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South Yemen rebels vow to intensify protests

Southern Yemeni separatists pledged on Thursday to escalate protests demanding secession, as northern Huthis vie to expand their control over more of the impoverished country.



The country continues to reel under the impact of the rebel expansion, after they overran the capital last month and seized a major port city unopposed, before clashing with tribes and Al Qaeda south of Sanaa.

Tens of thousands protested on Oct.14 in Al Arood Square in central Aden, capital of the formerly independent South Yemen, setting up a tent camp and promising an indefinite sit-in to press for independence.

A new coalition of two main separatist groups, the Supreme Council of the Revolutionary Peaceful Movement for the Liberation and Independence of the South, called for "Friday of Anger" protests.

It urged southerners working for the government, especially those in the armed forces and police, to abandon their jobs and join the protests.

Many protesters go to work during the day and return in the afternoon to the camp, which has some 120 tents, activists said.

The south was independent between the end of British colonial rule in 1967 and its union with the north in 1990.

A secession attempt four years later sparked a brief but bloody civil war that ended with northern forces occupying the region.

The separatists, as well as Huthis, rejected plans unveiled in February for Yemen to become a six-region federation, including two for the south, as part of a post-Saleh political transition.

Gulf Today **October-24-2014**