

= Mansoor al @-@ Jamri =

Mansoor al @-@ Jamri (also Mansour ; Arabic : ?????? ?????? ; born 17 December 1961) is a Bahraini columnist , author , human rights activist and former opposition leader . He is the editor @-@ in @-@ chief of Al @-@ Wasat , an Arabic language independent daily newspaper . He is also the second son of the Shia spiritual leader Sheikh Abdul @-@ Amir al @-@ Jamri , who died in 2006 .

A few months after he was born in the village of Bani Jamra , al @-@ Jamri moved with his family to Iraq where his father continued his religious studies . To his delight , al @-@ Jamri returned to Bahrain in 1973 and five years later graduated from high school . In 1979 he moved to the United Kingdom (UK) to continue his higher education . Between 1987 and 2001 , al @-@ Jamri lived in self @-@ imposed exile in UK where he became the spokesman of the opposition group , Bahrain Freedom Movement . Following a series of reforms of which he was initially skeptical of , al @-@ Jamri returned to Bahrain in December 2001 . He co @-@ founded Al @-@ Wasat in September 2002 and became its editor @-@ in @-@ chief since then . The newspaper , said to be the only one offering independent and non @-@ sectarian coverage in Bahrain was a success , becoming the country 's most popular and profitable . Al @-@ Jamri writes daily columns described to be moderate and non @-@ sectarian .

When the Bahraini uprising started in February 2011 , Al @-@ Wasat and al @-@ Jamri covered both sides of the conflict . Al @-@ Jamri was involved in reconciliation talks until 15 March when Saudi troops entered Bahrain . That day , Al @-@ Wasat printing facility was destroyed . Its employees which already faced harassment by groups of youths had to work from home . The next month , the newspaper was charged by government to publishing fabricated news about the uprising and was suspended . Al @-@ Jamri acknowledged his mistake , but said he was set up and downplayed the impact of the false news . He resigned from his position and the newspaper was allowed to publish the next day . He was subsequently charged and convicted of publishing false news . In August , Al @-@ Wasat board of directors reinstated him back to his position .

= = Early life and education = =

Mansoor al @-@ Jamri was born in Bahrain on 17 December 1961 . Al @-@ Jamri 's father Sheikh Abdul Amir is a Shia cleric who became the leader of the opposition and the spiritual father of the Shia during the 1990s uprising in Bahrain . His mother , Zahra ' is the grand daughter of the renovator Shia khatib Mulla Atiya al @-@ Jamri . They were married in Bahrain in 1957 . Abdul Amir was 20 and Zahra ' , his cousin 's grand daughter was 16 .

Few months after his birth , al @-@ Jamri family traveled to Najaf , Iraq where his father continued his religious studies . At the time , al @-@ Jamri 's family was composed of his parents and his 2 @-@ year @-@ old brother Mohammed Jameel . He studied for five years at the Talibiya primary school which was also attended by some Bahrainis such as Sami , the elder son of Isa Qassim . Having no TV at home , al @-@ Jamri and his siblings spent most of their time listening to stories told by their mother or playing with kites outside . At the age of 9 , he began practicing Islamic prayers and fasting in Ramadan .

In his book Non @-@ scattered memories of Najaf , al @-@ Jamri describes the dire situation in Iraq following the rise of Ba 'ath party in 1968 . He writes that the " biggest tragedy " he witnessed was the deportation of Iraqis of Iranian origins , some of whom were his neighbors . Al @-@ Jamri and his school colleagues were often forced to take part in pro and anti @-@ Ba 'athist protests .

Al @-@ Jamri 's first memories in Bahrain were during a visit with father during the month of Ramadan . Although he was mocked by other kids due to his partly Iraqi accent , al @-@ Jamri said he was very happy with the visit as he found his village Bani Jamra much more " open " than Najaf . In 1973 , al @-@ Jamri returned to Bahrain with his family , spending 11 years of his life in Iraq . He said his father 's decision to return to Bahrain was the " best news I have ever received " and that to him Bahrain represented " freedom and eternal joy " .

In 1978 , al @-@ Jamri graduated from high school , technical sector . In 1979 , he traveled to the

United Kingdom to continue his higher education after receiving a scholarship from Ministry of Education . He studied mechanical engineering at the University of the West of Scotland (Paisley University) of which he holds the doctorate degree . Trouble followed al @-@ Jamri during his visits to Bahrain as he was questioned by security forces in 1980 , his passport withdrawn for a year in 1982 and in 1987 he was not able to find a job . In 1987 , al @-@ Jamri immigrated to Britain which he held its citizenship . He lived in self @-@ imposed exile for 14 years during which he continued his studies and became the spokesman of the opposition group Bahrain Freedom Movement . He was also a " frequent guest on international news outlets such as the BBC . "

Al @-@ Jamri is married to Reem Khalifa , a columnist and reporter working for Al @-@ Wasat and the Associated Press . Unlike Mansoor , she follows the Sunni branch of Islam . She was described by the New York Times as a " woman of Western tastes " . Khalifa comes from a leftist family .

= = Founding of Al @-@ Wasat = =

In 1999 , then @-@ Emir (now King) Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa began a reform process and in 2001 exiles were told they could come back . Rejecting an offer to become a cabinet minister and leaving his leading position in the opposition , al @-@ Jamri returned from the United Kingdom in December 2001 , eight months after his father had obtained a consent from the Emir to establish two newspapers . Initially , he was sceptical about the king 's reform plan , but al @-@ Jamri received a personal invitation by the king and was given a large margin of freedom of expression . Al @-@ Jamri , backed by 39 other private investors (US \$ 5 @.@ 3 million capital) had initially planned to establish two independent newspapers , Al @-@ Wasat in Arabic and Gulf Observer in English .

Al @-@ Wasat (literally , " The Center ") was founded on September 2002 and its co @-@ founder al @-@ Jamri became its editor @-@ in @-@ chief . By 2011 it had become the country 's most popular newspaper with a daily circulation of 15 @,@ 000 and readership of 45 @,@ 000 to 60 @,@ 000 . It employed 200 individuals , a quarter of them worked as reporters or editors . Its coverage was described by Committee to Protect Journalists as independent and non @-@ sectarian , however this did not spare it from occasional harassment and political pressure . Al @-@ Wasat is the only independent and non @-@ sectarian newspaper in the county and is also " widely credited with being the first Bahraini newspaper to voice opposition views " . Although it also covers the government point of view , the newspaper is sometimes classified as siding with opposition . According to Margaret Warner of PBS NewsHour , Al @-@ Wasat is the " most popular and profitable newspaper " in Bahrain and al @-@ Jamri 's column is a " voice for non @-@ sectarian moderation " .

= = Bahraini uprising = =

= = = Background = = =

Beginning in February 2011 , Bahrain saw sustained pro @-@ democracy protests , centered at Pearl Roundabout in the capital of Manama , as part of the wider Arab Spring . Authorities responded with a night raid on 17 February (later referred to by protesters as Bloody Thursday) , which left four protesters dead and more than 300 injured . In March , martial law was declared and Saudi troops were called in . Despite the hard crackdown and official ban , the protests continued .

= = = Role of al @-@ Jamri and Al @-@ Wasat = = =

During the uprising , Al Wasat was a voice for " moderation and prudence " that urged compromise from both sides and its popularity reportedly increased by 30 percent . In his columns , al @-@ Jamri criticized the government for its repression and protesters for blocking a main highway . Al @-@ Jamri said he was involved in mediation efforts between the two sides of the conflict until 15

March after Saudi troops had entered Bahrain . He added that he refused to be hosted on Al @-@ Manar and Al @-@ Alam News Network , because " their rhetoric is not in accordance with Al @-@ Wasat 's " . This however , did not spare Al @-@ Wasat from the effects of the unrest as its printing facility was surrounded by youths who harassed employees since 12 March .

Three days later , the facility was attacked at 1am by a club @-@ wielding @-@ gang that " attack [ed] the touch screens and computers of the printing machine , " said the head of Al @-@ Wasat printing press . That day Al @-@ Wasat was printed by another newspaper . Employees had to work from home as " hundreds of vigilantes encircled the area " , they (employees) were harassed in checkpoints and authorities reportedly failed to protect them even after getting contacted . Al @-@ Jamri reported receiving death threats via phone and getting intimidated by government informers . " One of our photographers had camera smashed into his head and needed hospitalization , several distributors were beaten , and one columnist disappeared for a month . But under all of these circumstances , we continued , " al @-@ Jamri said .

= = = Suspension of Al @-@ Wasat and resignation of al @-@ Jamri = = =

On 2 April , following a three @-@ hour episode on Bahrain TV alleging it had published false and fabricated news and images in its 26 and 29 March editions , Al @-@ Wasat was forced to close down and had its website blocked by the Information Affairs Authority (IAA) . The state @-@ run Bahrain News Agency accused it of " unethical " media coverage of the events of the uprising and the IAA released a 30 @-@ page report " detailing Al Wasat 's alleged transgressions " . The news and images turned out to be either from other countries or from previous events . The newspaper did not publish an edition on 3 April . Al @-@ Jamri acknowledged that the reports identified in Bahrain TV show were false , but said he and his staff did not " knowingly [publish] false information " .

The ban was lifted a day later after al @-@ Jamri and two other top editors had resigned . Al @-@ Jamri said his resignation was " needed to safeguard the newspaper and the livelihood of its staff . " On 4 April , Al @-@ Wasat resumed publishing under the supervision of two Iraqi editors . The two temporary editors were questioned in the National Security Agency and were deported along with their families after they had refused to confess against al @-@ Jamri . Al @-@ Jamri and the two editors who resigned were subsequently questioned and charged with " publishing fabricated news and made up stories ... that may harm public safety and national interests . "

Unlike other cases which were brought before a military court , their first trial session on 18 May was before the (civilian) High Criminal Court and was postponed to June . Al @-@ Jamri said before a trial session on 19 June that the fabricated news articles were sent to Al @-@ Wasat from a Saudi IP address and that they were not verified properly due to the previous attacks on Al @-@ Wasat . " It was a setup . We were framed into it , and later on attacked , using ? using it as a launching pad for closing down the newspaper , " al @-@ Jamri said in a press interview . " If a bank CEO wanted to steal , he wouldn 't steal just 20 dollars , maybe he 'd steal 2 million . The fabricated news were of the price of 20 dollars , " he added .

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the charges were politically motivated and asked authorities to drop them , allow al @-@ Jamri back to his position and " cease their campaign to silence independent journalism " . The advocacy group added that following al @-@ Jamri 's resignation , Al @-@ Wasat 's coverage of human rights violations decreased significantly . " Bahrain 's rulers are showing they have no shame by muzzling the one media outlet that was widely regarded as the country 's only independent news source , " Joe Stork of HRW said . The Committee to Protect Journalists condemned the actions of Bahraini government and described them as " strong @-@ arm tactics " . The non @-@ government organization added that its research supported claims by al @-@ Jamri that the government was behind planting the false news . Mohammed al @-@ Maskati of Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights accused the Ministry of Interior of planting the fake stories . " They wanted him to quit , and the paper has totally changed , " he added .

On 4 August , al @-@ Jamri was reinstated back to his position by the board of directors . On 11 October , al @-@ Jamri and his colleagues were found guilty by the court and fined US \$ 2 @-@,

650 each . Subsequently , al @-@ Jamri received two international awards ; the CPJ International Press Freedom Award in 2011 and the Next Century Foundation 's Peace Through Media Award in 2012 . In September 2011 , Al @-@ Wasat won the UNICEF regional award for electronic media and in May 2012 , it was ranked top in the Media Credibility Index ahead of Al Jazeera , BBC , Agence France @-@ Presse and more than a dozen other media outlets .

= = Publications = =

Al @-@ Jamri has written two books in Arabic , Memories of Childhood (2007) and Interventions on Thought and Politics (2008) . The former is a narrative of al @-@ Jamri 's childhood in Iraq , the experiences he had and the events he witnessed . He was motivated to write it by people 's reactions following the death of his father and dedicated the book to his memory . The latter deals with political and ideological concepts in Europe and the Muslim world , and how Muslim countries can benefit from them in order to consolidate the political pluralism within the Islamic theme . Al @-@ Jamri also writes a daily column in Al @-@ Wasat and regular articles on politics and human rights for other publications such as Carnegie Endowment for International Peace .