

Yemeni president, rebels sign peace deal after PM resigns

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USPA News - The Yemeni government and Shia Houthi rebels have signed a ceasefire deal in an attempt to end days of deadly clashes in the capital Sana`a, where rebels have seized government buildings and parts of the city, officials said late on Sunday. The news came hours after the country's prime minister resigned.

The ceasefire deal - called "The Peace and National Partnership Agreement" - was signed late on Sunday at the presidential palace in Sana`a. The document was signed by President Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, delegates of the Houthi Movement, and leaders of all major political parties, although the Nasserite Party expressed its "reservations." The Yemeni government said the agreement was mediated by Jamal Benomar, the UN's Special Adviser to Yemen, in a bid to end worsening violence in Sana`a which has claimed more than 100 lives in less than a week. All parties to the deal pledged to "resolve any conflict through dialogue" and agreed to cease all hostilities in Sana`a, Al Jawf and Mareb with immediate effect. "The President of the Republic shall engage in inclusive and transparent consultations with all of the constituencies represented in the National Dialogue Conference immediately following the signing of this Agreement," the document said. "The purpose of these consultations shall be to establish a competency-based government in a period not to exceed one month. The current government shall remain responsible for the normal affairs until the formation of the new government." Under the deal, President Hadi is also required to appoint political advisers from both the Houthi Movement and the Southern Peaceful Movement within 3 days. During the same time, all parties to the agreement will nominate candidates for the new cabinet and Hadi will consult a representative of each party before making decisions on any objections raised against a candidate. "With the start of the formation of the new government, the camps established around the capital, Sana`a, as well as camps within the city limits, shall be dismantled and removed," the document adds, referring to camps outside high security facilities such as the airport, among others. "Unofficial checkpoints in and around Sana`a shall also be dismantled." The signing came hours after Prime Minister Mohammed Basindawa informed the Houthi Movement that he would resign from his post, and Sunday's document indicates it may have been a key demand for the rebels. "A new Prime Minister, who shall be a neutral and impartial national figure of competence and high integrity and who shall enjoy broad political support, shall be appointed," the document said. "The President of the Republic shall issue a presidential decree charging the new Prime Minister to form a new government." Benomar's office welcomed Sunday's signing but stressed more work was needed. "[He] underscored the importance of implementing in full the Agreement signed today, and without any delays," a statement from his office said. "He expects all sides to honor their commitment to the political undertakings contained in the Agreement." But within hours after the signing, Sana`a Mayor General Abdul Qader Hilal announced his resignation, saying Houthi rebels had seized his vehicle at a checkpoint and detained his driver and guard. The resignation did not appear to be directly linked to the agreement, which he hailed as a hopeful development. "I offer my resignation from my post as Mayor to the beloved capital Sana`a as my conscience and the values I was raised on do not allow me to continue in a post where I do not have the support and authority," he said, adding that he had spent hours trying to secure the release of the men without any result.

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