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Yemen must investigate sniper killings of protesters

Snipers were seen firing from rooftops as hundreds gathered to mark the 18th anniversary of the day in 1994 that government forces from Sana'a captured Aden from secessionist forces at the end of the civil war.

Media reports suggested that up to 18 were injured during Saturday's protest.

Eyewitnesses have today told Amnesty International delegates in Aden that security forces tried to enter Naqib hospital on Sunday evening apparently in an attempt to arrest injured protesters as they received treatment.

"The authorities must act immediately to investigate these killings and bring to justice those who ordered and carried out this deplorable apparently co-ordinated attack," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"If they appear to be turning a blind eye to the killing of peaceful protesters by security forces the situation is likely to worsen."

The protest began at al-Hashemi Square in the Sheikh Othman area of Aden at 9:30 local time on Saturday morning.

After speeches by some members of the Southern Movement, a loose coalition of political groups, some of which want the south of Yemen to secede from the rest of the country, some protesters started marching towards the al-Mansoura area of the city.

Security forces from three armoured vehicles opened fire on the protesters as they reached a location known as the Textiles roundabout.

Snipers positioned on rooftops then began shooting at the protesters as they fled.

"These marchers were merely exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. They weren't posing a threat to security forces or others," said Philip Luther. "The use of lethal force against them cannot be justified."

According to information received by Amnesty International, three of the protesters, Adil Haitham Jaber, Marwan Ahmed Ba-Azab and Fahad Hussein al-Junaidi, were shot and killed

Protester Mohammed Qaid Salman was shot in the head and is now on a life-support machine in hospital.

While at Naqib hospital, Amnesty International delegates witnessed one man, Wassim Mohammed Ali Awad, being treated for a gunshot wound to the stomach.

Several other people required treatment after suffering from convulsions apparently due to tear gas.

A number of individuals believed to be from the Central Security Forces, including two uniformed officers and several others in plain clothes, presented themselves at Naqib hospital on Sunday evening. According to reports, two or three entered and searched almost every room in the building but left after they they were unable to find who they were looking for. No one was arrested.

Security forces have previously entered the hospital and arrested people who were receiving treatment.

One of those, Hassan Ba'oom, who is chairman of a Southern Movement faction called the Supreme National Council for the Liberation of the South, was arrested along with his son Fawaz Ba'oom by security forces at Naqib hospital on 20 February 2011.

The two men were released without charge on 7 December 2011.

Note for editors

Amnesty International spokespeople are available:

- Dina El-Mamoun, Yemen researcher (in English and Arabic) from Yemen.
- Philip Luther, Middle East & North Africa programme director (in English and Arabic) from London.

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