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## **Yemen military must not ‘punish’ injured protesters**

Military forces in the Yemeni capital Sana’a must not use unlawful force against dozens of injured protesters, Amnesty International said.

Since Tuesday night, the military’s Fourth Armoured Brigade has blocked access into and out of an area outside the Council of Ministers office, where protesters have been engaged in a sit-in protest to demand adequate treatment for injuries sustained during demonstrations in 2011.

Of the around 70 protesters taking part in the sit-in, more than half sustained injuries in 2011 and many have recently gone on hunger strike.

They are demanding that the authorities comply with a November 2012 court ruling calling for them to be treated for a wide range of conditions including spinal cord injuries, and damage to nerves and muscles. At least two have been using wheelchairs as a result of their injuries.

“The quickest way for the Yemeni authorities to resolve the situation is to comply with the court order. They must immediately provide reparations and ensure care for the injured,” said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.

“The military’s latest crackdown is literally adding insult to injury. The ongoing operations do nothing more than punish the protesters for speaking out and seeking justice.”

After the Fourth Armoured Brigade – which is charged with guarding the Council of Ministers office – surrounded the sit-in protest on Tuesday night, nobody has been allowed to enter or leave the protest area.

An activist told Amnesty International that two of the protesters who attempted to leave the demonstration to a nearby shop last night were barred from doing so and beaten by the military. One of them is said to suffer from a kidney condition.

He said the security forces had also meted out violence against protesters in recent days, including beating them with batons and the butts of guns. At a solidarity demonstration for the injured protesters on Monday, several people were injured after receiving such beatings.

On Tuesday, around seven protesters were blocked from returning to the sit-in after leaving to use the bathroom in a nearby mosque.

Around 10 of the injured protesters at the sit-in protest won a court case in November of last year. The court found that the Yemeni authorities should provide adequate medical treatment for injuries sustained during the protests in 2011.

Since then, some of the injured protesters have told Amnesty International that the Yemeni government was dragging its feet and had not acted on the court ruling.

“The chances of recovery from some of the injuries sustained by protesters in 2011 is likely to diminish if treatment is denied or delayed for long periods of time, so it is vital that the Yemeni authorities urgently act on the recent court ruling and the protesters’ demands for adequate treatment,” said Luther.

Three weeks ago, another group of around 65 people injured in the 2011 protests brought a similar case to court and were subsequently joined by some 20 others, but there has not been a ruling in that case yet.