

## Seven killed, 32 injured in Yemen mosque blast

At least seven people were killed and 32 injured Friday in a powerful explosion which rocked a mosque in the volatile northwestern Yemeni province of Saada, witnesses and medical sources said.

Witnesses told DPA the blast, believed to be a car bomb, took place shortly after the weekly prayers in the provincial city of Saada.

Medical sources said two of the city's hospitals received seven bodies and 32 injured people from the attack. They said three of the dead were military men.

'Dozens of injured people were seen lying outside the mosque, and several cars were burned by the blast,' a witness said in a telephone call from Saada, some 230 km north of Sanaa.

He said ambulances were seen rushing injured worshippers to hospitals.

Local sources in Saada said a regional army commander was the target of the attack, but he survived unharmed.

They said Shia rebels who have been fighting government forces in Saada for more than three years, are believed to have been behind the attack.

The attack comes one day after four army troops were killed and several others injured after Shia rebels attacked an army personnel carrier in Saada.

The sources said the attack took place in Za'afa of the mountainous Haidan district, where armed members of the outlawed 'Believing Youth' Shia group hold sway over strategic mountainous locations near the border with Saudi Arabia.

It was the second attack on army vehicles since the fighting renewed April 25, one day after authorities said Qatari mediators had resumed efforts to follow up on the implementation of a Qatari-brokered ceasefire deal.

On Wednesday, seven soldiers were killed and 17 others wounded in a similar attack on a military convoy in the Dhahian city in northern Saada, the defence ministry said.

Tens of thousands of army troops have been deployed in Saada to crush the revolt that originally began after Shia cleric Hussein al-Houthi, the elder brother of the current leader of the group Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, established the movement in March 2004. Hussein was killed by the army in September the same year.

Waves of violent clashes since mid-2004 have left hundreds of government troops and rebels dead, and displaced thousands of civilians in the volatile region.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has repeatedly accused the Houthis of trying to topple the republican regime and re-establish the rule of the Zaidi Imamate, a royal regime that was overthrown by a revolution in 1962.

Followers of al-Houthi belong mostly to the Zaidi sect of Islam, which is regarded as a moderate sect.

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