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Violent crackdowns in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden leave thousands injured

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, Apr. 10 — More violence was directed against pro-democracy demonstrations this week as protesters in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden began marching as a way of escalating the revolution. In the capital, physicians estimate that the most recent bout of bloodshed resulted in one death, 40 injuries by bullets and car crashes, and over 2,000 by exposure to tear gas. Eyewitnesses told the Yemen Times that government security forces shot four protesters to death and then confiscated their bodies.

"The crimes they are committing are beyond imagination," shouted one of the protesters at the field hospital located within Sana'a University mosque. "They hid the dead bodies so that no one can prove their guilt."

"They took the bodies so as to dress them in government security uniforms and show them on Yemeni TV. That's what they do to fool the people and turn them against the protesters," said another demonstrator.

"When they started firing, some of us ducked into a gateway. The doors were

closed but it got us off the main street," said Iona Craig, a correspondent for the Irish Times who witnessed the attack.

"We were tear gassed and there was a lot of gunfire," explained Craig. "We were all crouching on the ground with our hands over our heads, waiting to get shot, until someone inside opened a door in the steel gate and let us into the yard between two houses."

Craig said that the family, whose name and location will remain anonymous, looked after her and approximately 40 other protesters who were trapped after security forces opened fire. Water cannons and tear gas kept them locked behind the gate for more than an hour.

"If it wasn't for the house's owner, I think we could have been in a lot of trouble," said Craig. "Those people with me would have been arrested, repeatedly tear gassed or — worse still — shot."

Craig had to wear a niqab and cover her face so as to find her way out of the area this morning. "It was the only safe way out without getting arrested or getting the people who owned the house into serious trouble, as Central Security Forces were still near the home," she



Hundreds of protesters were exposed to tear gas while attempting to flee the violence.

said.

The ones who were exposed to tear gas this time around said that it seemed less painful than the gas that had been used in the past. The victims of the gas were supplied with important injections by Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

"We have learned how to deal with the gas with the help of various international organizations," said Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Zarhany, a pharmacist who is currently working at the Sana'a University field hospital. "The main procedure that we were previously unaware of and which made patients suffer more was the immediate removal of all clothing

that had been exposed to the gas. We now know how important it is to wash everything with water, soap and Clo-rox."

The 1st Armored Division — whose leader, Major General Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar, defected from President Saleh's government last month — recently promised to protect the revolution and its protesters. Yet in spite of the fact that yesterday's protest in the capital was the biggest since Maj. Gen. Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar's defection, the 1st Armored Division did nothing to defend the protesters from government security forces.

President Saleh demands Gulf initiative be amended and accuses Qatar of masterminding it

By: Mohammed Bin Salam

SANA'A, Apr. 10 — In a step described as "uncalculated," the Yemeni government has recalled its ambassador to Qatar after President Saleh dismissed a GCC proposal to put an end to the political crisis in Yemen. The president rejected the initiative because it included preconditions that contradicted the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party position and the constitutional legitimacy that grants the president the right to remain in power until 2013.

President Saleh has reiterated in a speech on "concord Friday" before crowds of his supporters at Al-Sabeen Square his willingness to sacrifice his life for the constitutional legitimacy bestowed on him by the people. He asserted that Yemen did not need any mediation to settle the crisis in Yemen, because it was initiated by parties that belong to opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP). The JMP welcomed the Gulf proposal and considered it a key to end the stalemate in Yemen.

Saleh, who sounded furious while delivering his speech, attacked the Gulf initiative in general and Qatar's role in particular. He repeated his rejection of the initiative four times. "Our power comes from the power of our great people, not from Qatar, not from anyone else," he said. "[The initiative] is rejected, rejected, rejected, rejected," he shouted.

He described the Gulf undertaking and Qatar's position as a "blatant interference in Yemeni affairs," rejecting what "is brought by Qatari initiative and the Al-Jazeera channel."

Qatari Prime Minister, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasssem Al-Thani, dismissed the Yemeni president's accusation that Qatar was interfering in Yemeni affairs, adding that the proposal was made by the six-nation GCC as a whole, not by Qatar alone.

Saleh and his party's rejection of the initiative came after it had been celebrated and welcomed warmly in the official media. GPC spokesman, Mr. Tariq Al-Shami, even went on to accuse the JMP of "seeking to waste the efforts by our brothers in the GCC and nip their initiative in the bud."

piece, the 26 September newspaper that is close to the president, said in last week's editorial entitled "Brothers' Care": "We say to the parties, leadership and partners of the JMP: You have to be aware, understand and realize the meanings, purport, dimensions and notions of the keenness and sincere invitation by our brothers. You should rise to the occasion and quit your stubbornness and your narrow calculations."

The same newspaper affirmed that it welcomed "any proposal made by our brothers in the GCC without any prejudice or inflexibility since dialogue is the best option and because all Yemenis wish that this initiative would be the conclusion to the devastation Yemen."

The Gulf initiative is the fourth to be turned down by Saleh. He has already opposed proposals presented by Yemeni scholars and sheiks, the JMP, and a third one presented by the Friends of Yemen led by the US ambassador.

The Qatari prime minister announced on Thursday that the GCC states mediating to settle the crisis in Yemen hoped to reach a settlement that would lead to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation. The Yemeni opposition welcomed this approach saying that the ball was now in president's court. Sheikh Hamad said on the sidelines of the New York conference that they hoped to reach an agreement for the Yemeni president to relinquish power.

President Saleh phoned leaders of the GCC (excluding that of Qatar) appealing to them to reconsider some of the initiative's points, so as to be in line with Yemen's constitution and the legitimacy that allows him to finish his term in 2013. An exceptional GCC meeting is expected to be held today in Riyadh.

The US Department of State said that it encouraged dialogue among Yemenis with GCC sponsorship.

Mark Toner, the Department of State spokesman, said in a written statement that the US welcomed the GCC proposal to deal with the difficult situation in Yemen. He added that they strongly encouraged all sides to take part in the dialogue that is badly needed in order to reach a solution that would be approved of by Yemenis.

Continued on Page 2

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4 dead and 150 injured in Taiz

By: Imad al-Sakkaf

TAIZ, April 9 — Taiz governorate is experiencing an atmosphere of unprecedented anger and fear as four people died and around 150 were injured by live fire. Around 1700 cases of suffocation of the youth of the Change Revolution in Taiz as a result of tear gas were also reported. This was after security forces near the governor's building confronted a demonstration that started on Friday afternoon protesting against the President's statement which rejected the Gulf proposal.

The security forces and the Republican Guard used live bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas canisters, in an attempt to break up the clashes that continued as the protesters maintained their attempts to break past the security barriers and reach the governor's building.

On his part, Dr Sadeq al-Shajaa', head of the field hospital at Freedom Square, told the Yemen Times, "the authorities are behaving in a monstrous manner with the protesters, it is as if we are in battles which other countries see, as they are met with gunfire and the use of tear gas that has been out of date since 1987, that resulted in dangerous side effects." He added, "the number of dead after the events of Friday reached 3 people, and 130 were injured as a result of live fire, the majority to the head and the neck, and an added 1700 cases of suffocation." At the end of his statement al-Shajaa' pointed to the role that the private hospitals of Taiz have played, and the services they have provided to the injured, such as the 30 free operations that were undertaken by the hospitals on Saturday, in addition to the free distribution of medicines.

Muhammad Abdelateef, 18, is one of those who suffered a head injury, he



As protests spread across residential areas, more children are being caught up in the violence.

said, "the supporters of the President started throwing stones at my head whilst we were part of march in Hawdh al-Ashraf Street in front of the governor's building."

Taysir Nu'man al-Khalidi, an eyewitness, told the Yemen Times, "we noted that next to the security forces there are a number of men wearing civilian clothing firing on the protesters, and some of them were on top of the buildings that surround the governor's building.

A security source in Taiz governorate told the Yemen Times, "the security forces are keen to protect the protesters rights to peacefully protest in all the streets of the governorate." He added, "the leaders of the JMP are encouraging the youth to partake in acts of chaos and destruction, and the storming and burning of the governor's building. We prevent them from doing this, but we do not fire at bullets at them." He also said that some of the youth who demonstrated were firing bullets at the

security forces and then escaping on motorcycles, which resulted in 23 security forces being injured.

It is worth noting that groups of Republican Guard and Central Security Forces troops are grouped at the entrances and the city centre and the ends of side streets, and they closed some of the streets leading to the governor's building. It was also noted that pictures of the President have disappeared despite having previously been seen in the majority of the city's streets.

Call for civil disobedience as bloody clashes grow

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, Apr. 6th — Anti-government protesters are gearing up to commit civil disobedience in different governorates as President Saleh refuses to ease himself out of power.

Protesters in several governorates have reportedly already begun civil disobedience campaigns after having been repeatedly attacked by government forces.

In Sana'a, witnesses have said that many shops have been closed in some areas of the city but that protesters are preparing for an even larger civil disobedience movement that will include all areas in all cities.

Abdulhafeeth Al-Hattami, a journalist and political activist in Hodeida governorate, said that the protesters and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) are preparing for civil disobedience in Hodeida this week.

"This way will force president to leave soon," he said.

When asked about the current situation in Hodeida, Al-Hattami told the Yemen Times that the economic and security climate in the poverty-stricken governorate has significantly deteriorated. "People here are afraid of thugs. Some 'infamous' sheikhs send their thugs to cause chaos. Moreover, the regime releases inmates and sends some of the Republican Guard's soldiers to clash with peaceful protesters," explained Al-Hattami.

He indicated that protesters and the JMP in Hodeida have sent appeals to shops owners, private companies, businessmen and the public sector, asking for the immediate implementation of civil disobedience, which among other things would necessitate the temporary closure of all businesses in the governorate.

"Protesters will commit civil disobedience until the president leaves," said Al-Hattami. "They will not accept any initiatives from any side except the immediate departure of the president."

Bad economic consequences Mostafa Nasr, Director of the Economic Media Studies Center, spoke with the Yemen Times about the potential economic consequences of civil disobedience in Yemen, saying that, "The Yemeni economic environment is already weak. Civil disobedience will cause the situation to deteriorate and ultimately collapse."

However, Nasr said that civil disobedience is perhaps an important way to solve the crisis in Yemen.

"There is already a great deal of unintentional civil disobedience being committed by several companies and shops. Most economic projects have stopped," he said.

Nasr called for the private sector to hold a full strike to pressure president to leave. "They should adopt a positive attitude towards the revolution," he said.

Nasr also believes that the civil disobedience campaign should extend to such vital institutions as airports, banks, the public sector and various private companies.

Abdulalem Mohammed, a bus driver in Hodeida, said that he cannot work on his bus these days due to unrest in the governorate.

"I'm afraid that they will break my bus. It's my only source of income," he explained.

When asked about the implementation of civil disobedience in Hodeida, Abdulalem said that if economic life in the governorate were to stop, all commercial activities would be negatively affected.

"Yemen will put an end to terrorism if revolution succeeds" says former negotiator with Al-Qaeda

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Apr. 9 — Judge Hamoud Al-Hitar, the former Minister of Religious Affairs who chaired the government's dialogue committee with Al-Qaeda in 2006, told more than one million pro-democracy protesters on Friday that Yemen would soon be free of terrorism if President Saleh agreed to step down.

He explained that, "The real size of Al-Qaeda in Yemen does not exceed ten percent of what is being portrayed by the state-owned Yemeni media, but Saleh uses the Al-Qaeda card to blackmail Arab and foreign countries so as to get more assistance."

Al-Hitar urged Gulf countries to support Yemen's "popular revolution", assuring them that, "Yemen will remain an active partner in counterterrorism within the international community, in accordance with Yemen's constitution and international legislation."

There have been many US air strikes carried out in various Yemeni governorates against alleged sites of Al-Qaeda operation that have only resulted in

mass killing of civilians.

Yemeni officials have long asserted that these attacks were carried out by Yemeni — rather than American — forces, but at the end of 2010, a secret cable dated January 2010 and published by Wikileaks revealed that Yemen's President Saleh had assured the US' General David Petraeus that his government would "...continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours."

According to the cable, this arrangement with the US prompted Yemen's Deputy Prime Minister for Security and Defense Rashad Al-Alimi, "To joke that he had just 'lied' by telling Parliament that the bombs in Arhab, Abyan and Shabwa were American-made but deployed by the Yemeni government."

In June 2010, Amnesty International provided the media with photographs of the aftermath of one Abyan strike, which depicted remnants of US-sourced cluster munitions and of the Tomahawk cruise missiles used to deliver them.

At the time, the organization said that it had requested information from the Pentagon about the involvement of



Judge Hamoud Al-Hitar

US forces in the Al-Ma'jalah attack, as well as what precautions had been taken to minimize civilian injuries and deaths.

However, the organization later reported that, "The US government did not respond to Amnesty International but a press report the day after the im-

ages were released quoted a Pentagon spokesman as saying that the USA declined to comment on the strike and that questions on operations against Al-Qaeda should be posed to the Yemeni government."

An alleged Al-Qaeda training camp at Al-Ma'jalah in Abyan governorate was hit by a cruise missile on 17th December 2009.

On 7th February 2010, a Yemeni parliamentary inquiry found that 41 local residents — including 14 women and 21 children — and 14 alleged Al-Qaeda members were killed in the attack. Yet according to Amnesty International, General Petraeus is recorded as having said that the attack caused the deaths of "only" three civilians.

Saeed Ubaid Al-Jemhi, a Yemeni expert on Al-Qaeda's affairs in the country, told the Yemen Times that, "It is only in Yemen where the Al-Qaeda card is being employed in a political game by both anti-regime protesters and Saleh supporters."

"All parties — regardless of whether they support the regime or are demand-

ing its removal — aggrandize or downgrade the scale of Al-Qaeda in a way that serves their interests," explained Al-Jemhi.

He said that when Al-Hitar minimized the size of Al-Qaeda in Yemen, "...he only wanted to tickle American and Western feelings."

Al-Jemhi added that, "Al-Qaeda is an enemy to both sides — to the regime and its opponents. No one can accurately simplify the reality and both parties should stop playing with the Americans and the West with regards to the Al-Qaeda topic, as they are very aware and are more familiar with the Al-Qaeda threat than most."

Al-Hitar resigned from his post and left the ruling party on March 13th in protest against the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators who have been demanding an end to President Saleh's 33-year rule.

Since his resignation, Al-Hitar has announced his support for the pro-democracy protests and has called for the establishment of a modern democratic state.

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Violent crackdowns in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden leave thousands injured

Last week, Sanhan, Belad Al-Ros and Bani Bahlol tribal mediators accused the Division of having shot at them. The state-run 26th of September newspaper reported that four were killed in the shootout and 67 were injured. A statement from the Major General's office accused the regime of having tried to assassinate him.

Other eyewitnesses informed the Yemen Times and the National Organization for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms that government security forces arrested random protesters.

Meanwhile, in Taiz, a video that purportedly shows security forces shooting protesters in the midst of prayer has begun circulating on the Internet.

During his most recent visit to the country, the UN envoy to Yemen, Mr. Gamal bin Omar, told the Yemen Times that the purpose of his trip was to report to the Secretary General. In turn, his report would allow the UN to make more informed decisions regarding Yemen.

He stated that the UN has a long association with Yemen and that the UN is committed to providing Yemen with fur-

ther support during this difficult time.

During his visit to Yemen, bin Omar met with various groups, including government officials, opposition parties, tribal leaders, civil society figures and representatives of the youth protesting in Change Square.

"Although we realized from our talks with various political entities in Yemen that they all agree in principle on the concept of change," said bin Omar, "they disagree on how it is to happen. There are some who demand an immediate change while others want more time."

He added that the UN appreciates the fact that all entities have been open and willing to share their insights on and analyses of the situation.

"Our meetings were facilitated and we did not have any difficulties reaching any group we wanted to talk to. All have been very welcoming and all see the UN as a friend and a partner," said bin Omar.

As a result of the continued use of violence against protesters, the US stopped all military and development aid to Yemen earlier this week

President Saleh demands Gulf initiative be amended and accuses Qatar of masterminding it

A few kilometers from Al-Sabeen Square, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered for a 'Steadfastness Friday' at Change Square in Sana'a, to perform Friday prayers and ceremonies. The square was crowded with demonstrators who continued flowing in until the end of the Juma'a prayer.

The 'Steadfastness Friday' preacher was the former Minister of Endowment, Judge Hamoud Al-Hitar, who resigned a few weeks earlier from President Saleh's government. He commended the perseverance and resolution of the revolutionaries, urging them to keep their revolution peaceful and to be patient until their revolution achieved its goals. "Your revolution is that of the right against the wrong," he said, "and it is peaceful and it must triumph eventually."

Beside the demonstrators, Al-Hitar called upon the armed forces to refrain from attacking the demonstrators and thus shed forbidden blood. He reminded them of Quranic verses and hadiths (prophet's sayings) that prohibit the killing of Muslims and provides punishments for such acts. He also urged people to make their choice soon in support of the peaceful revolution that is spreading day by day.

Al-Hitar, who is also a member of Yemen's Scholar Association, asked the official media to maintain neutrality when covering the developments in the revolution. He called for them to avoid bias in favor of the ruling party and regime, and to let all citizens express their views since the official media is a public facility owned by the people, not the GPC or other parties.

The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) said on Friday that the US had frozen the first installment of the largest ever aid package offered to Yemen in February, after demonstrations against the Yemeni president erupted.

According to the newspaper, the first installment of aid worth a potential USD 1 billion or more over several years, was set to be made in February. It would have marked the White House's largest bid at securing President Ali Abdullah Saleh's allegiance in its battle against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

The WSJ quoted some US officials as saying that the package included USD 200 million to finance combating terrorism this year, up from USD 155 million in 2010. An equal amount would also have been provided as development aid.

Yemen's banking sector takes a hit

By: Amira Al-Arasi

Yemen's volatile political climate is beginning to have a negative effect on the country's already fragile economy. Major projects have been postponed for an indefinite period and the national currency has been falling against the dollar ever since protests began nearly two months ago.

"Yemen's Central Bank plays a principal role at this stage," said Mohammed Abdu Saeed, Chairman of the Chambers of Commerce. "It must open credit for smaller banks one way or another, but it must also play another role, too: by lending such banks foreign currency."

He added that the public has clear apprehensions concerning the possibility of further deterioration in the economic situation. "Some people are hoarding food at home as a precaution against possible bank failure. They're stockpiling sugar, wheat, rice, cooking oil and medicines."

Saeed added that the grave economic situation has been made even more dire by the cancellation of many large projects since the departure of foreign experts.

Mr. Nashwan Nashwan, a businessman who's various initiatives have sustained some damage on account of the current political impasse, told the Yemen Times that a USD 250 million Yemeni-Chinese electrical power project has been cancelled due to political volatility.

"A state of emergency," said Nashwan, "was imposed by tradesmen long before the government, for fear that they may lose their businesses. I lost a project that could have brought Yemen USD 250 million, had it been concluded."

Nashwan also expressed hesitance regarding the possibility of government involvement in his business because, like many other entrepreneurs, he fears that the government may not



Yemen's central bank plays a crucial role in helping the country's banking system recuperate.

be stable enough to fulfill its obligations in the long run.

As for Yemen's banks, Saeed said, "Unfortunately, the rial-dollar exchange fluctuations have alarmed depositors and they are now withdrawing their money from banks. Moreover, foreign banks are now requiring 100% coverage on loans instead of the previous 25%, something that has exerted further pressure on the currency. Banks are now too short on hard currency to open lines of credit."

The Ministry of Trade and Industry still does not have a clear view of the present economic state in light of the political crisis.

According to one ministry source, only two companies have submitted their required statements and budgets this month, due in large part to the limited number of companies that have registered during the protests.

Professor A'ayad Riyadh Antar, Di-

rector of the Companies Department of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, said that the ministry generally holds periodic meetings to discuss bank and company budgets, but that the present-day political stalemate has not allowed for such meetings.

"A meeting is supposed to be held every three months," explained Antar, "to review and discuss all company and bank budgets, statements and accounts. However, because of the crisis, such companies and banks are unable to make such submissions."

On the other hand, Saleh Al-Werafi, director of the agency that issues commercial registers at the ministry, claims that his directorate has not been affected by the current political climate: "The present crisis has no impact whatsoever on foreign agencies because foreign traders care only about their own interests, which do not conflict with the latest develop-

ments in Yemen."

He added sarcastically that, "They [the demonstrators] are few and cannot turn the country's economy upside-down."

Al-Werafi explained that most goods in Yemen are produced abroad and that the companies that produce those goods have representative agents inside the country. These agents are authorized and validated by Yemeni embassies and are registered at the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

According to Al-Werafi, in the past month, the number of foreign agents who have registered is completely consistent with the months prior to the commencement of protests – an indication that the market is actually stable.

"There are 442 foreign agencies operating in Yemen and in the past month alone, 2,453 of their contracts were renewed, 57 were amended and

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five were cancelled due to a failure to renew," said Al-Werafi.

Professor and economic analyst Salah Al-Maqtari asserted that there is an actual economic crisis taking place and that it was entirely foreseeable, considering the large portion of public funds that is being spent on securing the loyalty of pro-government protesters, sheikhs, quarter chiefs and thugs.

"I don't know exactly how much has been spent thus far," said Al-Maqtari, "but I estimate it to be around USD 1 billion or more. Nonetheless, the situation will improve as soon as the president steps down. This is because all sides will be satisfied and Yemen will begin receiving large amounts of foreign aid, as was the case in post-Mubarak Egypt."

"However," continued Al-Maqtari, "should Saleh remain in power, the situation will become even more critical. Fortunately, I think that things will get better and will return back to normal two weeks after his departure. The dollar will go down in favor of the Yemeni rial because all current economic problems in the country stem from the unlimited expenditures being made carelessly by the ruling party and which reflect negatively upon the common people."



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- Maintain and promote dialogue between the national authorities and bilateral and multilateral development partners with a view to achieving a coordinated and comprehensive support to the implementation of the country's trade integration strategy, and its inclusion into the country's national development strategy (PRSP).
- Prioritize areas for actions and elaborate strategies of intervention.
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Founder of Yemen Times

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OUR
OPINION

The deal breakers

It seems that the final initiative is on the table this time coming from the Gulf with American and European support. This is the last attempt at giving President Saleh a chance for a peaceful exit and avoiding a civil war in the country.

Our sources say that there is a problem regarding the trip to Riyadh to reach an agreement. The Joint Meeting Parties opposition coalition backed by the Qataris says they want Saleh to relinquish power before the talks even begin.

Saleh says, and it makes sense, that if I am to leave power before we even meet in Saudi, why go in the first place?

The other issue is regarding guarantees for his amnesty and promising that both he and his family will not be criminally prosecuted. Although it seems like a betrayal to the revolution and the Yemeni men and women who sacrificed their lives for change, it seems there is no choice but to relent.

I have no idea if there are such guarantees that would keep him and his regime immune from accountability in the future. But even if he is not prosecuted legally I am sure history will cover this transition, and years from now we will be reading about it from the point of view of the people who eventually assume power.

But will Yemen be allowed to recover from this transitional trauma and its new leaders given a chance to run the country without hurdles?

A suggestion on the table is that for the next six months following Saleh's resignation, eight figures should leave the country. These include Saleh and his family, Ali Mohsin Al-Ahmar and the three Al-Ahmar brothers in the political opposition.

Apparently their absence will allow the technocrats and politicians to have clear mind in dealing with the challenges of the new Yemen. This also seems like another deal breaker because not all of these eight figures, especially among the opposition, will accept to be put aside in an issue they had worked on and sacrificed heavily for.

Too many controversial points, and they all threaten the Riyadh initiative's success. Will the decision makers from all sides reach an agreement?

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Ali Abdullah Saleh is finished, but someone should tell him

By Mai Yamani

Ali Abdullah Saleh is finished as the president of Yemen. Popular democratic protests that started on a small scale in the middle of February outside Sanaa University have widened to encompass the whole country. The continuity and strength of the demonstrations clearly indicate that the regime's days are numbered. Tribal leaders have joined the protesters. Even close allies who belong to Saleh's own Hashid tribe, such as the First Armored Brigade commander, General Ali Mushin al-Ahmar, have abandoned him. Now, even his long-term protector, the United States, seems to be abandoning him.

Saleh, who has been in power since 1978, knows that his time is up. "They are falling like leaves in autumn," he recently said of the regime's defectors. Official resignations have increased: ambassadors, ministers, significant media figures and army generals.

It is the last group that is decisive: when senior military and security personnel abandon an authoritarian regime in the face of popular pressure, one can safely say that the regime's days are numbered. Yet Saleh still retains the loyalty of the Interior Ministry, the Republican Guard, and part of the air force. However, clashes between the army and the Republican Guard are further eroding the regime's coherence.

Like other dictators who have been

ousted from office or who are presently in their political death throes – the regimes of the former Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak, and Libya's Colonel Moammar Gadhafi, for example – Saleh has warned of the dangers the world would face if he is forced to depart. He has warned of the Muslim Brotherhood, attacks by Al-Qaeda, Iranian regional hegemony, and the breakup of Yemen. "After me the deluge," seems to be the sole justification that the Yemeni president can offer for his continued rule.

His desperation mounting, Saleh has ordered deadly attacks on protesters, evidently believing that his considerable skill at political manipulation would see him through the current crisis. However, when the president declared a state of emergency on March 23, the number of protesters in the streets doubled. Given his regime's obvious lack of legitimacy, Saleh is playing a dangerous game. The sooner he leaves office, the better for Yemen's stability and its security.

Indeed, all Yemenis – Houthis, Harak, and even the Al-Hashids – appear united in their opposition to Saleh's ailing regime and in their quest for an amelioration in civil and human rights in Yemen. Members of hundreds of tribes have erected tents in the location where the weeks of protests have been centered, namely "Change Square" in Sanaa. Perhaps more remarkably, in a country that contains more than 12 million guns, the protesters have not fired

a single shot.

Then, on the eve of the Yemeni opposition's planned "Friday of Departure" protests in late March, the United States resuscitated Saleh's rule. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared that, "the fall of Saleh would pose a real problem for [the United States'] counterterrorism work." Saleh, emboldened by the secretary's remarks, immediately appeared on television and ordered all his opponents to leave Yemen, as if millions of Yemenis could simply desert the country, leaving him and his family to reside in peace.

Since 2009, the United States has showered Saleh's government with military aid. But Washington is well aware that Al-Qaeda is an enemy of convenience for Saleh, and that the danger to the United States from post-Saleh chaos in Yemen is exaggerated. Democracy cannot coexist with Al-Qaeda. On the contrary, the rising threat of radicalization stems from the delay Saleh's departure.

America's credibility, which was already low in Yemen in the first place, has hit rock bottom; its leaders' words are no longer taken at face value. The gap between Washington's rhetoric and policies has widened. The Obama administration has relied on the language of human rights in Libya, but it has contented itself with ignoring the democratic demands of millions of Yemenis.

The reality is that the United States has known for weeks that it cannot save

Saleh's regime. Its concern for Saleh's political survival is closely linked to its guardianship of the Saudi regime, which fears that ferment in Yemen could give Saudi Arabia's own Shiite, Zaidi, and Ismaili populations dangerous ideas about democratic reform – if not threaten the very existence of the Saudi state. After all, Saudi Arabia's southern tribes and Yemen's northern tribes are historically the same people, while the Shiites in the kingdom's oil-rich Eastern Province are protesting in political harmony with the Shiites of Bahrain.

Not surprisingly, Saleh has tried to reach for the familiar Saudi lifeline, sending his foreign minister to Riyadh to plead for the sort of help the Saudi king provided to Bahrain. But the Saudis, having backed Saleh financially, and having sent troops to Yemen in 2009 to help him wage a war against the Houthis, now consider him beyond saving. Instead, they are betting on potential new alliances within Yemen to deal with events in the unpredictable neighboring country.

Finally, the United States now appears to have concluded that Saleh's regime cannot be revived. The most compassionate measure that the Americans, and Saudi Arabia, should take is a form of political euthanasia. A young Yemeni protester put this case succinctly: "America, stop administering life support to Saleh and deal with us directly. Yemen is the Yemeni people. We are Yemen. Saleh is only your crony."

Good omens for a new and equal era

By: Maged Ahmed Al-Qutami
magedalqutami@gmail.com

The accelerating events that are happening nowadays undoubtedly testify to a tremendous revival of nations around the world. People are ultimately becoming free of the dual nightmare of fear and silence, which had settled down their upon lives for so long. They have stood up to make their own futures. The extraordinary scenes have exceeded all expectations, and defeated the predictions from political centers. The

people frowned, and flowed out in many countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Iran, and even in Saudi Arabia. They broke the barriers of fear and compliance, and headed to the source of the troubles and the potential secret behind the deterioration of their countries: the rulers. They who have made people swallow the bitterness of hunger and need, and made them taste all sorts of humiliations and abasements. Those rulers have the confiscated the people's essential right to freedom, justice and good living. People got tired of lauding the names of their rulers, and stopped clap-

ping wildly for those tyrants and corrupted symbols. They have become upset at the hypocritical media and flattering tongues, which magnify the rulers and have given them numberless nicknames, such as the 'inspired leaders', the 'singular fulgent', and such nonsense.

People hated all the false promises, the bragging slogans, the fabricated political plays and pictures, and the misleading news put out by the regimes. They do not rule, but mislead and deceive their own nations. These regimes have forfeited the peoples' rights to expression, freedom, wealth and rule. They have monopolized the power and wealth for themselves for a long time now. The people have gone out to reveal and put an end to the absolute era of single-handed rulers, and launched a new era that will be full of equality and justice. The era of "with our souls and blood, we die for you, our boss" is gone, and the era of "with our souls and blood, we die for our equal and fair country," has started. The era of the president, vice president, army, and judiciary that stands in favor of the ruling party or an individual is finished. The era of false democracy and false elections has collapsed, and it will never come back again.

When you are amongst the youth sit-in, and ask them: "How do you imagine the tomorrow of Yemen?" I mean after the revolution has obtained its victory, you find an unfamiliar atmosphere full of unity and affection. Their demands are natural. They want to be real partners in everything taking place in their country – in the authority, wealth, and opportunities. I feel uncommonly buoyant whenever I go to the Square of Freedom in Sana'a and see so many people, men, women and children. It is virtually an imaginary perfect world, which the Greek philosopher Plato described in his books 'The Republic' and 'The Laws'.

Utopia.

Authority and opposition, youth and old men, they all are talking about the coming change. This change is a durable part of life. Some claim that the future will not be better than the present. That there will not be unity and stability. If they mean that they will cut roads or raise ferment, then they are wrong. The demonstrations and sit-ins are peaceful and so will last. Indeed, this is the secret behind their great power. People have been persuaded that wars and fighting will not create peace or solve issues. Rulers must realize that the nations have become able to stand up for their rights. The president has to understand what is going around in the brains of the protestors in Sana'a, Taiz, and Aden.

The spark of those raging revolutions came from the squares of Friday sermons. People have waited in every Friday for the blast, the logistic support, which will open new horizons for the youth, and break all the chains of slavery and submission. The youth reacted, and streamed down as the drops of rain, and yelled as rolling thunder in the squares of freedom. They dream of seeing Yemen a civilized country, where all citizens obtain freedom, democracy, and equality. Today, people are just taking their rights with their hands according to Yemen's constitution, which states in article four: "The people of Yemen are the possessor and the source of power." Rulers have no choice but to respond to the demands of the people. The future of Yemen will not be happy until the feelings of fraternity and unity triumph over the culture of hatred and neglect of others. Eventually, I am sure that the dream will come true. The tree of justice will grow and flourish throughout the whole of Yemen. Our country by then will swarm with freedom and fairness, which constitutes the twin faces of the real protection for formalizing any substantial society.

SKETCHED OPINION

By: Hamid



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Cote D'ivoire-Liberia: Refugees report murder, rape, abuse

DAKAR, 8 April 2011 (IRIN) - Ivoirians who have fled across the border to Liberia have reported incidents of rape, sexual abuse and murder to NGOs and human rights groups working in Grand Geddeh and Nimba counties.

Children in villages in Liberia's Nimba County have told field workers at NGO Equip that they were forced to watch as their mothers were raped and then killed. In several cases, the children themselves were then sexually assaulted.

A woman told Equip staff she was forced to watch while armed men raped her four-year-old daughter. Most attacks have taken place outside villages as people tried to flee, or at checkpoints, refugees said.

Refugees say sexual assaults have been committed by both armed supporters of Laurent Gbagbo and of Alassane Ouattara, as well as militia members at checkpoints, and to a lesser extent, op-

portunists who have preyed on refugees' vulnerability.

Equip is working in 23 clinics in Nimba Country to assist survivors of sexual violence and abuse in getting the medical and psychosocial attention they need.

Sexual violence has become increasingly prevalent in Côte d'Ivoire over the past decade. Human Rights Watch (HRW) senior West Africa researcher, Corinne Dufka told IRIN.

"During times of political upheaval sexual violence has a clear political link, but unfortunately the general sense of lawlessness in Côte d'Ivoire for the past decade has led to a disturbing increase in sexual violence countrywide."

HRW has documented over 20 cases of politically motivated rape by pro-Gbagbo military forces in which the ethnic and political element was clearly identifiable, as well as reports of what appear to be politically motivated rape by Ouattara supporters, Dufka told IRIN. The organi-

zation has also documented extra-judicial killings perpetrated by supporters on both sides, stating that some incidents "risk becoming a crime against humanity should it become widespread or systematic".

Ouattara spokesperson in Paris Sogona Bamba told IRIN impunity would not be accepted. "Ouattara has stressed he does not want to see impunity on our side, or the other side. We do not support 'selective indignation'." She went on to say: "We are caught up in a cycle now and we need to break out of that cycle and punish all those who have committed acts of violence, whether from Gbagbo's side or Ouattara's side."

Murder, massacres

Ivoirians who fled to Liberia have also reported having witnessed murders.

A man in his early thirties who is currently sheltering in Zwedru in Nimba County fled into the bush after seeing 12 people murdered by people who he says

were pro-Ouattara militia near the Liberia border, according to Equip country director David Waines.

Though order has been restored in parts of the country, said Waines - notably in Danané, a town in western Côte d'Ivoire - "there are still degrees of anarchy throughout the country... People are operating with complete impunity... They are getting away with rape, murder and every kind of human rights abuse."

Refugees are arriving in Liberia traumatized, exhausted, hungry and often sick, say NGO staff. "All along the Liberia border in Nimba County, I met refugee children who couldn't smile... They were too shocked by the violence they had seen," said NGO Plan International's disaster risk specialist Berenger Berehoudougou in a 6 April statement. Most of the refugees he spoke to came from villages near Duékoué where up to 800 people were allegedly massacred.

"Horrific journey"

One woman, Félicité, from Daloa in western Côte d'Ivoire, arrived in Liberia naked, with three children under six. She had been attacked by bandits in Côte d'Ivoire who stole her clothes and all her possessions. Her sister died en route. "It was a horrific journey... They had to run from gunfire; they saw dead bodies along the road; and they were forced to wade through rivers," said Berehoudougou.

Many children are arriving without their parents, says Save the Children's emergency manager in eastern Liberia Rae Mcgrath. "The longer they are separated from their parents, the bigger the chance they won't be found," he told IRIN. The organization is placing children with temporary foster families while it traces their relatives.

Most refugees are reporting that the violence is ethnically and politically driven, say NGOs and rights groups. The political fault-lines in this region are largely along

ethnic and religious grounds. Violence in the west has also been linked to long-standing clashes over land that have pitted local communities against outsiders. Waines, just back from talking to refugees in Nimba County, said: "There is a large ethnic dynamic to this violence - targeted ethnic killings and attacks are driving the dynamic."; Many of the refugees he spoke to are too nervous to return to Côte d'Ivoire, for fear of reprisal attacks under a change of guard.

Human Rights Watch has urged Ouattara and commanders in his military - known as Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) - to publicly order all members to abide by international human rights law, and investigate cases of extra-judicial killings and other abuses, and hold perpetrators accountable.

Ouattara, in a 31 March televised statement, urged FRCI and all military and paramilitary forces who have supported him to refrain from committing atrocities.

Israelis and Palestinians, Particularly the Youth, Grow Apathetic

By: Arieh O'Sullivan for the Media Line

Poll shows Israel youth moves rightward, Palestinians skeptical about protest

A generation ago one of the most popular Israeli songs was You and Me Can Change the World. Today's youth are more likely to be anxious over who's going to win the Big Brother reality television show.

A recent poll of Israeli youth, both Jews and Arabs, has shown that they are becoming more ambivalent and alienated and, when they do express themselves, tend to be more intolerant than their elders, if not holding downright undemocratic views.

A study by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation found that six out of 10 Israeli teenagers prefer strong leadership over democracy, and 46% support revoking some basic political rights, such as the right of an Arabs to be elected to

parliament.

According to the Youth Survey, the third after polls taken in 1998 and 2004, promoting Jewish identity is now held by young people as the most important objective of the state, pushing aside democracy, which fell to third place. Peace with Israel's Arab neighbors should be the country's second most important objective, the respondents said.

"The main finding is that the young are moving more to the right," said Roby Nathanson, director-general of the Macro Center for Political Economics, who cooperated with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in conducting the poll.

"For youth today, living in a Jewish state has overtaken the need to forge a peace deal with its Arab neighbors and Palestinians as their top priority," Nathanson told The Media Line.

But he stressed that the results of the survey showed what appeared to be contrary trends.

"They are very much in favor of the

peace process still, but they aren't ready to make compromises. They would like social justice and equality, but are very much in favor of minimizing intervention of the government in the market or the economy," Nathanson said.

The polls comes as the latest effort to restart Israeli-Palestinian peace talks has stalled. But the freeze hasn't caused a major political fallout, with the Israeli and Palestinian economies thriving and violence at relatively low levels. Across the Middle East, mass protests have brought down leaders and paralyzed countries, but in the Palestinian-ruled areas, protests have been small and focus on restoring national unity between the rival Palestinian movements, Hamas and Fatah.

The survey was carried out in 2010 among a representative sample of Israeli Jewish and Arab youth between the ages of 15-18 and 21-24.

"The generation of 2011 is different. This is already the generation that has grown up with the Internet and social

networking, so this is having an enormous impact," Nathanson said. "They get a large amount of information, but are ambiguous and don't necessarily have a clear cut position on things... It doesn't interest them so much."

Amid growing prosperity and dulled existential threats, with the violence of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin beyond the reach of their memories, youth are largely disengaged from the big political questions of the day.

In 1998, the same poll found that a plurality of Israelis (44%) saw the divisions between secular and religious Jews as the biggest rift in society. According to the 2010 poll, the biggest schism is between Israelis Jews and Israeli Arabs, who constitute about a fifth of the population. Researchers said this shows a greater move to the right. In 1998, it found that 32% of teens defined themselves as left-wing. By 2010, the proportion dropped to only

12%.

Israeli Arabs expressed more support for the equal rights of the minority. But the majority of them didn't accept the principle of Israel as a Jewish state, Nathanson said.

Meanwhile, a separate poll released this week showed a greater desire by Palestinians to stage non-violent demonstrations similar to the ones sweeping across the Arab world. But the survey showed that the vast majority of both Palestinians (66%) and Israelis (73%) believed that peaceful protest wouldn't end Israel's occupation of the West Bank or lead to the dismantling of communities there.

Released jointly by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) and the Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University, the poll said 67% of Gazans and 52% of West Bank Palestinians felt a need to organize demonstrations in Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. But Palestinians in the West Bank were

virtually split when it came to feeling a need to organize demonstrations against occupation (50% against versus 47% in favor).

While Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have stood aloof of the wave of protests across the Middle East, several Facebook pages have been launched to organize mass demonstrations by millions of Palestinian on May 15, when Palestinians mark the anniversary of the Nakba, the term they use for the founding of Israel. The PCPSR/Truman poll shouldn't give organizers much encouragement.

And, when it came to demonstrating against the ruling Palestinian Authority, support for peaceful protest dropped to just 36%.

"The Palestinians are less optimistic than other Arabs about the possibility that occupation could be ended through demonstrations," Walid Ladadweh of PCPSR told The Media Line. "They believe it is harder to remove the [Israeli] occupation than it is to remove Arab dictators."



JOB VACANCY

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Orthopedic Surgeon	Gynecologist	Surgeon
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Marrying foreigners

By: Nawal Zaid

Fatin Zaher is 30 years old and married. She has a son and a daughter, and she completed her education to a secondary school level. She lives in Sana'a with her husband and her children, and she is a housewife. She married Nabil, an Iraqi, 15 years ago.

"When Nabil asked for my hand in marriage my family totally refused," Fatin said. "Because he was not Yemeni and they did not know anything about him, and also that he had different customs. They were also worried about what people would say. After a while my family accepted and we married."

"The imam of the mosque near our house was the one who wrote our marriage contract." She added.

Dr. Aws Al-Ansari, an Iraqi, is 40, married, has a daughter and lives in Sana'a. He works in one of the hospitals in the capital as a public physician. "When I moved to Yemen 13 years ago and decided to live here permanently I also decided to marry with a Yemeni girl because I love Yemen so much and its customs and traditions."

"After a while I married a Yemeni woman and I'm happy with my family and I feel that customs and traditions in Yemen are like ours in Iraq. And that is what I like so much," he said.

Ahmed Mohamed, 60, is married to two women. He has eight children. He works as a government employee and lives in Sana'a.

"I travelled to Germany a long time ago for education and work and got to know a German girl, Nada. I decided I wanted to marry her because I didn't want to be alone and I needed a wife to take care of me. I didn't mind that she was a foreigner and the most important thing was that she converted to Islam and that is what she did when I requested her to do so before marriage," he said.

"After I completed my studies we traveled to Yemen together, but after a period of time she could not adapt to the lifestyle of my family and my environment in Yemen."

"I tried to help her, but she refused even to get to know the rest of my family or my neighbors. After a period I married Fatima, a Yemeni girl who was able to adapt to my family and my environment. Nada did not oppose my marriage to Fatima at all."

Abdullah Hadi is 45, married and has five children. He lives on the outskirts



Some foreigners find it difficult to adapt to Yemeni cultural traditions

of Sana'a and is a farmer.

"I married an Egyptian woman due to my bad economic situation as the dowry here is expensive and that made me to think of marrying from outside Yemen."

"Now my wife Aisha lives with me in Yemen, she works like other Yemeni women in the village and she dresses and speaks like them. She has raised my children well. We live in a society that maintains its customs and ways, and she respects this."

Mohamed Ali is 47, married, and has nine children. He lives in Sana'a and works as a builder.

"When I was a student, I traveled to Britain for education. I was alone in a foreign country and so I decided to get married. I married Manal and she was a woman dedicated to her religion and her life."

"We had three boys and when I decided to return to Yemen I also decided to take her and the boys with me, but

she refused. In the end, she decided to separate and to take the boys and raise them. I miss my sons and I try to contact them but their mother forbids them to speak to me."

Sara Najeeb is 25 years old and single. She lives in Britain with her mother, and is a university student. "I truly love Yemen, it's my father's country and my family is there. I live with my mother in Britain because she and my father are divorced. I always travel to Yemen but unfortunately I can't understand Yemeni customs and traditions. My mother doesn't let me stay for too long in Yemen, so I'm only able to visit my father and then see some areas of Yemen before I have to travel back."

"In terms of religion I don't know a lot about Islam and I'm unable to practice it. When I walk in the street I see that Yemeni women are covered, which is totally different to me, even though I am Yemeni and from a Muslim background. I have tried to learn of my friends in Yemen how to pray and other things that will make me a good Muslim. I was brought up by my mother with different values. I find the differences are huge."

Nisreen Hassan is 30 years old and single, she is a university student at the College of Education and lives in Sana'a.

"My father is Yemeni from Hajja, and my mother is Moroccan, and she is Christian. My brothers and I, Muhammed and Ayman, were raised according to Yemeni traditions and customs. My mother raised us in the best way and she gave us the full freedom, trust and everything we could wish for."

"Muhammed and Ayman go to the mosque and they copy my father's dress and the manner in which he speaks. We go to Morocco in our holidays to visit our family and friends there. I don't think there's much of a difference between the traditions and customs of Yemen and Morocco, except the different environments."

Omnia Abdul-Jabbar is 27 years old and single. She is a student in Sana'a.

"My father is Yemeni and my mother is German. I spent my childhood in Germany with my mother and father, and when I grew up I decided that I wanted to visit my country Yemen so that I could get to know it and my family there. When I travelled to Yemen I found that it was beautiful, that the people were kind, and that the traditions and customs were totally different to what I experienced in Germany. I started studying in Yemen and intend to

finish studying here so that I can learn more about Islam and memorize the Holy Qur'an."

Ibrahim Muhammed al-Salahi is 38 and is married with 3 children. He lives in Sana'a and works as a civil servant.

"Of course, according to the records so far in 2011, marriage to foreigners in general has reached 386 cases. The procedures are all correct; whoever applies to get married provides us with their file from their embassy, and the agreement from the necessary officials in their country. The request is then sent to the Immigration and Passports Authority, and then to the Ministry of the Interior, and then a note is sent to the Ministry of Justice. The National Security Services take the necessary measures and information from the Immigration and Passports Authority to determine whether the person applying for marriage is of the required morals, and if he has any previous issues that would prevent the marriage taking place. After this a note is sent by the Ministry of Justice to the Special Court so that the husband and wife can then partake in the religious ceremony."

"The matter is therefore not as easy

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as it was in the past. The relevant bodies in Yemen have put more importance to the matter, especially the marriage of a Yemeni woman to a foreign man."

There are also other reasons as to why marrying foreigners might not work. If there are children in these marriages then it can be victims of these failed

marriages. The children also face problems in school and after their secondary education, as they are not able to enter some colleges, such as the College of Aviation, the Military College, the Police Academy, etc. They are not permitted to enter these colleges as their parents are from different environments."

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