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Saleh rebuts exit plans as GPC members 'jump ship'



Several Yemeni MPs, sheikhs and businessmen resigned from the ruling General People's Congress in protest against the crackdown on anti-government protesters. Yemen analysts say the number of resignations will increase in the following days

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, Mar. 6—After days of delay President Ali Abdullah Saleh officially rejected a proposal that he step down this year and reiterated that he would remain in power until his term ends in 2013.

"The peaceful and smooth transition of power is not carried out through chaos but through the will of the people expressed through elections," said a statement from the presidential office on Saturday.

On Wednesday, leading members of Yemen's political opposition, the JMP, presented Saleh with a five-point plan that would allow the president to leave power by the end of this year, after tens of thousands of anti-Saleh protesters demanded the president leave immediately on Tuesday.

The plan also stated that Yemenis should be allowed to protest peace

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Deaths in Amran protest violence

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, Mar. 6 – Two people were allegedly killed and one wounded by the military in Amran governorate at a "peaceful anti-government protest" last Friday. The protest was organized by the rebel Houthi group, who were calling for the overthrow of the regime. The Houthis accused the Yemeni military of opening fire on the protesters.

"The dead bodies are still with the military and also the wounded," Ali Al-Dailami, head of the Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, told the Yemen Times. "We won't check the legality of the military keeping the bodies as the whole behavior is against the law that guarantees the right of life and the right of expression," he added.

The government claims that the protest wasn't peaceful and that the Houthis started the violence against



Anti-government protesters in Sana'a. The Banner reads 'Leave to maintain unity'.

soldiers which led to the injury of four soldiers.

"Around 11am today [Friday], an armed group of men attempted to overrun a military checkpoint in Tamthalah. Both sides exchanged gun fire which injured four soldiers – two of which are in a critical situation – and additionally three armed men were injured. There were no peaceful demonstrations in the vicinity of the checkpoint," read a statement from the government.

The Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms, which is concerned about the relationship between the Houthis and the government, condemned the targeting of anti-government protesters in the south and in the northern areas (Amran and Sa'ada) of the country. A statement from the organization claimed that the violations against anti-government protesters are systematic, not individual mistakes, and should be taken as war crimes to be dealt with by the International Criminal Court.

The state spent six years at war with the Houthis which ended last year in

a truce. According to Al-Dailami, the Houthis this time chose a peaceful way of protesting in harmony with other Yemeni governorates that are holding peaceful demonstrations calling for the overthrow of the regime. The government responds differently to protesters in different governorates.

"The state is using violence in the areas that they are scared of, such as the southern governorates, because of the absence of a strong media role there, and tensions in the government of the protests increasing," said Al-Dailami.

The government uses the participation of some Houthis in the capital's anti-government protests to throw suspicion upon the aims of the revolution. Some people who want to join the anti-government protests do not because of the presence of Houthis. "I would be crazy to join the protests while the Houthis are there," said Nuha Saif, who works at an international organization. She believes the protests would be dangerous to attend if Houthis are there.

Continued on page 2

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The Republic of Freedom Square in Taiz, marriage, auctions and cakes

By: Emad Al-Sakkaf

Many political analysts have admired the organization of the anti-government sit-in taking place in what is now called "Freedom Square" in Taiz. For three weeks, an administration committee made up entirely of youth has elicited support from all members of society to feed, house and support people demonstrating against the Saleh regime. Over the past three weeks, different societal sectors have sprung up naturally in the sit-in to ensure that the demonstration will be able to remain for the long term. These groups and committees are detailed in the following report.

Delegating responsibilities to various committees is one of the reasons why the demonstration in Freedom Square has been so successful. These committees include a security committee, an organizing and supervising committee, a media committee, a services committee, a financial committee, a rights committee and a charitable contribution committee. These committees employ more than one thousand youths who organize the space 24 hours a day.

Security Committee

This committee is considered one of the most important committees by demonstrators and was formed in the early days of the sit-in. It includes more than 100 volunteers from the youth who constructed a security fence around the borders of the demonstration. Its members also search all those who enter the space for weapons.

Anas Ahmed Ghaneem, a member of the security committee, said, "The committee is the safety line to protect the revolutionary youth. We thoroughly search all those who enter the



Freedom Space. We have stopped several armed people from entering the space during our period of operation. In the most dangerous instance facing the security committee, someone attempted to infiltrate the space carrying a gun equipped with a silencer. The man was arrested and his weapon was seized."

Media Committee

Abdualwahed Mohammad Alsami, a member of the media committee, said, "The tasks of the committee started before the sit-in by arranging the logos that are suitable for the event and the communication." He added, "We have members who are specialists in the electronic media they communicate via the facebook and other websites to send the youth message of change the governmental system at the Freedom Space."

Rights Committee

The committee is contained of a group of the prominent lawyers in Taiz city that study all the movements from the legal side and follow those who were arrested from the revolution youth and defense upon their rights.

Ghazy Al-Samai, a lawyer and a member of the rights committee said, "Our tasks represented by defense upon the youth of all the cases weather they were arrested or attacked." He added, "About the case of the grenades incident throwing it over the sit-in youth. We have followed all the procedures of collecting the evidences and questioned the accused people and we are waiting to take them to the court and the security forces to catch other wanted men in the case."

Marriage and Honey Moon

The Freedom Space has witnessed last Thursday the marriage of two brothers, Anas and Osama Ali Ahmed Al-Batah, they are from the sit-in youth. The sit-in youth have shared their celebration with microphones of the national and revolution songs instead of the usual weddings songs. Thousands of the sit-in youth shared them with their happiness and congratulated them and gave them symbol gifts too.

Osama Ali Al-Batah one of the bridegrooms said to the Yemen times, "we preferred my brother and I to have our wedding at the Freedom Space with the revolution youth, and our wedding to be the beginning of the freedom wedding that we hope." He added, "We also preferred to spend our honeymoon in the freedom space with the full approve of our wives. We hope for a better life different from our current reality."

The Watch of the Martyr in the Auction

Last Friday, the Freedom Space has witnessed the announcement of an auction for the personal watch of the martyr Mazen Al-Badhaji who was killed the previous week 18-2-2011 in the grenades incident that was thrown over the sit-in youth and 86 were injured.

The auction Started with YR 1000 , a lot have crowded to have it until it reached the price of YR one million by one of the crowd, after a woman has offered to buy it with YR 700 thousand as a tender touch for the martyr's family.

Worth to be mentioned, that the martyr Mazen Al-Badhaji is 26 years old of a poor family, he graduated from university with computer science major. He is unemployed. His death has a huge impact over the crowds. He was buried on Friday morning with the present of half million citizen after praying at the Freedom Space that were filled and the streets around it in a scene never has been witnessed in Taiz before.

In-kind contributions fund

The prominent and amazing thing is the cooperation situation between the people in Taiz who demanded with the change and who raced to give the kind contribution through

the revolution fund and the committee such as generators, trunks of water, tents, blankets, audio systems and other means of support to keep the sit-in and its successfulness.

Golden days for the sellers and the Peddlers

The Freedom Space has turned to an opened public market were peddlers are coming with their goods to sell the different kind of drinks, snakes and fruits. Also there are the cassettes' sellers of the national songs that had a huge popularity.

Shaker Dabwan, a seller of lemon juice, has a diploma in business he said to the Yemen Times, "This Space is the only place the municipality has not reached and chased us in our living income. Those days are considered as precious chances to earn money with no fear of the municipality." He added, "I wish that the sit-in would stay for long or the government would change and comes another government can work for our interest."

Woman an effectiveness attending

The Freedom Space was not only for the revolution youth of male only, women have a special attending especially when they are who are mostly affected with the social and economic situation by neglecting them, beside they are the poorest class in the country. The women's role is represented by its active participation with the youth revolution and its continuous attendance at the different time with their different age and education such as teachers, lawyers, doctors and housewives also college and high school students also with special attendance of university female professors too. Those women cheers and hold logos demanding for the government system to leave.

Women's role didn't stop at that, they recorded touching situations by given money support and supplied them by food and they even wrote "Leave" and "Allah with you Leave" on the cakes and the breads that they made.

Rahma Al-Aghbari, a housewife who is at the Freedom Space, The Yemen Times has seen her supplying youth with home cake she said, "We went to the Freedom Space to look for better future for our children. We have broken the rules of traditions and customs that were forbidden us from going out to streets only in specific times." She added, "Despite the hard financial conditions that I live with my family, but my daughters and I are participating from our allowance to prepare cakes. It is the only thing as a duty to do to them."

Nowria Saeed Haider, a teacher said "the woman is one who is affected the most by poverty and taken the responsibility of it with some problems that she faced as has been considered the weakest party in her family." She also said, "With my salary and my husband's we still cannot provide the smallest needs for our family such as good education, health and food." She added, "We make sure that the women participate and attend from the first day of the revolution. We take shifts with the rest of the women and prepare some meals for those youth who make our history that we always dreamed of." She also said, "We trust the youth a lot. We never trust parties."

Om Ahmed Abdalrahman said, "My husband spent most of his time at the Freedom space. Immediately after he came back from work he went to the Space with some food, then in the evening he came back and I already have prepared the cakes and breads and we took it together with our sons, Ahmed and Mohammad. I didn't forget to write "Leave" all the time to rise up the spirit of youth and to let them know that we stand beside them."

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Security Committee checking for arms



Freedom Square has become a permanent home for many



According to a member of the financial committee, donations reach YR 350,000 per day, and all coming from normal people



Tent erected in honor of a demonstrator that was killed



Snacks and juice vendors in Freedom Square



Bridegrooms celebrating marriages in the Freedom Square



A woman gives away a torte to the protestors



Female members of the Order Committee



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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invites NGOs to apply for the following Position with its "EC-UNDP Joint Electoral Assistance Project in Yemen"

Title: CSO activities aimed at increasing women's participation
Duration of Assignment: 3 months
Work Station: Sana'a, Yemen

Background

The EC-UNDP Joint Electoral Assistance Project in Yemen consists of three major components: building the capacity of electoral institutions; supporting the legal reform process; and increasing women's participation in the electoral process.

The third project component, Women's Participation aims at increasing women's role in political decision making processes, raising women's awareness, skills and knowledge on their constitutional rights to vote and to be elected, encouraging their active participation in the country's political life, etc.

One of the major directions of the component is engaging CSOs to conduct diverse activities in the context of the above mentioned goals. These may include workshops, trainings, seminars and conducting public awareness raising campaigns targeting both men and women, carrying out round table discussions with women political party members and influential women, as well as voters, including those from marginalized groups.

Duties & Responsibilities:

Under the direct supervision of the JEAP Gender Officer the selected SCO will contribute to the implementation of the project component "Women's Participation" through implementing its own project under small grants scheme in a timely and efficient manner.

The proposed project should foresee activities in a given direction (either round tables, or awareness raising campaigns, or trainings and other similar activities). A combination of diverse directions is also possible. In that case, limited financial possibilities should be borne in mind.

Deliverables:

Selected CSOs shall perform their respective tasks according to the schedule below and shall accommodate necessary adjustments as required by the project review work plans.

Description	Location
1. Preparing the necessary materials and conducting other preparatory activities as necessary for project implementation	Sana'a and other locations as appropriate
2. Conducting project activities	Sana'a and other locations as appropriate

Qualifications:

- At least 5 years of experience in conducting activities aimed at women's empowerment and women's participation.
- Participation in at least two projects aimed at enhancing women's empowerment
- Knowledge of methodology of the activity to be conducted under the project proposal project, as well as ability to produce tool kits, training materials, public campaign materials, etc.

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- Communicating with Production Engineering staff, and Completions Superintendent.
- Prepares daily operational reports.
- Prepares for and ensures that all necessary equipment is on hand prior to the job.
- Enforces Safety Management System.
- Responsible for all aspects of well control.

Job Duties:

The incumbent shall:

- Reads & evaluates program for potential operational concerns.
- Consults with Completions Superintendent and Production Engineering staff when trouble-shooting potential problems & concerns.
- Ensures timely delivery of required equipment, fluids, and services.
- Plans for on-site contingencies to minimize operational interruptions.
- Ensures that the operational program is followed.
- If errors are found in the operational programs follows up with the Completion Superintendent, Engineering Supervisor and Production Engineering staff.
- Performs rigless operations required to maintain production.
- Ensures that all operations are conducted SAFELY in accordance with Nexen policies.
- Completes the required post operational reports.
- Initiates the events and reports in DMS and fills out the daily operational reports / well history report, well bore schematics.
- Plans on-site logistical requirements to ensure continuous operations, without oversupply or overstocking.
- Uses SAP to obtain material from the warehouse.
- Obtains sub-contractor information for inclusion in the daily report.
- Is knowledgeable of rigless operations.
- Is knowledgeable of downhole & surface equipment.
- Coordinate the water well group activities.
- Ensures relevant personnel are trained or certified.
- Responsible for environmental protection, clean-ups and reports for the same.
- Responsible for emergency response plans related to rigless operations.

Minimum Requirements:

- Engineering degree, preferably in Drilling, Petroleum or Mechanical. A good understanding of well testing, hydraulic fracturing and matrix acidizing in high permeability sandstone reservoirs.
- Total Minimum of 8 years related experience, 5 years experience in petroleum industries preferably and 3 years in service rigs operations.
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Tourism Police at your service

Established in 2002, the Tourism Police Authority had one objective – to ensure the safety of tourists while they enjoy Yemen.

Dr. Musaid Az-Zahiri is the deputy chair of the authority. Other than his PhD in law and constitution from Russia, he speaks Arabic, Russian and English fluently, and can communicate in Japanese and Italian. His good nature and charm has left its mark on many tourists who had been to Yemen since he joined the authority in 2007.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf interviewed Az-Zahiri to talk about the authority, what is expected of tourists, and what they should expect from Yemen.

There is no country in the world that can entirely prevent crime. But what the Tourism Police are trying to do is minimize crimes against tourists and to provide them with an enjoyable experience in Yemen.

"It was clear that we needed a dedicated authority to deal with the problems tourists faced in Yemen, such as kidnapping and explosions," explained Az-Zahiri on why the Tourism Police were established. "The difference between a crime and a tourist crime is that the impact of the latter affects the whole country, and reverberates long after the crime was committed."

The Tourism Police is made of six administrations dealing with different issues ranging from tourist travel permits, to the protection of historic and cultural sites.

Quality control

Az-Zahiri is a man on a mission. Not only does he help run a critical establishment for the country, he and his team are adamant in fighting corruption and providing their beneficiaries with quality services.

"We carried out several events at the authority and even announced them on the radio. We called on tourists and tourist agencies to report any misconduct on the part of the Tourism Police.

So far we have documented 40 cases of attempted bribery, our men were the ones to report these cases," said Az-Zahiri.

He asserts that his office, at least the headquarters of the Tourism Police, is corruption free. And calls on anyone who faces problems with the Tourism Police to contact him personally, and he will ensure the right procedures are carried out.

"It is all about quality control and good management. We treat tourists as clients and we are trying to provide them with a high quality service for a low price," he added.

Although the authority is very much part of the national security system, officers working in the Tourism Police are highly educated. Most of them speak more than one language, and they must conduct themselves in the highest possible manner.

There is also a gradual trend to educate all officers in computer applications and in using the internet.

"I and a number of my team personally do the training in-house. We take from our time and energy and have created a syllabus and use the computer facilities in the office. We give our staff the chance to learn, but if they prove unable, we send them off to the Ministry of Interior and replace them with more qualified cadres," explained Az-Zahiri.



Az-Zahiri: The Tourism Police Authority had one objective – to ensure the safety of tourists while they enjoy Yemen.

He understands that the way his office deals with tourists will have a long standing impact on them, and will affect Yemen's image to the outside world. He also knows that there have been some incidents involving soldiers from the authority or connected bodies that have damaged the authorities image.

"We are a relatively new body, and given the size of the task allocated to us, it is to be expected that we are not yet able to do it perfectly. This is why we need the help and cooperation of tourists and tourist agencies," he said.

Protecting tourists

The international definition of a tourist is any foreign person who visits and stays in the country for a period of more than a day and less than a year. This definition includes researchers, students of Arabic, interns, etc.

All these people, says Dr. Musaid Az-Zahiri, are the responsibility of the Tourism Police whose highest concern is to keep them safe.

"We also facilitate their mobility inside the country. We provide them with travel advice and work out plans to ensure their safety while traveling inside Yemen. We also come to their rescue if they need any help," he explained.

For that same reason, he needs the full cooperation of tourists and calls on them to abide by the travel regulations, and when traveling, to stay within the routes they have declared.

The Tourism Police know which areas in Yemen are safe and which are not. Through their direct relations with other security authorities, they are also informed of any new threats, and directly inform travel agents or tourists if they happen to be near any of those areas.

"In some areas of Yemen we are obliged to provide tourists with security escorts from the local police to ensure their safety. In other areas we arrange for them to be escorted or followed by a security vehicle from one check point to another between cities. But most of the main cities are safe, and tourists don't need anything more than a travel permit and they can enjoy Yemen on their own," said Az-Zahiri.

He is aware that there were some incidents in Hadramout where a soldier who was told to escort tourists behaved badly and annoyed the tourists. He was reprimanded, demoted and will never accompany tourists again. "He now works as a security guard at the gate, and has learned not to bother tourists anymore," said Az-Zahiri.

He also mentioned that some tourists or travel agencies demand escorts even when not strictly required, just to feel safe. Although the escorts are essentially the responsibility of the security apparatus, there is a common understanding that the travel agency or tourists offer the security men to either eat with them, or separately if the trip is long.

"It is embarrassing for us to impose upon tourists the need to feed security men. But this is the reality, although cash is not acceptable and if any escort demands money from tourists or the travel agent we should be notified immediately," said Az-Zahiri.

Even if tourists face problems with their tourist agency and not security, the Tourism Police can be of assistance.

Az-Zahiri recalls when some tourists from Slovenia experienced a problem with their travel agency and demanded a refund, but could not stay in Yemen to go through the process. Dr. Az-Zahiri personally followed the case on their behalf and eventually sent their refund to the tourists' home town in Slovenia.

The authority also ensures all tourist agents to have a minimum credit of YR 2 million as a guarantee to protect tourists' financial rights.

Another incident Az-Zahiri recalled is when an Italian woman misplaced her passport just one day before her flight out of Yemen. He remembered that she was frantic and devastated, so he arranged for her to get a travel document from the Italian embassy and personally took it to her hotel.

"I did not want her last memories of Yemen to be sad. So I bought her a flower bouquet and took it with me to comfort her. She was very touched and pleased, and said that although she had

travelled to many countries around the world she had never been treated with such kindness," said Az-Zahiri.

The Tourism Police are also designing a website through which updated information needed by tourists will be made available, as well as contacts to answer any question or demand made by the website users. Az-Zahiri hopes the website will be up and running by the middle of this year.

"It will also be a legitimate platform for tourists to express their opinions and share their experiences and find answers without any speculation," explained Az-Zahiri.

Synchronized efforts

Foreign tourists who needed visas to enter Yemen in February 2011 reached 3,046 tourists with Italians coming in the first place. The favorite tourist destinations inside the country are Shibam, Kawkaban, Taiz, Hodeida, Socotra and Hadramout.

Those tourists make 25 percent of the total tourists coming to Yemen in general. The other 75 percent come from either Arab countries or are Yemenis with another nationality and hence do not need an entry permission.

"It depends on the situation at the given time. All interested tourists need to do is contact us and we will provide them with the latest updates. It is very important that they abide by our instructions in order for us to ensure their safety," Az-Zahiri emphasized.

Because of the size of the job the Tourism Police have to perform, it has to have clear coordination with different security authorities. For example, when tourists need security escorts for their travel between cities, the Tourism Police coordinates with the local police and those based at check points. The responsibility of escorting tourists is divided across all the security authorities operating along the travel path in a sort of relay.

The only problem with this method, explains Az-Zahiri, is that it is all based on paper work and phone calls. He hopes that a time will come soon when all security offices, not just those affiliated with the Tourism Police, have an electronic network through which the movement and status of all tourists can be updated electronically.

"I want a time to come when all I need to do is press a button to find out how many tourists are present at that specific moment, and which police groups are responsible for their safety," he said.

He hopes that by the end of 2011, the Tourism Police administration will be without paper. Corruption can be limited when paperwork is kept to a minimum.

4U

For any enquires on Tourism Police or complains, contact Deputy General Manager of Tourism Police
Dr. Musaid Az-Zahiri
musaid110@yahoo.com
777364932 or 733364932
or telefax: 01-486537/8



Mariana Panic (left) and Nina Slamnik from Slovenia are fans of Yemen.

Testimonies

Mariana Panic is a Yemen travel guide from Slovenia. She can understand Arabic enough to find her way around Yemen which she has been visiting for years as a tourist and a tour guide.

"Before coming to Yemen all I had as background information were some pictures and information from the internet. The websites I found useful for information on Yemen are that of the Ministry of Tourism and different forums where previous tourists posted their comments," said Panic.

Now Yemen is one of her most favorite tourist destinations in the world.

As an experienced traveler, the travel warnings on Yemen did not deter Mariana Panic, who has been to other countries with similar conditions. She says she knows how the media portrays a country's image and how it can blow violence out of proportion. She says she feels safer in Yemen than in her home town in Slovenia, especially as a woman moving at night.

"The truth is that I don't feel in danger at all in Yemen. After reading and seeing so much on TV, when I ended up here I was surprised at how peaceful everything is," she explained.

Her only advice to tourists coming to Yemen is to come with an open mind and an open heart.

"Just make sure you have what you need and Yemen will provide you with the rest," said Panic.

She also advised tourists to respect Yemeni culture by dressing modestly. Panic says that Yemen is still a country which maintains its rich culture despite the modernization that is dominating the world of tourism. "If you want to enjoy rich Arab culture, Yemen is the place to be. But you must hurry because there is no guarantee that Yemen will remain authentic culturally," she said.

Nina Slamnik is another tourist from Slovenia who is in Yemen with Panic's tourist group for the first time. She was also excited to be in Yemen and feels very safe. She did, however, discover that the concept of credit cards is not very common and it is advisable to carry enough cash for the trip.

"Also you need to know that you can't really plan that much in Yemen. So it is better to be more flexible and enjoy it while you can," said Slamnik. "Tourists in Yemen should realize that no matter what the situation is, everything can be solved with a big smile."

Before she came to Yemen, Nina Slamnik heard that many people carried Kalashnikovs. However, when she met them face-to-face she did not feel threatened at all. "The security though armed, always smiled and greeted me warmly so I never felt threatened, rather protected. So probably the best advice regarding this issue is to prepare oneself mentally to see such arms and not be threatened by them."

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Essam Sharaf named Egypt's new prime minister

Huffington Post

Egypt's military rulers appointed the first post-Hosni Mubarak prime minister Thursday, replacing an air force pilot close to the ousted leader in a bid to appease thousands of protesters who had threatened to renew the occupation of a central Cairo square.

The opposition hailed the decision as another victory for "people power" but many warned pressure must be maintained on the military to implement other democratic reforms, including an accountable police agency and a new constitution.

Leaders of the 18-day uprising that forced Mubarak to resign had been pressing the military to fire Ahmed Shafiq, arguing that a prime minister sworn in by the ousted leader should not stay in office. They also were angry that his Cabinet was filled with figures from the old regime.

The military's official Facebook page said former Transport Minister Essam Sharaf had been chosen as prime minister and asked to form a caretaker Cabinet during

the transition to civilian rule.

Activists say they had recommended the choice of Sharaf.

"First we ousted Mubarak. Second, we got rid of Shafiq. We have become again the owners of this country," said Bassem Kamel, a member of the Youth Coalition, an umbrella group of activists who launched the protests Jan. 25.

Sharaf, who served in the Cabinet for 18 months between 2004 and the end of 2005, has endeared himself to the youth groups by visiting them in Cairo's central Tahrir, or Liberation, Square, the uprising's epicenter. An engineer, Sharaf also appeared to fit the image of a professional civil servant who after leaving office founded a group of like-minded scientists called "the age of science."

"He is a reformer and was a vocal critic" of the old system, said Shady Ghazali, another protest leader.

The youth celebrated in the way that was the pillar of their uprising: on social networking sites. Soon after his appointment, the name of the new minister started trending on Twitter.

"We are writing the electronic revolutionary history. Long live Egypt," wrote Abdel-Rahman Mohamed, a 20-year-old student.

The Youth Coalition also canceled a Friday sit-in in Tahrir Square calling for Shafiq's resignation. Instead, there will be a rally to celebrate their latest victory and they invited Sharaf to deliver his oath in the square.

Pro-democracy activist and Nobel laureate Mohamed ElBaradei thanked the military for "listening to the people."

"Today (the) old regime has finally fallen. We are on the right track," ElBaradei said on his Twitter account. He is a likely presidential candidate who has returned to Egypt since the protests after a long absence that upset many of his supporters.

"Let us all get down to work and start rebuilding our country. We want the world to know that Egypt is open for business," said ElBaradei, the former head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency.

The military's prompt acceptance of Shafiq's resignation shows the sensitivity of the generals to the demands of the upris-

ing's leaders and concern that long protests could complicate returning life to normal.

Since Mubarak's ouster, Egypt has experienced a crime wave not seen in years, with a marked rise in armed robberies, arson and battles between rival criminal gangs over territory. Demoralized and hated by many for their perceived brutality against protesters, security forces have yet to fully take back the streets. They numbered around 500,000 on the eve of the protests.

Many believe the military should focus on restoring law and order in the country of 80 million people.

Since it took charge of managing Egypt's affairs on Feb. 11, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces promised to hand power over to a new government and elected president within six months. It disbanded both houses of parliament and promised to repeal the emergency laws, though only when conditions permit.

The council also appointed a committee to amend the now-suspended constitution to allow for elections.

But many are concerned the military rulers are moving too slowly.

"They do respond to pressure but they make sure it is on their own pace," said activist and blogger Alaa Abdel-Fattah. "We want decentralized democracy. They will resist. They want it highly centralized to keep control."

The military has yet to tackle the more complicated issues of dissolving the former ruling party and local councils, and restructuring security agencies, seen as the main tool for propping up Mubarak's regime.

There has been no release of political prisoners or prosecution of security officials behind the deaths of protesters — key opposition demands.

On Thursday, two leading Muslim Brotherhood figures were released on medical grounds after serving almost two-thirds of a seven-year sentence.

One of the two, Khayrat el-Shater, the brotherhood's chief strategist, said he expects the charges of money laundering and terrorism against him to be dropped because they violated international legal standards.

"We understand these trials were imposed on the military before by the tyrant



Mubarak. But now we won't find them any more excuses. They should drop all these sentences," he told The Associated Press after his release.

The military, however, continued to be criticized for its human rights record. The New-York based Human Rights Watch said the new rulers use military tribunals to prosecute dozens of civilians, all charged with criminal offenses, including weapons possession and curfew violations.

"Egyptian military authorities are continuing one of the worst practices of the Hosni Mubarak government by prosecuting civilians in military tribunals," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

Saving the Egyptian Revolution

TEL AVIV — Revolutions throughout history have proven to devour their children. Their final outcomes are seldom congruent with their prime movers' intentions. Too frequently, revolutions are hijacked by a second wave, either more conservative or more radical than what was first contemplated by the initiators of change.

What started in France in 1789 as an uprising of the middle classes in alliance with the sans culottes ended up with the return of the monarchy in the form of Napoleon's dictatorship. More recently, the first wave of the Iranian revolution, under the presidency of Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, was by no means exclusively Islamist; the second wave, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, was.

The question for Egypt is whether the agenda of a truly pluralistic democracy — proclaimed by the avant-garde young protesters at Tahrir Square, the admirably self-empowered Facebook and Twitter generation — can prevail against the resilient forces of the past. Indeed, according to a Pew Research Center poll, only 5.5%

of people have access to Facebook, while 95% want Islam to play a major role in politics, 80% believe that adulterers should be stoned, 45% are practically illiterate, and 40% live on less than \$2 a day.

Ideally, the new democratic order should be based on a common platform adopted by the forces of change, both secular and Islamic, and on a transition pact between these forces and those representing the old system, first and foremost the army. Indeed, one of the Egyptian revolution's odd features is that it now operates under the exclusive trusteeship of a conservative army.

True revolutions occur only when the old repressive system is thoroughly dismantled and purged. But Egypt's revolution is one whose initial stage ended with power fully in the hands of the old regime's repressive apparatus. The risk is that the fraternal ties between the army — not exactly innocent of the Mubarak regime's repressive practices — and the protesters might prove short-lived.

So far, the army has acceded to only one of the protesters' central demands — getting rid of Mubarak. It has not endorsed the

wide array of liberal demands voiced by the revolutionaries of Tahrir Square.

Arguably, the military concurred with the protesters' demand for Mubarak's removal as the best way to circumvent a move towards a dynastic republic under Mubarak's son, Gamal. The masses called for a revolution, while the army conducted its own coup d'état in the hope of saving what is essential in the system while sacrificing the man who embodied it.

The army's temptation to limit change reflects the conservative profile of its hierarchy, the extraordinary privileges it enjoys, and the economic interests with which it has been tied. Egypt was ruled as a police state, and, with a gigantic and all-pervasive security apparatus, the army might be tempted to assume the role of guardian of order and stability if democracy proves too messy.

Fortunately, there are limits to the Egyptian military's capacity to impede change. A Western-leaning army, funded and trained by the United States, it cannot allow itself the liberty of shooting peaceful protesters. Indeed, limiting the army's political role will certainly be a fundamental condition for maintaining Egypt's warm relations

with the West. A free-trade agreement with the US and improved access to EU markets might be powerful incentives that the West can offer to Egypt's young democracy.

So, no matter how conditioned the Egyptian army may be by its worldview and vested interests, it has no option but to facilitate the democratization process. It should have to accept, however, that no Arab democracy worthy of the name could refuse to open the electoral gates to political Islam.

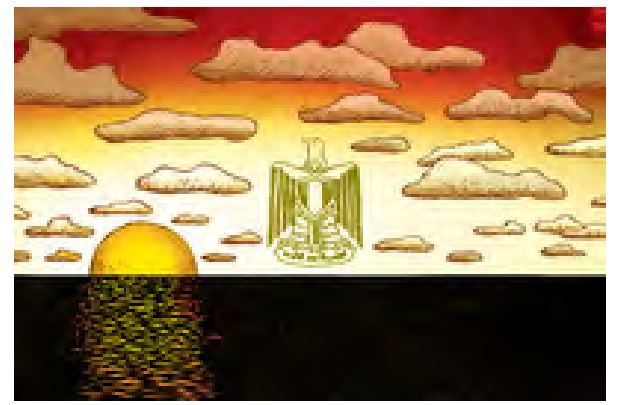
Indeed, Egypt's formidably historic task now is to refute the old paradigm according to which the Arab world's only choice is between secular and repressive autocracy or obscurantist and repressive theocracy. But the regime that emerges is bound to be more attuned to local conditions, and thus to religion's vital role in the social fabric.

A democracy that excludes religion from public life entirely, à la France, cannot work in Egypt. After all, such a democracy does not work in Israel, or even in the US, a country that G. K. Chesterton described as having "the soul of a church." Building a modern secular state for a devout people is Egypt's main challenge.

That said, a scenario in which the Muslim Brotherhood usurps the revolution does not seem plausible, if only because this might lead another strongman on horseback to take over. Although still inspired by staunchly anti-

Western conservatives who believe that the "banner of Jihad" should not be abandoned, the Brotherhood today is not the unconditionally jihadist organization that Mubarak regime's portrayed to the West. It has long disavowed its violent past and has shown an interest in peaceful political participation.

The tense relationship between the incumbent Arab regimes and political Islam is not necessarily a zero-sum game. It is in this context that the abortive Palestinian "Mecca Agreement" between the religious (Hamas) and the secular (Fatah) to form a national-unity government for Palestine



might have established a new paradigm for the future of regime change in the Arab world. Such compromises may be the only way to stem the slide to civil war, and possibly co-opt Islamists into a settlement with Israel and rapprochement with the West.

Shlomo Ben Ami is a former Israeli foreign minister who now serves as the vice-president of the Toledo International Centre for Peace. He is the author of Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy.

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Yemen's accession to WTO delayed

By: Ali Saeed

The Yemeni government has not yet finalized its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) despite widespread expectations that it would join by the end of 2010. Dr. Hamood Al-Najjar, the WTO's chief communication and coordination officer, told the Yemen Times.

Set up in 1995, the WTO is an organization that intends to supervise and liberalize international trade by providing a framework for negotiating and formalizing trade agreements. Yemen's accession to the WTO would bring its trade legislation into conformity with the multilateral-trading system which organizes and administers 95 percent of trade flows in the world. According to Al-Najjar, "Yemen cannot afford to be outside of this system."

Yemen has not joined the WTO because it "has not yet finalized negotiations with one member of the WTO on market access for goods," Al-Najjar

explained.

Yemen is also yet to finalize amendments on certain key legislation included in the action plan for its accession.

WTO officials had said Yemen was expected to join the WTO by the end of last year, but its application has been buoyed by slow progress and it is still unknown when Yemen will become a member, according to Al-Najjar.

The General Council established a Working Party to examine Yemen's request for accession in July 2000. According to Najjar Yemen is one of many countries that have been striving for over ten years to obtain WTO membership.

"Applications are often a slow process," he said "Saudi Arabia took 11 years and China took 15 years."

The key legislative amendments required are now being discussed in the Yemeni parliament, according to Al-Najjar.

Many of Yemen's neighbors, especially the GCC states, are WTO members. Yemen's accession to the WTO would help Yemen negotiating its ac-

cess to the GCC council, a step that analysts say is crucial to Yemen's future economic and political stability.

Al-Najjar highlighted Yemen's strategic location on the Arabian and Red seas as a through route for trade said that for this reason "Yemen should play a major role in the trade of the region as it did in the past."

But others are not so convinced by the WTO. Dr. Mohamed Jubran, professor of economics at the University of Sana'a told the Yemen Times that accession will not benefit Yemen as it is a country that is importing and not exporting."

"For those countries exporting goods, WTO membership makes a lot of sense, but 96% of Yemen's export are oil-related," he said. Adding that if Yemen joined the WTO its public budget may lose significant sums of money as its customs fees would be canceled.

"Those seeking Yemen's accession are doing so for their own political interests rather than out of concern for the economy."



WTO membership will not benefit Yemen in the trade sector as the country is importing and non-oil exports do not exceed more than 4 percent of all exports, according to the professor. YT photo by Sade

Protests affect some small businesses



Orange juice seller, Basheer Ali is optimistic through increasing his income during the demonstrations ,



Al-Hatimi, owner of a bookshop considers the tents as a hinder to his business



Abdullah Al-Nakhilani - a seller in a Bookshop- University area sits down as no students buy books or photocopy papers.

By: Ola Al-Shami

In the midst of calls for the regime to fall and those pledging to forever protect President Saleh, it is easy to forget that Tahrir Square and Sana'a University are surrounded by houses and small shops. In one way

or another, these protests are having a huge impact on small business owners in the surrounding areas. The Yemen Times went to both Tahrir Square and Sana'a University to find out how these business owners were faring in a time full of uncertainty.

Tawfiq Al-Hatimi, owner of Al-Batool Bookshop near Sana'a Uni-

versity expressed his frustration with the sit-in. "My business has been damaged by these protests. Our average sales have decreased a great deal. With no students attending classes, no one needs to make copies, buy notebooks or other supplies," he said.

He added that the tents in front of his bookshop make it harder for customers to get to his shop. "Most of my costumers are female students. If they want to come to my shop, their families know that strange men will be watching them. Most of them prefer to simply avoid this place," he said. Al-Hatimi considers the camps and tents as an invasion and attack on his business.

Om Mohammed lives on the second floor of a building near the university. "The local businesses must be suffering a great deal," she said, while pushing her way through a crowd of people buying groceries. "They scream on their microphones until midnight. It makes our lives very difficult," she said.

The anti-government protesters have erected almost a thousand tents, taking up most of the street in front of and leading up to Sana'a Universi-

ty. In addition, a group of paramedics are roaming the area with first-aid kits. Lines of security have also been set up to screen people entering the protest area for weapons.

"It's for your and our safety," said one of the women inspectors.

Basheer Ali, a man selling oranges from a wheelbarrow said "We are not affected by the protests, in fact these are the best protests I have ever seen because they're peaceful. Street vendors, shops, and restaurant are working day and night."

"Bookshops are sufferin but cafeterias and restaurants are experiencing an increase in business," said Abdullah Al-Nakhilani, the owner of Qur-toba Bookshop near the University.

"During the protests we stay open because they usually remain peaceful. However, if the pro-government thugs come, we close to avoid damage," added Al-Nakhilani.

Just a few miles away in Tahrir Square in, thousands of pro-government supporters are camped out under massive beige marquees. Mohammed Nabil Al-Bada'ani, the owner of a large business in Tahrir Square said his business was suffer-

ing greatly.

"Can you imagine that we used to get among 50 to 60 thousand riyals a day? Now we barely get 10 thousand."

Al-Bada'ni says that many of his customers are hesitant to enter the square for fear of getting caught up in violence.

As you pass by Tahrir Square, the shops are open, street vendors are selling their products, watch repair-

ers are working and calling for passers-by to buy used phones. At noon, the clothes shops open up while pro-Saleh supporters gather in groups inside large tents for lunch.

Ahmed Ali, an almond seller in the square said, "There are still large amounts of people that pass through Tahrir in spite of the demonstrations. However, when there crowds swell, I take my staff and flee from the area."

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (CONSULTANT SERVICES) Public Works Project -Yemen Credit n No/ 4419

The government of Yemen has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Public Works Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consultant services

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1. **Validate current base-line date so as to measure various outputs and outcome performance indicators**
2. **Conduct Socio - Economic impact assessments:-**
 - a. **Physical objectives**, in terms of infrastructure to be constructed and delivered to beneficiaries /concerned agencies: and
 - b. **Socio-economic objectives**, in terms of alleviating poverty through the generation of increased employment and improving community livelihoods through better public services (particularly , services of direct need to women and children).
 - c. **PWP improved procedures** and extent to which recommendations of the previous SIA were incorporated in aspects of improved data collection , social and environmental aspects.

The Public Works Project now invites eligible firms to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested firms must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments , experience in similar conditions , availability of appropriate skills among staff,etc.)Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultant by world Bank Borrowers (current edition)

Interested firms may obtain further information the address below during office hours 8:00am to 3:30pm .

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by {three weeks from Mar 5, 2011}

Attn: Saeed Abdo Ahmed Project Director
Almahrokot St .Brach from Zubairy Street,
Telephone :+ 967-1-409683/7, facsimile:409303
E-mail: pwp-yem@y.net.ue
P.O. Box: 18316 sanaa-yemen

Invitation to Pakistan Community for Attending Flag-Hoisting Ceremony on 23 March

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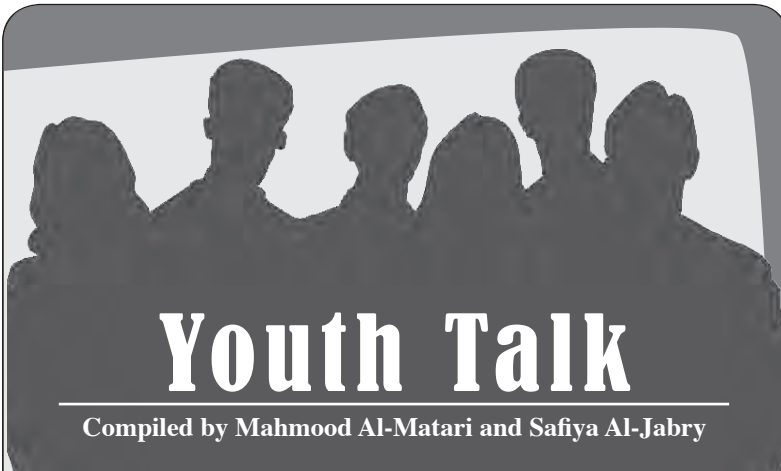
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Youth Talk

Compiled by Mahmood Al-Matari and Safiya Al-Jabry

In this new section we talk to young people about their concerns, hopes and dreams. Every week we hit the streets and share what young people have to say right here.

This week's question:

How do social networks like Facebook and Twitter have an impact on people?

Fathiya Al-Jabry

Internet plays a great role in our lives nowadays. Social networks have made it easy for people around the world to connect. I use these networks more than my phone sometimes. I reconnected with people I never thought I would ever meet again. Distant family and friends have become closer through these cheaper forms of communication. On the other hand, these networks also have a down side to them. People can become addicted to them and have virtual friends which could lead to psychological problems.

Riyadh AlHarazi

I think that facebook and twitter have made a lot of changes in our lives. They have been recently used as tools to change the dictatorship regimes in Tunisia and Egypt. These networks also make it easier for people to connect and make friendships from all over the world.

Ameera Al-Muhares

I feel like these networks are just wastage of time as no important topics are discussed. They can be addictive and take up all of a person's time. People become isolated and they forget about important things in their lives like family and friends.

Nada Mohammed

Nowadays, social networks have been the backbone for demonstrations and uprisings. They are basically considered the center for youth to share ideas freely without restrictions both directly and indirectly. They make youth feel like they can express their ideas without much care of whether they are accepted or not.

Muna Bajaber

I think for the most part it has had a good impact because it has provided a means of renewing relationships with people you had lost contact with a long time ago and had no way of reconnecting with. I also believe that even though it can be a good thing, it needs control and limitations by the person using it.

Waleed Muthana

Social networks play a great role by being sources of news and information of occurring events in the world. In fact, I feel that sometimes they offer more realistic information than other channels.

Sadeq Abdi

They make life much easier by assuring away of connecting people even though they are miles apart from each other. They are much cheaper and convenient.

Sitora Yuldashova

I was inspired by the story of a homeless man in America who found his daughter through twitter. I deeply believe that these networks provide that connection that people long to find. They are also a good platform for advertisements.

Next Week's Question:

How do you think tribalism affect the people in Yemen?

Follow this section for a new question every week and feel free to reply with your answers or feedback by sending an e-mail to tyyouth@gmail.com

So this is your chance to share your humorous stories, poems or opinions with other young readers!

My beautiful home (Yemen)

By: Redwan Mohammed
redwan200033@yahoo.com

O my beautiful home where I live in,
With ancient houses there isn't din,
Comfort and love your heart fill in.

Doves sit on their high roofs,
As a white scarf covering fair hair,
Ah, illuminations like sky stars,
Wastefully light life here and there.

The sun flirts you from time to time,
And sedately kisses your head and mine,
Neither hate you know nor spite,
Love you are filled with and pride.

High mountains are adorned by clouds,
Making the white crown your with unique gems,
A new green dress wearing when it rains,
Either beauty I'll feel or magnificence.

No home like you I surely say,
I can't leave you even one day,
If you ignore me, I will pass away.



For a few rials, this boy trades his day's collection of recycled metal and plastic waste before he launches on another expedition. It's not about protecting the environment, it is about fending off poverty.

YT Photo by Amira Al-Sharif

Being a successful manger

By: Shamsan Dabwan Saeed
shamsan@blumail.org

Generally, management is a term which describes the way that people control and organize different situations that happen in their lives or their work. The central meaning of management is a series of activities using different resources, both material and human. So management is not only a group of principals, systems and procedures. Basically management is a mixture of relationships, communications and interactions among different people. Here I would like to mention some tips that make a successful manger.

Cleverness is one of the most important traits of a successful manger. He or she should have an awake consciousness, a white heart and a sober tongue. He or she should have the ability to understand and analyze problems of work and teamwork, estimate the psychological mood of a team and have a vision of developing and training his team to the best level. They need to plan ahead to anticipate the needs and the costs of production, as well as maintaining profitability. A clever manger also has the ability to get work done in a timely manner, and to set priorities. On the other hand, a

successful manger should understand his team. They do not believe in tricks, does not instigate one employee to trick another, and respects individual differences. In other words, a successful manger behaves in such a way as to control the situation by using his or her intelligence, and to find reasonable ways to solving problems. Evaluation is also an attribute of a successful manger. He or she always steps back to evaluate how well different programs have worked. A successful manger asks themselves many questions. Are the current ways of managing resulting in a good profit? Are there ways to improve performance to get more benefits, cheaper and in a shorter time?

Effective and responsive interpersonal relationships are a trait of successful managers. Reporting to staff members, discussing happy moments and conducting executive decisions together creates respect in the managers' ability to demonstrate care, collaboration, respect, trust and attentiveness. Such traits create a network of professional and personal connections that make a successful management environment through good communication skills.

Good communication skills are a very important attribute of a good manger. Communication is achieved through many different ways: in person, writing, email and telephone.

Successful managers do not use humorous expressions, do not speak in anger or slam down the phone while someone is speaking. He or she listens carefully to their employees or customers. They seek out and give good and appropriate feedback to achieve a good result to a problem. The successful manger provides good outlets for expression, ideas, the voicing of concerns and the allowing of suggestions. By encouraging and practicing open communication, you can motivate employees and customers very easily. They will be more satisfied, and create a ready organization that responds well to a changing workplace. One of my friends reported to me that he had written a complaint to his manger, requesting him to address a specific problem. His manger did not care about his complaint, and days later, the problem lead to bigger and bigger problems. He wrote another complaint stating that "as a result of your carelessness about the former complaint..." This time the manger responded, saying that he would bear the responsibility of the problem, and reward his employee. Here the manger behaved in a reasonable way that cultivated the trust and motivation of his employee to do well. Here the manger used his intelligence and learned from his mistakes to encourage

good teamwork.

Building a team is another trait of a successful manger. He or she always encourages participation, the sharing of ideas and mutual respect at work. He or she looks for different ways that allow and help employees to make connections, and to refresh their connections by leading by example. A successful manger give employees autonomy. They need to meet their goals in their own away within a budget and deadline. He or she provides support, training, recognition and necessary knowledge leading to success. By building a good team, the work environment can cope in the absence of a member of the team. A good manger is one who conducts meetings weekly or monthly to discuss problems. In short, a successful manger keeps the relationship amongst his team intimate, respectable and collaborative.

I have mentioned some attributes of a good and successful manger. In general, they can be considered as a point of view, and may be right or wrong. Is it time to improve your chances of success and plan for your own project in the future? Re-evaluate your priorities for getting things done in time, and evaluate how well your program is working. I hope success for everyone in their life, projects and workplace.

Three Yemeni models worth watching

By: Naseh Shaker

The Yemeni Yard this week is experiencing three extraordinarily interesting models of political action and change – in Aden, Sana'a and Taiz – that share only a common problem, but do not offer insights into the best solution.

The common problem is that the existing political and economic order in the Yemeni Yard is unstable and unsustainable, because it is unsatisfying to a majority of citizens. These three models of change – not to mention other drastic ones, like the invaded South or shattered Sa'ada in the north – provide very different transformational paths that attempt in their own ways to narrow the gap between state and citizen, and activate to some extent the principle of "the consent of the governed."

The mechanisms for change in Sana'a, Aden and Taiz – rather than their results – represent important new dynamics that in turn reflect the increasingly desperate need among ordinary citizens for a better way to run their country. Of the three, Aden is the most complex and troubling, Taiz is the most sophisticated and heartening, and Sana'a is the most dramatic and universal, and thus most likely to be

copied in other Yemeni provinces.

Sana'a is unique in the region and the world for a number of reasons. The nature of its governance system requires consensus among four different parties and ethnic groups. And achieving consensus is immensely more complicated due to the Houthis in Sa'ada being militarily stronger than the government, and is willing to use its weight to block government decisions that it rejects, for instance, Bahrain's collaboration in the special mediation for Sa'ada's war.

The simultaneous expression in the country of separate strong-arm tactics alongside a perpetual quest for consensus among four opposition parties is impressive, but probably unworkable. The move by the JMP and its Houthi ally to withdraw from the ruling party and bring down the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh is in keeping with how this system has been structured, allowing the majority or opposition to veto decisions that do not have a consensus.

The political battle now under way over the next president, the parliament, and Houthi status and role in Yemen will be epic, probably prolonged, and very messy. If the Yemen consensus-based model of pluralistic governance can be made to work in these difficult

conditions, using constitutional and peaceful means, we should all cheer.

The situation in Aden is unique in being a rare case of citizens of the Yemeni Yard enjoying the opportunity to vote to determine their future status. Two massive gaps in the modern history of the Arab world are corrected by this move, which will probably see South Yemen emerge as an independent country. Self-determination by citizens of an Arab state who are able to define their borders, their national values and their system of governance; and, a corrective mechanism that allows the countries and peoples of this region to reconfigure themselves into more natural sovereign states that correspond to their ethnic-national identities (as the former Soviet Union was reconfigured after 1990).

This ideal model of change allows citizens individually and collectively to determine their fate and to give birth to more natural, democratic, and productive countries that have a better chance of success than has been the case to date among Yemeni security units.

The widespread demonstrations in Taiz – unlike Sana'a and Aden – mirror a universal pattern of change by citizens who reach a breaking point and go out into the street to brave the bombs of

the eternal ruler's military (thugs) and security services. When citizens are no longer afraid of the ruler's bullets, the ruler's days are numbered.

I have been saying for two weeks that we cannot predict when, where, how and by whom transformations from autocracy to democracy will start in the Yemeni Yard, but we know for sure that they will start. It is possible that Taiz will emerge as that starting point, just as Tunisia and Egypt started a liberation movement in 2001, which ultimately led to the collapse and transformation of the empire a decade later. The Yemeni regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh will probably try all sorts of creative and deceptive measures to remain in power, while liberalizing just enough to absorb the anger of its citizens. That's why this process must be watched closely to see if real change in the totally autocratic Yemeni Yard and the Arab world will end in Yemen and Libya this year, as it did in Tunisia and Egypt last month.

It is very satisfying, even spellbinding, to watch several Yemeni governorates simultaneously grappling with their inevitable need to leave behind the dark arenas of incompetence, stagnation, disparity and autocracy, and embrace something more humane for their people.

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Helping youth connect to opportunity in Yemen

Interview by: Roger Burks

Umelto (Alto) Labetubun is Mercy Corps' representative in Yemen, the organization's newest country program. Originally from Ambon, Indonesia, Alto began working for Mercy Corps in 2000, when his home island was rocked by a sectarian conflict that killed thousands and displaced more than a half-million people. He worked with our emergency assessment team, helping begin a rebuilding and reconciliation program that still continues today.

After his work in Ambon, Alto moved to the island of Sulawesi to continue working for Mercy Corps Indonesia as a program coordinator. He then took on new roles for the agency outside his home country: first as a peace-building advisor for Mercy Corps in southern Sudan, then as a program manager in Iraq.

He arrived in Yemen at the beginning of 2011 — just in time to experience the protests and change that are sweeping through the Middle East. Alto took time to answer questions about the current situation and Mercy Corps' work in Yemen.

What are you seeing, hearing and experiencing from the protests there? What are youth saying?

Alto: The youth want to be heard and, so far, they have neither experienced enough nor adequate opportunities and venues to express their voices. They're mostly protesting over a lack of economic opportunities and the feeling of inequality. So far, the protests have been peaceful and we've seen both pro- and anti-government shows of force.

However, there have also been a number of incidents in various parts of the country that have claimed casualties. The Yemeni people that I've talked to about the latest dynamics of their country are confident that ongoing protests will not turn into violent.



Young people in Yemen, who form the majority of the country's population, are upset at lack of career opportunities and voice in their communities.



Scene from a peaceful protest in Yemen on February 25.

What are the unique challenges that youth face in Yemen?

Yemen has one of the highest percentages of youth in the world: around 75 percent of the population is under 25 years old. It also has some of the highest economic and employment challenges in the Middle East region — the inadequacy of employment opportunities is the biggest challenge that Yemeni youth are currently facing.

I've been down to Aden (Yemen's second-biggest city) a few times and spent time talking to the taxi drivers, as well as small restaurants cook near the hotel where I was staying. What was fascinating about these discussions was that these people have had more education than these jobs would dictate. Many of them went to college or technical college because they had the belief of a better life through better education. However, the reality is, there are just not enough jobs for them.

The youth also often feels ignored by the system at all levels of government, both formal and informal. They don't know where to voice their concern about their challenges. They feel that there is a gap between them and their representative in the government. For example, I

spoke with a few young people I met during my trips, and some of them do not even know the local council member(s) from their areas and districts. None of them could recall any interaction such as community meetings with their government officials.

These grievances create a void that put these young people at risk — not only to their own community, but more importantly to the influence of radical ideas. They could easily become clients for radical groups or ideology, if radical groups promise them opportunities that their current government, society and social roles cannot provide.

How is Mercy Corps helping youth meet those challenges?

Our program in Yemen is designed to work with the key stakeholders in addressing these grievances. We acknowledge that there are gaps in the relationship between youth and the governance structures in their community. These gaps of relationship weaken the trust between youth and their government.

Our program works directly with the youth and the formal/informal governance structure in selected districts to re-strengthen this relationship. As a start,

we equip the leaders and youth with skills on consensus building, leadership and decision-making through trainings. Beyond the skills development provided by these trainings, we use these events as the vehicle or medium to increase interactions among these stakeholders.

Knowing and understanding of the other parties leads to an increase in productive, collaborative relationships, furthermore increasing trust between youth and the governance stakeholders. The youth will also function as the proxy channel not only their peer voices, but also their community's voice to the leaders.

In order for youth to become community leaders who can voice concerns to the leaders in the government, youth first needs to be appreciated and trusted. There is a perception in the community that Yemeni youth are only care about chewing qat, an addictive leaf that is chewed as a stimulant. And so, to change the perception of the community about their youth, the program will conduct a series of trainings on skills and business development, as well as conflict management skills and fundraising.

Again, the added value that we're

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looking for is the opportunity to bring youth from various groups together and increase the positive connections among peers. Then we will financially assist these young people in development projects that they have decided to implement in their communities. We believe that, through tangible and demonstrable activities in the community, the perception of adults in the community towards youth will change — and, reciprocally, that will change the perception of youth towards themselves, as well as redefine their place in their communities.

Lastly, the program is planning to address the issue of unemployment, by connecting youth with the potential employment opportunities in their areas. We will be working hard to identify potential employment, not only in the business sector, but also on government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to host these youth as interns, apprentices or even potential full-time employment. We also planning to connect youth who want to create their

own businesses to potential stakeholders who can provide mentorship.

What are the strengths that Mercy Corps brings to Yemen?

Mercy Corps has extensive experience from various parts of the world that can be adapted to the Yemeni context. Since we've just arrived in Yemen for the first time, we have a clean slate to start it right. We also have very dedicated and experienced staff — particularly young Yemeni citizens who are originally from the areas where we're working — who give us strength of local knowledge and wisdom, as well as local networks of leaders and influential citizens.

Mercy Corps always believes in local knowledge and resources, and this program reflects that. Program startup is always a challenge, especially to start a program and to establish our presence in a new country. Yemen at this time is an especially challenging context; here, we must plan for the worst but we're always hoping for the best.

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