

Thousands of Saudi troops cross into Bahrain after weekend of violence

By [Finian Cunningham](#)

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BAHRAIN: THERE WAS a defiant mood last night among Bahrain's pro-democracy protesters who said they viewed the unprecedented intervention of between 2,000 and 6,000 Saudi-led troops as "an illegal occupation".

Numbers at the protest encampment at Pearl Square in the capital, Manama, swelled well beyond the usual 50,000 to 100,000 that have been gathering every night for the past three weeks calling for the overthrow of the United States-backed monarchy.

The arrival yesterday of troops in convoys from Saudi Arabia came after a weekend of widespread chaos and violence by police and pro-government militias against largely peaceful protesters. "This is our right to demand democracy," said Zainab, a young Bahraini woman working as a volunteer at the protest media centre. "This is an invasion of our country by a foreign army."

It was a sentiment echoed by the overwhelming number of demonstrators in the square last night.

"We will not give up on our demands," said one man, called Fardhan. "We will not be intimidated. If these Saudi troops come here, we will meet them face to face."

While maintaining a peaceful protest last night, there was a heightened sense of popular anger against the regime headed by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa.

Given the Saudi government's concerns over recent protests in its Shia-dominated Eastern Province, which shares many cultural ties with Bahrainis as well as a 25km (15.5 miles) causeway bridge, there appears to be an incentive for the rulers in Riyadh to "restore order" in Bahrain.

The protest movement in Bahrain, which is calling for an elected government and sweeping social reforms, has grown in numbers and determination.

An upsurge in repression by state forces over the weekend, which saw more than 1,000 civilians injured and at least one dead, has failed to dampen the protests. Claims that riot police deployed toxic nerve gas against civilians, substantiated by senior medical consultants, have added to disaffection with the rulers.

There is a sense the ruling family is losing control. There have been calls by pro-government politicians and state-run media for the imposition of emergency laws and a curfew. Bahrain's Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa said on Sunday: "The right to

security and stability transcends any other considerations.”

The General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions has renewed strike action at main industries, including oil company Bapco and aluminium producer Alba.

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website Globalresearch.ca. He is a Master’s graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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