, gunfire could be heard in the distance. We set out on foot but then decided that going by car would be safest. The car dropped us in the middle of group of protesters and from there we went by foot closer to the front.

As we approached, sniper fire cracked overhead and we retreated, ducking for a couple of minutes behind a car before deciding to move toward the front again. We heard a rumor that forces were targeting journalists, so it made the walk a bit more nerve-wracking. When we were less than 100 yards from the front, gunfire and tear gas grenades were volleyed directly toward us.

Running and choking on tear gas, I got trapped in some bushes for a minute before breaking free and heading away from the fire. I stopped to shoot two frames of a wounded protester being loaded into an ambulance but then it was time to flee.

10.33pm GMT - Libya:

AP has an updated death toll in Benghazi, with a doctor at a city's hospital telling the agency that 35 protesters were killed there on Friday:

The doctor from al-Jalaa hospital says he counted 35 bodies received at his hospital alone, starting in the afternoon Friday.

He says witnesses and survivors told him most of the victims came from an attempted protest outside the residential compound used by Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi when he visits Benghazi. He says security forces inside the compound fired on protesters demonstrating outside. The doctor spoke on condition his name not be used for fear of retaliation. He said he could not keep track of the number of wounded.

10.25pm GMT - Libya:

Benghazi airport is reported to be closed, although quote what that means is anyone's guess.

10.12pm GMT - Kuwait:

Now this is news: protests even spread to Kuwait today. The official state news agency Kuna said protesters in the Kuwaiti area of Jahra threw stones at police after being told their demonstration was illegal and several officers were injured.

Reuters also reported that the protesters were more than 1,000 stateless Arabs demanding citizenship, with dozens arrested by police after the security forces used smoke bombs and water cannon, according to witnesses:

The stateless Arabs, longtime residents of Kuwait known as bedoun from the Arabic "bedoun jinsiyya" (without nationality), were demanding citizenship, free education, free healthcare and jobs, benefits available to Kuwaiti nationals.

Many of Kuwait's stateless are descendants of desert nomads denied citizenship under strict nationality laws in the small Gulf state, whose citizens are entitled to generous welfare benefits.

10pm: GMT - Libya

Amnesty International now says at least 46 people appear to have been killed in the last three days:

Amnesty International has accused the Libyan authorities of recklessly shooting at anti-government protesters after the organization learned that at least 46 people had been shot dead by security forces in the last 72 hours.

Sources at al-Jala hospital in Benghazi today told Amnesty International that patients' most common injuries were bullet wounds to the head, chest and neck.

"This alarming rise in the death toll, and the reported nature of the victims' injuries, strongly suggests that security forces are permitted use lethal force against unarmed protesters calling for political change," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa

"The Libyan authorities must immediately, rein in their security forces. Those responsible for unlawful killings and excessive force – both the direct perpetrators and those who gave the orders – must be identified and brought to justice."

Sources at al-Jala hospital have reported 28 fatalities from yesterday's protests in Benghazi with more than 110 people injured, and at least three further deaths in today's protests.

At least 15 people are reported to have been killed yesterday during "Day of Rage" protests in the city of al-Bayda, 100 km east of Benghazi.

I'd like to be able to tell you more about what's going on in Libya, where there are some extraordinary reports of protesters taking over entire cities, including Benghazi – al-Jazeera is quoting the Imam of the Benghazi mosque as saying that there aren't even traffic wardens on the streets any more – but it is hard to come by confirmed details.

9.42pm GMT - Bahrain:

Time magazine reveals an unsubtle PR operation by the Bahraini regime:

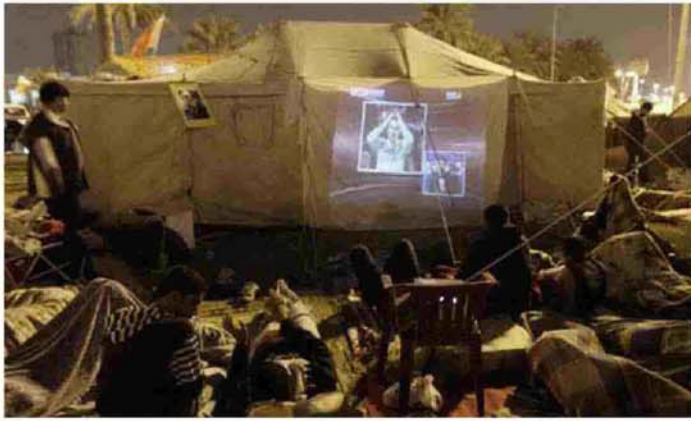
A group of journalists attempting to enter Bahrain had been detained at the airport.... a Press Ministry official arrived to apologize, explaining that the "situation" made things difficult. He allowed us to pass through immigration and graciously offered us a ride to our hotel.

It was a public-relations ambush. We realized it as soon as our convoy turned a corner and headed straight into a pro-government protest of honking cars, with flags flying from windows and men and women standing and waving from the sunroofs of their vehicles. Amal Abdul Kareem, whose bright red lipstick matched the flag she waved from her window, said, "We are here supporting our King, our country. We are here hand in hand to show our loyalty."

9.32pm GMT - Libya:

AFP passes on a report in Libya's Oea newspaper – which is close to Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam, according to AFP – that two policemen in al-Bayda were hanged after being captured by protesters.

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



Protesters camped on

Bahrain's Pearl roundabout watch Arsenal v Barcelona football match. Photograph:

Hassan Ammar/AP

9.25pm GMT - Bahrain:

The Atlantic curates a [gallery of AP, Reuters and AFP wire service photographs](#) charting the changing mood and descent into violence in Bahrain over the course of four days.

I hadn't previously seen the photograph by AP's Hassan Ammar, posted above, which shows the peaceful atmosphere at the protest camp on the Pearl roundabout, with people watching the Arsenal-Barcelona Champion's League match only a few hours before the police assault.

9.13pm GMT - Libya:

Protesters are "committing suicide" according to the chilling statement from the Revolutionary Committees – an integral part of Gaddafi's regime – published on the Azzahf al-Akhdar website:

The response of the people and the Revolutionary Forces to any adventure by these small groups will be sharp and violent.

The power of the people, the Jamahiriya, the Revolution and the leader are all red lines, and anyone who tries to cross or approach them will be committing suicide and playing with fire.

9.11pm GMT - Libya:

The BBC World Service is reporting from Tripoli that Facebook and Twitter have now been blocked in Libya. Can anyone inside Libya confirm this?

9pm GMT - Libya:

The Guardian's Ian Black and Owen Bowcott [report on the day's chaos in Libya](#):

Diplomats reported the use of heavy weapons in Benghazi, Libya's second city, and "a rapidly deteriorating situation" in the latest Arab country to be hit by serious unrest.

Amid a near-total official news blackout, fragmentary information and a ban on journalists entering Libya, there was a blizzard of rumours and claims about killings by mercenaries and defections by members of the security forces.

In one highly significant development, prisoners were reported to have escaped en masse from al-Jadida jail in the capital, Tripoli, which has so far been calm.

8.57pm GMT - Bahrain:

A depressing tweet from Bahraini journalist [Amira al-Hussaini](#).

8.42pm GMT - Libya:

We're getting reports that electricity has been cut off in parts of Benghazi, and tanks have been seen in the city centre. The BBC's World Service is also reporting the power cuts, but as always it is very hard to verify information out of Libya.

8.28pm GMT - Bahrain:

Some gruesome footage of the attacks on protesters in Bahrain, including a blood-stained man talking to reporters. According to the comments a rough translation of his words is:

We were going there, chanting peaceful peaceful, we even raised our hands [other person says: we even had flowers], they were not kidding, they've had machine guns, not rifles or hand weapons, literally machine guns with tripod, and they open fired, people ran away! A person in front me instantly died after a head shot, I tried to grab him and carry him away, I was in complete state of shock.

The clip ends with an ominous burst of machine gun fire.

8.15pm GMT - Bahrain:

Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa has announced via state media that he has asked the crown prince to start a national dialogue "with all parties" to resolve the crisis in the country.

8.06pm GMT - Saudi Arabia:

There are reports that Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz will finally return to the country after spending three months in the US and Morocco for medical treatment – an important move given the unrest in the Middle East and near-by Bahrain.

The Saudi foreign ministry says the 87-year-old king will return sometime next week, with flags and posters welcoming the king back now being installed around Riyadh.

7.43pm GMT - Bahrain:

The redoubtable Hadeel al-Shalchi of the Associated Press has filed an update on the tragic shootings in Manama:

Officials at the main Salmaniya hospital said at least 50 people were injured, some with gunshot wounds. Some doctors and medics on emergency medical teams were in tears as they tended to the wounded. X-rays showed bullets still lodged inside victims.

"This is a war," said Dr Bassem Deif, an orthopedic surgeon examining people with bullet-shattered bones.

Protesters described a chaotic scene of tear gas clouds, bullets coming from many directions and people slipping in pools of blood as they sought cover. Some claimed the gunfire came from either helicopters or sniper nests, a day after riot police swept through the protest encampment in Pearl Square, killing at least five people and razing the tents and makeshift shelters that were inspired by the demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

An Associated Press cameraman saw army units shooting anti-aircraft weapons, fitted on top of armored personnel carriers, above the protesters, in apparent warning shots and attempts to drive them back from security

cordons about 200 yards (200 meters) from the square.

Then the soldiers turned firearms on the crowd, one marcher said.

"People started running in all directions and bullets were flying," said Ali al-Haji, a 27-year-old bank clerk. "I saw people getting shot in the legs, chest, and one man was bleeding from his head."

7.19pm GMT - Bahrain:

Britain's Foreign Office has announced a tough squeeze on sales of weapons and security supplies to Bahrain. The department said it is revoking 24 individual short-term export licences and 20 longer term open export licences for sales to Bahrain.

My colleague Ben Quinn reports that the licences are likely to relate to equipment such as tear gas, pepper spray and other crowd control hardware.

A separate decision has also been taken to revoke eight individual licences for Libya while a review of export licences to the wider region, including Yemen, is underway.

Foreign office minister Alistair Burt said there was "no evidence of British equipment being used in the unrest in Bahrain, but went on:

We are deeply concerned about the situation in Bahrain and the events which have led to the deaths of several protesters.

This Government takes extremely seriously its export control responsibilities.... The longstanding British position is clear: We will not issue licences where we judge there is a clear risk that the proposed export might provoke or prolong regional or internal conflicts, or which might be used to facilitate internal repression.

France has also announced that it has suspended approval of exports of security equipment to Libya and Bahrain over the killing of anti-government protesters.



Bahraini protesters face armored vehicles in a street near Pearl roundabout in Manama. Photograph: Mazen Mahdi/EPA

7pm GMT - Bahrain:

The Washington Post's Janine Zacharia has also been doing some excellent work this week in Manama. Today she reports on the latest violence with eyewitnessing saying that armoured personal carriers opened fire with their machine guns near Pearl roundabout:

"The APCs came, three or four of them, and started firing shots," Mazen Mahdi, a Bahraini photojournalist who was accompanying the procession, said in an interview. "The first was a warning shot in the air. But after that, they just opened fire at the people."

Mahdi described the shooting as live fire from machine guns. After about 30 minutes, the police, who had retreated to let the APCs approach, returned and fired tear gas, dispersing all demonstrators from the area.

Mahdi said he saw ambulance crews being prevented from reaching the site. "They shot at the ambulances when they came in," he said.

There was no statement from the military, but an official at the Interior Ministry sent a text message to Bahrainis Friday night urging them to stay indoors.

6.45pm GMT - Bahrain:

The Bahraini diplomatic offensive continues with the country's special envoy to the US, Latif al-Zayani, appearing on CNN to say that the attacks on the protesters this week were legal and "necessary", as well as "proportional":

The kingdom is really committed to democracy. Democracy is a trip we have started.

It could be a long trip, if today's events are anything to go by.

6.36pm GMT - Bahrain:

There was a darkly amusing moment when al-Jazeera's English channel interviewed someone named Faisal Fulad from something called Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society. Fulad seemed surprisingly supportive of the Bahraini government and was warmly appreciative of the Crown Prince's recent statement.

When pressed on the recent deadly violence, Fulad said the region's governments supported Bahrain's actions. "Qatar also supports the Bahraini policy," claimed Falud. The interview was quickly terminated.

Unrelated fact: al-Jazeera is based in Doha, the capital of Qatar. The TV station is owned by Qatar Media Corporation, and al-Jazeera was founded by a \$150m grant from the emir of Qatar, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The chairman of the Qatar Media Corporation is Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer bin Mohammed bin Thani al-Thani.

Update: The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society has no connection to the organisation Human Rights Watch

6.25pm GMT: Many people have been asking how the events in Bahrain are being reported by the BBC. My colleague Ben Quinn watched the BBC's flagship Six O'Clock News bulletin minutes ago:

The backlash by Bahraini security forces against demonstrators in the Gulf Kingdom and violence on the streets of Libya, Yemen and elsewhere led the six o'clock news bulletin on BBC.

The channel showed footage of protesters coming under fire on the streets of Manama, Bahrain's capital, where doctors in local hospitals said that at least 100 people have been injured in the latest clashes surrounding the funerals of those killed in recent days.

Reporting from the city, the BBC's Ian Pannell also interviewed a separate protest attended today by what he called "the well-heeled supporters of the king". A young couple in a jeep who took part told him that the country would be "destroyed" if those calling for the toppling of the royal family had their way.

Pannell added: "The poor here are overwhelmingly Shia Muslim. They are

also the ones losing out." As a result, he said, it wasn't surprising that they are making up the bulk of the protesters, raising fears of sectarian tensions with Bahrain's Sunni minority.

The BBC also reported on clashes in Libya, Yemen and Jordan and said that the "latest news" was of pro-democracy protests spreading to the tiny state of Djibouti, which also hosts a key US military base.

6.18pm GMT - Bahrain:



Hoisted from the comments section below, a reader claiming to be in Bahrain sets the scene at Salmaniya hospital (unedited):

Just got back from salmaniya hospital, carnage and chaos. Lots of wounded and around 30000 people outside the hospital. There was a rumour that they were going to march back down to the pearl roundabout. Lots more arriving at the hospital. Absolutely shocking scenes. People praying in the corridors it is an absolute disgrace. some of the things i have just seen will stay with me forever. We have gone from a protest to what feels like a civil war. For the first time tonight I was scared. You stop at traffic lights and the police car next to you they are loading their guns. At the big intersections they have huge screen tvs saw flashing lights and crapped myself again.

Just seen the crown prince who was the most respected of the khalifa family by my students. he is revered as the man who can change Bahrain. Now i feel like it is impossible. The Shias will not take this. It is just going to get worse and worse.

Desperate shortage of blood but so good to see that people are giving their blood. Totally depressed, family want to leave and I feel like i am supporting this regime by staying here.

6.04pm GMT - Bahrain:

Catching up on this: the Crown Prince of Bahrain, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, has appeared on state television and appealed for calm:

We need to call for self-restraint from all sides, the armed forces, security men and citizens. I urge you, there should be calm. Now is time for calm.

The kingdom seems to have started an earnest PR campaign both at home and abroad, and the prince has a reputation of being a reformer and thus is a more credible figure than other members of the governing caste.

"Today is the time to sit down and hold a dialogue, not to fight," the prince said in a call for talks with the opposition.

6.01pm GMT: President Obama has just given a statement to the media on-board Air Force One, on the situation in Bahrain, Libya and Yemen.

Here's the statement in Obama's name:



I am deeply concerned by reports of violence in Bahrain, Libya and Yemen.

The United States condemns the use of violence by governments against peaceful protesters in those countries and wherever else it may occur. We

express our condolences to the family and friends of those who have been killed during the demonstrations.

Wherever they are, people have certain universal rights including the right to peaceful assembly.

The United States urges the governments of Bahrain, Libya and Yemen to show restraint in responding to peaceful protests, and to respect the rights of their people.

5.53pm GMT - Bahrain

The Associated Press's Hadeel al-Shalchi tweets from Manama:

Shalchi has done a fantastic job reporting from Bahrain, and she's well worth following on Twitter: [@hadeelalsh](#)

5.46pm GMT - Libya:

Britain's Channel 4 News has a disturbing interview from from one hospital in Benghazi:

Channel 4 News spoke to nurse in a Benghazi hospital on Friday morning. The nurse said that in the last two days, "at least" 15 people had died in the hospital from gunshot wounds and two men being treated "were still unconscious after two days after suffering injuries [which appear to have been caused by] being hit so many times by the ends of guns."

The nurse said that last night, armed men, wearing "military or police" uniforms, which the nurse had "not seen before" entered the hospital at around 2am, and carried away three patients who were involved and injured in the protest on Thursday night.

The source added that nurses and doctors were ushered into a room and kept there until the patients had been loaded into a vehicle outside.

5.35pm GMT - Libya:

A video compilation of [scenes from the uprising in Libya](#), showing injured protesters and burning police stations, has been put online. **Warning:** some of the images show graphic scenes of the bloodied bodies of protesters being carried into hospitals.

5.30pm GMT - Egypt:

The Guardian's Jack Shenker reports from Cairo on the massive turnout there:



Hundreds of thousands of protesters returned to Cairo's iconic Tahrir Square on Friday in a mass rally to mark the downfall of former president Hosni Mubarak. A week on from Mubarak's dramatic resignation, Egyptians gathered to celebrate the success of their 18-day anti-government uprising – but also to honour those who died in the violence and to express solidarity with neighbouring Arab populations who have taken to the streets themselves.

Amid widespread speculation over the intentions of Egypt's army, who are currently governing the country through a Supreme Military Council but have promised a swift transition to democratic civilian rule, prominent Islamic cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi used his midday sermon in the square to

warn Egyptians that their struggle was not complete.

"Don't let anyone steal this revolution from you – those hypocrites who will put on a new face that suits them," he told the crowds. He also praised the non-sectarian spirit of cooperation between Muslims and Christians that marked the demonstrations of recent weeks, drawing praise from Copts who were listening.

Jack also reports that demonstrators waved flags with the colours and symbols of Bahrain, Algeria, Libya and other Middle Eastern states experiencing pro-change movements themselves. "What happened in Egypt has echoed throughout the Arab World," Gamal Fahmi, a writer for independent daily Al Dostour, told him.



This is Richard Adams in the Guardian's Washington DC bureau taking over live-blogging duties this evening. I'm also tweeting at [@RichardA](#)

5.20pm: Here's a summary of the day's events so far:



• **Bahrain: Troops have opened fire on protesters in Manama, killing at least one person, according to reports.** The army used teargas and live ammunition in an attempt to expell the crowds, which gathered when hundreds of people marched to Pearl roundabout, prompting the security forces to act.

Hospital officials say at least 20 people have been injured, some seriously, and video footage showed three men in Manama bleeding heavily, apparently having been shot. There have been reports of police preventing ambulances from reaching the injured at the roundabout.

• **Libya: Reports claim up to 50 people have been killed in anti-government protests in the east of the country – but it is very hard to verify information from Libya.** The protests have mostly ocured in the east of the country, with Benghazi, Libya's second city, seeing clashes, which have been blamed on mercenaries brought in from neighbouring Chad by the Gaddafi regime.

Reports also claim al-Bayda has been taken over by anti-government protesters. There was little sign of anti-Gaddafi feeling in Tripoli this morning, but pro-democracy activists are now claiming the revolt seen in other cities is beginning to spread to the capital.

• **Yemen: Two people have died in the country in separate incidents on today's 'Day of Rage', the eighth straight day of protests.** One anti-Saleh protester died when a hand grenade was thrown at a group of demonstrators in the city of Taiz, with at least seven others injured. In the early hours of the morning a protester was shot and killed by police in Aden after cars and local government buildings were set alight.

In the capital, Sana'a, pro- and anti-Saleh protesters clashed near the city's university, with Saleh's supporters driving away his detractors with sticks and rocks. Some of the pro-Saleh supports admitted to the Guardian that they had been paid to show their support for the leader.

• **Egypt: A 'Day of Victory' has seen one million people gather in Tahrir Square, previously the scene of violence during the 18 day protests which led to Mubarak's exit.** Egyptians listened to a sermon from Muslim Brotherhood cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, where he praised the Coptic Christians' role in the revolution in a non-sectarian speech which surprised some commentators. Up to 2,000 pro-

Mubarak protesters gathered across the river from Tahrir Square to praise the former leader, some holding banners calling for him to forgive them. Elsewhere news emerged that Egypt will allow two Iranian warships to pass through the Suez canal, in a move described by Iran as "provocative".

• **Jordan: Eight protesters were injured in the first reported violence in weeks of demonstrations in the country.** Jordanians took to the streets for the seventh Friday in a row to demand a greater role in decision making, with demonstrations in Amman attracting 2,000 people.

Jordan's king has absolute power, ruling by decree and is able to appoint and dismiss cabinets and parliament at will. Protesters said they were beaten with batons and pipes by supporters of the king, with police doing nothing to prevent the violence.

4.57pm: More details are emerging about the deadly confrontation at or near the Pearl roundabout. The Times's correspondent, Hugh Tomlinson, was on the scene when the army opened fire. He says on the [Times live blog](#) (paywall):

"It was a trap. The security forces fell back, waiting until they turned onto the boulevard towards the square. There was a huge volley of gunfire. The crowd fled. More firing. Within five minutes I saw half a dozen ambulances screaming away from the square."



Protesters run from a cloud of teargas during a clash with Bahraini security forces. Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

Meanwhile the Telegraph reports on its live blog that its correspondent in Bahrain, Adrian Blomfield is safe. Al-Jazeera had earlier reported that a Telegraph correspondent had been hurt during the clashes.

4.44pm - Egypt Egypt has approved the passage of two Iranian warships through the Suez canal, Reuters is reporting.

It was reported earlier today that Egypt was considering Iran's request to allow the warships through – believed to be the first time the country has made such a request since 1979. Reuters reported that Israel's foreign minister has described the move as "provocative".

"Egypt has agreed to the passage of two Iranian ships through the Suez Canal," a security source said.

State TV and the official news agency subsequently reported the news, without citing sources. An army source earlier said the Defence Ministry was considering a request by the Iranians to allow the naval ships to cross the strategic waterway.

4.38pm - Bahrain: In [this video](#) from earlier today in Bahrain gunfire can be heard as three men who have apparently been shot are carried away.

4.32pm - Bahrain: Martin Chulov is tweeting from Salmaniya hospital in Manama. A man admitted with gunshot wounds has just died, Martin says.

- [@martinchulov](#) Just seen one man in hosp hit with live round in the head. In terrible shape. Not expected to live.

- [@martinchulov](#) Man shot in the head just died.

4.24pm - Bahrain: Lots of tweets flying around about medical treatment being denied in Manama. Reports unconfirmed as yet.

[@BahrainRights](#) doctors from Salmania hsptl just confirmed to AlJazeera the army are not allowing ambulances to enter the area to save the injured #bahrain

4.14pm - Egypt: [The Google executive who was arrested for his role](#) in the Egyptian uprising was barred from speaking on stage in Tahrir Square today, AFP is reporting.

The news agency says [Wael Ghonim](#), who played a key role in using the internet to spark the uprising against Hosni Mubarak, was prevented from accessing the stage by men who "appeared to be guarding" Yusuf al-Qaradawi - the influential Muslim Brotherhood figure.

"Ghonim, who was angered by the episode, then left the square with his face hidden by an Egyptian flag," AFP reported.

4.02pm - Libya: Pro-democracy activists from cities where protesters have already taken control are reported to be converging on Benghazi to confront the regime. Much of the violence is being blamed on "mercenaries" brought in from neighbouring Chad. Eastern Libya has traditionally been less loyal to the Gaddafi government.

[ShababLibya](#) tweets:

More reports now coming from Derna: people headed to Benghazi with weapons from Police to fight Mercenaries, its all out war #Libya #Feb17

4.01pm: Mark Tran has been speaking to Martin Chulov in Manama. He says:

The worst fears have played out to some extent. A small group of villagers marched to Pearl Square ... They were beaten back. There were a large numbers of shots fired. Most of them were warning shots fired in the air ... We're told it was only 100 or so villagers walking on the area; that was perceived as being something far more significant by the security forces, who had laid siege to that part of town, which is in central Manama. We understand that the shots were fired in the air, but we also believe that a couple of people have been injured ... They absolutely will not tolerate any dissent and nor will they tolerate demonstrators returning to Pearl Square ... It appears that [now] they [the security forces] have retreated back to their positions.

The audio quality is not great; apologies.

3.51pm - Bahrain: According to Reuters, Lebanon's Hezbollah-run al-Manar television quoted a doctor at Salmaniya hospital in Manama as saying 25 wounded had been admitted, two of them with serious wounds. Witnesses said about 20 police cars had driven toward Pearl roundabout and shooting was still going on.

3.48pm - Libya: Opposition groups claim the first signs of revolt are beginning to

spread to the capital, Tripoli. Earlier reports suggested that security police had surrounded the mosques to make sure protesters did not begin congregating.

libyanfsl tweets:



Imams in the mosques of Tripoli refuse to read the sermons given to them by regime #Feb17 #Libya

3.47pm – Bahrain: According to my colleague Martin Chulov in Bahrain, the latest outbreak of violence occurred when a few hundred people marched to Pearl roundabout, prompting the security forces to fire shots into the air. But a number of people were injured and have been taken to hospital; the hospital was at one point surrounded by riot police, sparking a moment of panic.

3.45pm – Bahrain: Al-Jazeera is reporting the shootings in Manama were carried out by the army rather than the police.

3.40pm – Bahrain: Nick Kristof of the New York Times has been tweeting furiously about the outbreak of violence in Manama.



Man in blood drenched shirt just walked in. Drs outraged, helping me get stories and video. #Bahrain

Worst injuries from those at Deh marching toward Pearl. Many head wounds. Unsure if live fire or rubber bullets.

ABt 20 patients so far, 1 nr death. Ambulances say many many more casualties but they are denied access.

3.30pm – Bahrain: My colleague Laura Oliver was just listening to a Dr Ghassan from Salmaniya hospital in Manama speaking on al-Jazeera. He sounded very distressed, and said:

The hospital is full of casualties. All the medical staff are running off their feet. It's hard to accommodate all these casualties; we are full. It's unbelievable scenes, it's indescribable.

When asked how many had died or were injured he said it was uncountable and confirmed that protesters had been hit by tear gas and bullets:

It's very difficult to count the number of casualties ... They were thrown on the road; there are tens if not hundreds of people still on the road. The ambulances can't access them ... These people are innocent; they don't hold machine guns, they don't hold swords, they are innocent protesters.

People coming to the hospital told him that the majority of the shots were to the head "in order to kill – patients with brains shattered, their skulls are full of bullets. This is indescribable. This country is a peaceful country," he said, before describing the situation as like a war zone.

3.23pm – Bahrain: Reuters has now filed on the shootings near Pearl roundabout in Manama.

Bahraini troops shot at protesters near Pearl roundabout today and wounded several, a former Shia MP said, a day after police forcibly cleared a protest camp from the traffic circle in Manama.

Jalal Firooz, of the Wifaq bloc that resigned from parliament on Thursday, said demonstrators had been elsewhere in the city, marking the death of a protester killed earlier this week when riot police had fired tear gas at them.

The demonstrators then made for Pearl roundabout, where army troops who took it over after the police raid on Thursday, opened fire, he said. Police had no immediate comment.

3.13pm – Bahrain: The Associated Press's Hadeel al-Shalchi has filed her first report on the shootings at Pearl roundabout. She says at least 20 people were injured, some seriously:

Soldiers fired tear gas and shot heavy weapons into the air Friday as thousands of protest marchers defied a government ban and streamed toward the landmark square that has been the symbolic centre of the uprising against the Gulf nation's leaders.

Hospital officials said at least 20 people were injured, some seriously. Ambulance sirens were heard throughout central Manama a day after riot police swept through the protest encampment in Pearl roundabout, killing at least five people and injuring more than 230.

An Associated Press cameraman saw army units shooting anti-aircraft weapons above the protesters in apparent warning shots and attempting to drive them back from security cordons about 200 yards (200m) from the square.

The clash came just hours after funeral mourners and worshippers at Friday prayers called for the toppling of the western-allied monarchy in the tiny island nation, which is home to the US navy's fifth fleet.

The cries against King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and his inner circle at a main Shia mosque and at burials for those killed in Thursday's crushing attack reflect an important escalation of the political uprising, which began with calls to weaken the Sunni monarchy's power and address claims of discrimination against the Shia majority in the tiny island nation.

The mood, however, appears to have turned toward defiance of the entire ruling system after the brutal crackdown on a protest encampment in Bahrain's capital, Manama, which led the government to put the nation under emergency-style footing with military forces in key areas and checkpoints on main roads.

"The regime has broken something inside of me ... All of these people gathered today have had something broken in them," said Ahmed Makki Abu Taki at the funeral for his 23-year-old brother, Mahmoud, who was killed in the pre-dawn sweep through the protest camp in Manama's Pearl roundabout. "We used to demand for the prime minister to step down, but now our demand is for the ruling family to get out."

3.08pm – Senegal: Associated Press reports a man setting himself on fire in front of the presidential palace in Senegal on Friday, the latest self-immolation on the African continent.

Tunisia's mutiny that ousted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was touched off by a struggling 26-year-old university graduate who lit himself on fire after police confiscated his fruit and vegetable cart in December. Other self-immolations then quickly spread elsewhere in northern Africa and the

Middle East.

3.05pm – Bahrain: Protesters are calling for the minister of health to resign. There were rumours he had done so yesterday.

3.02pm – Bahrain: Al-Jazeera is reporting a number of patients with head wounds coming in to a Bahraini hospital.

2.59pm – Bahrain: In the comments [SandyBh](#) has heard from a protester outside Salmaniya hospital in Manama.



Just talked to somebody who's in Salmaniya hospital protests. Reports of new wounded coming to the hospital. Daih protests, reportedly intending to head for Lulu roundabout, might have been attacked.

Live ammunition shot - ppl in salmaniya are pleading... international community silent

Person from Salmaniya hospital: ambulances are withheld, not allowed to carry wounded from daih protest

2.56pm – Bahrain: Reuters is corroborating what Hadeel Al-Shalchi has been saying about gunfire near Pearl roundabout ([see 2.48pm](#)) .

Shots were heard on Friday in the area of Pearl Square, a day after Bahraini police forcibly cleared a protest encampment from the traffic circle in Manama, witnesses said. The circumstances of the shooting after nightfall were not clear and there was no immediate word on any casualties.

2.54pm – Bahrain: The Associated Press has more on the violent turn of events in Bahrain:

Security forces have fired tear gas on thousands of protest marchers in Bahrain's capital after angry calls to topple the gulf nation's monarchy. Some demonstrators are moving in the direction of Pearl Square today, a day after riot police swept into the area to destroy an Egypt-style protest encampment. At least five people were killed in that attack. Witnesses say they saw some casualties in the clashes today.

2.50pm – Bahrain: Bernie Ecclestone is taking flak on social networking websites for [comments the Formula One chief has made in a BBC interview](#) about whether the Bahrain Grand Prix should be postponed.

We scheduled [the 1985 Belgian Grand Prix] later. We may be able to do the same with this one. I hope we don't have to do anything, I hope things will just carry on as normal. Obviously some people were killed, nobody's happy with that, I'm quite sure.

Let's hope that this all blows away. In these parts there's always been skirmishes. Perhaps it's a bit more than that.

2.48pm – Bahrain: [Some disturbing tweets](#) from Associated Press's Hadeel Al-Shalchi in Manama, suggesting things have turned very violent there.



Gunshots fired into #bahrain protesters, injured have fallen as they try to enter pearl square

Army firing live ammo from anti-aircraft guns from APC's at protesters
#bahrain

Protesters were carrying flowers saying they wanted to deliver it to police.
Were shot instead. Blood on street now #bahrain

2.42pm – Libya: Benghazi, Libya's second city, appears to be the scene of a trial of strength between protesters and Gaddafi loyalists. Lawyers and other pro-democracy supporters have rallied outside the main courthouse. One of the president's sons, Saddi, is said to be trapped in the city.

EnoughGaddafi tweets:



Saadi Gaddafi reported to be hiding in Birka military barracks in #Benghazi, protesters headed towards barracks #feb17 #Libya

2.37pm – Bahrain: Associated Press and AFP are both reporting that security forces have fired tear gas at protest marches in Manama, the capital of Bahrain.

2.35pm – Bahrain: In the comments, SandyBh provides some updates from Bahrain:



Another protest is right now being held outside the Salmaniya hospital by the doctors, expressing shock and demanding answers for attack on both protesters and medics and answers why doctors and ambulances were prevented from reaching wounded ...

Just got an SMS, commemorators in Daih might be heading to Pearl Roundabout later on.

SandyBh is also suggesting that the pro-king/pro-government protests involve a lot of foreigners/non-Bahrainis.

2.25pm – Bahrain: In the comments, SandyBh gives some details of what the protesters in Sitra are up to:



The last I talked to somebody who was in the morning funeral procession in Sitra (attended by 20,000-30,000), he told me that people are heading for the village Daih to attend the last day of funeral processions for the first martyr, Ali Moshami'i, who was murdered last Monday. (Note: funeral processions usually take three days in Bahrain.) Dunno where they will go from there!

2.17pm - Bahrain: President Christian Wulff of Germany has cancelled a trip to Bahrain later this month in response to the government's heavy-handed treatment of demonstrators. Olaf Glaeseker, a presidential spokesman, said Wulff insisted that "freedom of assembly and freedom of speech in Bahrain must be fully guaranteed." Wulff's trip to Bahrain was part of a tour to the region taking in Kuwait and Qatar.

1.49pm – Bahrain: Mark Tran has just been on the phone to Martin Chulov who's in Manama.

Martin says the organisers of the protests have taken a tactical decision not to head to

Pearl roundabout, scene of violent clashes in the early hours of Thursday morning, for what would be a showdown with the security forces. He adds, however, that there is talk of a protest at the roundabout tomorrow.

"There was no showdown today but there will be one as both sides have painted themselves into a corner," says Martin.

1.37pm - Algeria: A weekend of rallies and gatherings calling for democracy is planned in the oil-rich Magreb state, the Guardian's [Anglelique Chrisafis](#) writes, despite protest remaining banned in Algiers.



An umbrella group of civil society groups, some independent trade unionists and small political parties have organised fresh demonstrations to end the authoritarian rule of the president, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, and the military generals.

In a statement, the group's committee said: "Despite the warlike offensive in place in and around the capital, thousands of citizens broke through the wall of fear."

Demonstrators said people now felt less scared of taking to the streets. The protest organisers said the government's offer to lift the state of emergency was a red herring as it could simply be replaced by an even more repressive anti-terrorist law.

Last weekend 30,000 police saturated the capital to prevent 2,000 people demonstrating. Riot police blocked off roads, harassed, beat and arrested hundreds of people who had gathered.

Read Anglelique's full dispatch from Algeria [here](#).

1.29pm - Yemen: One person was killed when a hand grenade was thrown at anti-government protesters in Taiz earlier, Reuters is reporting.

Eight people were initially reported to have been wounded in the attack, which came when a car drove up to protesters and a passenger threw a grenade out of the window.

1.18pm - Egypt: Jack Shenker writes from Cairo's Tahrir Square:

The million-strong crowd in central Cairo is still swelling as Hamza Namira – a musician famous for his political lyrics – kicks off a concert in one corner of the square. The atmosphere remains festive, with much humour on show. One young man is holding aloft a placard reading: "We thought Mubarak was going to hell - turns out it was only Sharm El Sheikh," while another is brandishing a big hidden camera alongside a banner that reads: "Only joking Hosni: You've been framed."

Nearby a group of people have put a neat but gruesome twist on one of the most popular chants of the anti-government uprising: "Ahum ahum ahum, Al Masryeen ahum." It means: "Here, here, here, the people of Egypt are here," but now they've swapped "the Egyptians" for "Habib Al Adly" – Egypt's hated former interior minister who was arrested earlier today – and are pointing down to a dead sheep in the road.

Also on display are a number of flags expressing solidarity with other anti-government uprisings erupting across the Middle East – one piece of fabric managed to cleverly combine the national colours of about six different

neighbouring countries. Gamal Fahmi, a satirical writer for the popular independent daily newspaper Al Dostour, told me: "What happened in Egypt is echoing across the Arab world. I am absolutely certain more of the old regimes will fall."

1.16pm – Libya: Here's a sequence of images showing protesters in Tubruq, Libya, destroying a monument to Muammar Gaddafi's "green book" of political philosophy (see 11.21am).



Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

1.15pm: [A useful Yemen Twitter list.](#)

1.13pm – Egypt: Nancy Messieh, who wrote the poem mentioned at [10.58am](#), has been in touch to explain why she wrote it and what she thinks the future holds for her country:

I wanted to write the poem because I wanted to honour what happened in Tahrir, and throughout the country. I wanted to make a contribution, and that was the best way I knew how. And most importantly I don't want people to forget about what we went through to get to where we are today.

There's still so much work to be done in Egypt, so much change that is waiting to happen, but I refuse to be anything but optimistic and am grateful that I get to be a part of it. It's hard to say what the immediate future holds, there are so many different elements at play in the arena now and very little time to prepare for free and fair elections. I think that is where have to all put our focus and energy – in ensuring that we have a constitution that honours the January 25 demands and the chance, for the first time ever, to elect our president.

1.13pm – Egypt: [Gallery of Egyptian demonstrations today.](#)

1.12pm – Libya: [Amateur video footage of Libyan protests.](#)

1.11pm – Morocco: [Giles Tremlett on Sunday's planned protests in Morocco.](#)

1.07pm – Egypt: Earlier we heard that the number of pro-Mubarak protesters was around 200, but [ianinegypt](#), an independent film-maker based in the country, reckons there were significantly more than that at the protests across the river from Tahrir Square.

The number of pro-Mubarak protesters throughout the day, coming and going, were probably around 2 thousand. #jan25 #egypt

1.06pm – Iraq: A protest against treatment of protesters in the Middle East is under way in London for the second day in a row, with 25 people entering [the offices of the Kurdistan Regional Government on Edgware Road](#), this morning to protest against deaths in northern Iraq yesterday Iraq.

"We shouted at them [staff in the office]: you no longer represent the Kurdistan people. You should no longer stay in the office," Dashty Jamal, general secretary of the International Federation of Iraqi refugees, told the Guardian.

Jamal said since being ejected by police he and fellow protesters have remained outside the KRG offices demonstrating. A larger protest at the same location has been called for 3pm today, he said, with "over 100" expected to attend. The protesters will demonstrate outside the office from 9am until 6pm every day up to and including Monday.

Two people were killed in Kurdistan and 40 wounded after police shot at a crowd of people demonstrating against corruption and high unemployment. Yesterday hundreds of pro- and anti-Gaddafi protesters clashed outside the Libyan embassy in London.

12.52pm: Here is a **summary of events so far**:

- **Bahrain:** After the funerals of protesters killed in recent violence, demonstrators were expected to head back to Manama's Pearl roundabout. Tens of thousands turned out for the funeral of Mahmood abu Taki ([see 10.30am](#)). The protesters' demands seem to be getting more radical, with calls for the monarchy to be removed ([see 11.33am](#)).
- **Egypt:** An estimated 1 million people have gathered in Tahrir Square in an event celebrating the fall of Hosni Mubarak and putting pressure on the army to include demonstrators in the country's transition to democracy ([see 12.21pm](#)). Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a controversial cleric, gave a strikingly non-sectarian speech.
- **Libya:** Reports claim up to 50 people have been killed in anti-government protests in the east of the country – but it is very hard to verify information from Libya. Reports claim al-Bayda has been taken over by anti-government protesters. But there was little sign of anti-Gaddafi feeling in Tripoli, where the Libyan leader paraded among crowds of supporters ([see 12.17pm](#)).
- **Yemen:** Crowds are demonstrating against Ali Abdullah Saleh, the president, in the capital, Sana'a, and elsewhere. The biggest demonstration – tens of thousands of people – was in Taiz, where reports said eight people had been wounded by a hand grenade ([see 12.12pm](#)).
- **Jordan:** Eight people have been injured in Amman in clashes between pro- and anti-government demonstrators ([see 12.28pm](#)).
- **Iran:** There were calls for the execution of opposition leaders ([see 12.03pm](#)).

12.28pm – Jordan: Eight people have been injured in Amman, Jordan, in clashes between pro- and anti-government demonstrators, in the seventh Friday in a row of unrest there. About 2,000 people protested, according to the Associated Press, with students from the growing Jaayin – or I'm Coming – movement chanting: "We want constitutional reforms; we want a complete change to policies."

12.24pm – Libya: Reuters is corroborating our report that al-Bayda has been taken over by protesters:

Anti-government protesters have seized control of the eastern Libyan city of al-Bayda after they were joined by some local police, two separate Libyan exile groups said on Friday.

"Al-Bayda is in the hands of the people," Giumma el-Omami of the Libyan Human Rights Solidarity group told Reuters.

"The city is out of the control of the [Muammar] Gaddafi regime," said Fathi al-Warfali of the Libyan Committee for Truth and Justice.

The reports, which the two groups said were based on their own telephone contacts with the city of some 250,000 people, could not be independently verified.

12.21pm – Egypt: Jack Shenker is in a "baking hot" Tahrir Square in Cairo for today's "day of victory" demonstration. He says some estimates place the crowd there at over 1 million people, and says it is certainly just as packed as it was during the 18 days of protests that preceded Hosni Mubarak's exit.

Jack listened to the speech made by Yusuf al-Qaradawi – seen as a father figure of the Muslim Brotherhood – and says it was well received:

He was making particularly non-sectarian points. He went out of his way to praise the role Coptic Christians played in Tahrir, the way in which Christians and Muslims prayed together and protected each other. As a man who is not particularly known for his non-sectarian views, that was very welcome.

Jack said he interviewed a Coptic Christian protester after the speech who said he had been "reassured" by the speech and was not worried about the prospect of an Islamist-dominated Egyptian parliament in the future as he felt sure there would be no oppression of the Christian minority.

12.20pm – Yemen: A bit more from Yemen from Reuters:

Crowds of rival demonstrators thronged the Yemeni capital and two other cities on Friday in a show of strength between President Ali Abdullah Saleh's supporters and those demanding an end to his 32 years in power.

In the biggest display of anti-government feeling, tens of thousands of protesters gathered in Hurriya (Freedom) Square in Taiz, about 200km (120 miles) south of the capital Sana'a, witnesses said.

"Down with the dictator, down with oppression," chanted the demonstrators, who have camped out for days in imitation of Egyptian demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

At least 10,000 Saleh loyalists also took to the streets of the busy commercial city.

12.17pm – Libya: Reuters sends some interesting reports from Libya. Their reporter is based in Tripoli rather than Benghazi, where much of the unrest has taken place.

Libya watchers say an Egypt-style uprising is unlikely because the government can use oil cash to smooth over social problems and Gaddafi is widely respected, though support for him is weaker in the Cyrenaica region

around Benghazi.

"For sure there is no national uprising," said Noman Benotman, a former opposition Libyan Islamist who is based in Britain but is currently in Tripoli.

"I don't think Libya is comparable to Egypt or Tunisia. Gaddafi would fight to the very last moment," he said by telephone from the Libyan capital.

Tight controls on media and communications in Libya made it difficult to assess the extent of the violence. But on Friday unverified reports on social network sites said up to 50 people had died. There was no official comment on the violence.

Gaddafi's opponents say they want political freedoms, respect for human rights and an end to corruption. Gaddafi says Libyans enjoy true democracy.

State television showed several hundred pro-government supporters holding a rally in Tripoli's Green Square before dawn. As Gaddafi arrived, he stood up through the sunroof of his limousine and waved to the crowd.

12.14pm – Egypt: Reuters has interviewed demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Mohamed el-Said, 28, from Port Said, said:

This is a serious message to the military. After today, it will be more than obvious to them that if they don't protect the revolution and respond to the people's demands, the next time people go down to Tahrir won't be to celebrate victory, but they will bring their blankets with them like before.

12.12pm – Yemen: More from Yemen. Eight anti-government protesters in Taiz were wounded today when an assailant threw a hand grenade at them, opposition sources and witnesses said, according to Reuters. Several ambulances rushed to the city's Hurriya Square where protesters have camped out for days.

12.10pm – Yemen: Tom Finn, the Guardian's man in Yemen, is at the university in Sana'a, the capital, where protests against the president have been staged for the last eight days. Tom says while the protests are continuing, a group of around 400-500 supporters of Ali Abdullah Saleh, armed with sticks and rocks, have gathered and are sporadically driving away the anti-Saleh demonstrators.

There is a clear difference in age between the two sides, in a country where half the population is under 15, Tom reports:

When you see the two sides standing off against each other, the age gap is very much apparent; the anti-Saleh protesters generally are much younger, lots of them speak English, whereas the pro-Saleh supporters are much more middle-aged, traditionally dressed guys.

—

12.03pm – Iran: Thousands of government supporters called for the execution of opposition leaders at Friday prayers in Tehran this morning, the Associated Press reports.

Hardline cleric Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said during the Friday prayers that the opposition leaders have lost their reputation among people and are practically "dead and executed," while worshippers chanted for their actual executions.

Janati proposed more restrictions on Mir Hossein Mousavi on Mahdi

Karroubi, opposition leaders who are under house arrest, but still managed to organise the largest opposition protest in more than a year on Monday.

"Their communications with people should completely cut. They should not be able to receive and send message. Their phone lines and internet should be cut. They should be prisoners in their home," he said.

11.44am – Egypt: The Guardian's video desk have sent [this clip of Egyptians gathering in Tahrir Square this morning](#).

—

11.37am – Bahrain: [Here's a gallery of pictures of the Bahraini funeral protesters](#).

11.33am – Bahrain: From Bahrain, the Associated Press reports on the changing nature of the protests, with anger now directed at the monarchy itself. Here's an extract:

Amid the Shia funeral rites, many chanted for the removal of king and the entire Sunni dynasty that has ruled for more than two centuries in Bahrain, the first nation in the Gulf to feel the pressure for changes sweeping the Arab world.

"The government has shaken something inside us all and we have lost all trust in it," Mohamed Ali, 40, a civil servant, said as he choked back tears.

"Our demands were peaceful and simple at first. We wanted the prime minister to step down. Now the demands are harsher and have reached the pinnacle of the pyramid. We want the whole government to fall."

In another funeral in the Shia village of Karzkan, opposition leaders urged protesters to keep up their fight but not to seek revenge.

"We know they have weapons and they are trying to drag us into violence," said Sheik Ali Salman, the leader of the largest Shia party, al-Wifaq, whose 18 MPs have resigned in protest from the 40-seat parliament to deepen the political crisis.

11.33am – Yemen: The Associated Press is reporting tens of thousands of Yemenis demonstrating across the country today in the eighth day of protests there. There were riots over night, with protesters in Aden setting fire to a local government building and a demonstrator shot dead by police, according to local officials. The protesters are calling for Ali Abdullah Saleh, the president, to step down after 32 years as president. On social media sites demonstrators are calling for a "Friday of rage" today.

In Sana'a, the capital, the preacher at the university mosque where many protesters had gathered spoke out against torture and beatings of demonstrators and said "we have been living for 30 years without purpose or hope".

The crowds then marched towards the presidential palace chanting anti-government slogans, despite attempts by riot police to stop them. There were also demonstrations elsewhere in the city by the president's supporters. In the past few days the two groups have clashed.

Saleh's promises not to run for re-election in 2013 or to set up his son as his heir have failed to quiet the anti-government storm sweeping Yemen and other nations in the region.

The Yemeni president is an important US ally in fighting al-Qaida. The terror group's Yemen-based offshoot has been linked to attacks beyond Yemen's borders, including the failed attempt in December 2009 to blow up a Detroit-bound aeroplane.

11.26am – Egypt: Associated Press is reporting "tens of thousands of flag-waving Egyptians" in Tahrir Square for "the Friday of victory and continuation". The news agency quotes Sheik Youssef el-Qaradawi as saying: "The revolution is not over, until we have a new Egypt." AP gives this report of what's happening in the square:

People flooded the square ahead of prayers, even though a main access road was blocked by an army jeep and a barricade, and those entering on foot had to present identification to soldiers.

The atmosphere was festive, as organizers hoped it would be, maintaining the upbeat spirit of the earlier protests. A military-style brass band marched through the crowd, while a few vendors sold vuvuzelas, the buzzing horns that became the soundtrack to the World Cup in South Africa last summer.

"We came here because we are excited about Egypt and the revolution," said 48-year-old Ashraf Abdel-Azim, who made his way to the square with his wife, Nadwa, and their 9-year-old son, Ahmed. "We want freedom and change, so we are happy to see it coming."

His wife had prepared a handwritten cardboard sign. "The people want to cleanse the country of corruption," it read.

The three young children of Nizar Mohammad and his wife, Rasha, were caught up in the patriotic fervour of the moment with Egypt's red, white and black flag painted on their faces. They carried small flags, too.

"We want our kids to see where all of this happened," Rasha Mohammad said.

Despite Friday's festivities, the situation in Egypt remains unsettled amid labor unrest and worries the military council running the country won't implement promised reforms.

Wael Hassan, a 32-year-old dentist who participated in the Cairo protests and witnessed major clashes on 28 January, went to Tahrir Square on Friday and captured the anxiety many Egyptians have about the future.

"For me, it's not a celebration. It's a message to the army and the government that we're still here and we will still protest, that we won't stop until we see a civilian government, not a government appointed by Mubarak himself," he said, a reference to the former president's confidants in the transition government.

11.21am – Libya: [Al-Jazeera's live blog](#) features [video footage on YouTube](#) showing protesters in the city of Tubruq tearing down a "green book" monument on Thursday. The green book was written by Muammar Gaddafi, outlining his political philosophy.

11.16am – Egypt: [Gsquare86](#) has posted [this image](#) of people praying in Tahrir Square to Twitter, saying simply: "Speechless." Prayers have just finished.

11.11am – Libya: The local privately-owned [Quryna newspaper in Benghazi](#) has published pictures of what it says are demonstrators with gunshot wounds being carried by a trolley into the local hospital. You can translate the website using a button at the top right. The translation produced this report:

Cyrene [the newspaper] has learned from an official security source that seven victims died and a number were wounded after being shot during protests in the city of Benghazi on Thursday evening.

The source said security forces used live bullets to discourage demonstrators

after protests marked by violence and brutality. The source said police stations and the headquarters of the city's administrative authority had been burned. A number of cars - including seven police cars - were also set alight.

On Thursday, protesters burned a police station in Ras Obeida and the headquarters of the local revolutionary committee. Tyres were also set alight in a number of places, on the most violent day since protests began on Tuesday.

Demonstrators spread out in a number of districts of Benghazi. They were demonstrations in Geleanp, and Ras Obeida, and in the administrative area. Mr Abdul Jalily, 20, said gunfire was heard for the first time in those areas.

Witnesses said that security forces broke up a protest held in Gamal Abdel Nasser Street in central Benghazi a few hours ago, deploying tear gas canisters and firing live bullets into the air for the first time since the protests began.

Cyrene was unable to establish the number of critically injured among the wounded.

11.05am – Libya: Anti-Gaddafi demonstrators have taken over several cities in eastern Libya but have suffered scores of deaths, according to exiled opposition groups in London.

Government troops have withdrawn from al-Bayda, the scene of earlier confrontations, and protesters have blocked the runway to prevent military reinforcements arriving, the National Front for the Salvation of Libya maintains.

Mohamad Ali Abdalla, the deputy director of the NFSL, said:

I was told that there were 13 deaths in the city of al-Bayda alone last night and six more in Benghazi.

In al-Bayda, the city has been taken over and protesters are dismantling the runway to stop any military planes landing.

In total, there have been 30 deaths in Benghazi since demonstrations began on January 15th. Some of those who died were injured citizens who had been taken to al-Jala hospital in Benghazi.

Members of the revolutionary committee were shooting the injured who were brought in. I was told this by a nurse in al-Jala Hospital.

The government's revolutionary committee headquarters have been captured in other places, the FNSL claimed. In Ajdabiya, in north-eastern Libya, demonstrations were in charge of the city.

There have been few demonstrations further west nearer to the capital, Tripoli. In the western mountains, nearer to Tunisia, protesters have also been out on the streets.

Several opposition sites have reported that Gaddafi's regime has been relying on French-speaking soldiers, or "mercenaries" drawn from neighbouring Chad to crack down on the demonstrations (see 9.16am).

11.03am – Bahrain: [leildehat](#) tweets on a pro-government rally in Bahrain:

pro gov rally next to al fateh mosque is being protected by security forces.
couldn't get more inhumane than this... #bahrain

I LIKED FREEDOM



BEFORE IT WAS
COOL

11.01am: My colleague Jack Shenker in Cairo tells me this is the T-shirt all the Tunisian hipsters are wearing right now:

As Jack says: "So much for Arab solidarity."

10.58am – Egypt: This poem, *For Tahrir, For Egypt* by Nancy Messieh, has been doing the rounds on Twitter. Here's an extract:

The world watched as we were called
traitors
and on television screens
in homes, doors locked refusing to let in
the truth,
men spit scorn into cameras
and women screamed into their phones
eyes and hearts full of rage
unable to understand
that Tahrir was theirs, for them,
while government eyes showed only what they wanted
us to see
the sun setting over the Nile

10.52am – Egypt: ianinegypt tweets: "This is the most packed I've seen Tahrir. There could be a million people today."

Sandmonkey, the blogger who rose to prominence through his reporting of the anti-Mubarak protests in Egypt – and was arrested during the demonstrations – is in Tahrir Square tweeting away:

At a cafe right next to tahrir. People looking for places to pray coz of how crowded it is.

10.51am – Bahrain: One our commenters, ccopenhaver, who was living in Bahrain until recently and is in regular contact with friends there, states the case for the monarchy.

There is also a significant rally to support King Hamad in Bahrain at Al Fateh mosque in Juffair today after Jumma prayers. Why are we not hearing anything about this? Much of the country, although renouncing the use of violence by security forces, support the king and are against the protests, where is the coverage of both sides? We are only getting news of the protesters, especially by Mr Nicholas Kristof, who is tweeting ignorant comments about the king's spending and popularity. What many people may not know is that the king is able to provide every Bahraini citizen with free healthcare, education, etc without ever asking for a cent in taxes. "Poverty" in Bahrain is not even close to comparable to what we see in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, etc.

10.46am: My colleagues on the Guardian's video desk have put up this clip of the protesting Bahraini mourners.

—

10.43am – Libya: Libya's state news agency says Muammar Gaddafi has toured the capital, Tripoli, trying to rally loyalists amid widening anti-government protests, according to the Associated Press news agency.

The state news agency Jana says that Gaddafi's convoy toured Tripoli late Thursday to rally support. A pro-Gaddafi online paper says a son of Gaddafi has visited security forces in eastern region where many of the protests took place to offer financial help.

10.37am – Egypt: Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a leading Muslim Brotherhood figure, is giving a sermon at Friday prayers in Tahrir Square. Shadihamid, who is tweeting snippets of al-Qaradawi's sermon, reports that there is "definitely a more religious crowd here".

shadihamid points out:

A million people praying behind a leading Islamist cleric in tahrir sq... That'll be sure to get Americans nervous #jan25

Al-Qaradawi was refused a visa to enter the UK three years ago, the Foreign Office saying the UK "will not tolerate the presence of those who seek to justify any acts of terrorist violence or express views that could foster inter-community violence".

Reports say al-Qaradawi has told the square that "Egypt taught the world about revolutions", which is perhaps a little discourteous to Tunisia.

Der Spiegel has a good background piece on al-Qaradawi and his role within the Muslim Brotherhood.

10.35am – Bahrain: Al-Jazeera has a powerful report from a hospital in Bahrain where people voice incredulity and anger at the response of the security forces to their protests. **(Warning: there is disturbing footage.)**

10.30am – Bahrain: In the comments, goonerinoman, who sent some very interesting first-person reports from Bahrain yesterday, has this from the funeral of Mahmood abu Taki.

Just got back from Sitra for the funeral of Mahmood abu Taki. Very sad scenes. I would not like to estimate the numbers but maybe 20,000. A huge raft of emotions from sadness and grieving to retribution and hatred. Lots of uses of the word martyr over the mosque tannoy. After the funeral it looked like they were preparing to protest. A hardcore of around 5,000 waited whilst others went their separate ways.

—

10.28am – Bahrain and Yemen: The Committee to Protect Journalists in New York says the authorities in Bahrain and Yemen have escalated their physical attacks on the press in order to censor coverage of spreading anti-government protests.

In Bahrain, ABC reporter Miguel Marquez was beaten early Thursday while covering a violent attempt by authorities to clear Lulu Square (Pearl Square) in Manama by what he described as "a gang of thugs". Marquez can be heard shouting "journalist" while being attacked in an audio recording posted on the network's website. His camera was confiscated. Several journalists also reported today that Bahraini authorities are barring journalists from entering the country.

New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof tweeted: "Bahrain barring journalists from entry at airport. King Hamad doesn't want witnesses to his brutality." Roy Gutman, a foreign desk editor for McClatchy Newspapers, told CPJ that McClatchy reporter Nancy Youssef was denied entry to the

country. In Yemen, photographers and camera operators were targeted today by pro-government supporters at anti-government protests. At least four photojournalists were attacked, beaten, and had their cameras confiscated.

10.25am: More links from commenters and those on Twitter:

- [A report from today of a protester killed in Yemen.](#)

Protesters in Yemen's southern port city of Aden have set fire to the municipal building and a third demonstrator was killed, witnesses said, as protests stretched into an eighth day.

Hundreds of protesters also demonstrated in the country's second largest city, Taiz, demanding the removal of the president, a key US ally in battling al Qaida.

- [A video of a shooting in Libya](#), purportedly from yesterday (via ZahratTrabli).

(Warning: video is graphic and disturbing.)

10.24am – Yemen: Al-Jazeera is reporting clashes between pro- and anti-government demonstrators in Sana'a. There have been calls on social networking sites for a "Friday of rage" in the country.

10.22am: Reuters is reporting that Amr Moussa, the head of the Arab League, said the group had not received any formal request to reschedule an Arab summit planned for Iraq in March, after Libya said it would be postponed due regional circumstances.

Asked if it had been delayed, Moussa told Reuters: "I haven't received any formal request," adding that the meeting planned for 29 March was still proceeding as scheduled.

10.16am – Bahrain: With the US navy's fifth fleet headquartered in Bahrain, there is much at stake for the Obama administration. The US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, yesterday telephoned her Bahraini counterpart to express her "deep concern" after riot police stormed a protest camp. Here's what the White House spokesman said yesterday:

We believe that people have universal rights, including the right to peaceful assembly. So we continue to urge the government of Bahrain to show restraint in responding to peaceful protests. The government of Bahrain has the responsibility to maintain peace and security for its citizens and to hold accountable those who utilise excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators.

10.13am – Egypt: Al-Jazeera English is showing a huge crowd gathered in Tahrir Square – the numbers look similar to those we saw last Friday, when Mubarak finally made his exit. People are waving banners and chanting, and Al-Jazeera reports that the army has been handing out celebratory flags to protesters.

Gsquare86, a blogger who attended many of the protests which finally ousted Mubarak, is back in the square to celebrate the day of victory and [tweeting energetically](#):

It is so awesome to reunite with my new friends from Tahrir, we spent 18 days that changed our lives together, and now reunited :)

There are reports that there are now 200 pro-Mubarak protesters gathered in Mohandiseen in Cairo – but their demonstration is also peaceful. Elsewhere there are also thousands of people celebrating on the streets in Alexandria.

10.02am: Useful links from commenter orlandobeetle:

- [Map of pro-democracy protests in Libya](#) (via Twitter user arasmus).

- [Videos reportedly of unrest in Tunisia yesterday](#).

9.59am: 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.

9.49am – Iraq: Reuters is reporting that Iraqi politicians are making attempts to head off the kind of popular uprising seen elsewhere in the Middle East. They are buying sugar, diverting money from fighter jets to food, giving free power, and cutting their own pay. Reuters reports:

Iraqis have long protested against poor government services. But demonstrations against food, power and water shortages have mounted in recent weeks and some protesters are now voicing direct anger at prime minister Nouri al-Maliki's new government.

Gala Riani, a Middle East analyst with IHS Global Insight, said:

Certainly from the steps they [politicians] are taking it would seem that they are nervous. Iraq has experienced relatively big protests in the past related to the poor state of public services without taking such a big move as increasing electricity subsidies.

Wayne White of the Middle East Institute said:

Maliki's almost panicked response to this new unrest demonstrates the extent to which he feels insecure: a man who is well aware that he obtained his second term as prime minister primarily through guile, stubbornness, and help from Tehran.

But Ranj Alaadin of the Next Century Foundation pointed out some key differences between Iraq and Tunisia or Egypt:

The Tunisian/Egyptian uprisings revolved around a desire for regime change and free and fair elections. Iraq has a democratically elected coalition government that's representative of the Iraqi society, as opposed to having one ruling individual or family and ruling elite. It is very difficult to coordinate and execute an uprising against a government that is so diverse and heterogeneous.

9.36am – Bahrain: An earlier peevish [tweet from the New York Times's Nick Kristof](#):

If #Bahrain King Hamad took the money he spends on PR firms hassling me and spent it on his people, he might be more popular.

9.33am – Egypt: Thousands have gathered in Tahrir Square. [CNN reports](#) "waving flags

and beating drums" as they celebrate on today's "day of victory".

There is a counter pro-Mubarak rally, Sherine Tadros, al-Jazeera English's correspondent, tweets. There are around 100 pro-Mubarak supporters gathered, Tadros reports, carrying banners reading: "Forgive us, father, for the actions of our brothers."

Tadros says most of the crowd in Tahrir Square for the day of victory celebrations "don't really know why they [the pro-Mubarak brigade] are here".

9.30am – Bahrain: Reuters has a report from the funeral procession with good detail.

Here's an extract:

Inside a mosque, men washed the body of 22-year-old student Mahmoud Abu Taki, whose shoulder was peppered with buckshot. "He told me before he went there: 'Don't worry, father, I want freedom,'" said his father, Mekki Abu Taki, 53.

"This is a failed government," said Abu Taki, a real estate company manager. "Of course the protests will continue. The government here is like people of the jungle."

The bodies of his son and of Ali Mansour Khudeir, 58, were then draped in red and white Bahraini flags and placed on top of two vehicles which drove slowly through the streets.

"Trial, trial for the criminal gang," the crowd shouted. "Justice, freedom and constitutional monarchy." A brief attempt to start a chant of "Death to al-Khalifa" fizzled.

There was no visible police presence in Sitra, although a helicopter circled overhead.

9.27am – Libya: Muammar Gaddafi's family appears to be taking a prominent role in suppressing the revolt. The news agency Reuters has been told that Saadi, a son of the president, is heading to the eastern city of Benghazi, the flashpoint in the latest round of demonstrations (see 8.39am). Reuters reported:

The resident also said Saadi Gaddafi, a businessman son of the Libyan leader, had been on local radio and said he was coming to Benghazi to take over as mayor of the city and protect the people there. Funerals of those killed were expected in Benghazi and Al Bayda on Friday, and could act as a catalyst for further protests.

9.21am – Bahrain: Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times tweets from Bahrain:

Vast throngs here at Darraz mosque in #Bahrain. Crowd chants "Death to al-Khalifa." No police in sight.

Calling for the death of royal figures seems a significant escalation. The king of Bahrain is Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa and the prime minister of 40 years is Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, a member of the royal family; four-fifths of the 25-man cabinet are also members of the family.

9.16am – Libya: There are repeated claims that Muammar Gaddafi's regime is relying on "mercenaries" from central African states, such as Chad, as shock troops to break up demonstrations. The latest casualty figure, according to Human Rights Watch, places the number of dead at 24.

LibyanThinker:

Mercenaries operating in #Libya have been confirmed to be #French

speaking Africans from CHAD. #feb17 #Tripoli #Benghazi

fustat:

At least 24 people killed by sec forces - Libya: Security Forces Fire on 'Day of Anger' Demonstrations (HRW) <http://bit.ly/f34oxD> #Feb17

9.11am – Bahrain: Mark Tran has been talking to Martin Chulov, who has been attending a funeral rally in a suburb of Bahrain. He says tens of thousands of people have been peacefully attending the event, but there could a showdown later on when the mourners march to Pearl roundabout.

This is where there protesters were attacked by security forces on Wednesday night, leading to several fatalities. Martin says the demands of the demonstrators have escalated significantly and are now targeting the monarchy itself. However, Martin says there has no evidence whatsoever of any anti-American sentiment. Bahrain is the headquarters of the American navy's fifth fleet.

There's been a large funeral procession through a suburb of Sitra, which swelled to around 30,000 as people moved through the streets. They were carrying the body of one of the people killed in a pre-dawn raid on the tent city yesterday. The rally has now arrived at a cemetery for burial. People are standing around; it's been very peaceful so far. They plan to regroup and march on Pearl roundabout ... If that happens then we are setting the scene for a showdown the security forces.

8.54am – Egypt: There is a sense of deja vu watching al-Jazeera this morning as Egyptians gather once again in Cairo's Tahrir Square. The key question is how the army will react to today's protests – and whether they mark the moment when the goals of the demonstrators and those of the army begin to part company.

This morning the Muslim Brotherhood, the formerly banned Islamist group, urged Egyptians to protect the revolution that toppled Hosni Mubarak from those who wanted to "kidnap it and its accomplishments".

Mohamed Badie, the leader of the group, which this week said it would form a political party, sought to reassure Egyptians about his organisation's influence. He said the Brotherhood would not seek the presidency or a parliamentary majority in free and fair elections promised by the military council ruling the country.

"[The Brotherhood] has no appetite for the presidency, or a majority or temporal positions," he said.

8.39am: Good morning. Governments around the Middle East are bracing themselves for protests and violence today as the unrest in the region continues to spread.

Bahrain

In Bahrain this morning many thousands of mourners called for the downfall of the monarchy as they began burying the dead after an assault on protesters at Manama's Pearl roundabout on Wednesday night which left five dead. Today's calls for the king to go were seen as an escalation of demonstrators' demands; the uprising began with calls for a weakening of the Sunni monarchy's hold on top government posts and measures to address discrimination against the Shia majority. Two funerals have taken place, with one more to go this morning – after which protesters plan to march to Pearl roundabout, something that may cause a confrontation with police and security forces.

Libya

In Libya, soldiers were deployed on to the streets of Benghazi, after thousands took to the streets overnight to protest about security forces killing an estimated 24 demonstrators. The city was quiet this morning, but a witness reported shooting last night and the BBC said 10 people had been killed. Funerals are expected today that could act as a catalyst for further protests. Pro-government supporters were also out on the streets this morning. Crucially, there was little sign of anti-government protest in Tripoli, the capital. [Ian Black has more on yesterday's protests here.](#)

Egypt

Thousands of Egyptians gathered for prayers this morning and a planned victory march through Cairo's Tahrir Square, the site of the protests that led to the fall of the president, Hosni Mubarak, a week ago today. The demonstrations will also act as a warning to the army – which took power after Mubarak stepped down – that protesters want to take a more active role in the country's transition to democracy.

Yemen

New protests are also expected today in Sana'a, Yemen's capital. Yesterday saw a sixth day of [clashes between pro-democracy protesters and government loyalists in the country](#). Demonstrators want to get rid of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled for 32 years but is seen by Washington as an ally in its fight against al Qaeda militants based in Yemen.

Iraq

About 1,000 protesters in Basra, the southern Iraqi city, are demonstrating to demand better services from the government, jobs and improved pensions. They warned that today's protest would be peaceful, but others in the future might not be. At least five people have been killed at protests throughout the country this week.

Our correspondents throughout the region and Middle East experts and reporters in London will be keeping you updated throughout the day.

[Next](#)

[Previous](#)

[Blog home](#)