

מרכז עזרי לחקר איראן והמפרץ הפרסי



The Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies

The Persian Gulf Observer

Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf

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The Ezri Center for Iran & Persian Gulf Studies at the University of Haifa is happy to launch ***The Persian Gulf Observer: Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf***. *The Persian Gulf Observer* will be published periodically, expressing the views and analysis of the Ezri center's researchers on various issues concerning the Persian Gulf region and the countries which lay by its shores.

Attached please find the first issue written by Dr. Moshe Terdiman on "The Creation of Environmental Governmental Organs in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia"

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The Persian Gulf Observer: Perspectives on Iran and the Persian Gulf מרכז עזרי לחקר איראן והמפרץ הפרסי באוניברסיטת חיפה שמח להשיק את *Iran and the Persian Gulf*, בו יוצגו מאמרי דעה שיופצו בתדירות תקופתית, פרי- עטם של חוקרי המרכז על מגוון נושאים מאזור המפרץ הפרסי והמדינות השוכנות לחופיה.

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"The Creation of Environmental Governmental Organs in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia"

By Dr. Moshe Terdiman

Until a year ago, all Gulf countries, besides Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, had ministries of environment, which have been tasked with the formulation of environmental policy and strategy for the country and with the implementation of environmental laws promulgated by the parliament. The Ministries of Environment in the Gulf countries have different names: the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs in Oman, the Ministry of Water and Environment in Yemen, the Ministry of Environment in Qatar, the Ministry of Environment and Water in the UAE, the Environment Public Authority in Kuwait, the Ministry of Environment in Iraq, and the Department of Environment in Iran.

In December 2012, the Supreme Council for the Environment was established in Bahrain by a royal decree, which was approved by parliament and later endorsed by the Shura Council on March 26, 2013. It replaced the Public Commission for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife. The head of this Council is the king's second son, Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad bin Issa al-Khalifa. It consists of six ministers, who bring with them an expertise in industry, trade, health, municipal affairs, social development, electricity, water, the oil and gas sectors, etc. The Council's declared aim is to protect Bahrain's natural environment and to monitor potentially harmful industrial activity. However, it is also in a good position, due to the comprehensive knowledge and expertise which is brought to the table by its members, to oversee all services linked to the environment as well as to formulate environmental policy and strategy for the country and to enact environmental legislation and implement environmental laws promulgated by the parliament whose aim is the protection of the environment.¹

¹ See on-line at: http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2013/01/09/feature-03;
[http://www.shura.bh/en/MediaCenter/News/CouncilNews/Pages/03-26-2013\(1\).aspx](http://www.shura.bh/en/MediaCenter/News/CouncilNews/Pages/03-26-2013(1).aspx)



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The Supreme Council for the Environment was established as a result of a few main factors. First of all, in recent years, Bahrain, just as the rest of the Gulf countries, has been witnessing a sharpened increase in various environmental pressures. These pressures include rapid population growth, urbanization and continued construction despite limited land space. All these pressures have resulted in increased land reclamation and pollution. Secondly, Bahrain has experienced increasing sea contamination as a result of waste from ships, factories and even humans. Thirdly, a key problem in Bahrain is the depletion of fish stocks, especially since fishermen and their families comprise a large segment of the Bahraini citizens, as a result of unchecked urbanization, the creation of artificial islands and maritime border agreements with neighboring countries.²

In light of these factors and challenges facing Bahrain, the most important issues that the Council has to deal with are: protecting marine life from urban sprawl and pollution; protecting the rights of Bahraini fishermen; and creating a balance between infrastructure growth and safeguarding natural resources by resorting to sustainable development.³

Indeed, as from the end of March 2013 until today, the Council announced the creation of Hayrrat, Bahrain's largest marine life reserve which is located off the north coast of Bahrain and which will cover an area of around 1,350 sq m, for the protection of the pearls' environment. It will also serve as a cultural and environmental heritage site.⁴ The Council also gave directives to establish a national center for the prevention of nuclear radiation⁵, and it organized a national training course on how to cope with radioactivity in the work place.⁶

² See on-line at: http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2013/01/09/feature-03

³ See on-line at: http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2013/01/09/feature-03; <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=354601>

⁴ See on-line at: [http://www.shura.bh/en/MediaCenter/News/CouncilNews/Pages/03-26-2013\(1\).aspx](http://www.shura.bh/en/MediaCenter/News/CouncilNews/Pages/03-26-2013(1).aspx)

⁵ See on-line at: <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/573601>

⁶ See on-line at: <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/575320>



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In addition, the Council is also responsible for the formulation of Bahrain's 2020 environmental strategy. In this capacity, it directed the executive authorities to draw up a roadmap towards this aim. The Council itself is supposed to be transformed from an executive agency into a regulatory body.⁷

Thus, as of today, Saudi Arabia is the only Gulf country without a ministry of environment or a centralized governmental organ dealing with environmental issues. In Saudi Arabia, many governmental ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, the Wildlife Protection Agency, and the Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection (PME), are tasked with dealing with environmental issues.⁸

Some experts urged the Saudi government to establish a separate Ministry of the Environment which will be able to deal with the challenges of the ever-growing population and the need to supply its ever-increasing needs, the rising industrial activity, the overlapping efforts of government environmental agencies to prevent pollution, and the protection of the environment. According to these experts, the Ministry of the Environment will also be tasked with the formulation of a national strategy for the protection of the environment and sustainable development in Saudi Arabia.⁹ But, to no avail.

At the end of the day, in my point of view, the Saudi government will have to create a separate Ministry of the Environment, or an environmental governmental organ modeled on Bahrain's example, due to the ever increasing environmental challenges facing its population and environment and due to its need to formulate a unified environmental strategy to face these challenges.

⁷ See on-line at: <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/573601>

⁸ See on-line at: <http://www.arabnews.com/news/448579>

⁹ See on-line at: <http://www.arabnews.com/news/448579>