

# Bahrain protests gather pace

Protests demanding sweeping political reforms are creating unprecedented pressure in one of Washington's most strategic allies in the Gulf. Bahrain, home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, has a Shia Muslim majority population but is governed by a Sunni royal family



## BAHRAIN FACTFILE

■ **Politics:** Country ruled by **Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa** since 1999

Khalifa family has reigned since 1783 – Bahrain now constitutional monarchy

■ **Population:** 807,000 (UN, 2010) – 235,108 are foreign expats (CIA, 2010)

**Shias – 70% of population – complain of discrimination by Sunni-led government**

■ **Economy:** Non-OPEC oil producer, Bahrain is banking and financial services centre

**GNI per capita:** \$25,420 (World Bank, 2009)

■ **Media:** Many Bahrainis connected to internet – but some sites are censored

## DEMANDS OF PROTESTERS

► Resignation of Prime Minister **Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa** – king's uncle, in power since end of British rule in 1971

► Release of political prisoners, new constitution and end to civil rights abuses



**Manama:** Protesters camping in Pearl Square

Diraz

Daih

**King Fahd Causeway:** Connects Bahrain to Saudi Arabia

**Juffair:** Base of U.S. Fifth Fleet

Karzakkan

Nuaidrat

**Gulf of Bahrain**

**BAHRAIN**

5km  
3 miles

📍 Major protests

Pictures: AP

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