

## **Erdogan rejects Arab demands; Turkish troops stay in Qatar**

25/06/2017 09:28 by admin

**Istanbul:** Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan today rejected a demand by major Arab states to remove Turkish troops from Qatar, saying their sweeping list of ultimatums has threatened the small Gulf country's sovereignty.

### **Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan**

Speaking after Eid prayers in Istanbul, the President called the demand "disrespectful" and said Turkey would not seek permission from others when making its defence cooperation agreements. "Demanding that Turkey pull its soldiers is unfortunately also disrespectful toward Turkey."

He said that Turkey would continue to support Qatar against the many sanctions it has faced since several Arab countries moved earlier this month to isolate the country for its alleged support of terrorism.

In a sign of support, the Turkish parliament swiftly ratified a 2014 agreement with Qatar earlier this month, allowing the deployment of troops to its base there. The military said a contingent of 23 soldiers reached Doha on Thursday. Erdogan said he made a similar offer to Saudi Arabia to set up a base there in the past but did not hear back from the king.

Doha received a 13-point list from Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain that included demands to shut down the media network Al-Jazeera and cut ties with Islamist groups including the Muslim Brotherhood. The energy-rich country said it was reviewing the ultimatum but added it would not negotiate under siege.

Turkey's president said his country "admires and embraces" Qatar's attitude, while slamming the demands by arguing they contradict international law.

"Here we see an attack against a state's sovereignty rights," Erdogan said.

Erdogan called the demand that Qatar shut down Al-Jazeera an attempt to take away the network's press freedom and urged rights groups to speak out against that.

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