

Yemeni forces kill 3 from militants' prison breakout

UNREST MAY BE HELPING AL-QAIDA PRISONERS HAD BEEN AWAITING EXECUTION

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The Associated Press

SANAA, Yemen — Yemeni forces killed three men Saturday who were among nearly 60 suspected al-Qaida militants who escaped from prison this past week, officials said.

The three escapees were awaiting execution in the Mukalla prison in southern Yemen, where inmates attacked guards, seized their weapons and fled through a tunnel Wednesday in another sign Islamic militants are making gains amid Yemen's political turmoil.

Nearly four months of anti-government protests have left the country's president of more than three decades clinging to power. President Ali Abdullah Saleh's forces have failed to silence the dissent with a bloody crackdown and even have been drawn into street battles with tribesmen who have turned against him. An attorney spoke to the press.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

A security official said an investigation of the breakout showed prisoners had mobile phones and digging equipment.

Two of them had been hit by gunfire, but the circumstances of the third man's death were unclear, medical officials said.

In Saturday's confrontation, the three prison escapees were killed during a chase.

Two towns in southern Yemen, where inmates attacked guards, seized their weapons and fled through a tunnel Wednesday in another sign Islamic militants are making gains amid Yemen's political turmoil.

Besides the prison escape, Islamic militants, including some believed to be linked to al-Qaida, have taken over two towns in southern Yemen in recent weeks.

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