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<http://www.rsf.org/yemen-houthi-rebels-bombard-state-23-09-2014,46998.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Yemen

Media besieged, ransacked

## Houthi rebels bombard state broadcaster in Sanaa

23 September 2014

After a three-day bombardment, the rebels seize control of the complex that houses several national radio and TV stations.

A month-old political and security crisis escalated dramatically on 21 September when, after bombarding the headquarters of the state TV broadcaster for three days, northern Houthi rebels seized control of military command posts and government buildings in Sanaa including the national radio and TV stations.

Despite the prime minister's resignation and the signing of a ceasefire, the Houthi rebels went on to attack a privately-owned television station, *Suhail TV*, yesterday.

The "Ansar Allah" Houthi rebels began bombarding the national TV compound with mortar shells at around 8 p.m. on 18 September. It houses three state satellite TV stations – *Yemen TV*, *Seba TV* and *Eman TV*. They also bombarded surrounding areas of the Sanaa district of Jiraf, destroying or damaging buildings. A [fire](#) damaged part of the compound itself on 20 September.

Broadcasting was interrupted for two or three hours on 20 September, and then resumed from another location. Hundreds of journalists and other state TV employees were trapped in these buildings as they were being [targeted](#).

The rebels accused that state TV broadcaster of [providing biased coverage](#) of the tension and clashes between the rebels and government forces [since the start of 2014](#).

Despite the signing of the ceasefire the previous day, members of the Houthi rebellion seized control of [Suhail TV's](#) headquarters on Al-Rabat Street in Sanaa yesterday evening, and then ransacked the premises. Journalists and other employees [were trapped](#) inside without any means of communication and the station was forced [to suspend broadcasting](#).

*Suhail TV* is owned by Sheikh Hamid Al-Ahmar, one of the Muslim Brotherhood's leaders in Yemen and a member of the Al-Ahmar, a powerful Sunni tribe that has been fighting the Houthis.

*"We strongly condemn this deliberate attack on the state TV broadcaster and Suhail TV, which threatened the lives of many journalists and other employees,"* said Reporters Without Borders assistant research director Virginie Dangles. *"Targeted attacks on civilians are regarded as war crimes and grave violations of the Geneva Conventions. Those responsible must be identified."*

Dangles added: *"Reporters Without Borders calls on all parties to the conflict to respect the media and the work of journalists. At the same time, the media and their employees must fulfil their duty to report the news in an independent and professional manner, without fuelling political tension and differences."*

Yemen's state broadcaster [appealed](#) to the government and to local and international humanitarian organizations for help on 20 September.

Houthi spokesman Mohamed Abdulsalam meanwhile [denied](#) that "Ansar Allah" began the attacks on TV headquarters. He said the bombardment was in response to shots being fired at Houthi rebels by a unit located near the TV broadcaster's headquarters.

The homes of two journalists with privately-owned *Yemen Shabab TV* were [hit](#) when Houthi rebels bombarded residential neighbourhoods on 19 September. Presenter **Mohamed Al Jama'i** and producer **Ibrahim Al Haidam** and their families were [lucky to survive](#).

An assault on the *Sky News* bureau was only narrowly averted the day before by negotiations.

The three days of intense fighting led to the imposition of a curfew on 20 September followed by

the prime minister's resignation and a [ceasefire agreement](#) the next day. This accord is supposed to pave the way to the formation of new government that includes representatives of both the Houthis and the southern rebels.

According to the health ministry, more than [200 people](#) were killed in the recent fighting.

[Journalists were already targeted](#) during clashes between Houthi rebels and the rival Al-Ahmar clan in recent months in the north of the country.

Yemen is ranked 167th out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

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