

# Al Qaida suspects arrested in Yemen after attack

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- By Nasser Arrabyee, Correspondent
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Sana'a: The Yemeni government arrested tens of Al Qaida suspects in the southern coastal city of Aden after a group of gunmen, believed to be Al Qaida operatives, staged a brazen attack on the headquarters of the intelligence office, killing 11.

The gunmen escaped after they killed everyone they saw in that supposed maximum-security facility.

Does that unexpected operation mean that Al Qaida is increasing its presence in the south of Yemen where disgruntled groups have been demanding separation since 2007? And is there any relationship between these groups, locally known as Al Herak, and Al Qaida?

Although Al Qaida did not claim responsibility for the attack, the government arrested the mastermind a day later and identified him as Ghawdal Mohammad Saleh Naji.

Naji appeared in a video footage shown by some satellite channels beside Al Qaida operative Mohammad Ahmad Saleh Omair as they threatened in that video to retaliate for the government air strike that targeted an Al Qaida training camp in Al Majalah, Abyan on December 17, 2009. Omair was killed one week later in another air strike which targeted a meeting of Al Qaida leaders.

Al Herak has not yet staged such sophisticated operations even though it has adopted violence as a means of achieving its goals. It's not united as Al Qaida. It's divided into eight groups at least, including two groups outside Yemen.

The most important and obvious common element between these two entities in their desire to control the south is their hostility to the Sana'a regime.

"Al Qaida and Al Herak are both opponents of the government, but each has its own background. Al Qaida is religious and extremist and is using violence to achieve its goals ... Al Herak is using violence as well but not for religious reasons," said Saeed Obaid Al Jemhi, chairman of Al Jemhi Centre for Research and Studies, a recently established think tank concerned with the Islamic groups and Al Qaida affairs.

### **'Exploiting Al Herak'**

"Al Qaida is exploiting Al Herak, but it is not allying with it ... If they fail to succeed, Al Qaida will remain as it is, and if they succeed, Al Qaida will do its best to make Al Herak far away from the socialism and Marxism they were in the past," Obaid, who is originally from Aden, said.

The Al Herak groups say those who were arrested after the attack on the intelligence headquarters were only their activists and that they had nothing to do with Al Qaida, and that the government used Al Qaida as a justification to repress them.

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