

YEMEN UNREST

# Clashes spread as Saleh vows to hit back

### Shelling of tribal head's home kills 10

AFP, Sanaa

Fresh fighting gripped the Yemeni capital yesterday as embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh vowed to hit back after he was wounded in shelling of his compound.

His premier, who suffered face burns, and four other senior officials also hurt in the attack were transferred to neighbouring Saudi Arabia for treatment, a medic and state news agency Saba said.

Saleh's regime has blamed the attack on powerful dissident tribesman Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, whose fighters have been battling government forces in the Yemeni capital since a truce crumbled on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, ten people were killed and 35 others wounded in southern Sanaa as Yemeni troops shelled the

home of Sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar, an influential tribal figure, his office said yesterday.

"Ten people were killed and 35 others wounded when Republican Guard troops shelled the home" of Sheikh Hamid on Friday, in an apparent tit-for-tat attack, an aide in his office told AFP.

Sheikh Hamid, a prominent businessman, is a leader of Yemen's biggest opposition party -- the Islamist party Al-Islah (reform).

The shelling in Hada neighbourhood, in Sanaa's south, also targeted the homes of their two other brothers, Hemyar and Mizhij, and that of dissident General Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar.

In an audio statement broadcast on state television late Friday, Saleh who was being treated at the defence ministry hospital in Sanaa said, "I am well, in

good health," and added the bombardment had killed seven people.

Saleh, in power in Sanaa since 1978, hit out at "the sons of Al-Ahmar," a reference to Sheikh Sadiq and his brothers, and called on "the security forces to purge state institutions of these gangs."

Sporadic shelling and rocketfire rattled the Al-Hasaba district of northern Sanaa yesterday where Sheikh Sadiq has his base, witnesses said, adding residents were fleeing amid water and electricity cuts.

Washington condemned the violence, including the attack on the Saleh's palace and called for him to transfer power.

Yemen's parliamentary opposition also called for an "immediate" ceasefire yesterday in the deeply tribal country.



A man sits in a street corner hoping for a job as a labourer yesterday in Pompano Beach, Florida, USA. The unemployment rate inched up to 9.1 percent in the US as job market remains low despite various efforts taken by the administration.

PHOTO: AFP

## US drone strike 'kills' key Pakistani militant

BBC ONLINE

One of Pakistan's most senior militants has been killed in a US drone strike in South Waziristan, reports said yesterday.

Locals said Ilyas Kashmiri was among nine people killed in the overnight strike on the village of Laman.

They said he and his men had only recently arrived in the area. His death has not been confirmed by officials.

Ilyas Kashmiri heads a group that specialises in co-ordinated Mumbai-style strikes on military targets, and is a key commander in al-Qaeda.

He is so senior within al-Qaeda that his name had been mentioned as a possible successor to Osama Bin Laden, the BBC's Orla Guerin in Islamabad says.

His death would be welcomed by the White House, she adds. The US blames him for organising multiple attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India - and has



Ilyas Kashmiri

offered its maximum reward for a most-wanted target, \$5m.

Locals and witnesses in South Waziristan told the BBC's Urdu Service that Kashmiri had been killed in the US attack on a militant hideout west of Wana, the main town in the region, on Friday.

A government official in the frontier city of Peshawar said he had received information of the militant's death but could not confirm it, our correspondent says. There has been no word from militant groups.

In September 2009, Pakistani intelligence officials wrongly declared Ilyas Kashmiri had been killed in a US drone strike in North Waziristan.

Ilyas Kashmiri has been leading a group called the 313 brigade, which is reported to be a unit of the banned Pakistani organisation Harkatul Jihad al-Islami.

## New al-Qaeda video urges individual jihad

AFP, Washington

Al-Qaeda has released a two-part 100-minute video apparently produced after the death of Laden that calls for individual acts of jihad on "enemy soil," a US-based monitoring service said Friday.

Among the several speakers are Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's long-time number two to bin Laden, and American-born Adam Gadahn, who says that Muslims living in the West are "perfectly placed to play an important and decisive part in the jihad against the Zionists and Crusaders."

"It's important that we weaken our cowardly enemies' will to fight by targeting influential public figures in Crusader and Zionist government, industry and media," Gadahn says.

## Friday's death toll rises to 63 in Syria

### 100000 join funerals; US condemns internet cut

Agencies

Security forces yesterday killed three demonstrators in northwestern Syria, after more than 100,000 mourners turned out in Hama for the funerals of protesters, rights groups said.

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman said more than 100,000 people attended the funerals of at least 53 people killed during anti-regime protests on Friday, all but five of them in Hama.

Syrian forces killed at least 70 protesters on Friday, activists said, in one of the bloodiest days since the start of an 11-week revolt against the authoritarian rule of President Bashar al-Assad.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets on Friday in defiance of security forces determined to crush the uprising, and some activists said the death toll could hit 100.

Rami Abdulrahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, said at least

60 people were killed in Hama, where Assad's father Hafez crushed an armed revolt 29 years ago by killing up to 30,000 people and razing parts of the city.

Syria's official press, in reporting Friday's violence, said 20 people were killed, including police, security agents and civilians "by shots fired by armed groups."

One resident said Internet access was still cut off in Hama yesterday, as users elsewhere said Internet services had been restored after a cut of more than 24 hours.

Meanwhile, the United States expressed concern yesterday at the Internet shutdown in Syria, warning the embattled regime that attempting to silence protesters "cannot prevent the transition currently taking place."

"We are deeply concerned by reports that Internet service has been shut down across much of Syria, as have some mobile communication networks," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in a statement.

## Withdraw troops from Abyei

UN calls on Sudan

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council demanded Friday that Sudan withdraw troops from Abyei and stop looting and attacks in the region disputed with rival southern Sudan.

Khartoum government troops overran Abyei, on the frontier with southern Sudan, on May 21 and razed much of the main town. The United Nations estimates that at least 60,000 people have fled the region.

A statement from the 15-nation Security Council called Sudan's military operations in Abyei a "serious violation" of a 2005 peace accord that ended two decades of civil war with the south in which two million people died.

## NEWS IN brief

### Egypt ex-finance minister gets 30 years in absentia

AFP, Cairo

Former Egyptian finance minister Yussef Boutros Ghali was yesterday sentenced to 30 years in prison in absentia on corruption charges, an AFP correspondent said.

Judge Magdi Ghoneim of the Cairo criminal court sentenced Ghali to 15 years for squandering public money by using cars held in customs and 15 years for abusing his position to personally benefit from minis-

### Abbas nods at French bid to revive peace talks

REUTERS, Ramallah

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas yesterday cautiously welcomed a French proposal to convene Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Paris to try to renew collapsed peace talks.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe this week offered to host talks to discuss ideas for a Palestinian state raised last month by President Barack Obama, aiming to avert a showdown at the United Nations in September.

### 48 to face trial for Egypt sectarian violence

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's public prosecutor yesterday referred 48 people to trial for their involvement in deadly Muslim-Christian clashes earlier this month.

The 48 accused were referred to Cairo's supreme state security court for "premeditated murder, harming public security, inciting sectarian tension, burning a church and possessing weapons with the purpose of

### US, Britain urge cooperation on cyber threats

AFP, Singapore

The United States and Britain called yesterday for international cooperation against threats to cyber security following a fresh spate of attacks on government and corporate targets.

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates and British Defence Secretary Liam Fox underscored the urgency of the problem at an Asia-Pacific security forum in Singapore also attended by their Chinese counterpart Liang Guanglie.

Gates said "we take the cyber threat very seriously and we see it from a variety of sources, not just one or another country."

### UN RACISM SUMMIT US confirms boycott

AFP, Washington

The United States will not participate in the Durban III UN summit on racism in September this year, which commemorates ten years since the controversial 2001 Durban Declaration conference, officials confirmed Friday.

"We will not participate in the Durban commemoration. In December, we voted against the resolution establishing this event because we believe the Durban process includes displays of intolerance and anti-Semitism, and we don't want to see that commemorated," State Department spokesman Mark Toner said.

The 2001 conference was marked by bitter disputes and walkouts over plans to include condemnations of Zionism in the final declaration. Israel and the United States walked out complaining of anti-Semitism.

### FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION Indian yoga guru begins fast to death

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's most famous yoga guru began a mass fast to the death yesterday to demand reforms including the death penalty for corrupt officials in an anti-graft campaign that has undermined an embattled and scandal-tainted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The saffron-robed and bearded Swami Ramdev, who rose from an illiterate family to host a television show with 30 million viewers and owns a "peace" island in Scotland, sat with thousands of followers in a tent the size of four football pitches in Delhi.

Tapping into spiralling voter anger at corruption as Asia's third largest economy booms, the guru has called on the government to pursue billions of dollars in illegal funds abroad and the withdrawal of high denomination bank notes.

One newspaper called it "Yogitation," others called it a publicity stunt.

His campaign is the latest embarrassment for a Congress party-led coalition hit by graft scandals including allegations of kickbacks at the Commonwealth Games and a telecoms scam that may have cost the government up to \$39 billion.

Investors worry the latest troubles will again force the government to pay less attention to reform bills, such as making it easier for industry to acquire land, postponed due to opposition protests over graft causing parliamentary deadlock.

### 'Back our right to drive'

### Saudi women write letter to Hillary Clinton

AFP, Washington

Saudi activists have written an open letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a champion of women's rights around the world, urging her to publicly press Saudi Arabia to let women drive.

The letter written by Saudi Women for Driving and distributed on Change.org has amassed more than 10,000 signatures of support throughout the United States, according to the website that petitions for social change.

"In the context of the Arab Spring and US commitments to support nonviolent movements for democracy, now is the time for US leaders to show their support for Saudi women's rights," said the letter to the chief US diplomat.

"We were encouraged to see media reports that US diplomats have quietly pressured the Saudi government to give women the right to drive.

"But given the recent arrests of women trying to drive, now is the time for the US to show its muscle and make that pressure public," it continued.

The petition comes after Manal Sharif, a



32-year-old computer-security consultant, was arrested on May 22 after posting on YouTube a video of herself driving her car around the eastern Saudi city of Khobar.

Many women are said to have followed her example.

"We write to ask that you (Clinton) make a public statement supporting Saudi women's right to drive," the female activists said.

"We do not make this request lightly, but we believe that you making a public statement of support for Saudi Arabia opening the country's roads to women would be a game changing moment."

The letter said the ban on women driving in Saudi Arabia means they miss medical and other important appointments and are prevented from carrying out basic errands in the absence of a good public transportation system.

"Our lack of this basic right to drive our own cars has been repeatedly exploited by abusive fathers, brothers, husbands and even hired drivers," it added.

"Just this week, a Saudi woman reported she was raped by her driver."

## Combat helicopters enter Libya fray

AFP, Benghazi

Attack helicopters struck Muammar Gaddafi's forces Nato said yesterday marking a new chapter in the Libya conflict.

As the Nato-led war entered a new phase, explosions rattled Tripoli and US lawmakers chided President Barack Obama for failing to obtain congressional approval for military action in Libya.

"Attack helicopters under Nato command were used for the first time," the military alliance said in a statement.

"The targets struck included military vehicles, military equipment and fielded forces" of the Gaddafi regime, it said, without detailing where the strikes had taken place.

British Apache choppers and French Gazelles and Tigres were deployed, the two countries said. The Apaches returned safely to a carrier, Britain's defence ministry said, also without disclosing the targets.

The helicopters destroyed a radar post and a checkpoint near the coastal oil city of Brega in the overnight strikes, according to Britain's domestic news agency PA.

The attacks were launched as part of the aerial campaign to protect Libyan civilians from Gaddafi's forces in line with a UN resolution that barred ground troops.

British Defence Secretary Liam Fox said the use of the Apaches showed the willingness of the coalition to "keep the pressure up" on Gaddafi.

"We made to Colonel Gaddafi very clear that there is a very quick way to stop the current Nato activity and that's for him to go and stop waging war on his own people," Fox told journalists at a Singapore security conference.

A spokesman for France's military chiefs, Thierry Brukhard, said the copters destroyed about 20 targets and drew light arms fire from forces on the ground but were not damaged.



A photo released yesterday shows Tigre attack helicopter operating from the French helicopter carrier "Tonnerre", flying close the Libyan coast.

PHOTO: AFP