



WORLD AFFAIRS

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# WORLD ROUNDUP

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A military band marches into Cairo's Tahrir Square on Friday prior to planned Victory Day celebrations. Photo CNN

## Wave Of **Fresh** Protests In The Middle East

Two successful revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt have plunged the middle-east into political uncertainty. Furious protests took place in Bahrain, Yemen and Libya during the last week with additional protests taking place in Iran and Algeria.



## LIBYA

A so called 'Day of rage' took place on Thursday in Libya where thousands of protesters gathered in four cities to express anti-government sentiments. Libya has been tightly controlled by Muammar Gaddafi, who is Africa's longest serving leader. Thursday was the anniversary of clashes that took place on February 17, 2006, in the country's second largest city of Benghazi when security forces killed several protesters who were attacking the city's Italian consulate.

Large protests continued on Friday where thousands came out on to the streets of the eastern city of Benghazi and activists also set up camps in Al-Bayda amidst expectations of increasing fervor closer to the Friday prayers. Violent confrontations are reported to have spread to five cities in demonstrations so far, but not yet to Tripoli, the capital, in any large numbers.

There has been a tough government response, including the use of gunfire and even denying supplies to hospitals. Human Rights Watch says 24 people have been killed and many wounded in the demonstrations which continued into the night on Thursday.



## BAHRAIN

The Obama administration has once again found itself in a tough position as brutal crackdowns on pro-democracy protesters in Bahrain killed five people. The US has a critical Naval base in Bahrain and considers the country a key regional ally.

Some analysts say that the Bahrain protests not only display a strong anti-governmental bent but also reflects an emerging split between the country's ruling minority Sunnis and majority Shia Muslims. Over 70% of Bahrain's 500,000 citizens are Shia Muslims. Paranoia has erupted with regard to the Bahrain protests as fear was raised in Saudi Arabia with regard to possible interference by Iran, the region's biggest Shia power, in the protests. But Shiite political figures in Bahrain denied their goal is to institute an Islamic theocracy like that in Tehran.

Protests went from somewhat peaceful to extremely angry and violent after police opened fire without warning on thousands who were sleeping in Pearl Square; it was a day of shock and disbelief. Many of the hundreds taken to the hospital were wounded by shotgun blasts, doctors said, their bodies speckled with pellets or bruised by rubber bullets or police clubs. Anger increased as thousands gathered for the funerals of the deceased on Friday. The once-peaceful protesters were transformed into a mob of angry mourners chanting slogans like "death to Khalifa," the king, while the opposition withdrew from the Parliament and demanded that the government step down.



## YEMEN

Pro and anti government protesters clashed in Yemen with unprecedented violence. Following weeks of peaceful protests and demonstrators running away in the face of heavily armed pro-government mobs – the sudden surge by anti-governmental protesters suggested that this strategic Middle Eastern nation had crossed a threshold, from street protests to a revolution.

While relatively small in number, Yemen's anti-government activists suddenly, surprisingly retaliated with fury, fighting with metal pipes, wooden sticks, and daggers, and deepening the pressure on President Saleh to find a way to calm Yemen's increasingly angry and volatile protesters. Saleh in a telephone call with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, who is also facing a populist uprising, blamed "foreign agendas" for the movement to oust him and other Arab leaders, the state news agency Saba reported. "There are schemes aimed at plunging the region into chaos and violence targeting the nation's security and the stability of its countries," Saleh told the king, according to Saba.

On Thursday, anti-government protests unfolded in seven governorates across this mountainous nation, underscoring its fragility. In the southern city of Taiz, thousands of protesters took over the main square, defiantly camping as young people did in Cairo's Tahrir Square, the focal point of the Egyptian revolution. In the port city of Aden; thousands of protesters clashed with security forces, who used tear gas, electric stun guns and batons to disperse them. Two protesters were killed and 12 wounded, according to local news reports.



## AMERICAN Arrested In PAKISTAN

Raymond A. Davis, a US Embassy official and formerly of Special Forces, was arrested in Pakistan when he shot dead two Pakistanis in Lahore. A Pakistani court on Thursday gave the central government three more weeks to determine whether Davis, facing murder charges, qualifies for diplomatic immunity. The decision in the high court in the eastern city of Lahore came two days after Sen. John F. Kerry arrived in Pakistan to ramp up pressure by the United States for the release of the official.

Davis has said that he acted in self-defense when he fatally shot two Pakistanis on Jan. 27, an assertion rejected by police. Pakistani media have questioned why Davis was armed and what his duties were in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province. The U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Cameron Munter, said in a statement Thursday that the United States was "disappointed" that the government did not certify immunity for Davis. Echoing Kerry, Munter apologized for the "tragic" incident in Lahore, in which a third, uninvolved man was also killed after being hit by a U.S. consulate vehicle that was coming to Davis's rescue. The Pakistani government is under immense pressure by the public and religious authorities to prosecute Davis.