

Brutal crackdown in Bahrain

MANAMA, Bahrain — The gleaming banking center of Bahrain, one of those family-run autocratic Arab states that count as U.S. allies, has become the latest reminder that authoritarian regimes are slow learners.

Bahrain is another Middle East domino wobbled by an angry youth — and it has struck back with volleys of tear gas, rubber bullets and even buckshot at completely peaceful protesters.

In the early-morning hours Thursday here in the Bahrain capital, it used deadly force to clear the throngs of pro-democracy protesters who had turned Pearl Square in the center of the city into a local version of Tahrir Square in Cairo. This was the last spasm of brutality from a regime that has handled protests with an exceptionally heavy hand — and it will further undermine the legitimacy of the government.

"Egypt has infected Bahrain," a young businessman, Husain, explained to me as he trudged with a vast protest march snaking through the capital, Manama. Husain said that Tunisia and Egypt awakened a sense of possibility inside him — and that his resolve only grew when Bahrain's riot police first attacked peaceful protesters.

When protesters held a funeral march for the first man killed by police, the authorities here then opened fire on the mourners, killing another person.

"I was scared to participate," Husain admitted. But he was so enraged that he decided that he couldn't stay home any longer. So he became one of the countless thousands of pro-democracy protesters demanding far-reaching change.

At first the protesters just wanted the release of political prisoners, an end to torture and less concentration of power in the al-Khalifa family that controls the country. But, now, the crowds increasingly are calling for the overthrow of the al-Khalifa family. Many would accept a British-style constitutional monarchy in which King Hamad would reign without power. But an increasing number are calling for the ouster of the king himself.

King Hamad gave a speech regretting the deaths of demonstrators, and he temporarily called off the police. By dispatching the riot police early Thursday morning, King Hamad underscored his vulnerability and his moral bankruptcy.

All of this puts the United States in a bind. Bahrain is a

critical United States ally because it is home to the American Navy's Fifth Fleet. What's more, in some ways Bahrain was a model for the region. It gives women and minorities a far greater role than Saudi Arabia next door, it has achieved near universal literacy for women as well as men, and it has introduced some genuine democratic reforms. Of the 40 members of the Lower House of Parliament, 18 belong to an opposition party.

Somewhat cruelly, on Wednesday I asked the foreign minister, Sheik Khalid Ahmed al-Khalifa, if he doesn't owe his position to his family. He acknowledged the point but noted that Bahrain is changing and added that some day the country will have a foreign minister who is not a Khalifa. "It's an evolving process," he insisted, and he emphasized that Bahrain should be seen through the prism of its regional peer group.

The problem is that Bahrain has educated its people and created a middle class that isn't content to settle for crumbs beneath a paternalistic Arab potentate — and this country is inherently unstable as a predominantly Shiite country ruled by a Sunni royal family. That's one reason Bahrain's upheavals are sending a tremor through other gulf autocracies that oppress Shiites, not least Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain's leaders may whisper to U.S. officials that the democracy protesters are fundamentalists inspired by Iran. That's ridiculous. There's no anti-Americanism in the protests — and if we favor "people power" in Iran, we should favor it in Bahrain as well.

Walk with protesters here, and their grievances seem eminently reasonable. One woman, Howra, beseeched me to write about her brother, Yasser Khalil, who she said was arrested in September at the age of 15, for vague political offenses. She showed me photos of Yasser injured by what she described as beatings by police.

Another woman, Hayat, said that she had been shot with rubber bullets twice this week. After hospitalization, she painfully returned to the streets to continue to demand more democracy. "I will sacrifice my life if necessary so my children can have a better life," she said.

America has important interests at stake in Bahrain — but also important values. I hope that our cozy relations with those in power won't dull our appreciation that history is more likely to side with protesters being shot with rubber bullets than with the regimes doing the shooting.

A look at an improving market

The year 2010 brought some greatly needed relief to our community as the real estate market rebounded from the 2009 market, which saw a major dip in real estate activity. The slowdown of 2009 forced local governments to adopt austere budgets because Mountain Village and the Town of Telluride rely on fees and taxes associated with real estate transactions to fund much of their activity. Also affected were some local property owners, many of whom needed to sell their homes and condos but were unable to do so in much of 2009 because of the lack of buyers in our marketplace. Beginning in the fourth quarter of 2009, our local real estate market began a turnaround that improved government budgets and allowed many local property owners to finally start selling their properties.

All of the statistical data used in this article was supplied by Judi Kiernan of Telluride Consulting.

Overall, the San Miguel County real estate market of 2010 closely resembled the market of 2008. Both 2008 and 2010 significantly outperformed 2009, which suggests that our market reached some sort of bottom that year. In 2010, total sales volume was \$318 million with a total of 327 transactions. 2010 saw an increase of 20 percent in terms of sales volume and a 19

percent increase in the number of transactions over 2009.

The market rebounded most solidly in the Town of Telluride, the Ski Ranches and Aldasoro Ranch. The Town of Telluride total sales rose 110 percent over 2009 to \$107 million. The Ski Ranches, which only had two sales in all of 2009, bounced back with seven sales for a total of \$8.3 million. Aldasoro Ranch, which also experienced a very slow 2009 with three sales, improved strongly in 2010 with eight sales for just over \$20 million.

Mountain Village experienced only 10 percent growth in terms of total sales volume ending the year with just under \$150 million in sales. The remainder of San Miguel County did not rebound from the unrest of 2009 and unfortunately experienced further decline of just over 50 percent in total sales volume.

Our market performance often varies widely from segment to segment. This was true in 2010. Buyers were very focused on value opportunities of higher-end houses in the Mountain Village home segment, which came on strong last year. There were 19 Mountain Village homes sold in 2010 for \$85 million for an average of almost \$4.5 million per sale. This is a marked increase over 2009 in terms of sales volume when 18 homes sold for \$48 million for an average of \$2.7 million per home.

The single family home segment in the Town of Telluride improved even more significantly than Mountain Village in 2010 by more than doubling 2009 in both total sales dollars and number of homes sold. Last year there were 25 homes sold in Telluride for a total of \$45 million while in 2009 only 12 homes sold for a total of \$19 million.

In the condominium segments, the Town of Telluride market came back very strongly in 2010 by nearly doubling sales compared to 2009. In the Mountain Village segment, performance improved by 16 percent over the previous year.

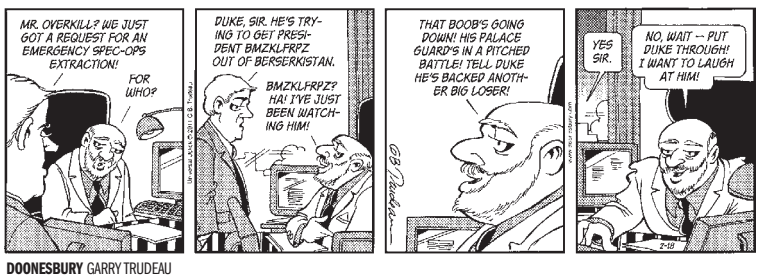
The vacant land segments continue to be the weakest segments of our market affected by a lack of financing and with the increased availability of homes on the market for replacement cost or less. Only a handful of lots sold in Mountain Village while half a dozen sold in the Town of Telluride.

The general improvement of our real estate market in 2010 was reassuring especially for the Town of Telluride, which roughly doubled the transfer taxes or RETT it collected from real estate sales in 2010 compared to the year before. Looking into 2011 we continue to stay hopefully optimistic for continued strength in real estate sales and the overall economy.

— Stewart Seeligson is director for the Telluride Association of Realtors.

LOCAL VOICES
Stewart Seeligson

NICHOLAS KRISTOF
NEW YORK TIMES



DOONESBURY GARRY TRUDEAU

Letters

Our loving community

DEAR EDITOR,

We are so grateful to the local community for supporting our daughter Jacqueline and her fight to find a cure for dysautonomia. Special thanks go to Mark Galbo of the Rock and Roll Academy for producing the show (no small feat), and the Sheridan Opera House for donating the theater. Thanks too, to Jen Julia, Cecily Hughes, Sandy McLaughlin, Beth Barr and Xiomara and Dany Torres. To Olivia and Dave Coffin, this never would have happened without your ideas and efforts.

Thanks to all who donated items for the silent auction, some of them even unsolicited! To all the musicians who performed so beautifully and with such heart, and to all who attended Saturday night, you helped make the benefit a success. The National Dysautonomia Research Foundation will be so appreciative of your donations. It is a sentiment often repeated because it is so true — we are so lucky to live in such a lov-

Letters policy

The *TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET* welcomes all letters. Those fewer than 500 words that do not need to be factually verified are considered first, edited least and printed most readily. Letters must be accompanied by the author's printed name, signature, street address, P.O. Box number. A phone number is required for publication. No personal or libelous statements. Out-of-town letters are not guaranteed publication. Send letters to: editor@tellurideneews.com or to *TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET*, Letter to the Editor, P.O. Box 2315, Telluride, CO 81435 or bring by our offices at 307 E. Colorado Ave. We reserve the right to edit any letter to the editor or commentary submitted for publication.

ing and generous community!
 Sincerest thanks,
 VALERIE AND RICHARD CHILD

TRAINING FLIGHTS IN THE FOUR CORNERS

DEAR EDITOR,

The Air Force wants training flights in the Four Corners area because the terrain is similar to what pilots will encounter in Afghanistan.

Who besides state representatives Wes McKinley and Edward Bigg wants to send our servicemen into combat with less than the absolute best training?

If it will save one American life you can train in my living room.

RUSS SKOUSEN, VIETNAM VETERAN
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SAVING ENERGY AND MONEY

DEAR EDITOR,

We have a two-story frame house in South St. Louis, 2,100 square feet with no insulation anywhere. Last year's January gas bill; \$426.20, this year's; \$212.71. Half. This after implementing things I learned from TNCC seminars and videos. Like caulking all the electrical outlets, baseboards and pipes. And window treatments have helped a whole lot too. Thanks to you and your crew!

JEFF SCHAEFER