

Violence grips southern provinces - point of no return say separatists
By Yemen Post Staff
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For the fifth consecutive days, Yemen southern provinces are gripped by an escalation in violence, with reports of armed clashes in Aden - southern seaport city - Seyoun and Mukallah - eastern province of Hadhramawt - between separatists and the Central Security Forces.

On Monday afternoon in Crater, residents reported seeing from the Security Forces chasing down unarmed Haraki militants - Southern Secessionist Movement - down alleyways and streets, weapons at the ready.

Just after Asr, a Doctor in al-Haddadin Street - Crater - witnessed an armored vehicle pursuing two civilians on foot, while two snipers were shooting live ammunitions. "I heard shooting and screaming... a few seconds later I saw two young men running while being chased by an armored vehicle. A sniper started immediately shooting at them. I could see the bullet hitting the balconies right above them. Those two men were unarmed and could not have been much over twenty years old."

Lina a housewife in Sheikh Othman also said violent shoot outs took place in her neighborhood, forcing her and her family to stay indoors. I didn't dare go out but I could hear the shooting ... We spent the night listening to the sounds of bullets...sometimes near, sometimes far away.

Relatives in Crater told me the fighting had spread throughout Aden with separatists barricading entire neighborhoods to prevent the Security Forces from raiding militants' houses.

Hassan, an Egyptian seaport worker said he was assaulted on Monday as militants confused him for northerner. "A group of men cornered me asking to see my papers, calling me a filthy northerner ... If it wasn't for my Egyptian accent and the intervention of one of my neighbor who vouched for me I'm not sure what would have happened ... I heard news of people getting attacked and their properties torched."

A man from Taiz - Ahmed Mahmoud - and his family were attacked on Monday by a southern radical. His wife immediately perished under the assault - the attacker came armed with an axe - Both father and sons - 2 - are now in critical conditions at the hospital. Having committed no crime Ahmed was attacked because he was a northerner.

Hatred against North Yemen is running at an all time high in the southern provinces as separatists and civilians are understanding Thursday's targeting of their demonstration as a declaration of war. In Seyoun and Mukallah, militants are calling for an armed struggle, vowing to revenge their fallen brothers and South Yemen's honor.

Residents in both cities told the Yemen Post armored vehicles and soldiers were already heavily patrolling their streets, all in combat gear, fingers on the trigger.

While the Harak officially declared their struggle for secession open, they refrained so far from calling their supporters to take up arms.

A local Haraki officials noted that while there was still a chance things could get back to normal, he feared North and South Yemen had reached a point of no return.

"The Southern Movement does not want to draw first blood at this point. That being said, many feel Thursday attack was the last straw. I don't see how we can walk from this. As many people pointed out last Thursday, South Yemen revolution already started."