



[The Complicity of Repressive Arab Dictators and Monarchies in Israel's Destructive War on Gaza](#)

Repressive Arab dictators and monarchies in countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates certainly have a fair share of complicity in Israel's ongoing War on Gaza – a conflict which has seen numerous Israeli crimes against humanity be committed including the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians. While human rights activists and concerned citizens around the world have attempted to draw attention to and put an end to these war crimes, those seeking to do so in countries ruled by these repressive regimes have been subjected to high levels of suppression and significant clampdowns. In Bahrain for example, international watchdog Human Rights Watch (HRW) recently shed light on authorities' efforts to suppress pro-Palestinian solidarity demonstrations by arresting and harassing scores of participants, including those who merely engaged in online advocacy and informational-sharing campaigns. This is troubling because it not only displays the intent of ruling authorities to suppress protests and gatherings themselves, but also thwarts the aim of social justice advocates to spread awareness regarding what is really taking place in Gaza, independent of much of the often-criticized mainstream media coverage of the conflict. In suppressing demonstrations and the sharing of information and first-hand accounts from impartial journalists on the ground, these repressive governments contribute to misinformation, the distorting of the truth, and the perpetuation of the human rights violations happening in Gaza.

The recent HRW report on the suppression of pro-Palestinian protests in Bahrain unveils the connection repressive governments often make between these solidarity demonstrations and domestic-related ones. Analysts underscore how these regimes fear that widespread protests in support of Palestinian rights and freedoms could serve as a threat to the political status quo – since they may very well take on a domestic element and become critical of the ruling government's treatment of its own citizens too. As a result, repressive regimes either ban these types of pro-Palestinian solidarity demonstrations altogether, or severely crack down on them in an effort to prevent these from becoming anti-government rallies and gatherings. Authorities tend to view these solidarity protests as a general way for the populace to vent its societal grievances, and thus they are always wary of them taking a domestic turn and becoming critical of the regime itself. Due to this, the ruling governments usually walk a delicate tightrope between saying what their citizens want to hear regarding abuses committed against Palestinians, but clamping down on the protests themselves because of their understanding as to the threat they pose to the political status quo.

In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), official permission is required for demonstrations and the regime bans protests that authorities consider disruptive. The UAE's repressive policies recently came to the fore on the global stage when it hosted the COP28 United Nations Climate Change Conference. Pro-Palestinian activists at the summit detailed how they faced serious restrictions including prohibitions on flags, the hindering of slogans calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and the displaying of the keffiyeh. Typically, in most COP summits in the past, there would be mass demonstrations of tens of thousands of people outside of the United Nations-controlled "Blue Zone" rallying in the streets, but due to the UAE's strict rules, the only place where activists could gather was inside of that particular space. In addition to the suppression of demonstrations, the UAE, like other repressive regimes in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, significantly restricts internet freedom, social media, and the sharing of information.

Online censorship and monitoring in these countries is widespread, and it is not uncommon for authorities to detain citizens for questioning based on their internet activity. HRW's previously mentioned report on Bahrain cited multiple specific instances of this taking place surrounding pro-Palestinian content on social media in the preceding months since Israel's War on Gaza began.

Ultimately, the level of suppression seen under these repressive governments does not come as a surprise, as there has long been a noticeable discrepancy regarding pro-Palestinian solidarity in the Arab world between some of the regimes in power and the general populations at-large. This disconnect is evident, as authoritarian governments often give only mild rebukes of Israeli atrocities, while the populaces call for action and stronger rhetoric to provide accountability for these human rights violations. Like demands for democratic reforms, expressions of solidarity with Palestinians are stymied. Simply put, repressive regimes quell voices which try to speak out in support of social justice for Palestinians because allowing them to freely exist would require these governments to take a long, hard look at their own actions and policies domestically, something that if done, threatens their own stability and grip on power.