

## INTERVIEW

### British ambassador speaks on Yemen



YT photo by Fatima Al-Azzani

In a candid timely interview on Yemeni affairs British ambassador Jon Wilks talks to Nadia Al-Sakkaf editor of The Yemen Times on how he views the Yemeni situation, his country's point of view and the best ways forward.

The interview touched on many issues starting from the political standstill to Al-Qaeda in Abyan and the economic crisis.

He made it clear that since the Gulf Initiative seems to take long that the Yemeni constitution should be taken as an alternative and that vice president Hadi could be the one to break the political deadlock.

He urged Yemeni protestors to organize themselves in order for the world to recognize them and warned that if Yemen does not address its humanitarian and economic situations as priorities the country will turn into a war country which is a very hard process to reverse.

Wilks stressed on the point of inclusiveness in any political discussions, which he believe is the only solution for Yemen considering the complexity of the country. He also said that the friends of Yemen are willing and waiting to help Yemen, but the first step has to be Yemeni as the solution for Yemen's problems has to be a local one.

Read full interview on pages 4 and 5.

# At least 16 die after President Saleh's TV appearance



Following President Saleh's speech last Thursday, Sana'a exploded with fireworks and heavy gunfire.

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, July 9 — At least 16 people died from 'celebratory fire' across Yemen after President Ali Abdullah Saleh appeared on TV for the first time since the assassination attempt against him on June 3.

Three died and at least 21 were injured in Ibb governorate as Saleh supporters fired weaponry in celebration of the president's TV appearance. According to hospital sources, those who died suffered for hours before succumbing to their wounds.

Government sources had repeatedly claimed that Saleh would appear on TV prior to his actual appearance on Thursday July 7. The repeated failures to appear had fueled speculation that the president was dead or dying, as Saudi Arabia had withheld information regarding his condition. The lack of information has only heightened tensions in

the political stalemate that has gripped Yemen since Saleh's departure.

"Although I feel sorry to see the president so burnt - I can feel his pain and wounds - I still think it's a horrible way to celebrate," said an anti-government protester.

"He has had eight successful surgeries which means he fought to live. And in a very non-humanitarian way they [Saleh supporters] killed people randomly in less than two hours. It's not fair at all."

Saleh supporters and loyal military forces terrified people with heavy gunfire and random shooting into the air. According to the Women Sister's Forum for Human Rights at least 200 people were injured by falling bullets. The forum condemned the continual usage of heavy and light weapons in celebrating Saleh's appearance.

"They terrified us. I was on my way home when the shooting started.

I didn't yet know what had happened. I was running for my life but nowhere seemed safe. A bullet fell right in front of me. Why should we die for their celebrations?" said Nuha Ahmed, a resident of Sana'a.

Open hatred was seen among Saleh supporters. Although his appearance showed how badly Saleh had been injured, it confirmed that he was alive and gave support to the feeling that he would return and take revenge upon his opponents.

In his recorded televised appearance Saleh said that, "there is a wrong understanding of democracy." Some Saleh supporters have interpreted this to mean that once he returns he will repair "his mistake" of giving too much freedom and democracy to Yemenis.

Article 116 of Yemen's constitution states that: If the post of the President of the Republic becomes vacant or should the president become permanently disabled, the Vice President temporarily takes over the presidential functions for a period that does not exceed 60 days, during which new elections for the President of the Republic shall take place. If the posts of the President of the Republic and Vice President become vacant at the same time, the Presiding Board of the House shall temporarily take over the functions of the President. If the House of Representatives is under dissolution, the government shall replace the Presiding Board of the House in carrying out the functions of the

Presidency, and in this case the election of the President of the Republic shall take place within a period that does not exceed sixty days from the first session of the new House of Representatives.

"Article 116 should be implemented as Saleh's appearance made it clear that he is not able to return and perform his duties anytime soon," said Ahmed Al-Zurqa, a political analyst. "He needs at least one year [to recover]. We saw that he has lost [use of] parts of his body, maybe like his hands or legs."

According to Al-Zurqa, Saleh's appearance on TV worked against him rather than for him, and the only reason that Article 116 can't be implemented is that Yemen is lacking strong institutions. It would only be implemented if there was a strong parliament or a cohesive military.

Although President Saleh clearly knows Article 116, he still called for power sharing with the opposition "within the constitution" as a step towards rescuing the country.

"His [Saleh's] appearance wasn't his decision. He is a very confident person who cares about his appearance and his image. He would have decided to broadcast his voice, but not to be seen like this," said Al-Zurqa.

"His sons might have put pressure on him to be televised to prove that he is alive and to gain sympathy for him. And most importantly, to stop any procedure to transfer power to the vice president."

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# Who could be in the transitional council? Part 3

By: Ali Saeed

Yemen's official opposition and pro-change protesters in 17 'Change Squares' across Yemen are still demanding the establishment of a transitional council to run the country. It has been over a month since President Saleh left for Saudi Arabia to recover from injuries sustained in a bomb attack. There is still no clear indication when, or even if, Saleh will return to Yemen. Whilst the political stalemate continues, Yemen's population of 25 million continue to suffer as the country heads towards economic collapse.

The Yemen Times presents four more national figures, to add to the ten previously published, who could potentially join a transitional council to lead Yemen out of its present crisis.

## Nabeel Al-Faqih

The former Minister of Tourism and pro-change supporter, Nabeel Al-Faqih, defected from the ruling General Peoples' Congress (GPC) after the massacre of 52 peaceful protesters by security forces on March 18 in Sana'a.

Al-Faqih has a bachelor's degree in economics, a master's degree in marketing and a higher diploma in business administration.

He started work at the state-owned Yemenia Airlines as a sales officer in 1988 and in 1996 was promoted to marketing officer. He continued to advance in the administrative section of the company until he was appointed deputy minister of tourism in 2004. He became minister of tourism in Feb. 2006 until his resignation in 2011.

Before resigning in response to the March massacre of protesters in Sana'a, he had been advocating a proposal to President Saleh that he thought could free Yemen from its political unrest. Saleh declined to act upon his initiative.

A man with his administrative skills and many contacts with various local and international organizations, he is expected to have a role in the future of Yemen.



## Nasr Taha Mostafa

Born in Sana'a in 1962, Mostafa has worked in journalism since 1982. Originally a member of the Islah opposition party, he switched to the ruling GPC party after the 1994 civil war. He was general director of state-owned Al-Thawra Press from 1995 to 1996.

In 2001 he became editor-in-chief of the state-run Saba News Agency, and was head of the Yemeni Journalists' Union from 2006 until 2009. He resigned from his post as editor-in-chief of Saba News in March 2011 in protest against the killing of peaceful protesters in Sana'a on March 18th.

In interviews after his resignation from the GPC and Saba News, he vowed not to return to the Islah party, and called on Saleh's sons and nephews to leave their military posts and establish their own political party. He also called on Saleh to step down as president, as former president, Abdu Al-Rahman Al-Eryani did, to save Yemeni lives and to save the country from collapse.

Mostafa has also refused to join the coalition of members and officials who defected from the GPC and government, known as the Justice and Development Bloc, saying at the moment he will not practice any partisan activity. He has stated that any dialogue to resolve the crisis in Yemen should be based on a peaceful transition of power.

Mostafa is a respected Yemeni journalist and political analyst who has made a huge contribution to Yemeni and Arab journalism. With this experience and a long relationship with the GPC, he is expected to play a role in the coming period of Yemen's rule.



## Hooria Mashhour

Hooria Mashhour is a Yemeni woman from the south who received her education during the socialist regime in Aden. She has had experience of the regimes in both the south and the north.

She is activist for female empowerment, a political activist and a social leader who has occupied several government posts in both the south and the north. She was one of Saleh's ruling party members until her resignation in March 2011. She left the GPC and her post as chairwoman of the women's national committee in protest against the killing of dozens of pro-democracy protesters in the Sana'a on March 18.

Mashhour announced her support for the popular uprisings against Saleh's 33-year rule and appeared on local TV stations and in local newspapers saying that Saleh's regime did not empower Yemeni women, and had just used them as decoration to get the support of foreign organizations.

Born in 1954 in Aden, she received part of her higher education in Cairo and Germany, and completed her bachelor's degree in economics and administration from the University of Aden in 1981.

She worked as a teacher in public schools in Aden before unification, and as teacher trainer with the ministry of education after Yemen's unity in 1990. She worked as the general director in the department of organizations and external relations at UNESCO from 1997 until 1999.

From 2000 until 2005, she was deputy chairwoman of the women's national committee, the state department responsible of drawing up policies for improving the status of women in Yemen and empowering them to contribute effectively in national development. She became chairwoman in 2005 and chaired many workshops, symposiums and conferences on women issues both inside and outside of Yemen.

Mashhour has contributed to the design of many national strategies including those on child labor, HIV/AIDS, gender, primary education and poverty alleviation. She also supervised many studies about the status of Yemeni women in rural areas, in the workplace and strategies for female political empowerment.



## Hisham Sharaf

The minister of industry and trade in the current care-taker government, Sharaf has been an active member of the GPC since 1983.

Sharaf was born in 1956 in Taiz governorate. He received a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Pennsylvania in the early 80's and then a master's degree in project administration. He continued his tertiary education at the American Catholic University in Washington until 1988.

Upon returning to Yemen he joined the ministry of planning and international cooperation and rose through the professional ranks until being appointed deputy minister for the international cooperation sector from 1998 until 2009. In this role he chaired high level technical and preparatory ministerial committees with countries friendly with Yemen. He was also responsible of running Yemen's economic affairs with international donors and funding institutions including the World Bank, the Arab Economic and Social Development Fund and the Abu

Dhabi Development Fund.

Sharaf supervised and coordinated many donors' conferences including that in the Hague in 1996, Brussels in 1997, Paris in 2002 and London in 2006. From 2009 until 2011 he was deputy minister of planning and international cooperation.

During the mass defections from the GPC and government during the 2011 revolution, Sharaf remained loyal to his party against the regime's opponents. This will make of him a likely figure to represent the ruling party in any transitional period.



## Diesel shortage leads to garbage pile-ups



Waste accumulation on the streets of Sana'a has been increasing since last week due to a diesel shortage. Respiratory disease professors warned if no measures are taken, an environmental and health crisis will emerge.

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, July 10 — Garbage has been accumulating in streets across the capital Sana'a for over a week due to a diesel shortage, forcing garbage trucks to cease their daily trash pickups across the city.

"The trash has been piled up with no daily removal due to the lack of diesel," an official at the municipality of the capital Sana'a told the Yemen Times on Sunday.

"Until now no measures have been taken yet to tackle the problem because officials in higher posts are not aware of consequences for leaving the waste piled up...they do not know the scale of our job they have no idea that will cause diseases and environmental hazards," he said.

The municipality of the capital Sana'a requires 10,000 liters of diesel per a day to run its trucks to pick up waste from streets and neighborhoods of the city, according to the official who requested anonymity.

"This is only for streets and neighborhoods rather than diesel needed to take

out medical waste from hospitals and pharmacies and waste of big establishments such as restaurants and supermarkets," he explained.

The United Nations Inquiry Committee who concluded their 9-day visit last Wednesday to investigate the human rights situation in the country said that Yemen is facing deliberate humanitarian and economic crisis in which the two-month nationwide fuel shortage is part of it.

Dr. Faker Al-Kubati, professor of respiratory diseases at the University of Sana'a told the Yemen Times on Sunday that leaving the waste accumulating on streets and neighborhoods "is going to cause terrible diseases that will cost more than the diesel charge for municipality trucks."

Some locals in Sana'a started burning the waste around their houses when they saw the trash accumulating with no one to pick it up. But this action according to the respiratory diseases consultant is also risky as it causes bronchial allergy and both upper and lower respiratory tract infections which leads to lung dusting and then respiratory failure.

"The waste accumulation leads to chronic environmental diseases and the proliferation of mosquito which causes malaria epidemic," he said.

The professor highlighted that the trash increase on streets and around houses also attracts stray animals to live on that and this produces water liver and lung microbes.

He urged concerned administration to take action because negative consequences will be major not only in Sana'a but at the nation level.

He suggested allocating specific gas stations for the municipality workers to be able to perform their job, "otherwise an environmental and health crisis will occur."

"The people and the state will lose much because of this. This is much worse than cutting fuel or the power. It will cost huge amounts of money," he warned.

The municipality official who spoke with the Yemen Times said that "higher officials do not really feel the importance of our duty, but when the crisis of waste accumulation explodes, they will see it."



## JOB PROFILE MDM YEMEN

Position:	Field Coordinator
Starting date:	ASAP
Duration:	9 months with possible extension
Base in:	Sa'ada City
Supervisor:	General Coordinator - Sanaa

### Context of the mission

Médecins du Monde - MDM, (Doctors of the World) is an international impartial and non-governmental medical organization currently working in Yemen.

### I. DUTIES

The field coordinator is based in Sa'ada with travel to the field locations and Sana'a for meetings and reporting purposes.

#### 1. GENERAL Objective of the Position

Under the responsibility of the General Coordinator, and in close collaboration with the Medical Coordinator, Logistic Officer and Admin Coordinator, the FieldCo guarantee the good fulfillment/ achievement of MDM's projects in Sa'ada governorate through:

- > Coordinating MDM team in Sa'ada and assure the links with the local partners, authorities and beneficiaries.
- > Guarantees the respect of MDM's: rules, procedures and image.

#### 2. SPECIFIC Objective

(S)he is in charge of the operation implementation in Sa'ada, (s)he also assess the new needs and identifies complementary activities as necessary. (S)he reports to the General Coordinator and contribute strongly in proposals and reports writing.

### II. POSITION DESCRIPTION

1. Security: rules, procedures respect & implementation
2. Operational management
3. Project Monitoring & Evaluation
4. External relations & representation in Sa'ada
5. Administration & Finance:

### III. LINE MANAGEMENT & FUNCTIONAL LINKS

- > Works under the responsibility: of the General Coordinator.
- > Collaborate with: the Country Management Team.
- > Responsible for: the whole team in Sa'ada project.

### IV. BACKGROUND OF THE CANDIDATE

Sex	Male	Humanitarian experience	Yes
Nationality	Yemeni	Emergency experience	Yes
		Coordination experience	Yes
Languages	English	Fluent (Spoken & Written)	
	Arabic	An Asset	
		Computer skills	Excellent knowledge of windows environment (word, excel)
		Driving license	Yes+ ideally knowledge of 4x4 driving (for emergencies only).

### Skills required

- > Knowledge of Yemen an asset.
- > Experience of at least 1 year on project management (planning, monitoring, evaluation) in humanitarian context, preferably in health programs
- > Experience in conceptual, planning, organizational, and team leadership skills.
- > Experience in project finance management and narrative and financial reporting to international donors.
- > Experienced in a complex context and volatile security situation.
- > Experience in multi-national / sartorial team work & management.
- > Experience in negotiations and relations with local partners and authorities in a difficult legal, administrative and political context.
- > Capacity to work in isolated context and able to respect and to implement strict security rules.
- > Strong sense of responsibility, analysis and planning.
- > Strong sense in decision making and procedures management.

### Excellent Personal skills required

- > Patience & good listener.
- > Reactivity, anticipation, adaptability and capacity to take initiatives to changing requirements.
- > Organisational skills, rigor.
- > Precise and pro-active.
- > Ability to classify and manage priorities.
- > Impartiality.
- > Team-player ready to support and jump in when needed.
- > Capacity to work and to live in tense conditions (climate, cultural context, isolation).

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Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf, (1951 - 1999) Founder of Yemen Times

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OUR OPINION

The president's speech

British actor Colin Firth starred in a historical drama called The King's Speech in which he plays King George VI of England. The story is about the king who overcomes his speech impediment and shakes the British nation with an inspiring speech that unites them in preparation before entering into World War II.

The essence of the movie, which is worth seeing by the way, is about leadership and how a determined courageous leader with wise words can save his or her nation in dire times.

Likewise Yemen has much anticipated our president's speech. After 34 agonizing days filled with rumors and speculations as to our president's health and the future direction of his regime, President Saleh came on TV to address the nation last Thursday.

He did look fragile and so unlike the strong confident president's almost macho personality who would discard anyone or anything but his own line of thinking and followers, he used to be. We were so worried as to whether Yemen was going to remain a one man show as it used to when he was healthy, and who this new man would be. We thought his son is going to keep the family heritage and continue on his father's steps and we have seen signs of this.

But when Saleh appeared on TV, it just seemed as if nothing has really changed. One would think after what he has gone through personally and what the entire country has gone through that there will be a different tone, a new direction...

With a near-death experience and realizing how weak a human being could be, I really hoped we would have a new rhetoric. But no, it was like nothing has changed.

The president's speech talked about the opposition parties as if they were the only political entity to talk to and this is very unfair. In fact, many Yemenis have lost their trust in the traditional opposition almost as much as they lost it in the regime.

Moreover, I thought the president will talk about the disastrous humanitarian situation the country is going through.. show that he is aware of the suffering of the people and do something about it. Yet the pointing fingers and accusing others of blocking roads and attacking people and institutions continued.

It is so sad an unnerving that the real issues were ignored, such as the devaluation of the Yemeni currency which will even go worse as the Central Bank has already printed more currency. I would not be surprised if by the end of the year one USD equals 500 Yemeni Rials, and mark my words, this will happen soon.

Already businesses are screaming in agony and many companies are laying off people. The catastrophic combination of increasing unemployment, high inflation and absence of rule of law will only create chaos... the very thing everyone keeps saying we don't want that for Yemen.

The creation of a black market economy is only the start of a transition into a war nation. The worst part is that Yemenis have not realized yet that no-one including the divided Saudi royal family can save us from this fall. If we don't do something on our own no one will help us.

The moment Yemenis realize that only they can make a difference and that the longer they wait the more difficult the task becomes, is when things will improve.

Until then, no matter how many politicians lead campaigns and how many times the president comes on TV to promise and threaten, we will continue to fall.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

A new nation is born

By Ban Ki-moon

This Saturday, July 9, the Republic of South Sudan will join the community of nations. Foreign dignitaries will converge on its capital, Juba, to watch the new country raise its flag and inaugurate a first president, Salva Kiir Mayardit.

For the more than eight million citizens of South Sudan, it will be a momentous and emotional day. In January, they voted in an historic referendum to separate from the rest of Sudan. That they did so peacefully is a credit to both the North and South Sudanese leadership. Yet nationhood has come at steep cost: a staggering number of lives lost and people displaced in a 21-year civil war that ended only in 2005. When the assembled presidents and prime ministers board their official planes to return home, the challenges that remain will be daunting indeed.

On the day of its birth, South Sudan will rank near the bottom of all recognized human development indices. The statistics are truly humbling. It has the world's highest maternal mortality rate. Estimates of illiteracy among the female population exceed 80 percent. More than half of its people must feed, clothe and shelter themselves on less than a dollar a day. Critical issues of poverty, insecurity and lack of infrastructure must all be addressed by a relatively new government with little experience and only embryonic institutions.

I came to appreciate the sheer scale of these challenges, for myself, when I first visited South Sudan in 2007 — an area of 620,000 square kilometers with less than 100 kilometers of paved road. Within this larger context, the risk of increased violence, harm to civilian populations and further humanitarian suffering is very real.

At the same time, South Sudan has remarkable potential. With substantial oil reserves, huge amounts of arable land and the Nile flowing through its centre, South Sudan could grow into a

prosperous, self-sustaining nation capable of providing security, services and employment for its population.

Alone, South Sudan cannot meet these challenges nor realize its potential. Doing so will require partnership — a full (and on-going) engagement with the international community and, most especially, South Sudan's neighbours.

First and foremost, the new leaders of South Sudan should reach out to their counter-parts in Khartoum. Strong, peaceful relations with the North are essential. A priority for both countries is agreement on their common border, sustainable relations to ensure both states can benefit from the oil revenues in the region, and cross-border arrangements to continue their strong historical, economic and cultural ties. Recent instability in Southern Kordofan and Abyei have strained North-South relations and heightened political rhetoric. Now is the time for both the North and the South to think of the long-term benefits of working together, not short-term political gains at the other's expense.

South Sudan must also reach out to its other neighbours. Across the globe — and in Africa, especially — the trend is towards regional partnerships. South Sudan will be strengthened by becoming an active participant in the regional organizations of East Africa and developing durable trade and political ties throughout the continent.

Finally, South Sudan must reach out to its own people. It must find strength in diversity and build institutions that represent the full constellation of its broad geographic and ethnic communities. The basics of any modern, democratic state must be guaranteed: free expression, full political rights, inclusive institutions that extend benefits to citizens of rural areas as well as regions affected by conflict.

In the 21st-century, the international community has increasingly come to recognize the responsibilities of governments to their citizens, including the protection of political space and

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democratic rights. The popular uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East have shown what can happen when governments are inattentive to the needs of their people.

The United Nations is committed to assisting the government of South Sudan meet its many responsibilities. That is why I have proposed a new United Nations mission in South Sudan: to help build the institutions that the country needs to stand on its own. In doing so, let us remember that the United Nations is only one part of a broader set of partnerships that the government should develop — with the North, with its neighbours in the

region and beyond and, most importantly, with its own people.

On July 9, I will join other leaders in Juba to mark the birth of South Sudan. The last thing a new nation needs is a celebration as it springs into existence, only to then be forgotten until the next crisis. Our purpose is to do more than celebrate this milestone. It is to highlight the international obligation to stand by the people of South Sudan as they seek to build a stable, strong and ultimately prosperous nation.

The writer is Secretary-General of the United Nations

The importance of Bab Al-Mandeb

By: Sarakenos For Kabobfest

The importance of Yemen to the industrial world (led by the US Empire) has to do with its strategic location on the most important oil-shipping route, through Bab el-Mandeb strait. A free, democratic, and independent Yemen cannot be allowed to exist because we all know what it would demand in return for continuing to allow a safe passage to oil tankers from the Persian Gulf through the strait of Bab al-Mandeb. The last time someone halted oil exports to the US, forcing it to choose between Israel and petroleum, he got assassinated. A rebellious dictator can be handled (some shrapnel and an airplane ride to Riyadh will do). But an entire country, with a history of mighty warriors, the only Arab country to have successfully blocked the British Empire's colonization? That's too much risk to put up with, even for America, the self-proclaimed No. 1 country.

"Oil is much too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs." ~ Henry Kissinger, 1975

This golden route of black oil from Arabia to Europe and the US must be safe-guarded in all key areas aforementioned, Yemen being the most danger-

ous of all. Given Yemenis' short fuse for bullshit (especially in politics), it is a miracle that the US and its supreme ally, Saudi Arabia, could manage to install and maintain a president for all these years without a mass rebellion and rejection, as what the incumbent's pre-selected predecessors had to go through.

All of Saleh's predecessors were removed by force. The Yemeni king (pro-West) was overthrown by his own military general, al-Sallal, in 1962 with the help of Egypt's Abdul-Nasser. In 1967, al-Sallal was overthrown while outside the country by judge Abdul-Rahman al-Aryani (the first and last civilian Yemeni president). Al-Aryani was the most respected and loved by the people. In order to avoid a civil war, al-Aryani gave up his presidency willingly to military general Ibrahim al-Hamdi in 1974. When al-Hamdi decided to go visit South Yemen to discuss unification in October of 1977, Saudi-sponsored agents had him assassinated. He was replaced by al-Ghashmi, who was assassinated six months later (June 1978) in retaliation for his involvement in the assassination of al-Hamdi, and replaced by al-Arashi. Four weeks later, al-Arashi decided to step down and become vice-president, and Ali Abdullah Saleh (the third Saudi stooge) was installed in his place.

Under Saleh's rule, Yemen received hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid from the US (which was temporarily blocked in 1991 as a punishment for Yemen's stance at the UN regarding the war on Iraq), while the country's economy and society deteriorated so much that Arabs had jokingly referred to Yemen as a live museum of the seventh century. Saleh also opened his country's shores to American navy destroyers and battle ships to patrol the crucial waterways and clear them from, say, Somali pirates. In 2000, the USS Cole was bombed while refueling at Aden port.

Overall, Saleh was never really the most fit man for the job (the job being to serve his Saudi and American masters and protect their interests), but he was good enough. And in the recent wave of Arab Spring revolts, the American-Saudi coalition realized that Saleh remaining in power does more harm to the stability and security of their oil route, hence leading to the GCC initiative for "the peaceful and organized transition in government." Saleh refused to play game (as expected), which meant he defied his Saudi and American masters. In the mysterious bombing of the mosque near the Yemeni presidential palace, reports first said Saleh was "slightly injured." A couple of days later, reports said Saleh would be flown over to a hospi-

tal in Riyadh for check-up and minor medical attention (anyone who ever lived in Yemen knows very well about that country's poor medical facilities, perhaps the worst in the whole region, thanks to Saleh). Then newer reports said that he had shrapnel lodged in his chest, 2 inches deep into his flesh. Today's reports are saying that he is in a very critical condition and might not make it. Isn't that peculiar, perhaps even politically-convenient!

It is true that the American and Saudi governments do not want Saleh to return to Yemen, and most likely he won't (and most likely they had something to do with the bombing, and if they didn't, they eventually would have), but that is not because they share the Yemeni people's aspirations to resurrecting their civilian, modern, democratic, secular government, but because they would very much like to supervise this "peaceful and orderly transition of power," to make sure that whatever comes out of the people's revolution is a government they can depend on; a government that does not threaten Saudi-American interests; a government of politicians who respond to carrots and sticks.

And if it's still unclear as to what damage could possibly come out of a truly democratic Yemen to US-Saudi-Israeli interests, the answer is two words: Bab el-Mandeb.

## British Ambassador to Yemen, Jon Wilks:

## “The political process in Yemen should not be about dealing with the fundam

Armed with his M.Phil in International Relations from St. Antony's College, Oxford University, and around 22 years of diplomatic experience since joining the British Diplomatic Service in 1989, Ambassador Jon Wilks presents as a capable person who can understand Yemen and all its complexities. He speaks fluent Arabic which he mastered in the early nineties in Cairo, a skill that has come very handy in Yemeni qat chewing sessions with officials, diplomats, activists and Yemeni leaders.

Prior to coming to Yemen, Wilks was posted in Baghdad as deputy head of mission. He has also worked in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and, Sudan

Editor-in-Chief of the Yemen Times, Nadia Al-Sakkaf, interviewed Jonathan Wilks on the latest developments in Yemen, and the role of the British government in the country.



**What is the situation of the embassy these days?**

We have been here all the way through and we want to stay. We have the smallest team who can do the work of the embassy. We closed the visa section last year. And also because of the current crisis we no longer deal with passport issues or applications which are now happening in Amman.

If we make progress we can review these operations in a position direction.

**What do you mean by progress?**

Two things: one we need to decrease political tensions and that means real dialogue and a political transition process. And secondly of course, we need the removal of tribes from Sana'a and a unified military command. We need to see restoration of control over all provinces and progress against Al-Qaeda in Zinjibar and elsewhere. These are the things that will help improve the security situation.

**What about the other development projects?**

We withdrew our development team in March as part of bringing down our embassy to a minimum size but they are working on Yemen from London. We are concerned that Yemen is heading towards a humanitarian crisis and we and the other big donors are working to alleviate that. And to plan together if we have to do a major international operation if there is a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen. So our development team remains an important part of our work on Yemen but they are working from London or travelling in the region. For instance, our head of DFID (Development Ministry) team met the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in Jordan recently.

We are ready to increase our aid to Yemen because Yemen will need increased support, but first we need a political transition process and a government. We are doing some humanitarian work at the moment but most of our development projects have stopped, because of the security situation.

**“We are ready to increase our aid to Yemen because Yemen will need increased support, but first we need a political transitional process and a government.”**

**What if the political deal does not take place but a humanitarian crisis happens?**

We have a duty to help but the UN is here and it will lead on the humanitarian response in that case and we will support it. The UN has to operate in extremely dangerous circumstances in some countries so they are ready to play a role here more than we can because our security regulations are tighter. But Britain is increasing funding for humanitarian activity. That is to help preserve life because there are communities in Yemen that are now threatened with starvation. But we will be entering a much greater humanitarian crisis if politicians do not

agree a deal and there may be need for a major humanitarian response and the UN will lead on that.

**We are talking about a UN humanitarian response, what about Chapter 7?**

A humanitarian intervention is obviously very different from a political one. If you are talking about the UN Security Council there have been three debates on Yemen following the visits of Jamal Benomar, who is the Secretary-General's envoy for Yemen. After the last debate there was a press statement by the security council which basically reflected the consensus of the members of the security council. That we need an orderly political transition in Yemen, that the solution should be a Yemeni solution with outside support and that we are all ready to support Yemen in this.

And we appreciate the efforts of the Gulf countries and I know from talking to the ambassadors of the other permanent members of the Security Council – the United States, China, Russia, and France – that we will support the Gulf initiative which includes very important ideas, but most of all the idea of early transfer of power.

That [not having an early transition of power] is the thing that is blocking political progress in Yemen, and as we have seen in the last month during the President's absence there has been no political progress. Meanwhile there is constant deterioration in the economic and humanitarian situations.

**Why is there a lack of political progress in your view?**

The President has said that he does not want to sign the GCC initiative. We encourage him to do so and we encourage in his absence those people whom he authorizes, i.e., the Vice President and Ministers in the care-taker government, his relatives in senior security positions, to review the situation in Yemen. To ask themselves, is the collapse of the state in your interest? Is it in the country's interest, or the people's interest or for the sake of the unity of Yemen, which is the historical legacy of President Ali Abdullah Saleh?

We think the answer to all these questions is it clearly isn't. Therefore we want the politicians for all those reasons to say: 'OK, we are prepared to enter a dialogue over the transfer of power first, and then the formation of national unity government and then a transitional period where a new constitution will be discussed.

**But then the question is, why this understanding has not happened yet and whether it ever will be?**

That is our job as diplomats to help with that process. I think that is the main diplomatic task, to persuade all the political powers that real dialogue that will lead to an early transition of power is in everybody's interests. There has been good cooperation with the Gulf initiative, but now we have to focus on the real outstanding issue which is the transfer of power. The transfer of power is the beginning of a process. We would expect all political Yemeni forces including the ones in the ruling party to be part of the dialogue. It is not a question of giving power from one person or one party to another. It is about the participation of all political forces in dealing with this crisis and cooperating in orderly political transition.

That is the main objective of Britain and all these countries that we work

with – America, the GCC countries, EU partners, Russia and China – to avoid chaos because we are slowly sliding into chaos.

**In what capacity is Britain involved in the attacks against Al-Qaeda in Abyan?**

We are not directly involved in Abyan. Of course there are elements of Al-Qaeda in Yemen who are a threat to UK national security and the national security of our allies, so we have an on-going relation with the Yemeni security forces to counter them. This Embassy engages with the Political Security Organization, National Security Bureau and Central Security Forces. We have political, intelligence and training connections.

**What about the news that the British Special Air Service is here in Yemen?**

We don't comment on Special Forces, but what I can say is that we did have a conventional military training team here which was withdrawn a month ago. It was training the Yemeni Counterterrorism Unit at the Central Security Forces and the Yemeni Coast Guard.

We withdrew them for security reasons, but we would like to re-establish training with the Central Security Forces and the Yemeni Coast Guard as we believe that the solution to the Al-Qaeda problem must be a Yemeni one, and our aim is to build the capacity of Yemenis to deal with this problem.

**So you are talking a different approach than the Americans are who are being involved directly?**

No, the Americans have a much bigger presence in Yemen and have more resources dedicated to fighting Al-Qaeda, but the approach is the same which is Yemenis must lead the battle against Al-Qaeda. We are focused on the Al-Qaeda threat to the UK and specific individuals who are either British or a threat to UK national security.

**Is there a wanted list for you in Yemen? Are there any British nationals among them?**

There are individuals who are interested in but there is nothing that would be called a wanted list. Al-Qaeda in general as a whole is a threat, but our focus is specifically on threats against the UK. Of course we cooperate not just with the Yemeni authorities but the Americans and the GCC and other

countries who are also working to counter the threat of Al-Qaeda.

In terms of British nationals among the fighters Zinjibar, I do not have information on that. But we know that there are British nationals who have visited Yemen in order to make contact with Al-Qaeda.

**In the last year there have been two serious attacks by Al-Qaeda against officials at the embassy.**

I think the attacks on the UK in Yemen were in part because they [Al-Qaeda] saw an opportunity. But of course the UK in general is one of the main targets of Al-Qaeda. In Yemen they saw an opportunity and they attacked us twice. So

an important task for me is to keep all our staff here, Yemeni as well as British, safe.

**One more question on what is happening Abyan. Isn't the attack against Al-Qaeda there causing a humanitarian crisis? What are your views on this issue?**

We are very concerned. We have had a major humanitarian crisis in the north [Sa'ada] for some time and now we have a new humanitarian crisis in the south. And I have raised with the Vice President the need for getting access for humanitarian organizations to the displaced people those who have left their homes in Abyan and gone to Aden and other areas. So this is very much a part of our agenda.

**Politically it is on your agenda?**

The situation in Abyan is a major concern from a counterterrorism point of view as well. We see Al-Qaeda exploiting the area as the state has lost control there. It is also politically a concern because we support the unity of Yemen, and we do not want to see the break-up of the country in a chaotic way.

It is for Yemenis to discuss the future of the political system in Yemen and ideas of federalism, but this form of chaotic break-up of the country is not something we support, in fact it is a source of extreme concern.

And we are concerned about the humanitarian situation and the need to look after these 40,000 displaced people.

**How do you view Vice President Hadi's role in this period?**

I think the Vice-President is capable and clear in his view of what needs to be done on the security side and on dealing with the situation in Sana'a. We encour-

age him to engage in dialogue with all the political forces in Yemen, because ultimately in the absence of the President he should be authorized to carry out all the responsibilities of the President under these circumstances, such as national dialogue.

His position is constrained. He makes this absolutely clear. He asks always to be called Vice President. But our view is that the best way forward in these circumstances is to use the constitution as a reference point. And the constitution is clear that under these circumstances as Vice President he should have full authority.

Now again this goes back to the question of a transfer of power, and if the President and his family are not willing to discuss the issue of a transfer of power, then I think this has negative consequences for Yemen politically, regarding security, and in economic and humanitarian terms. Therefore we will continue to make the argument during this period that time is short, and it is not in the interest of any political party or individual to just sit and let Yemen collapse. So we will continue to make that argument to the Vice President and the President's relatives and to the members of the ruling party.

And to the opposition we also make clear that violence is not the solution to Yemen's problems. And while the opposition has every right to put political pressure on the regime, that is the role of an opposition in politics, we strongly urge them not to support further conflict or to engage in violent actions.

**Do you think some violent acts are going to happen? Are they on the horizon?**

There are conflicts all over Yemen and this is a message to everybody, every armed force in the country, whether they are from the regime, tribal, political, whatever... Now is not the time to escalate violence. Now is the time to engage in a political process which is inclusive, and we do insist that everybody should be involved who cares about Yemen or represents a political force.

**But are you talking about violence by the traditional opposition, or the independent youth, or armed groups?**

When we talk about the opposition we are talking about the wider concept of opposition. That must include the students and protestors, the Houthis, the southerners and the JMP. We urge all

not to resort to violence whether they are protestors, militias or tribal groups.

One of the things we really fear is that we are witnessing the Somalization of the country. And that does not just mean the break-up of the country into regions. It means that young men particularly are joining militias and gangs to receive wages and food and weapons. And this process is very difficult to reverse.

When we talk about the need for opposition to avoid violence, we are also talking to ordinary Yemenis who may be tempted because of all the difficulties they face to join gangs and militias and to engage in violence for any reason. This will destroy what is left of Yemeni society and it is extremely difficult to reverse as we know in Somalia and Afghanistan.

There is the question of bringing back the state and the rule of law which is very difficult. But if the society has become a war society and the economy has become a war economy, it takes Yemen to a very very dangerous phase.

We respect the peaceful protestors and the right to protest and we support their right to participate in the political process. And the protesting youth have succeeded in convincing not just Britain, but all the western countries and indeed some non-western countries, that they have a role to play in the future of politics in Yemen. So when we say we want a full participation in Yemen's national dialogue and political transitions, this must include representatives from the protestors.

What the youth need to do now is organize elections that produce a leadership of five or six people whom we can engage with as representatives of the youth movement. Now every time I ask this, and I have asked this since March, I get the same answer: We are working on it, and here we are three or four months later and we all know why this has not happened.

**Why is that?**

Because they are divided. And this weakens the youth protest movement and it is a mistake. If people are really committed to change and to changing the political culture of the country, they need to organize and in part that means they need to have a leadership that is elected and representative. The danger if you don't do this is that you get marginalized. And this is a lesson from other Arab countries.

**Would you support them if they ask for logistical support for the elections?**

We haven't been involved in the organization of elections in the square and it shouldn't be anything that requires major funding or organization. But in general we do receive and have received [requests] from civil society projects, and it remains an aspect of our work although it has been much reduced because of the security situation.

**Would you recognize the leaders among the youth if they do hold national elections and create a council of the people's representatives?**

I don't think that this is the solution to Yemen's problems. While of course the student protestors as a civil society movement have the right to

gather and elect their representatives, they should be part of a wider national dialogue that includes all the political forces. I fear that Yemen is the sort of society, as it is so pluralist and because of the tribal element, that is prone to chaos. And without strong institutions and with the collapse of the state, the safest way to achieve an orderly transition is to have a full participation of all in an agreed process.

There are different ideas of transitional councils. One is a sort of informal parliament I would like the student pro-

**“It is not a question of giving power from one person or one party to another. It is about the participation of all political forces in dealing with this crisis situation and cooperating in an orderly political transition.”**

# not just be about seats in government, it's about a fundamental economic crisis in the country."

test movement to elect some leaders that can engage in the political process and with the international community, but I am not in favor of the formation of a transitional national council that claims to be an alternative government.

I also think that the role of a popular gathering to debate the new constitution (a sort of informal parliament) could be valuable, but actually that needs to happen after a government of national unity has been formed. Someone is going to be needed to run the country, and after that all the political forces and the public should discuss the new constitution, the elections and the issue of federalism.

This is very confusing to me, it's like the chicken or the egg. People are not coming together for dialogue and you are saying it has to be inclusive because everyone has to sit around the table. But there are people who don't want to sit around the table, and we are waiting for them to make up their minds, and Yemen is falling into an economic collapse.

What I am saying is that I don't think the solution to the problem is to go off in a different direction. I think the solution to the problem is through inclusive dialogue. And we in the international community should continue to persuade those political forces that are refusing to go to dialogue.

**But you have been talking to them.**  
Yes, but diplomacy in difficult circumstances takes patience and time.

**Takes time? But we are dying every day?**

But the problem with the argument "that we are dying every day and that we must have solutions today" is that many people then go to violent solutions, and we believe that there is no quick violent solution to the problems of Yemen. Instead even more people could die.

The fact is that in situations like this where a country is breaking up and the state is collapsing, and there are a lot of armed groups and a lot of guns, there are no quick solutions at all. But in any case political solutions are preferable to violent solutions.

**I understand where you are coming from and your position. But the frustration of waiting for diplomats and politicians to make up their minds is really piling up.**

First of all let me make clear that I believe that diplomacy at the moment in Yemen is secondary to the activity of the politicians.

They have it in their hands to agree on all of this tomorrow. I rarely react negatively to anything that Yemenis tell me but I do react negatively when Yemenis tell me that they are really disappointed that the international community has not sorted out the problems of Yemen. Because I think that is the wrong way round.

If you sit and chew qat and wait for the international community

to solve your problems, you are part of the problem of this country and not part of the solution. We are ready, and I have always said that Yemen is a very lucky country, that most countries are ready to offer help – look at the Friends of Yemen initiative and Britain has been a leader in that. But there has to be a basic Yemeni agreement first and then we are ready to help, very quickly by the way. We are all sitting waiting for this. We, the international community and by the way the level of co-operation between Arab and other countries is unprecedented, have helped work out the Gulf initiative. But then at the end the President refused to sign. We continue to encourage him to sign, but actually if Yemenis say we can't wait for this, then it is for you to come up with other solutions. But my view is these solutions should be inclusive and should be peaceful.

So as I said, the idea of a transitional council, of the students and citizens getting together and electing leaders, that is good. If it is the idea of an informal parliament, I'd see a role for that in the transitional period. If it claims to be an alternative government then that would be a big mistake.

You are probably right in this, but Yemen has surprised us on so many levels. It might be just another surprise how peaceful elections for the protestors on a national level could be and how they could even unite Yemenis.

I agree with you that the Yemeni crisis is complicated, but in my view the fundamental crisis in the country is one of economics and resources. And the hardest fact that we all have to deal with when we think about Yemen is there are not enough resources in the country to give a good life to every Yemeni. Therefore we need to think very carefully about how we need to distribute whatever resources there are fairly, and how to build institutions

and build an economy that can give more opportunities, and how to build Yemeni capabilities to take employment abroad for a period until such a time as Yemen develops an economy that can provide a good life for all its people. So one of the things I ask all politicians – I have said it to the President, I have said it to his relatives, I have said it to the Vice President and the ministers and opposition and the students – is what we are looking for, and all donor countries are looking for, is a real understanding of this economic crisis.

The political process in Yemen should not just be about seats in government, it should be about dealing with the fundamental economic crisis in the country. And we would want to build a partnership with all the political forces that recognize this is the big issue.

**Vice President Hadi hinted that Saleh is expected to orchestrate the transition himself. Are we looking at stalemate for the next six months until Saleh is physically capable?**

I think that it is too long to wait. My understanding is that the president is in a fairly serious condition and will need to take some time to recover, and meanwhile Yemen needs political transition to begin now. It is clear that it [Yemen] cannot afford to wait months for him to come back, you know the political situation is tense and the way to deal with that tension is to try and defuse it, and to respect the constitution. And the constitution is clear that when the President is incapacitated, or it is infeasible for him to carry out his duties, that all the power should be transferred to the Vice President. And in my view, that is the best way to defuse tensions and minimize the risk of morer violence.

Now another way of dealing with the problem of course is the Gulf Initiative, if the President is willing to sign it. But the President has shown no willingness to sign it.

**And you have personally experienced what happened on May 22 at the UAE embassy. How was that?**

The Emirati hospitality was superb. In fact there were some exaggerations in the media about helicopters. There was a helicopter provided for Zayani to fly from the palace to the airport, but for the diplomats we sat, some of us smoked

shisha and enjoyed some excellent food and then I took my car and went home to my residence. So it was not as dramatic as the media portrayed it.

**Yes but to be confined until eight in the evening, and in an embassy which is supposed to have sovereignty?**

It was a mistake on behalf of whoever organised it. And it sent some very negative signals. Nevertheless, in the end we all have to focus on the future of Yemen and so we continue to develop ideas with all the political forces. We were actually working while we were there [at the UAE embassy] on the implementation of the GCC agreement. And we have also been working on other ideas.

As I have said under the current circumstances my reading of the constitution is that the Vice President should have full authority to lead the national dialogue.



**Is there any indication whether UN Chapter 7 will be employed in Yemen even if we head towards Somalization?**

Chapter 7 is not being discussed at the moment. I think the international community

**But there is no deadline for that, is there?**

I leave that debate to Yemeni constitutional experts. The principle I think is that we should all support applying the constitution as the first reference point, and the GCC should be the second reference point. Thereafter there should be a political agreement between all sides on a timetable. And because of the crisis there should be no delay.

**Just a few days ago the UK Foreign Minister visited Saudi Arabia. Was Yemen part of the discussions?**

Britain has a continuing and important dialogue with Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries on the situation of Yemen, we believe that Saudi has a very important role within the GCC initiative, and we with the other European Union countries and the US will continue to work with Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman and other GCC countries to support whatever Yemenis decide is the best political way forward. The President has not signed but all of these countries continue to work together because chaos is not in any of our interests in Yemen. We have worked so closely together on the details that we have a very common understanding about how to minimize the risks and how to achieve progress.

The discussions we have had with the Saudi authorities have been constructive and we want to continue to discuss Yemen with Saudi Arabia because we think it will continue to play a very important role.

**Are you worried about the 3 million barrels of oil that need to cross Al-Mandab strait every day?**

Of course, Yemen is in a strategic area. One of the reasons why Yemen is close to the top of the agenda in so many countries is not just because of the Arab spring, but because Yemen is in a very strategic position.

Al-Qaeda has been an issue that the UK has focused on for some years, but now I think we see an international community common understanding that there are issues of piracy, there are issues of terrorism, major oil producing countries nearby and oil trade passing through, but it is more than just oil trade because many countries are dependent on general trade that passes through the straits.

**Are there British forces to protect this trade?**

We have some forces in the region as obviously this is a region of strategic interest to us including the Gulf and the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. There are constant movements through this area. You know the result of all of this is that Yemen is going to remain very high on the international agenda. One of the things I say again to all sides – the President's relatives and the opposition, and the Vice President and others – is that this is not just a Yemeni crisis. This is a crisis with international dimensions and that is clear when we discuss it in the UN Security Council that Russia and China share the concerns that Britain, America and France have.

**What about freezing assets, for example?**

We've got to see what comes out of the report. Clearly there are going to be a lot of criticism of the human rights situation. But until we actually see the evidence and until we see what accusations are made, we can't say what the consequences could be.

**Let me rephrase the question. Do you know if the UN has any capacity given evidence of accusations to enforce consequences?**

We see in previous cases that this is possible, eg Libya, the Balkans, Rwanda. But we can't say anything specific in this case until we see the report. We welcome the visit by the way, and it is a good sign that this visit was allowed to happen, and that they have been able to visit Taiz, as well as Aden and Sana'a.

**On the issue of accusations, there have been complaints in the Yemeni press that Yemeni security trained by Britain to combat Al-Qaeda are being deployed against the protestors or Al-Ahmar supporters. What do you say to that?**

We have said to the government that you are not winning the fight against Al-Qaeda in Zinjibar. We have helped train troops that give you capabilities you can use, and we are surprised you have not deployed them.

**But this has not stopped you from continuing to provide training to state security. As you said, the reason**

looks at Yemen and they want most of all to prevent a humanitarian crisis from happening. Furthermore nobody wants to do something that is going to encourage support for Al-Qaeda, as we have seen in the past military intervention can. The lesson of past interventions is they are best done in a way that preserves maximum international support. And Libya is a good example where international support has been preserved and Arab participation helps prevent Al-Qaeda and other groups from taking advantage of it. Discussion in the security council on Yemen, however, is focused on political solutions and the humanitarian situation.

So what I foresee is that the Security Council will remain interested in what is happening in Yemen, and I think there are a lot of common concerns and therefore we will be able to build common positions. But the way the international community as a whole will act in the next phase is to support and encourage Yemeni political solutions. So I don't see any great military intervention in Yemen.

**What about the UN Human Rights investigation team that has just been to Yemen?**  
The human rights situation in Yemen has been quite a concern for many countries for many years, and we have seen a deterioration even before the current crisis and the massacre of protestors in Sana'a, Taiz and elsewhere. So within the UN Human Rights Organization which is in Geneva there have been discussions and calls for a visit of a mission to find out what is happening here and to report on it.

**What consequences do you think this visit can have for Yemen?**

Human Rights in Yemen is going to be discussed in the UN in September. There is going to be a complete review of the human rights situation and all the

issues and the report of this mission will be part of that discussion.

I have met the mission and I have encouraged them to publish that report early so that everybody has the chance to engage in debate about the issues it raises. I think it is important for Yemenis as well to feel we are not all just focused on the crisis or politics or counterterrorism, but also human rights which are vitally important.

**But what could be the consequences of such mission?**

It depends on the report.

**Say it says that Yemen is a terrible place for human rights and names names, then what?**

Well, you know we have to see whether there are accusations against certain individuals. That has in certain cases led to action, to the International Criminal Court, it has sometimes led to UN Security Council resolutions.

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**But this has not stopped you from continuing to provide training to state security. As you said, the reason**

you pulled them out is security not political.

Yes, the reason we withdrew is because of security reasons not political ones. But we have made clear that if any troops that we train are engaged in activities that violate human rights, or there is a misuse of forces or excessive use of force against protestors, that we would immediately cut the training program. But that wasn't the reason that we withdrew our forces.

**“One of the things we really fear is that we are witnessing the Somalization of the country. And that does not just mean the break-up of the country into regions. It means that young men particularly are joining militias and gangs to receive wages, food and weapons. And this process is very difficult to reverse.”**

**That means that they didn't use them?**

It means we have no evidence that they used them in violation of human rights. Obviously we are monitoring the situation, but we have no evidence of that. But of course if evidence arises that is a very serious matter and this could be something that the UN report produces.

**If the security situation in Yemen remains calm, will your training program recommence?**

We keep it under constant review, but there are no plans to bring them back at the moment. Clearly we are not in a sustainable political process where tension is subsiding and we could be confident that things will become better. But that is what we are aiming at. Time will tell whether we can achieve a peaceful resolution.

## SANA'A BRITISH SCHOOL



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# ROI youth magnet for global change

By: Felice Friedman  
The Media Line

A new generation of social entrepreneurs meet in Jerusalem to discuss ways to apply Jewish values to the task of improving the world.

“Jewish Summer.” Young, remarkable and ready to change the world.

“I was 25 and never had spoken to a Pakistani delegation before. Mustafa came over to me and said, ‘Would you mind if I sit down next to you and speak?’ We were struck by the fact we were so-called intellectuals -- well read -- and yet our attitudes in dealing with people were as though we never opened a book.”

That was two years ago, and today Ilja Sichrovsky, savvy founder and general secretary of the Muslim Jewish Conference, and Mustafa are close friends. In 2010, Ilja’s Vienna-based organization brought more than 65 individuals from 25 countries together to promote the idea that with collective faith, peaceful coexistence is feasible.

Ilja represented the electrifying energy of creative and collaborative thought that flowed through the halls of Hebrew University as 150 young global social entrepreneurs came together to share and learn from each other. They are the ROI – an acronym for “return on investment” – attending the sixth ROI Summit sponsored by The Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. Justin Korda, the ROI Community’s executive director and force behind the initiative, explained to The Media Line that participants, which he described as “a small handful of people building community,” are in their 20s and 30s, and are pooled from other organizations, having been nominated by their peers.

During the five-day conference, participants are brought together to network and engage in ideas, according to Sandy Cardin, president of the Schusterman Foundation and steward of its flagship project. “The focus has changed to strengthening the individual and providing talents and skills, as opposed to earlier years of the projects’ orientation,” he told The Media Line. Indeed, those selected for the Jerusalem conference would reap not only the benefits of exchanging ideas with peers, but receiving hands-on coaching in skills necessary to navigate more mundane organizational needs ranging from fundraising to name branding to improving personal speaking abilities and presentations.

A vibrant force of thinkers representing every aspect of Jewish life ranged from Jewtogether.org, an on-line hospitality network that assists Jewish travelers find Jewish homes; to Moishe House, where a post-collegiate can share in a Jewish environment in any of 35 hosting homes in 14 countries;

to Yiddish Summer Farm, where “all things Yiddish are hip”; to Machshava Tova, which collects discarded computers destined for landfills and uses them to train unemployed youth-at-risk as qualified computer technicians.

Skill sessions, experimental labs and master classes featured a wide range of topics including art and culture; cuisine; media hi-tech; environment; LGBT as issues effecting Jews as citizens of the world.

Beaming with pride, conference founder Lynn Schusterman viewed the plethora of proceedings and told The Media Line that, “We’re almost 600 strong and in some way, shape or form, each and every one is a success story. It may not be dollars and cents; they may not have a name-recognition organization yet; but they feel better about whom they are, they have more self-confidence and they look at the world differently.”

One recurring theme in speaking to participants was finding ways the global Jewish community can contribute to making the world around it a better place. The idea was reflected in the make-up of organizations selected to attend. Cadena, for instance, is a Mexican organization created to organize immediate support through the Jewish community that is distributed to victims of natural disasters. Executive director Karen Steiner told of her group’s work after a flood devastated Veracruz. “The government didn’t help the little towns because only boats could get there,” she told The Media Line. “We assisted through the local fisherman and delivered 150 tons of food and water.” The group also provided assistance to Haiti.

Stephen Shashoua heads the U.K.-based Three Faiths Forum, an organization that has linked 45 British schools bringing Jewish, Christian and Muslim students together. Opining that his generation has “more of an instinct for fairness than our parents’ generation did,” he praised ROI for “creating a space where nothing is off-limits.”

Tzvika Avnery is co-founder of Israel-based Wisestamp, an email app platform that enables your functional dynamic email signature. Tzvika told The Media Line that with two million installers globally, “one has the option of enabling users to follow a good cause.” Avnery felt the ROI Summit gave him an opportunity to meet one of his biggest niches – the non-profits and projects for good causes. “For me to meet them, understand their needs and leverage their supporters is important from the business perspective,” he said.

On the flip side sits Charlene Seidle, who is directly involved in grant-making as the vice president of the Jewish Community Foundation of San Diego. As a leading philanthropic adviser, Seidle sees the RIO experience in a different light. “As a funder, I’m besieged by requests. There’s little time to reflect on strategy. We are more responsive and this gathering brings the innovators together and equalizes it.”

environments from MTR, and that many of the contaminants are known to impair fetal development.

“Rates for any anomaly were approximately 235 per 100,000 live births in the mountaintop mining area versus 144 per 100,000 live births in the non-mining area,” the study says. Although not as high as near MTR sites, it also found increased incidences of birth defects in communities near underground mines.

“This is monumental,” said Bob Kincaid, the president of Coal River Mountain Watch (CRMW). He told The Huffington Post that this latest research is just one more among a dozen or so earlier studies “that shows that the coal industry, especially mountaintop removal, is engaged in the wholesale poisoning of Appalachia.”

“For those who actually pay attention to science, it’s irrefutable,” Kincaid said. “Would it be more obvious if the coal industry were using machine guns or gas chambers?”

Another study published in May by researchers from West Virginia University found that residents of communities near MTR mining sites suffered poorer health and a lower quality of life.

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Colorado-based Sarah Indyk is a manager at the Rose Community Foundation where she is responsible for three Jewish Life Foundation initiatives. “Do you have a logic model? Will people buy into your idea?” she asks her fellow ROIs during her session entitled, “Evaluation without an Evaluator.”

Laptops, iPads, phones and even antiquated notebooks were all sprawled out across desks while parallel sessions were taught by professionals, most of whom were of equal age to that of the participants.

Jumpstart, through its co-founder Shawn Landres, has changed the global conversation about Jewish innovation primarily through research and advocacy. Landres taught at ROI in 2009, and ran a number of workshops. “I’m here as a participant,” he told The Media Line, “and I’m so honored to be joining

the community from that perspective.

Landres was first in line to ask questions of Bob Rosenschein following a master class he delivered. An example of the talent available to summit participants, Rosenschein is the entrepreneurial wizard who created Answers.com – listed among the top 20 sites in the world and recently sold for more than \$100 million. He called his session, “Confessions of a Serial Entrepreneur.”

“I think it’s brilliant. There is such a diverse group of people here, all talking about action,” said Gadi Rouach, an artist who created the What is Real Creative Energy? video, which will develop into a branding campaign about what Israel and Jewry is today. Another branding expert, Karin Dimant-Rogovsky, who founded Brandtality, returns to the ROI Summit with the distinction of

having met her husband at ROI 2007.

Yet, for all of the talk of world-views, reliance upon “Jewish values” is inherent in all of the activities displayed and in the thought process of those assembled to teach and to learn. As well, concern over the place Israel holds in the hierarchy of priorities among the younger generation is rife. Landres, a multi-year veteran of the ROI Summit, suggested that, “there are a lot of young Jews who are becoming social entrepreneurs who are making change in the world and doing so from the basis of their Jewish values...At the end of the day, the burden is on us to show the world that Judaism and Jewish life can bring a positive impact to all of us in the world – to the world around us.” Inwardly, Landres said the other challenge is “to create compelling and meaningful Jewish communities that

will engage the 21st Century Jews in ways that connect them to the richness of our tradition.”

With 29 nations represented, none of those assembled in Jerusalem for the ROI Summit was oblivious to being in the region marked by mass unrest and a new set of epithets, including “Arab Spring.” The ROI Community’s Korda offered a telling differentiation between the two movements: “Our challenges are different as Jewish people than those living in ‘Tehranical’ countries where human rights are lacking as well as freedom of expression. One of the greatest problems as a result of so much freedom is that in the Jewish world when we talk about revolution we’re talking about transition.” Korda believes that, “These people are not working to overthrow establishment, but working with establishment.”

Jewish communal leaders have been agonizing over the younger generation’s perceived loss of interest in the Jewish state, an issue that is part-and-parcel of the transition Korda spoke about. One reality permeating the ROI Summit was that the new generation does not necessarily reject its parents’ bonding with the modern state, but young Jews do insist on being allowed the ability to process the relevant facts and form independent, informed conclusions. Landres quotes his organization’s research which, he says, demonstrates “a desire on the part of the younger generation to learn; to engage; to see the complexity of Israel from start to finish; to put everything in context and then be treated as adults who are capable of making up their own minds about what their relationship with Israel is going to look like.”

Lynn Schusterman says, “We need a Jewish Spring. And I don’t mean a revolution like what went on in Egypt. But what I think Israel has to do and what I think world Jewry has to do is to be inclusive, not exclusive. And I think they have to welcome anyone who wants to be Jewish to expose them to what being Jewish is; to Jewish education.”

Listening to Schusterman, that the real strategy behind the ROI Summit is a vision that suggests if the attitude is achieved, the individual pieces will fall into place is evidenced by her passionate telling of two stories. The first, her unbridled joy at receiving an email from an ROI alum asking for assistance “for a buddy, not for himself.” The second, the story of a now-successful doctor who attended medical school with a loan from Shusterman’s father. Rather than accept the proffered repayment of the loan, he told the doctor to use the money to “send someone else to medical school.”

From the chemistry apparent at the ROI Summit, it seems likely that Cardin’s prediction of ten years hence is not far-fetched: “a network of some 1700-1800 young activists around the world who understand they’re part of something larger and they’re connected in a way they are really a global force in Jewish life.”

# Mountaintop removal mining birth defects

By: Travis Donovan  
For the Huffington Post

Researchers found “significantly higher” rates of birth defects in babies born near mountaintop removal mining sites than those in non-mining areas, according to a new study released last week.

Mountaintop removal mining is a particularly environmentally destructive type of resource extraction that involves using explosives to blow the tops off of mountains to expose coal underneath the soil and rock. The unusable dirt and gravel are then disposed of in adjacent valleys and streams. MTR is used prominently in the Appalachian region of the eastern United States.

The mining study, published in the journal Environmental Research, examined over 1.8 million live birth records from 1996 to 2003 using National Center for Health Statistics data from the central Appalachian states of West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee.

It found that rates for six out of seven types of birth defects -- circulatory/respiratory, central nervous system, musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, urogenital and “other” -- were increased near MTR sites. The research suggests that contaminants are released into nearby

environments from MTR, and that many of the contaminants are known to impair fetal development.

“Rates for any anomaly were approximately 235 per 100,000 live births in the mountaintop mining area versus 144 per 100,000 live births in the non-mining area,” the study says. Although not as high as near MTR sites, it also found increased incidences of birth defects in communities near underground mines.

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Another study published in May by researchers from West Virginia University found that residents of communities near MTR mining sites suffered poorer health and a lower quality of life.

While the recent Environmental Research study reveals a spike in birth defects near MTR operations, the data can’t be used to conclusively pin

any specific environmental factor as the cause, the study’s co-author said. “What we think is happening is that there isn’t just one type of exposure. There is air quality problems in some areas, water quality problems in other areas,” Dr. Michael Hendryx told The Huffington Post.

Furthermore, the study noted various socioeconomic factors could account for a variance in birth defects, but said that they “remain elevated after controlling for those risks.” Critics of the research argue that these factors weren’t fully accounted for.

A spokesperson for the World Coal Association told The Huffington Post that it hasn’t yet “processed the results of this study.” Still, WCA claimed, “It is clear that focusing on only one aspect of an issue will inevitably lead to skewed results.”

The response from the National Mining Association was similar.

“While the authors say they controlled for [socioeconomic factors], it does not appear, based on their summary, they have done so,” said Carol Raulston, the senior vice president of communications for the NMA, in an emailed statement. While she conceded that her organization hasn’t had the opportunity to thoroughly review the study, Raulston said that other papers by the same researchers “have had

methodological deficiencies” and that this particular study “merits further investigation.”

“Our studies have limitations, they do not have ‘deficiencies’ and the choice of this word illustrates the bias of the mining industry,” said Hendryx. He asserts that any study published in any journal has “limitations,” but insists they used available data to control for risks -- from education to smoking during pregnancy, among others.

This study is unprecedented, Hendryx added, in the amount of individual records that were looked at. It extends previous research beyond mere county aggregates. He also said it’s the first academic paper to truly look at the potential effects MTR could be having on children.

Moving forward, Hendryx hopes to begin doing direct field assessments, such as collecting air and water samples in the communities experiencing high birth defects near MTR sites. Preliminary results could come within a year, but a definitive study would likely take at least several more.

But for some activists, these initial findings are all the evidence they need to escalate their fight against MTR operations.

“If a foreign power was doing this to us, we’d be at war with them,” Bob Kincaid said of the mining companies

behind the controversial process. The new health findings will be the “the centerpiece” of CRMW’s fight against what he calls “the single greatest human rights crisis facing the United States today.”

Nothing about the research is surprising to Kincaid. In fact, he just considers it validation for what anti-MTR mining activists have been alleging for years.

“We are going forward with a very plain message: They are killing us,” he said. “It is scientifically proven now.”

But not all activists agree the study is a silver bullet needed to end MTR mining.

“I don’t know that having one more piece of scientific evidence that coal is hurting our health is going to tip the balance,” said Mary Anne Hitt, director of Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal campaign. “It’s kind of like tobacco: We had piles and piles of evidence that it was bad for our health, but took years and years of work to turn around.”

Regardless, Hitt said Sierra Club, which recently launched an interactive website about coal pollution’s effect on health, plans to draw attention to the latest research.

The practice of MTR mining has recently become a subject of the national dialogue, with opponents’ efforts being backed by a variety of notable figures

and celebrities. A new film featuring Robert Kennedy Jr., “The Last Mountaintop,” has drawn a lot of attention to the issues surrounding the mining controversy in Appalachia, and more than a thousand people recently descended on Blair Mountain in West Virginia to protest planned MTR operations at the historic site. Earlier in the year, the Environmental Protection Agency revoked a permit for West Virginia’s largest MTR mine due to environmental and health concerns.

Despite a renewed sense of purpose among activists, some in the industry remain undaunted.

“It’s an injustice to everyone involved and to the science itself to present this data as though its worthy of some conclusion,” Vice President of the West Virginia Coal Association Jason Bostic told The Huffington Post. He contends that there is “no connection” between coal mining and birth defects, and brushes off the study as “a fairy tale.”

“If anything, the involvement of the coal industry helps offset what would otherwise be worse health defects from poverty, isolation and lack of access to preventative medicine,” Bostic said. “We’re the ones providing health benefits and wellness plans to our employees and their dependents. Take us away and see how well it goes.”



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IDEAL

## Faces from Yemen's revolution



### Redhwan Al-Absi

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

**H**odeida residents have become more focused and driven after President Saleh's recent speech. The momentum and morale of Change Square in Hodeida has also increased, according to lawyer and activist Redhwan Al-Absi.

As a prominent lawyer in Hodeida, Al-Absi successfully exploited his strong relationship with different businessmen, social leaders and average citizens in Hodeida to increase support for protesters.

"The vast majority of the Hodeida's locals support the revolution. People in Hodeida have become more aware of their rights and they are eager to take advantage of them," he said.

Al-Absi indicated that the protesters in Hodeida are planning to step up the intensity of their protests. "No more initiatives and no more compromise. We will hold qualitative marches and more people from poor districts will join us," he said.

"We will intensify our media programs about our revolution. We will raise awareness among people about the importance and seriousness of the revolution."

Al-Absi said that people in Hodeida used to be a complacent and submissive and many observers in Yemen were not certain that those people would rise up and protest against the regime.

"Peaceful people started protesting after Sana'a and Taiz governorates and proved to the world that people from Hodeida are not submissive anymore. Many people were surprised by the determination of Hodeida's locals," he said.

"People here are so disappointed about their difficult circumstances, injustice and rampant corruption. They have suddenly exploded with anger."

"People in rural areas started demanding their unrecognized rights. The policy of the inane regime has forced people to rise up and protest against them," he said.

According to Al-Absi, there are many reasons for why people in Hodeida have joined nationwide protester. "Our peaceful protests and repeated attacks on us by thugs led many people to support us and join us enthusiastically."

He said that Hodeida is the most impoverished governorate in Yemen in spite of its potential for wealth and natural resources. "Hodeida's locals have suffered severely from injustice and oppression for many years. There is not enough electricity, no fresh water, no proper education and no jobs for the youth. People here took to the streets because of these reasons."

"Despite its big contribution to the state's budget, Hodeida has no central project and people's land has been stolen by some officials," he said.

"Most of the protesters in Hodeida are jobless. Not only do they want a job but they want to live with dignity and freedom," he said.

Speaking about the determination of the protesters in Hodeida, Al-Absi said, "The youth struggle to continue their protest despite considerable difficulties



and economic stagnation. They sometimes cannot buy fresh and cold water and resort to drinking unclean water from faucets."

Participation of women in Hodeida's protests was active and has enraged the regime, according to Al-Absi.

"They were fighting back against the thugs courageously and sometimes we were urging them not to come to some marches because of the potential for violence. But they were tenacious and determined to take part in these risky demonstrations," he explained.

Al-Absi expressed his admiration for women who brought food and cold water to the protesters. "The women of Hodeida are the backbone of the revolution."

"Unfortunately, the National Security Bureau has spread malicious rumors about those women and tried to destroy their reputation," he said.

Regarding the president's pictures in Hodeida's streets and shops, Al-Absi said that, "all pictures of president Saleh were removed from Hodeida's streets

and buildings. People themselves removed the president's picture from their houses and shops," he said. "They are ashamed to put the president's picture up in their homes or shops."

In response to a question about opposing parties' control on the revolution, he said, "There is no partisan control over the revolution. The youth told the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) not to control the protests and welcomed them as partners."

Al-Absi isn't depressed about a long and protracted revolution and he said that the lengthy revolution exposes the crimes of the regime and creates better ideas of a new country.

"This revolution has made the socialists sit with the Islamists and brought all parties and politicians together," he said.

Al-Absi remembered the sad moment when a 12-year-old Bas-sam and a 14-year-old Aref were killed by thugs near his office.

"I was watching from the window of my office as a group of thugs began shooting peaceful protesters. They were shoot-

ing children ruthlessly," he said sorrowfully. "I cannot forget Aref who was advised by his friends not to go to demonstrations but he was determined to go and was killed right before my eyes."

"If I had a weapon at that time I would use it to defend those peaceful protesters," he said.

Al-Absi hopes to see the industrial, agricultural and tourism industries further develop in the Hodeida governorate with its international harbor aiding in development.

"I don't want to see men begging from drivers anymore," he said.

Al-Absi is known for his eloquent speeches and effective activism. He realizes that his efforts into protests will cause serious trouble to him and his family.

"I'm threatened repeatedly by anonymous people. They call my wife and try to frighten her to prevent me to be activist in the revolution," he explained. "My wife is my strength. She supports me and bears the pressure and troubles caused by my activities. She doesn't rule out that one day I may be killed."



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أجمل التهاني والتبريكات معطرة بأريج الفل والياسمين نهدبها للأخ

فيصل محمد فارح العززي

بمناسبة المولودة الجديدة

آن

فانوس لؤلؤة مبروكة

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