

Security forces clash with protesters near Aden palace



Published on February 20, 2026

Document Date: Mon, May 18 2026 12:26:48 am

Category: ,English,Middle East - ,Snippets

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Source: Xinhua

ADEN, Yemen, Feb. 19— Heavy gunfire erupted in Yemen’s southern port city of Aden as security forces clashed with anti-government protesters attempting to approach the presidential palace, according to local officials and witnesses.

Security personnel opened fire to disperse demonstrators aligned with the Southern Transitional Council (STC) after they moved toward the palace compound and tried to breach security barriers. The protesters were later pushed back and the area secured. No immediate official casualty figures

were released, though local media reported several injuries during the confrontation.

Witnesses said some protesters initially retreated following the gunfire but later regrouped nearby, leaving tensions high around the presidential zone.

The unrest coincided with the first Aden meeting of Yemen's internationally recognized government since its return from Saudi Arabia. The new cabinet, led by Prime Minister Shaya al-Zindani, convened with most ministers present, marking the formal resumption of government operations in the temporary capital.

Earlier, large crowds of STC supporters gathered near the meeting venue, waving secessionist flags and chanting slogans against the government. Demonstrators attempted to block cabinet members' access and obstructed main roads for hours before security forces intervened.

Residents reported heightened military deployment around the presidential area and along key routes leading to government institutions and officials' residences.

The STC condemned the government's return, calling it a challenge to the "will of the southern people" and warning of further protests.

Yemen has remained deeply divided since 2014, when Houthi forces seized Sanaa, prompting a Saudi-led coalition intervention in 2015. Despite its inclusion in Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, the STC continues to press for southern self-determination, fueling recurring political

tensions.