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Yemen

The women's uprising in Yemen

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Yemeni women have taken to the streets in their thousands in recent weeks.

They have demanded water, electricity, a better standard of living, the payment of salary arrears, improved teaching conditions, a halt to the widespread arming of the army and the prosecution of those responsible for corruption.

This movement did not start in vain. For years, women's groups have sporadically taken to the streets to demand water or electricity, as part of wider, mainly male, protest movements. To name but a few the women of Arrawa (governorate of Abyan) for water in 2017, Aden for water and electricity and Mukalla (governorate of Hadramaut) for electricity and jobs in 2020, Maareb for water and medicine in 2021, Qaataba (governorate of Dali) for water in 2022, and Seiyoun (governorate of Hadramaut) for electricity and schools in 2024. But the exacerbation of the economic problems, the incessant demonstrations by their peers for the same demands, which led to nothing but clashes and repression, resulting in arrests, sometimes accompanied by torture, and deaths or bullet wounds, prompted the women to assert themselves as a force capable of leading what some have already dubbed the 'women's revolution'.

The wave of protests began in El Hawf (Al Mahra governorate) on 5 May when women blocked the Sarfit border post with the Sultanate of Oman to demand electricity. The movement then spread to El Houta and Zinjibar (Lahij governorate), Chakra (Abyan governorate), Taiz and Aden. Women, sometimes accompanied by their children, or carrying empty water bottles, old lanterns or firewood, demonstrated on several occasions in Taezz and Aden. The women were keen to distance themselves from any (partisan) politicisation in order to unite women around their demands, regardless of the authority in place, but were keen to emphasise the political nature of their approach. This was reflected in the placards and slogans: *'there is no water crisis in Taiz, but a crisis of conscience'* or those calling for *'the corrupt to be prosecuted'* and the historic slogan *'the people want a dignified life'* (El Houta).

On the other side, there was a double movement. In Aden and El Houta, the authorities increased the fuel supply to the power stations, so that they could provide extra hours of electricity. But during the demonstration on 24 May in Aden, militiamen blocked the roads leading to the rally site and female militias were deployed to dissuade the demonstrators and violently assaulted them. And the day after the demonstration on 31st in Aden, roadblocks were still in place in the streets and bus drivers were no longer allowed to take female passengers on board. With the exception of the region controlled by the Houthis, where the Zaynabia, a women's militia, have been deployed as a deterrent, the women are continuing despite the repression. On 6 June, after the *Eid El Adha* prayer, they met at the Hubaishi stadium in Aden for another demonstration to demand electricity.

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Translated by Pierre Rousset avec l'aide de DeepLpro for [ESSF](#).

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