



Bahrain 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Rape/Sexual Violence; Fraud; Financial Security; Embezzlement; Drug Trafficking; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest; Extreme heat/drought; Counterfeiting

Near East > Bahrain; Near East > Bahrain > Manama

3/10/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Bahrain is composed of a group of small desert islands with a total land area of 665 square kilometers and a population of approximately 1.3 million, including approximately 620,000 non-nationals. The country is located off the east coast of Saudi Arabia, and the two countries are connected by a 24 kilometer causeway.

Almost all citizens of the country are Muslim. Though the government does not publish statistics on the population breakdown by sect, observers believe Shia comprise a slight majority of the Muslim citizen population.

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

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The overall rate of street crime is considered low, and the targeting of Westerners is uncommon; however, there have been a few isolated incidents of theft and break-ins. As in most cities, robbery and burglary are crimes that can be prevented with common sense precautions. Over the past few years, in commercial districts surrounding Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, Westerners have reported being victims of crime. There have been reported and anecdotal incidents of harassment and sexual assault of women. Other reported crimes include, but are not limited to, various types of immigration and residency fraud, ATM/credit card theft, white collar fraud, embezzlement, possession/trafficking of illegal narcotics, and property theft.

Much of the crime occurs within the large South Asian population of guest workers, numbering approximately 500,000.

Violent crime is rare, and firearms are prohibited.

Other Areas of Concern

In February 2012, the U.S. Embassy identified geographic boundaries known as “red zones.” These red zones were designated as restricted travel areas. In March 2013, the Embassy introduced “yellow zones,” which are designated as daylight travel areas only. The U.S. Embassy is constantly assessing the island-wide security situation to reevaluate the restricted zones. The current restricted travel areas can be found on the U.S. Embassy Manama’s website at <http://bahrain.usembassy.gov>.

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Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Although the roads are generally very good, driving can be hazardous. Night driving is particularly dangerous because some drivers do not turn on their headlights. Apart from periodic sandstorms, fog, and rain, road and weather conditions are favorable most of the year, but drivers must remain on the defensive and alert to the hazards posed by other drivers. Aggressive driving coupled with a high-speed road network creates a dangerous driving environment. Bahrain has an excellent highway system, but many drivers neglect to yield in merges; drive in excess of the posted speed limits; weave through traffic at high rates of speed. The danger posed by these high-speed drivers is compounded by many others who drive well below the speed limit across all lanes of traffic, increasing the chances for accidents.

A good general rule to follow is to avoid the number one (far left) lane on highways due to the prevalence of high-speed drivers. These number-one-lane drivers may exhibit aggressive behavior (flashing their headlights rapidly, tailgating in order to get the slower driver to move) if blocked. Road rage, pursuit, extremely aggressive and reckless driving, and vehicle gamesmanship often end in disaster when a vehicle is forced off the road, or has a collision with another vehicle on the crowded highways.

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One in five vehicles is involved in an accident each year, often with deadly results. Speed is the primary cause for traffic fatalities. Alcohol-related traffic accidents increase over weekends (Thursday evening through Saturday).

Wearing seat belts is required by law, but compliance is irregular, and traffic enforcement is minimal but increasing with the government's new awareness campaign.

Police checkpoints are not unusual and increase during certain time periods, specifically February and March. Ministry of Interior (MOI) maintains semi-permanent checkpoints in certain areas with a high rate of opposition activity and near MOI installations that may afford significant scrutiny to passersby. Uniformed police have the authority to make traffic stops. The RSO advises individuals to remain in their own vehicles with the doors locked but to lower the window and be polite when answering questions. Be prepared to present identification, as there is a 2014 law requiring people to carry government issued ID. Do not attempt to run from an official police checkpoint.

If someone is involved in an accident, s/he should not move the vehicle and should immediately contact the traffic police by calling 199 if there are no injuries or 999 if the accident involves injuries. Drivers should wait until the police arrive or direct them to one of several traffic police stations to file an accident report. The driver should obtain a copy of the accident report for later use. Car rental and auto repair companies require a police accident report prior to making repairs.

Public Transportation Conditions

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The use of marked taxis or transportation companies is generally safe and reliable; however, the risk of sexual harassment is elevated.

Uber, the international mobile app-based transportation network, began its testing phase in Bahrain in December 2014 and was officially launched in June 2015. In October 2015, local taxi drivers threatened to go on a strike over the introduction of Uber services and have caused several incidents.

On November 8, taxi drivers located at a taxi stand forced Uber drivers to pull over and harassed them before they reached a common pick-up location.

On November 21, an angry mob of taxi drivers surrounded an Uber vehicle near the Manama Souq and began to violently yell at the passengers and the driver telling them to exit the vehicle. The mob of taxi drivers opened the doors of the vehicle and harassed and threatened the driver and the three passengers, that they would go to jail and have to pay 1,000 BD fine each. An MOI traffic police officer was on scene attempting to defuse the situation, allowing the three passengers to exit the vehicle and enter nearby restaurant to wait for additional police to arrive. Once the police were able to restore order, the passengers departed the area utilizing another Uber without incident.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Bahrain International Airport (BAH) is the international airport of Bahrain, located in Muharraq, an island about 7km (4.3 mi) northeast of the capital, Manama. It serves as the hub for the national carrier Gulf Air. www.bahrainairport.com

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Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Although there have been no terrorist attacks against Americans, the fact that Bahrain is joined by a causeway link to Saudi Arabia, has a large U.S. Department of Defense presence, and is in very close proximity to neighboring state sponsors of terrorism demands constant security awareness. Bahrain's police and security forces are competent and capable counterterrorist partners.

Bahrain continued to experience periodic bomb attacks from Shi'a militants throughout 2015 with targeting focused exclusively on Bahraini security forces. In previous years, the attacks mostly involved homemade devices, but in 2015 the militants began to use military-grade explosive materials (C-4, RDX).

On March 19, a bomb injured two policemen in the predominantly Shi'a village of Karranah.

On July 15, the MOI reported a man accidentally blew himself up when attempting to plant a bomb targeting police in the Shi'a village of Eker.

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On July 28, a bomb killed two policemen and injured six policemen outside a girl's school on the Shi'a majority island of Sitra.

On August 28, a blast killed one policeman in Karranah, and seven civilians were injured in collateral damage.

On September 10, a bomb targeted a police station in Bilad Al-Qadim but caused no casualties.

On October 9, a bomb targeted MOI forces, and they responded to a dumpster fire along Juffair Avenue, Juffair, which is approximately 120 meters from the Bahrain School perimeter; there were no reported casualties.

Suspected Shi'a militants targeted security services with Molotov cocktails and other homemade devices throughout 2015, and other blasts occurred with fewer/no casualties. On several occasions, ISIL-affiliated social media accounts claimed the group would carry out attacks in Bahrain, but these failed to materialize, and the country did not experience any Sunni terrorist incidents in 2015.

The call for self-radicalization, whether disseminated on extremist forums, or via the broader approach via social media continue to be a global concern. It is difficult to determine which message will inspire a violent extremist.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy governed by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. The Constitution, ratified in 2002, established an elected lower house of parliament, the Council of Representatives, and an appointed upper

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house, the Shura Council. Elections for the Council of Representatives were held in 2006, 2010, and 2014.

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Anti-government demonstrations are commonplace and frequently become violent. These demonstrations routinely include: throwing rocks, burning trash receptacles, blocking major highways, vigilante-type checkpoints, and the use of Molotov cocktails and various other homemade weapons and improvised explosive devices. Bahraini security officials, not Westerners, remain the target of these types of activities. However, there is concern that Westerners may become involved in a “wrong place, wrong time scenario.” Violent clashes, often without advance warning, between security forces and demonstrators can make travel in/around Bahrain dangerous. The demonstrations are primarily located in/around identified areas of concern. The MOI maintains official and temporary checkpoints in certain areas and routinely uses tear gas and stun grenades along with birdshot and other crowd control measures against demonstrators.

On February 13, 2011, opposition groups began organizing anti-government demonstrations, some of which resulted in violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Since then, opposition groups continue to rally and demonstrate against the government and hold spontaneous demonstrations in response to world, regional, or local developments. Both peaceful and violent oppositionist activity increase in the February to March timeframe to mark the anniversaries of the 2011 events. During these times, violent opposition groups have sought to disrupt daily life by creating havoc on the roadways and infrastructure with

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homemade spike strips, blocking off roads with burning tires and debris, and calling for a general labor strikes. Violent activity against security forces has included an increase in Molotov cocktail attacks and the use of improvised weapons, improvised explosive devices, and shotgun-like projectiles.

The U.S. Embassy issues frequent Security Messages alerting American citizens to the location of planned demonstrations.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Bahrain's low desert plain and arid climate put it at risk for periodic droughts and dust storms.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Communications (cell phones and Internet) are reliable; however, during the 2011 uprising, cell towers were shut down in an effort to prevent their use in organizing demonstration activity.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is an abundance of pirated merchandise for sale, readily available from street vendors.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Women traveling alone have been harassed while driving or when out.

U.S. citizens should keep in mind the cultural differences among the many people who coexist in Bahrain and should be cognizant that unwitting actions may invite unwanted attention.

Drug-related Crimes

There is a growing illegal drug market, and the government regularly interdicts illegal drugs entering the country. In 2014, media outlets reported several seizures of illegal narcotics by local authorities at the King Fahad Causeway crossing and the airport due to enhanced monitoring and enforcement measures.

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Police Response

Visitors should be aware that the use of profane language and gestures in public can result in fines and arrests.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police are generally professional and competent. If American citizens are detained, they should make their citizenship known immediately to the officers. The authorities will notify the U.S. Embassy. Consular officers will assist and visit when necessary.

Crime Victim Assistance

Police, ambulance, and fire services can be reached by dialing 999.

Crimes of rape are perceived to not be fully prosecuted under the law.

Police/Security Agencies

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The Ministry of Interior (MOI) is responsible for law enforcement and public safety. The Public Security Forces are the principal law enforcement arm of the MOI and are responsible for maintaining order and security.

The Special Security Forces are the paramilitary law enforcement arm and include the riot police, SWAT, explosive team, and VIP protection.

Medical Emergencies

Basic modern medical care and medicine are available in several hospitals and clinics. Three government hospitals, a network of primary care clinics, and several private facilities offer a wide range of medical services. Cardiac care, general surgery, ENT, internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics, orthopedics, and dentistry services are readily available, as are x-rays, CT-scans and MRI testing. The government hospitals house both trauma and ICU units. In an emergency, call 999 or go to the emergency department of a nearby hospital.

Payment at all medical facilities is due at the time of service. Some hospitals have limited direct billing capability for certain insurance carriers. Billing and insurance practices vary among the medical facilities.

Pharmacies are common and carry a wide range of medications.

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

If experiencing chest pain, go directly to the Bahrain Defense Force Hospital's Chest Pain clinic (Tel: 1776 6637 or 1776 6626) located in the Emergency Department. If an ambulance is required, contact 999 and state it is cardiac emergency. They will contact BDF, which will send out a BDF ambulance and care team.

Local medical facilities include, but are not limited to, the following (Bahrain Defense Force, Salmaniya Hospital, and King Hamad University Hospital (KHUH) are the three tertiary facilities):

American Mission Hospital (AMH): Tel: +973 17 253-447; Saar Medical and Dental Center: Tel: +973 17 790-025 - Bahrain's oldest hospital is located on Shaikh Isa al Kabeer Road in central Manama. The urgent Care unit has a doctor on 24-hour duty. It provides general practitioner services and specialty services in internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, general surgery, physiotherapy, and dietitian services. Medical and dental care (including pharmacy) is available at both AMH in central Manama and at Saar Medical and Dental Center located in the Saar area. AMH and Saar Medical Clinic are not staffed or equipped for cardiac, trauma, or emergency care. AMH is a private not-for-profit hospital.

Awali Hospital: Tel: +973 17 757 600 - Awali Hospital is a private hospital primarily staffed by Western doctors, nurses, and midwives. It provides general practitioner services and specialty services in internal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, general surgery, physiotherapy, and dietitian services. Awali Hospital is not staffed or equipped for cardiac, stroke, major trauma, or emergency care.

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Bahrain Defense Force Hospital (BDF): Tel: +973 17 766 555 - This is the Private Practice Appointment (for all Non-Bahrainis/Expats) number. Main switchboard is 1766 3366, which will refer to all departments. BDF Hospital is a government hospital; it is located in Riffa and has a modern, state-of-the-art Coronary Care Unit. The Al-Khalifa Cardiac Care Center is in a separate building that is joined to the main hospital by a walkway. Various specialist services, full service emergency department, and an intensive care unit are available.

Bahrain Specialist Hospital (BSH): Tel: +973 17 812 000 - BSH is a private hospital located in Juffair. It has several specialties including cardiology, endocrinology, gastroenterology, internal medicine, general surgery, pediatrics, and orthopedics. Bahrain Specialist Hospital has a full-service emergency room and intensive care unit.

International Hospital of Bahrain (IHB): Tel: +973 17 598 222 - IHB is a private hospital located on Budaiya highway and has several specialties to include general surgery, obstetrics, gynecology, pediatrics, and a full service emergency room and intensive care unit.

King Hamad University Hospital (KHUH): Tel: + (973) 17 444 777 – KHUH is the newest hospital in Bahrain, opened in 2012. This tertiary government facility has most medical specialties and sub-specialties. Though without 24/7 neurosurgical assets, it is still the recommended facility for trauma management. A blood bank is located here, as is the only hyperbaric chambers in country. An oncology center, planned to open in 2016/17, will be the largest in the Middle East.

Royal Bahrain Hospital (RBH): Tel: (+973) 1724-69-01 – RBH is located less than five minutes from the Embassy, and it has a small emergency room. Due to its proximity and excellent working relationship with the Embassy's Health Unit, RBH is often utilized for laboratory and routine radiologic examinations by the Embassy.

Salmaniya Medical Center (SMC): Tel: 1728 8888 (the receptionist may answer as Ministry Of Health). This number will direct you to any Department in SMC. SMC is the main government hospital with over 1,000 beds and providing many specialist medical services. SMC has full emergency and ambulance services and an intensive care unit. Stroke patients are likely best served at this facility.

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Gulf Dental Hospital: +973 17 741 444 - Provides all types of specialized dental treatments.

Seef Dental Centre: +973 1758 7991 - Provides all types of specialized dental treatments.

Available Air Ambulance Services

International SOS: +971 4 601 8777 – International SOS maintains a dedicated fleet of air ambulances that provide evacuation services worldwide. <http://www.internationalsos.com>.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Current vaccination and health information is posted on the Center for Disease Control's website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/bahrain.htm>

OSAC Country Council Information

The Bahrain OSAC Country Council meets monthly and includes more than 500 members. Prospective members may contact the Council at: osac.manama@gmail.com. To reach OSAC's Near East team, please email OSACNEA@state.gov.

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U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Street Address: Building No. 979

Road 3119, Block 331

Zinj District

Manama - Kingdom of Bahrain

The American Embassy Consular section offers American Citizen Services for routine matters on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday 1:30-3:00pm, and Thursday 9:00-12:00pm. Consular Report of Birth Abroad service is Sunday, Monday, Wednesday at 1:00 pm, and Thursday at 8:30am. All consular services are by appointments only.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Emergency requests after-hours will be handled by the Embassy Duty Officer. In case of an emergency after hours, call the Embassy switchboard and follow the recorded instructions to speak to the U.S. Marine Security Guard on duty.

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Working Hours: (+973) 1724-2700

After Hours: (+973) 1727-5126

Fax: (+973) 1727-2594

Vonage Lines from U.S.: (202)-536-4783; (202)-536-3053; (202)-536-2354; (202)-448-5131

Website: <http://bahrain.usembassy.gov/>

Embassy Guidance

American citizens should enroll with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at <http://step.state.gov>.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Common sense precautions necessary in any major metropolitan area are appropriate for Bahrain. Bahrain is very livable and generally safe, but in view of the possibility of terrorism and political violence, visitors should take active personal security measures, including

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remaining aware of their surroundings and keeping current with local events and Embassy Security Messages, including remaining aware of the areas Embassy Manama recommends as restricted due to ongoing political violence.

Visitors should vary their routes/times, maintain a low profile, and avoid confrontations. Any suspicious activity should be immediately reported to the police. To avoid becoming a target of opportunity for criminals, visitors should lock doors and windows, conceal valuables, and secure purses and bags.

Modest dress, not engaging in “small talk,” not making constant eye contact, and maintaining a low profile may deter harassment. Try to travel with a buddy or in groups, especially during hours of darkness. U.S. citizens who find themselves harassed are advised to seek safe haven in a public area immediately, contact store management or security personnel, and do not attempt to go to a secluded area or drive to their residences until the situation has been resolved.

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