

# 15 killed as Yemen forces, gunmen battle in Sanaa

AFP

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A firefight between Yemeni security forces and gunmen dressed in police uniforms killed 15 people and wounded 43 at the interior ministry in Sanaa on Tuesday, medical and security officials said.

"The number of dead has increased to 15, in addition to 43 wounded," a medic said, while a security official confirmed the toll, saying it included one dead civilian.

The rest of the dead were gunmen or soldiers, including members of the First Armoured Division, which had dispatched a company to protect the ministry, the official said, adding

that 16 soldiers were also captured by the gunmen who took control of the ministry.



The gunmen had worked unofficially in Yemen's police during the rule of now ousted president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who stepped down in February after a year of protests.

They have been surrounding the ministry since Sunday demanding that they be enrolled back into the force.

They stormed the ministry in the afternoon, backed by members of the central security services, which remains under the leadership of Saleh's nephew, Yahya Mohammed Abdullah Saleh, a police official

said. "They took control of the ministry," the official said.

The exchange of Kalashnikov fire was heard intermittently throughout the day, witnesses said.

The gunmen had served in the ranks of the Yemeni police when it was led by Mohammed Abdullah al-Qawsi during Saleh's rule, security officials told AFP.

Qawsi had promised to enrol them officially before President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi sacked him in May.

The gunmen stormed the ministry on Sunday and held a sit-in before setting a two-day ultimatum for officials to meet their demands, that include compensation payments as well as being taken on officially.

Last year's uprising in Yemen ended when Saleh signed a Gulf-brokered agreement under which he agreed to transfer power to Hadi.

Under the terms of the agreement, Hadi is tasked with restructuring the military and security apparatus, which had been controlled by officials with close ties to Saleh and accused of corruption.

The clashes in the Al-Hasaba neighbourhood triggered tension across north Sanaa which was the scene of fierce clashes last year between Saleh partisans and tribesmen loyal to powerful tribal chief Sheikh Sadeq al-Ahmar.

Witnesses said armed tribesmen were deployed in the area on Monday.