



## Yemen

25 May 2011

### Yemen: measures must be taken to prevent irrevocable escalation of violence

**FIDH member organisations in Yemen, HRITC and SAF warn about the risk of civil war. Armed clashes have erupted in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a between the army and followers of the tribal leader Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar who joined the anti-government protests a few weeks ago. Between May 22 and 24, the clashes allegedly led to the death of at least 34 people including tribesmen, soldiers and civilians. The combat zone is densely populated and completely closed off. Rescue teams are prevented from reaching the wounded, including civilians. According to witnesses, the fighting erupted on May 24 in the heart of Sana'a with heavy gunfire.**

Armed clashes escalated the day after the Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh warns about the threat of a civil war in his speech announcing his refusal to sign the political agreement initiated by the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The armed conflict broke out when the security forces transformed a school adjacent to the house of Sheikh Abdallah Al-Ahmar in Sana'a into a military site. According to the Office of Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar followers of the tribal leader Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar protested against these dealings, resulting in soldiers opening fire on the protesters.

In addition to these deadly clashes, Sanaa was again the scene of repression and violence over the past couple of days against demonstrators and civilians identified as anti-government protesters. Peaceful and popular protests demanding reforms are still taking place in several cities across Yemen even if protesters face ongoing harsh repression by the Yemeni security forces and members of the army. According to reliable sources, on May 22 groups of thugs and armed groups carrying weapons and sticks dispersed throughout the city and attacked civilians. An elderly woman died as a consequence of such violent acts.

Over the past few days, power has been regularly cut in the main towns making communication very difficult. These power cuts, if seen as deliberate acts, could aim at restricting the freedom of expression and communication in order to prevent people from relaying the human rights violations committed in the country, or participating in peaceful demonstrations.

FIDH, HRITC and SAF express their utmost concern regarding the escalation of violence in Yemen. The organisations are particularly worried since they have also been informed about the distribution of arms to civilians in several parts of the country, by representatives of the authorities arguing the threat of a civil war over the past days. They urge all parties to refrain from using violence and to guarantee the protection of civilians.

These developments demonstrate the inability of the international community, notably under the authority of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to prevent the increase in violence.

FIDH, HRITC and SAF call upon the United Nations Human Rights Council, in session from Monday May 30th, to respond to the escalating violence in application of its protection mandate. This can be accomplished through a resolution denouncing the violations and deploying an urgent fact finding mission to the area.

Listen to the interview of Ezzedine El-Asbahi, President of the Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC - Yemen) :

- [ezzedine\\_alasbahi\\_2011\\_fidh\\_hrcif.mp3](#) MP3 &ndash; 14.8 Mb

<http://www.fidh.org/Yemen-measures-must-be-taken-to-prevent>