Power outages yemen



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SANAA, Yemen (AP) -- Yemeni authorities deployed security forces and armored vehicles across the port city of Aden on Wednesday, as protesters were expected to take to the streets in the latest in a series of protests over hours-long electricity outages caused by a shortage of fuel for power stations.

For several days, hundreds of demonstrators in three central districts of Aden blocked roads and set tires on fire, protesting electricity shortages as temperatures soared to 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit).

On Monday and Tuesday, security forces moved in to disperse the demonstrations, beating protesters with batons and barricading the entrances of some streets, three witnesses told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Aden, home to one million people, is governed by the Southern Transitional Council, a group backed by the United Arab Emirates that controls much of the south in the country fractured by nine years of civil war. The STC is allied to the internationally recognized government fighting the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa and much of the north and center of Yemen.

In recent weeks, electricity outages reached up to 10 hours a day in Aden or up to 20 hours in neighboring Abyan province, according to residents. However, outages lasted only eight hours on Wednesday. The cause of the outages is a shortage of diesel fuel for power stations, the spokesman for Aden's electricity corporation, Nawar Akbar, said in a Facebook post Sunday.

The finances of the Southern Transitional Council, which governs Aden, have been strained ever since Yemen's oil exports were halted more than a year ago. Additionally, attacks by Yemen's Houthis, who control the country's north and the capital of Sanaa, on international shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden have disrupted deliveries of fuel to the south. The attacks are in retaliation for Israel's seven-month-old assault in Gaza.

The impoverished nation has oil fields in the south, a major source of income, but has limited refining capacity and so must import refined fuel.

A commercial fuel tanker was expected at the port of Aden, but the importer refuses to unload the cargo before receiving payment in advance, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the internal disputes

Moammar al-Eryani, the information minister and government spokesperson, did not immediately respond to requests for comment by the AP.

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Akbar, of the electricity corporation, said authorities had gotten fuel to one of Aden's power stations Sunday morning and that there were plans to bring in 800 tons of diesel for other stations Monday. There was no subsequent official confirmation whether that had taken place.

Aden has always faced power outages, but those used to only last between four to five hours a day, according to residents. The electricity shortage was cited by Human Rights Watch in a November report highlighting the failure by the Yemeni government and the STC to provide Aden residents with basic rights to water and electricity.

They "have an obligation to provide access to adequate water and electricity in Aden," said Niku Jafarnia, Yemen and Bahrain researcher at Human Rights Watch. "And yet, when residents have protested the cuts, security forces have responded by firing on them."

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WhatsApp: 8613816583346

