

Lawmakers among injured as police clash with crowd in Kuwait

Several Kuwaitis, including five lawmakers, were treated in hospital after they were injured in an attempt by the police to disperse crowds

- By Habib Toumi, Bureau Chief
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Manama: Several Kuwaitis, including five lawmakers, were treated in hospital after they were injured as police tried to disperse crowds who had gathered at an unauthorised forum, Kuwaiti media reported.

Following the unprecedented clash at the rally in Sulaibkhat, 10 kilometres west of Kuwait City, MPs held a meeting and said that they would press for action to question the country's prime minister, Shaikh Nasser Mohammad Al Ahmad Al Sabah over the issue.

Al Arabiya television said some parliament members were among those injured outside the home of MP Jaman Al Herbish where a crowd had gathered to attend an opposition forum.

Footage carried by Al Jazeera television showed riot police using batons to push back a group of opposition members.

Significant opposition

"This was an outrage unprecedented in Kuwait's political history. There was a deliberate will to beat the opposition physically," Al Herbish told the television channel.

But it was unclear whether the issue of the police action has the potential to rally significant opposition to the prime minister in parliament, where government opponents make up a minority.

According to the Al Shahed newspaper, MPs Abdul Rahman Al Anjari, Dhaif Allah Buramya, Waleed Al Tabtabai, Mislum Al Barrak and Falah Al Sawwagh were injured in the attack in which the police used batons.

The lawmakers were among a large crowd that attended a forum to discuss an alleged plan by the government to amend the 1962 constitution.

It was the second time that the MPs and their supporters held a rally to voice their protest despite a warning by the government that it was adopting a zero-tolerance policy towards holding public gatherings outside the diwanias, the privately-owned traditional Kuwaiti halls.

Witnesses reportedly said that the scuffles started when the rally organisers could not control the people who were unable to enter the diwaniya of MP Jama'an Al Harbash where the gathering was planned to take place.

Special forces were sent in to help calm the growing tension and contain the situation, but the clashes became inevitable when the crowds could not move back and the police insisted on pushing them, witnesses told Kuwaiti dailies.

Blocked roads

Ambulances called in to help treat or evacuate the injured faced problems reaching the diwaniya with roads blocked by hundreds of parked cars belonging to the crowd.

The State has been rocked by a series of political crises over the past five years that led the ruler to dissolve parliament three times, while the cabinet has resigned five times. MPs are planning to submit a motion on Sunday to question the prime minister.

There was no immediate comment on state media about the incident.

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