

# Yemen army troops briefly capture major city in Abyan

Author:

Sun, 2020-06-07 21:54

AL-MUKALLA: Heavy fighting broke out on Sunday between government forces and separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) troops in Yemen's southern Abyan province after loyalists attacked a major city there, local media reports and residents said.

Army troops and allied tribesmen briefly recaptured Ja'ar town after a brief and abrupt attack on separatists who retreated to neighboring areas under their control. Residents told Arab News that separatists pushed loyalists out of Ja'ar three hours later after regrouping and getting reinforcements from Abyan's capital.

"Government forces entered the town at nearly 11 a.m. and subsequently set up checkpoints before being forced into retreating after a counterattack by STC troops," a resident, who preferred to remain anonymous, said.

Clashes have reportedly killed several combatants and civilians. Pro-government figures posted images on social media of captured forces and military equipment abandoned by separatists. STC media broadcast footage of military vehicles seized from government forces after the clashes.

The latest circle of violence in southern Yemen began in April, when the STC announced self-rule in Aden and other southern provinces and vowed to block the return of the internationally-recognized government to Aden, prompting the government into ordering its forces to push toward Aden to expel the separatists.

Separatists managed to fight back despite the relentless attacks.

In the north of the country Yemen's defense ministry said on Sunday that army troops and allied tribesmen had liberated a number of mountainous locations in Sanaa's Nehim district following heavy clashes with the Iran-backed Houthis.

The Armed Forces Media Center reported that government forces, backed by air support from Saudi-led coalition warplanes, pushed Houthis out of several "strategic" locations in Najed Al-Ateq in Nehim, east of Sanaa.

Brig. Mohammed Mashali, an army commander in Nehim, was quoted as saying that government forces liberated 11 km in Nehim after killing and injuring dozens of Houthis, adding that army troops seized three vehicles, weapons and ammunition after the clashes.

Coalition warplanes targeted Houthi gatherings and reinforcements, destroying eight military vehicles on their way to the battlefield in Nehim, the Yemeni commander said.

Government forces have escalated attacks on Houthis in Nehim to recapture strategic areas that have fallen to the militia in the last couple of months. Fighting in Yemen has intensified since early this year, despite many calls from local health workers for a humanitarian truce to allow them to fight the spread of coronavirus.

Coronavirus deaths in government-controlled areas have topped 111, amid a severe shortage of testing kits at local laboratories.

The Aden-based national coronavirus committee on Saturday recorded 13 new COVID-19 cases in Aden, Taiz, Lahj, Abyan, Hadramout, Marib, Mahra, Dhale and Shabwa, bringing the total number to confirmed cases to 482, including 23 recoveries.

Laboratories in the province of Hadramout have run out of testing kits since Wednesday, when heavy rains destroyed the main road that links the provincial capital with Aden, disrupting the arrival of testing kits.

“We could not transport the province’s shipment of PRC machine testing kits from Aden due to floods,” a local government official, who wished to remain anonymous, told Arab News. “We alternatively use rapid tests for diagnosing coronavirus cases.”



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## [Erdogan's former ally Davutoglu prepares opposition alliances in Turkey – report](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-06-07 20:35

LONDON: Former Turkish prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu said he is ready to cooperate with opposition parties to stand against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), [Al Arabiya reported](#).

Davutoglu, once a close ally of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, now leads an opposition party after splitting from the AKP.

Davutoglu was speaking at a meeting on Saturday with members of his Future Party as it prepared for possible early parliamentary or presidential elections, the report said.

He said Turkey needed a new political vision and that the current government was unfit to manage daily crises.

“Turkey cannot bear a policy that sets barriers between political parties,” Davutoglu said according to the report. “The country’s future and the nation’s peace are not entitled to one party.”

He also criticized the government’s failure to manage the COVID-19 crisis.

Turkey’s next elections are scheduled for 2023, but speculation has been mounting that they could be called as early as November.



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## [UN: Numerous reports of looting in Libyan towns retaken by Turkey-backed GNA](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

1591548070778138500

Sun, 2020-06-07 16:31

CAIRO: The United Nations has received "numerous" reports of looting and

destruction in two towns outside Tripoli retaken by the forces of Libya's internationally recognized government, it said on Sunday.

Forces of the Turkish-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) on Thursday recaptured Tarhouna as part of an advance ending a 14-month offensive on the capital by the eastern-based Libyan National Army (LNA) of Khalifa Haftar. Since the LNA retreated, videos have been posted online purportedly showing looting of shops and torching of homes of families associated with the LNA and its local backers.

The UN Libya mission (UNSMIL) said more than 16,000 people had been displaced in Tarhouna and southern Tripoli.

## Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

"Reports of the discovery of a number of corpses at the hospital in Tarhouna are deeply disturbing," UNSMIL said in a statement, urging the GNA to investigate impartially.

"We have also received numerous reports of the looting and destruction of public and private property in Tarhouna and Alasabaa, which in some cases appear to be acts of retribution and revenge that risk further fraying Libya's social fabric."

Alasabaa is another town south of Tripoli that was retaken by the GNA after changing hands several times. Tarhouna was a forward base for the LNA's Tripoli offensive.

A spokesman for the GNA interior ministry sent Reuters a statement warning its forces that reprisals in recaptured areas would be punished.

The Tripoli-based justice ministry said the GNA forces that entered Tarhouna had discovered more than 100 bodies in a morgue.

Jalel Harchaoui, research fellow at the Clingendael Institute, said international diplomatic efforts that had supported the Tripoli government "will be predicated on that government providing security, imposing order and promoting robust transitional justice."

Turkey said it hoped to expand its cooperation with the GNA with deals on energy and construction once the conflict is over.

"From roads to bridges, hospitals, hotels, housing, we already have a history. These stopped because of the war. The same goes for energy," presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told the Milliyet daily.



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## [‘We want to breathe, too’: Solidarity from Iraq](#)

Sun, 2020-06-07 00:19

BAGHDAD: Seventeen years after US troops invaded their country and eight months since protests engulfed their cities, Iraqis are sending solidarity, warnings and advice to demonstrators across America.

Whether in Baghdad's Tahrir Square or on Twitter, Iraqis are closely watching the unprecedented street protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died in Minneapolis as a police officer knelt on his neck.

"I think what the Americans are doing is brave and they should be angry, but rioting is not the solution," said Yassin Alaa, a scrawny 20-year-old camped out in Tahrir.

Only a few dozen Iraqis remain in tents in the capital's main protest square, which just months ago saw security forces fire tear gas and live bullets at demonstrators, who shot back with rocks or occasionally Molotov cocktails. Violence left more than 550 people dead, but virtually no one has been held accountable – mirroring a lack of accountability over deaths at the hands of security forces in the US, Iraqis say. Now, they want to share their lessons learned.

"Don't set anything on fire. Stay away from that, because the police will treat you with force right from the beginning and might react unpredictably," Alaa told AFP.

And most importantly, he insisted, stick together. "If blacks and whites were united and they threw racism away, the system can never stop them," he said. Across their country, Iraqis spotted parallels between the roots of America's protests and their own society.

"In the US it's a race war, while here it's a war of politics and religion," said Haider Kareem, 31, who protested often in Tahrir and whose family lives in the US.

"But the one thing we have in common is the injustice we both suffer from," he told AFP.

Iraq has its own history of racism, particularly against a minority of Afro-Iraqis in the south who trace their roots back to East Africa.

In 2013, leading Afro-Iraqi figure Jalal Thiyab was gunned down in the oil-rich city of Basra – but discrimination against the community is otherwise mostly nonviolent.

"Our racism is different than America's racism," said Ali Essam, a 34-year-old Afro-Iraqi who directed a wildly popular play about Iraq's protests last year.

"Here, we joke about dark skin but in America, being dark makes people think you're a threat," he told AFP.

Solidarity is spreading online, too, with Iraqis tweaking their own protest chants and slogans to fit the US.

In one video, an elderly Iraqi is seen reciting a "hosa" or rhythmic chant, used to rally people into the streets last year and now adapted to an American context.

"This is a vow, this a vow! Texas won't be quiet now," he bellowed, before advising Americans to keep their rallies independent of foreign interference – mimicking a US government warning to Iraqis last year. Others shared the hashtag "America Revolts."

Another Arabic hashtag going viral in Iraq translates as "We want to breathe, too," referring to Floyd's last words.

Not all the comparisons have been uplifting, however.

The governor of Minnesota, the state in which Minneapolis is located, said the US street violence "was reminiscent of Mogadishu or Baghdad."

And the troops briefly deployed by US President Donald Trump to quell unrest

in Washington were from the 82nd Airborne – which had just returned from duty in Iraq.

“Trump is using the American army against the American people,” said Democrat presidential candidate and former vice president Joe Biden.

Iraqis have fought back online, tweeting “Stop associating Baghdad with turmoil,” in response to comparisons with their homeland.

Others have used biting sarcasm.

In response to videos of crowds breaking into shops across US cities, Iraqis have dug up an infamous quote by ex-defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

“Lawlessness and looting is a natural consequence of the transition from dictatorship to a free country,” he said in response to a journalist’s question on widespread looting and chaos in Baghdad following the 2003 US-led invasion.



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[Eritrean navy urged to free dozens of](#)

# Yemeni fishermen from custody

Sat, 2020-06-06 23:28

AL-MUKALLA: There have been calls for Eritrea to release dozens of Yemeni fishermen who were caught last week after sailing into a maritime flashpoint.

On Wednesday 15 armed boats from Eritrea's navy seized 120 Yemeni fishermen from the Red Sea between Hanish Islands and the coast of Khokha.

Eritrea briefly occupied the Hanish Islands in 1995 before retreating after the international arbitration court granted Yemen sovereignty over them. But Yemeni authorities complain that the Eritreans have attacked and seized hundreds of Yemeni fishermen over the last couple of years.

The most recent incursion triggered a brief clash with the Yemeni coastguards that ended with the capture of seven Eritreans, local security officials said. On Thursday the Eritreans released 62 Yemeni fishermen after confiscating their boats.

"We demand all concerned authorities to work on releasing our colleagues and their boats that are in Eritrea's custody," Khaled Al-Zarnouqi, the head of Yemen's Shabab Al- Khokha fishery association, told Arab News on Saturday. "We demand the international community, the (Saudi-led) coalition and the (Yemeni) government to protect us from the repeated attacks by Eritrea's navy that violates Yemeni sovereignty, attacks Yemeni fishermen and seizes boats."

Hashem, one of the fishermen who was released on Thursday, said that armed Eritrean vessels approached their boats on Tuesday and asked them to sail to Eritrea's Ras Tarma.

"They were tough," Hashem told Arab News, preferring to be identified by his first name. "Before releasing us, they gave us little fuel and rickety boats and asked us to sail back home."

## **NUMBER**

**120 Yemeni fishermen were captured by Eritrea's navy on Wednesday from the Red Sea between Hanish Islands and the coast of Khokha.**

The Eritreans refused to release their boats. "Each boat costs YER2.5 million (\$9,987). They seized the finest and most expensive boats and allowed us to sail back with the worst ones."

Local security officials and fishermen say that Eritrea's naval attacks have become more brazen and are getting closer to the Yemeni coastline.

"They have attacked Yemeni fishermen less than 17 miles from the Yemeni coastline," a local security official who documents Eritrea's navy attacks on

Yemeni fishermen told Arab News. "The Eritreans are also still holding 24 fishermen who were detained in the Red Sea on Dec. 1, 2019 and refuse to release them," he said, adding that many fishermen were thinking of taking up arms to protect themselves.

Yemen's coast guard authority crumbled in early 2015 when the Iran-backed Houthis expanded across Yemen after taking over Sanaa, triggering heavy clashes with their opponents.

Since the beginning of its military operations in Yemen in support of the internationally- recognized government, the Saudi-led coalition has trained and armed hundreds of coast guard troops and deployed them along the country's coastline.

Yemeni officials say they are battling Eritrea's navy attacks, Houthi arms' smugglers and drug gangs.



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