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Pajhwok

4 dead as Zabul protest turns violent

By Nasim Hotak

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Four people, including a policeman, were killed and six others wounded on Friday when a demonstration turned violent in the southern province of Zabul, an official said.

Residents of Qalat, the provincial capital, took to the streets against the Afghan police for what they called disrespect to the bodies of two Taliban fighters.

But police chief, Lt. Col. Abdul Nabi Elham, rejected the allegation as baseless, saying armed individuals among the demonstrators tried to provoke violence.

Shah Wali, a wounded participant of the demonstration in front of the Eidgah mosque, said three militants had been killed by Afghan and foreign forces in the Khwar village, on outskirts of the provincial capital on Thursday.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Police pulled out the bodies of two rebels who were buried in the Syanak area of the city."

Residents were staging a peaceful rally, but police opened fire on them, Wali claimed. Some of the protestors were killed and wounded, he said, giving no exact figures.

However, the police chief said the Taliban killed in Thursday's battle included a commander, named Sharifullah. Police took the bodies, before they were buried, for a forensic examination, he explained.

Once the examination was completed, he added, the bodies would be buried, he added. "The provincial court allowed the forensic examination of the bodies," the police chief maintained.

He blamed villagers for threatening security of the city by staging the violent demonstration. He alleged the protestors fired at police who were providing security for them. As a result of retaliatory fire from police, three protestors were killed and three others wounded, he said.

But one the wounded protestors, Shah Wali, said he was unaware of any demonstrator firing at police. However, he explained, the protestors did pelt stones at the policemen on duty.

Asked about the policeman's death, Wali said: "I don't know who killed him; I did not see any armed individual among the demonstrators."

Although resident Abdul Wahid claimed police had detained a number of protestors, Lt. Col. Abdul Nabi Elham said he was unaware about the arrests.

Three bodies and five wounded people, including a 12-year-old child, were brought to the Qalat Civil Hospital from the protest scene, Public Health Director Dr. Sulaiman Safi said. He added two of the seriously wounded people had been referred to an ISAF health facility in the area.