

# American survey reviews Al-Qaeda popularity in Yemen

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, August 3 — A recent report by an independent American organization called the Foreign Policy Research Institute revealed findings of a survey on stability in Yemen. The survey conducted by Glevum Associates indicated that there is an alarming support for Al-Qaeda among Yemen's populous as well as a profound resistance to US intervention in the country.

The survey which its implementers claim to be the most extensive survey done to date of Yemen's population and is considered a reference guide to influence US policy on Yemen especially since there has been a shift in US policy toward a public role in easing Yemen's President out of office despite his cooperation in fighting Al Qaeda.

More than one thousand Yemenis older than 15 years old from eight governorates were interviewed between January and February 2011 for the purpose of this survey which was locally conducted by Glevum research Partner, Hot Zone Research.

The survey questions focused on four themes:

What are the most urgent issues facing Yemen. This theme had three questions: Are things headed in the right direction or the wrong direction? What is the most urgent issue facing Yemen? What outside group is believed to be best to help Yemenis solve the problem of violence in Yemen?

The second theme was about the popularity of the government and political groups. Here the interviewees were asked four questions: How popular are various political figures and groups in

Yemen? How satisfied are Yemenis with the provision of government services? What are Yemenis opinions regarding President Saleh and the execution of his duties? And how well is the Government of Yemen handling tensions in the country?

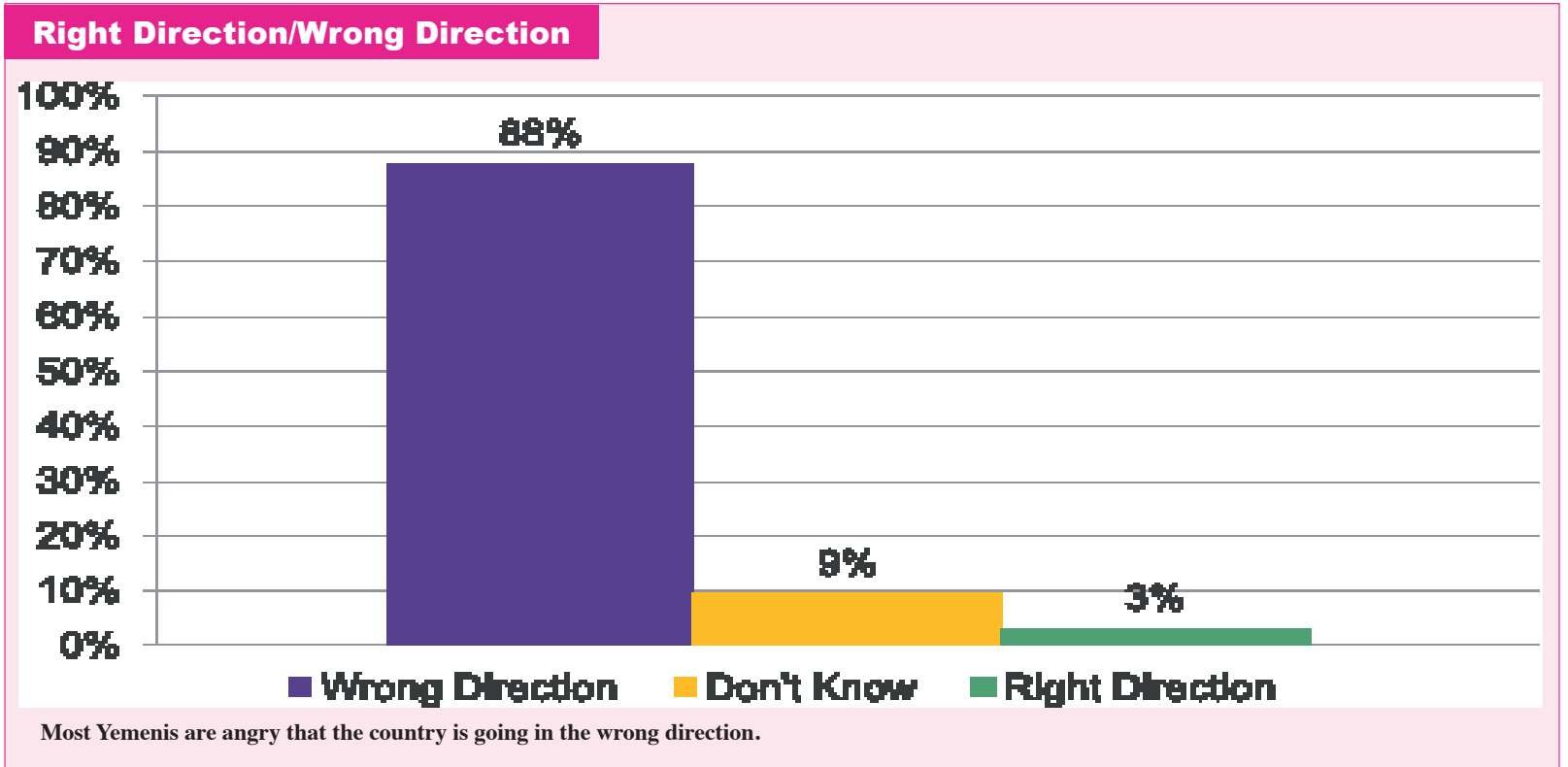
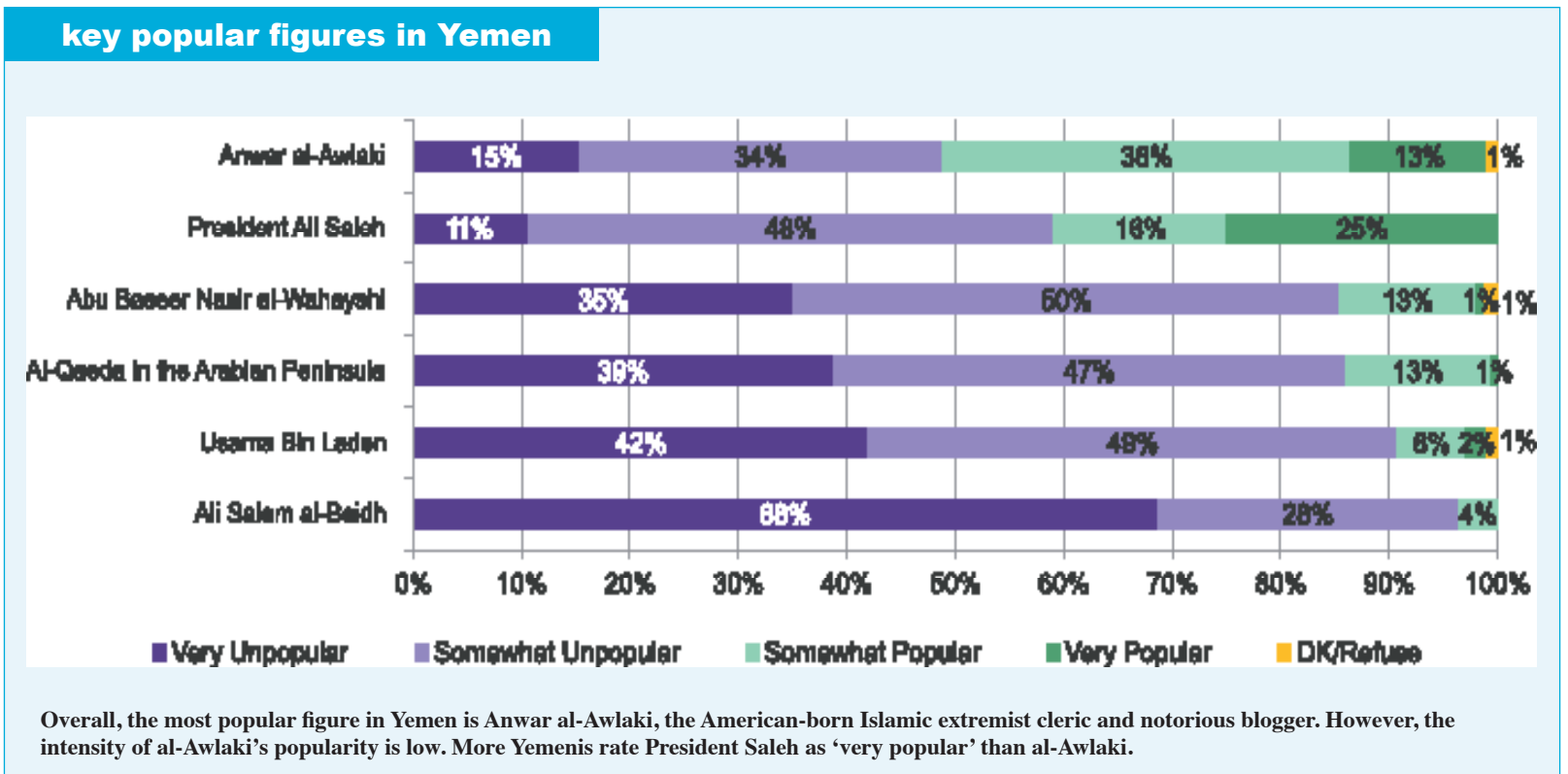
The third theme was on Yemenis perceptions of the United States. Questions were: What perceptions do Yemenis hold about the United States' influence in the world? Do Yemenis support U.S. involvement in the Middle East? Do Yemenis want the U.S. to provide security assistance in Yemen?

And finally the issue of Yemenis opinions on violence and Al-Qaeda. Questions were: Are Yemenis sympathetic to the use of violence? And how do Yemenis feel about Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula?

### Key findings

The survey results showed that Yemenis are angry and this impacts how they feel about their leaders and the government. Only 3 percent of the sample said they felt the country is heading in the right direction compared to 88 percent who said they believed the country was run in the wrong way. Moreover, Yemenis were primarily concerned with their security. They survey found differences between religious sects attitudes on this issue: Zaydi Shia and Imami Shia are most concerned with security while Ismaili Shia and Sunnis are more worried about economic matters.

However, when it came to key political officials in Yemen in general the survey resulted that they are not popular, although President Ali Saleh received mixed ratings, but he still has a siz-



able support base. Southern Movement leader Ali Salem Al-Beidh is even less popular. Approximately one-third were satisfied with the job Saleh is doing but a majority disapprove.

### US intervention in Yemen and the Al-Qaeda threat

Just one percent of Yemenis felt the U.S. should help Yemen address the upsurge in violent protest. They feel the Arab League is best positioned to provide assistance. There is also almost no support for President Ali Saleh's policy of coop-

erating with the United States. According to the survey, Yemenis are critical of the U.S. led war on terrorism; U.S. policy towards the Islamic world; and opinions about the U.S. government are deeply negative (55% very unfavorable/43% somewhat unfavorable).

Even though people hold a negative opinion of the United States, Yemenis are split on the issue of U.S. military assistance to Yemen. Interestingly, 46% support U.S. military assistance while 54% oppose U.S. military intervention.

The same research institute had done

a similar survey in Iraq between January and February 2011 and found out that 41 percent of the Iraqi population thought that their country was heading in the right direction probably because of US intervention there, compared to 56% believing otherwise. Comparing these results with Yemen and also seeing that almost half of the Yemeni surveyed sample were supportive of US military assistance to Yemen could give US decision makers a reason to intervene differently in Yemen.

The overwhelming majority of re-

spondents do not view AQAP as the true defender of Islam.

However, nearly one third (31%) consider AQAP's use of violence an act of self-defense. A notable minority do believe Western violence prompts AQAP to use violence. Additionally, nearly half believe AQAP only attacks legitimate targets.

Interestingly the survey resulted that although Overall, Yemenis have little sympathy for the use of violence, there was a notable level of popular support for the radical cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki and for the actions and agenda of the terrorist group 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.'

Yemenis see Western actions and motives as negative toward Islam and Muslims. Almost all

Yemenis feel that the West is at war with Islam and that Western culture corrupts Muslims.

There is broad agreement with the two major tenets of AQAP policy recommendations: the liberation of Jerusalem and the establishment of an Islamic Emirate.

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# Fuel shortage to cause food crisis in Yemen

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Aug 2 — The four-month nationwide fuel shortage in Yemen has destroyed hundreds of farms, especially in the agricultural region of Yemen's western coastal bar known as Tehama, local farmers told the Yemen Times this week.

Tehama is the food basket to many different areas of the country because tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, carrots, lettuce and other vegetables come to Yemen's markets from this region. Other fruits, including bananas, melon, watermelon and mangos, are also brought to Yemen's markets and exported to some countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey and Britain from here.

The area also is a big source for Yemen's livestock as locals there depend mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry for their cash income.

However, the fuel problem has forced farmers to stop their operations after they found their agricultural crops either dead due to a lack of irrigation or found themselves with no gasoline to transport the product to the market.

"Dozens of farms around my own two farms in Hodeida have been ended completely due to the diesel shortage," Abdo Al-Ahdi, a local farmer in Hodeida told the Yemen Times.

Over 90 percent of farms in Tehama depend on well water, which is pumped up from groundwater by diesel generators. Thus, the diesel shortage has affected not only the crops; many farmers could not even find diesel to run the pump for water to drink.

"The farmer who has four farms now cannot find a glass of water to drink," Hodeida-based agricultural expert Mahbob Hadi told the Yemen Times.

Some farmers have started selling part of their livestock at a low price when they become unable to feed them due to the diesel shortage, according to Sultan Abdullah, a farmer in Hodeida.

The diesel shortage still hampers the work of farmers despite a confirmation by Hisham Sharaf, the minister of industry and trade in the caretaker government, that the government started supplying the fuel to gas stations in main cities.

"The diesel is still unavailable at gas stations in Hodeida and we can only get a 20-liter jar on the black market with YR 4.000 (USD 20)," said Sultan. This

means the one diesel liter is being sold at YR 200 while it must be sold at YR 50 in the regular market.

Around 30 percent of the country's daily fuel requirement of 8,000 tons of diesel goes to the agricultural sector, which is badly affected at the country-wide level.

The price of one kilo of tomatoes went up this week from YR 80 to YR 400 due to low production and transportation difficulties related to the fuel problem.

Engineer Abad Al-Ansi, head of Agricultural Engineers Union, said in a statement to Al-Jazeera.net that the agricultural loss caused by the fuel shortage is estimated at over USD 10 million.

He explained that all the well water that irrigated crops was affected, so crops that were in the growing phase were damaged, crops in the harvesting phase had low production yields, and harvested crops could not be transported locally or otherwise.

He warned that "the fuel shortage greatly affected the current season. There will be no upcoming season and there will be no sufficient crops to cover the domestic need, so Yemen will be forced to import vegetables and fruits from outside while it used to be able to cover the local demand as well as export abroad."

Around 53 percent of Yemen's manpower works in the agricultural sector and the sector contributes to around 15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Farmer Abdo Al-Ahdi in Hodeida said in a telephone call with the Yemen Times that diesel shortage in the country is due to corruption by officials who also have farms in Tehama and other parts of the country. Their farms, he says, have not been affected at all by the present shortage.

"Land around mine in Tehama belongs to an influential official in Sana'a whose farms are being supplied with diesel in special trucks from the state-owned company Yemen's Economic Corporation," he said.

Dr. Mohamed Jubran, professor of economics at the University of Sana'a, told the Yemen Times that the ongoing fuel problem is being carried out deliberately by Saleh's regime to punish the people for their demands to end his 33-year rule.

ple were killed in targeted attacks. The media faced repressive laws and practices; several journalists were prisoners of conscience. Women continued to face discrimination and violence.

Mass protests were held across the country against the worsening economic situation and substantial rises in fuel, electricity, water and food prices.

A presidential amnesty announced on 21 May appeared to apply to all political prisoners, including journalists, but the government did not give details about those it covered or the timeframe for releases. Later that month, 117 people detained on suspicion of taking part in the Sa'dah conflict and the protests in the south were released under the amnesty, as were four journalists. However, hundreds of other political prisoners

# Government accuses defected army of leading battles in Taiz

By: Ali Saeed

TAIZ, Aug 3 — On Tuesday, the Deputy Minister of Information in the caretaker government, Abdo Al-Janadi, accused defected military officers from the first armored division of commanding street battles against Saleh's forces.

The statement by Al-Janadi was made at a press conference. Further he has said that the VP Abd Rabo Hadi has dispatched a military and political envoy to Taiz to implement the ceasefire proposal. The proposal was signed last Monday between the opposition and the government.

"An armed group commanded by an officer of the first armored division have left their camps in Sana'a for Taiz in order to initiate control of security checkpoints. Thus the republican guards have circled the armed group in which some

were shot dead and others have turned themselves to the state," said Al-Janadi.

This accusation came amidst escalating and continuous violence that has been seen in the city since late May after security forces stormed the anti-government protest camp and killed over 50 protesters and burned their tents. This has thus provoked tribal leaders in Taiz to vow to protect the anti-Saleh regime protesters who took to streets last February. It is they who have been vulnerable to several attacks by security forces and armed-paid thugs loyal to the regime.

On Monday, the first day of Ramadan, five soldiers from the republican guard — that is run by Saleh's son — were killed and five others were wounded, the local news website Al-Masdar revealed.

Sources from Al-Masdar have explained that battles took place on Monday between armed tribesmen loyal to the opposition and forces of the republican guards in Al-Sateen street of the city. Two people of the armed tribe were killed and ten others were injured.

A field leader of the opposition of armed men has said that their forces have burned ten armored vehicles and took control of five tanks.

Local sources from Taiz told the Yemen Times two weeks ago that both parties have sent military enforcements to Taiz in preparation for fierce battles.

As the fighting continued between the two sides in more than one area on Tuesday, the power supply was off around the clock and the Internet continued to be disconnected in the city for 24 hours.

The first armored division based in the capital Sana'a and commanded by major general, Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar de-

fecting against Saleh on March 21st after over 52 peaceful protesters were killed on March 18th which sparked mass resignations and defections by civilian and military figures of Saleh's regime.

Taiz, the most populated city in Yemen, with an estimated four million people population has been the centre point in Yemen's popular uprisings that were inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. Most Yemeni intellectuals, educated and informed people who hail from this city have been supportive of the nationwide protests against Saleh's 33-year regime.

Two weeks ago, a security source in Taiz has told the Yemen Times that the opposition coalition known as the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) is responsible of all the violence in Taiz city. He also accused the opposition of attempting to turn Taiz into Yemen's Benghazi.

# Business initiative reduces poverty, unemployment

By: Faisal Dareem

SANA'A, Aug 2 (Al-SHORFA) — Ten years ago, Yemeni entrepreneur Rashad al-Sharabi established a small print shop in Sana'a comprised of only five employees.

However, after taking advantage of a government assistance program for small business industries, he has been reaping great success that has "spurred him to widen the scope of his ambition".

The government programme enabled al-Sharabi to quickly repay his initial 10 million riyals start-up loan within one year of opening his shop. It has allowed him to secure two additional loans to expand his business and launch a major project with a staff of 20 employees.

Small business industries throughout Yemen, like Al-Sharabi's venture, are enjoying widespread success due to the government's 'Support for Small Scale Industries' programme that was introduced over a decade ago to assist the nation's small businesses.

According to officials and economists, the government initiative is

boon for entrepreneurs like al-Sharabi and the national economy in general, in that it combats both unemployment and poverty.

Abdul Ilah Sheyban, the Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, said that small scale industrial ventures "constitute about 90 % of the industrial sector, and are the largest segment in terms of number and geographical distribution across the majority of regions in the republic".

"The small scale industry sector holds promise and has garnered considerable interest from the government," he told Al-Shorfa. "It plays an important role in supporting the economy, providing new job opportunities, and combating poverty," adding that the ministry has conducted a number of studies and projects in collaboration with donors to bolster small business industries.

One such recent study was conducted in collaboration with donors and the main support agency, the Social Fund for Development. Sheyban said the survey's results, which are now in the processing phase, will help the ministry identify and avoid weak aspects of work programmes. The aim is to assist

entrepreneurs launch and hone competitive ventures, as well as increase their customer satisfaction, market staying power, and export potential.

"We currently have 12 funding programmes supporting small scale industries, and 680,000 active clients," according to Osama al-Shami, director of the Social Fund's Small Scale Industries Development Unit.

"Up to 16 billion riyals, from 1998 to the present time" have been loaned out to borrowers and repaid following their success, al-Shami told Al-Shorfa.

Additionally, the Fund provides financing for programmes and lending institutions across all provinces for a variety of industries, including fish and livestock farming, agricultural projects, and small, urban markets.

Dr. Taha al-Faseel, professor of Economics at Sana'a University, said that these small scale industrial ventures require attention, especially since the Yemeni economy depends largely on oil revenue.

The Yemeni economy is in dire need of diversifying its revenue sources, explained Dr. al-Faseel, adding that dependency on oil revenue makes the

national economy chronically vulnerable to crisis and shocks arising from unforeseen events.

He said that the government attention received by such sectors "gives a strong impetus to efforts aimed at combating poverty and unemployment, and to concentrating primarily on expanding the revenue structure of the economy through utilising the country's resources".

PhD candidate Nabila Abdullah Ghaleb, whose field research in late 2010 has helped provide focus for small business assistance programmes, told Al-Shorfa, "Small scale industries have elevated the income of proprietors, as the study showed a statistically significant variance between family income levels before and after obtaining loans, with income rising by 60.6 per cent subsequent to obtaining loans."

The results of Ghaleb's study show that the "ventures attained good market value, unemployment rates among the proprietors' family members were reduced, and proprietors were able to save, giving them the ability to cope with any crisis they may face".

# Amnesty International 2011 Report on Yemen

Extracts from the full report

SANA'A, August 3 — The latest report by Amnesty International on Yemen painted a gloomy picture of the issue of human rights in the country throughout 2010 and into 2011. It reported that human rights were subordinated to security challenges posed by al-Qa'ida as well as by armed conflict in the northern Sa'dah province and protests in the south. Thousands of people were detained. Most were released quickly, but many were held for prolonged periods. Government repression increased in the face of continuing protests in the south against perceived discrimination by the northern-based government; security forces used excessive force against some demonstrations and several peo-

ple were killed in targeted attacks. The media faced repressive laws and practices; several journalists were prisoners of conscience. Women continued to face discrimination and violence. Mass protests were held across the country against the worsening economic situation and substantial rises in fuel, electricity, water and food prices. A presidential amnesty announced on 21 May appeared to apply to all political prisoners, including journalists, but the government did not give details about those it covered or the timeframe for releases. Later that month, 117 people detained on suspicion of taking part in the Sa'dah conflict and the protests in the south were released under the amnesty, as were four journalists. However, hundreds of other political prisoners



## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

remained held at the end of 2010.

Tens of people suspected of links to Al-Qaeda or armed Islamist groups were killed by the security forces, some in circumstances suggesting that no attempt was made to arrest them. No judicial investigations were known to have been held to establish whether the

use of lethal force by the security forces was justified and lawful. Scores of other Al-Qaeda suspects were arrested and subjected to a wide range of abuses, including enforced disappearance, prolonged detention without charge, and torture. Several were under sentence of death or serving long prison terms after unfair trials before the SCC.

In March, following an investigation by a parliamentary committee, the government acknowledged that an air raid on 17 December 2009 that killed 41 men, women and children in Abyan region had been a mistake and that there was no evidence of a military camp at the site, as first alleged. Photographs apparently taken following the attack suggest that the operation used a US-manufactured cruise missile that carried cluster bombs. Such missiles are only known to be held by US forces, and Yemeni armed forces are unlikely to have the military capability to use

such a missile. A diplomatic cable leaked by the organization Wikileaks in November corroborated the images that had been released by Amnesty International earlier in the year.

Mass and generally peaceful protests organized by the Southern Movement continued, and there were growing calls for secession of the south. The authorities used excessive and sometimes lethal force against protesters. They accused elements in the Southern Movement of links with Al-Qaeda and in some cases targeted individuals or communities for attack. The government temporarily blockaded some areas by establishing checkpoints and shutting down mobile phone networks, leading to food shortages, and imposed travel bans on some members of the Southern Movement.

Hundreds of people were detained in waves of arrests. Most were released soon after, but some were held incom-

municado or for long periods, and some were sentenced to imprisonment after unfair trials before the SCC.

Restrictive press laws and repressive actions by the security forces continued to undermine freedom of the press. People linked to the media were harassed, prosecuted and imprisoned. Some faced unfair trials before the Specialized Press and Publications Court in Sana'a.

Women and girls continued to face severe discrimination in law and practice, and particularly in rural areas were still subject to forced and early marriage. A draft law to raise the minimum age for marriage for girls to 17, approved by the parliament in 2009, had not been enacted by the end of 2010. Large rallies were held in support of and against the proposed reform. The government pledged to implement plans aimed at increasing the participation of women in political, social and economic life.

# Yemenis live Ramadan amidst continuous darkness

By: Mohamed Bin Sallam

SANA'A, Aug 3 — The month of Ramadan, one of five pillars of Islamic faith, during which all able bodied Muslims are obliged to fast — abstain from eating or drinking from dawn to sunset — for 29 or 30 days has been received differently by all Yemenis.

Ramadan began on August 3rd under a nationwide blackout. Many were frustrated but it was the poor who were especially hard-hit, as they do not have electric generators at home.

From the first day of the holy month until today, Yemenis have been living in darkness and there is no insight on when the service will come back. This is especially unfortunate as in this

month life is more active in the night than in other months.

"The first two-day power outage during Ramadan has frustrated and annoyed people," said Rana Mohamed, a university student. "We had our breakfast against light provided by kerosene lanterns and candles. Further food kept in the refrigerator was spoilt," she said.

On Monday, the government stated that the Mareb gas power station, which provides 40 per cent of national power, was attacked on Sunday evening by extensive ammunitions in the Nihm area. It was this attack that led to the power outage. The area is situated 25 km north of Sana'a.

On the other hand, the Nihm tribes-

men have denied the government allegation via the state-media. They assert that the state-media has fabricated the story. Further they emphasized that they have had nothing to do with outage that has affected the capital Sana'a and other governorates.

"The electricity towers and power supplying lines were not sabotaged by our actions and the objective of the power cut is to deepen the crisis and enact mass punishment against citizens. This is just an attempt by regime to incite people against the tribesmen of Mareb and Nihm," read the tribal statement.

They also held the ministry of information accountable for the distorting campaign waged by the state media

against the tribes of Mareb demanding the ministry apologize for publishing untrue news.

Some people have said that the power cuts resumed immediately after the UN envoy to Yemen; Jamal Bin Omer left Sana'a after his ten-day trip. They added that the outage was expected following Bin Omer's departure and this action is obvious to all citizens. They indicated that the power was on while the UN envoy was staying here and when he left, the regime cooked up the power tower attack story.

The situation has been exacerbated by continuous rainfall in Sana'a, which has turned streets into mud and stagnant water pools and the increasing price hikes.



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# What to do about Yemen?

Monday saw protests calling for change in Yemen. This is a well researched analysis of another pressure area where the USA is off base, but better late than never, Obama.

By: Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi  
Arutz Sheva

Whilst there has been much analysis on the recent uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, comparatively little attention has been devoted to the situation in Yemen, where there have been ongoing protests, particularly in the south, against the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has announced that he will not seek another term in office. This raises two important questions. What is the present state of Western governments' policies towards Yemen? How, if at all, should they be changed? These problems are urgent to resolve in light of the active Al-Qaeda insurgency ('Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula' - AQAP) in the south of the country, which is likely to have been responsible for the failed Christmas Day

bombing attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab.

Currently, the main financial backer of Saleh's government is the US, which has dramatically increased military aid to Yemen since the failed Christmas plot. This aid has effectively been doubled and could well reach \$250 million in 2011, excluding the substantial amounts of development aid that will probably increase too. The US also occasionally carries out drone attacks in counter-terrorism operations. Despite such measures, however, the country has become progressively more unstable, as Al-Qaeda now has a well-established foothold in the south, which is itself mostly in the hands of separatist movements that Saleh failed to integrate into the political system after the Yemeni civil war in the 1990s.

One useful way to look into the failures of Western policies in Yemen is through examining the Wikileaks cables, which show that US diplomats were actually well aware of Saleh's double game of diverting aid to suppress internal opponents. For example, U.S. ambassador Stephen Seche noted in one cable that Saleh was using a

commando group (funded and trained by Britain and the US since 2002 to fight Al-Qaeda) and perhaps American Humvees against Houthis.

The Houthis are a Shi'a movement in the north of the country that began a revolt in 2004, primarily in opposition to what they regard as discrimination by Saleh's government against the north in terms of jobs, development and lack of political autonomy. Although Qatar was able to mediate a ceasefire between the Houthis and Saleh's government back in August, a lasting peace agreement failed to materialise. Seche himself merely protests vainly against what he rightly sees as the Yemeni government's misuse of US military aid.

Incidentally, the cables dispel the myth that US officials regard Al-Qaeda as being in any sort of alliance with the Houthis. For example, in a meeting in September 2009 with White House counter-terrorism advisor John Brennan, Saleh specifically pressured the US to provide armoured vehicles, airplanes and ambulances for his campaign against the Houthis. Brennan rejected Saleh's pleas, affirming that 'the US [U.S. government] is prohibited by law

from providing military support to the [Yemeni government] to be used against the Houthis since the USG considers the group a domestic insurgency'.

Meanwhile, Saleh has been remarkably tolerant of Al-Qaeda figures in Yemen. At lunch with a US envoy in 2007, he openly bragged about having met with Jamal Badawi for a chat only two weeks earlier. Badawi was the chief Al-Qaeda member responsible for orchestrating the bombing of the USS Cole in 2000 that killed seventeen people. Though Badawi's whereabouts are unknown today, it is clear that Saleh has been pursuing a strategy of attempting to co-opt Al-Qaeda leaders in Yemen rather than crack down on them. When one also takes into account the diversion of Western support to crush internal opposition, is it any wonder that Al-Qaeda is so well entrenched in the country, in contrast to an estimate of only 50-100 Al-Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan?

So what is the best course of action for Western governments vis-à-vis Yemen? Given the corruption and unpopularity of Saleh's regime, together with its unreliability as an ally in counter-terrorism operations against AQAP, it

seems that the most sensible option is to simply end aid to his government and allow it to fall at the hands of the current wave of protests in Yemen.

One might object that such a move would instead help AQAP by creating a power vacuum. This would certainly be a risk, but not if the West backs the Houthis, who are themselves opposed to Al-Qaeda, with the latter now having declared jihad against the Houthis in an audio message posted on the Internet. As Saeed Ali al-Shihri, the deputy leader of AQAP, puts it: 'to our Sunni fellows in northern Yemeni provinces of Saada, Al-Jouf and Amran, we (AQAP) announced jihad (holy war) against Iranian-backed Houthi Shiite advocates'.

In this context, it should be pointed out that there is no evidence that Iran is backing the Houthi rebels. Even so, with Western support and guarantees for protection, the Houthis could well serve as a containment force, diverting AQAP's attention from waging international jihad and spreading beyond Yemen into the Arabian Peninsula, since the group's primary goal is to unite Yemen as an Islamist state.

On the other hand, the US should end

drone attacks in Yemen (where overt military intervention, as in Somalia and Pakistan, undermines our own security interests), whilst Western governments should make it clear to AQAP that any further aggression will be met with severe retaliation. Furthermore, if our governments are to win over the Houthis, who are at present resentful of Western support for Saleh, they should also put pressure on Saudi Arabia to stop conducting airstrikes against Houthis in Yemeni territory, a fact of which US officials have long been aware.

By adopting a strategy of containment as outlined, it does not follow that AQAP will be eradicated from Yemen, but the West will at least be able to safeguard security interests against any threats emanating from Islamist militants in that country. For too long, review of policy towards Yemen has been neglected. A major shift is desperately needed.

Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi is a student at Brasenose College, Oxford University, and an intern at Daniel Pipes' Philadelphia-based think-tank, the Middle East Forum.

# Arab awakening and western media: Time for a new revolutionary discourse

When President Ali Abdullah Saleh tried desperately to quell Yemen's popular uprising, he appealed to tribalism, customs and traditions. All his efforts evidently failed, and the revolution continued unabated.

By: Ramzy Baroud  
Teheran Times

When Saleh denounced women for joining men in demonstrations in Sana'a — playing on cultural sensitivities and a very selective interpretation of religion — the response was even more poignant.

Thousands of women took to the streets, denouncing Saleh's regime and calling for its ouster.

The immediate popular response was notable for its level of organization and decisiveness. It was also interesting because most of the women protesting did so while wearing the Niqab. Fully covered Yemeni women have continued to inspire — if not fuel — the revolution which started in February. Without their active participation and resilience in the face of violent attempts to quash the uprising, one wonders if Yemen could have held on for so long.

The role of Yemeni women in the revolution should significantly challenge any ideas of Arab women that are based simply on statistical or superficial criteria. In 2010, the Freedom House report on women in the Middle East had already determined that Yemen made no significant progress on women's rights in the preceding five years. Most international reports examining the standing of women in Yemen — whether in education, health or any other field — have consistently been bleak. Yet, in

revolutionary.

Yemen, the discounted women were more than equal to their male peers when it came to articulating their demands for freedom, democracy and equality.

Yemeni women have not simply broken the stereotype regarding what truly 'radical' women in a traditional society should be. They have also challenged all sorts of academic takes on the subject. No famous feminist or NGO has been responsible for mobilizing the women's activism. Yemeni women are also not specifically asking for equality in a supposedly men-dominated society. They seem to understand that a truly free and democratic society will naturally deliver on its promises of equal treatment, opportunities and expectations for all.

Western media and think-tanks have long presented a mistaken and divisive understanding of Arab — and other — societies. There is a discrepancy between the actual situation and indicators-driven understanding. Entire Arab societies are deconstructed and reduced into simple data, which is filtered, classified and juggled to fit into precise criteria and clear-cut conclusions. Public opinions and entire policies are then formed or formulated based on these conclusions.

The problem does not lie in academic practices per se, but rather the objective-specific understanding that many in the west have towards the Middle East. Most Washington-based think-tanks — regardless of their political leanings — tend to study distant societies only for the sake of producing definite answers and recommendations. However, providing an all-encompassing depiction of a society like Yemen's — whose internal dynamics and complexity necessarily differs from any other's in the

region — would be most unhelpful for those eager to design policies and short-term strategies on the go.

Arab revolutions continue to tear down archaic beliefs and misguided understandings, challenging the wild theories around Arab peoples and their supposed wrangling between secularism and Islamism. Despite all of this, the self-seeking objectifying of Arabs continues in western media.

Under the all-inclusive title, "The Arab World: The Awakening", an article in Economist Magazine (Feb 17) attempted to describe the upheaval currently underway throughout the Arab world. Interspersed with such predictable terms as 'extremists', 'Islamists', 'strongmen' and so on, the inane analysis made way for equally silly conclusions. The article, for example, suggested that the West's decision to accommodate dictatorial regimes in the Middle East was motivated by a mix of despair and altruism: "The West has surrendered to this (Arab) despair too, assuming that only the strongmen could hold back the extremists."

While words such as 'extremists', 'fundamentalists' and 'terrorists' may have their own special ring to western audiences, they could well mean something entirely different — if anything at all — to Arabs.

Listening to the Arab media's coverage of ongoing revolutions, one may not even encounter any of the above terminologies. At times, they can be entirely irrelevant in terms of understanding the momentous happenings underway throughout the region.

The Libyan rebellion is another example to note here. Revolution and war in Libya have ignited a heated debate among Arab intellectuals, pertaining to the use of violence and foreign intervention — although barely in

support of the Libyan regime. However, for the New York Times, the coverage of the story is often slated and removed from current reality in Libya. The article "Exiled Islamists Watch Rebellion Unfold at Home," (NYT, July 18) attempted to answer a nagging question concerning the relationship between Islamists and the Libyan rebels. This question is relevant only to western governments.

Although the group examined — the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group — has long been dismantled, its alleged former ties with Al-Qaeda continue to concern many in the west. While for Libyans, "the men are seen not as an alien, pernicious force but as patriots," the article claims that many in the West "are trying to assess their influence and any lingering links to Al-Qaeda."

Arab revolutions are attempting to examine larger issues that have tremendous impact on all aspects of life. They are actively confronting the suffering caused at the hands of local dictators supported by Western and other foreign governments. Western media and intellectuals, however, continue to seek only easy answers to intricate, multifaceted questions. In doing so, they follow the path of the same superficial, stereotypical and predictable discourse. While Arab societies discuss democracy, freedom and social justice, Western writers continue to follow the imagined paths of Al-Qaeda, Islamists, moderates and extremists. In all of this, they are embarking on yet another futile hunt, a hunt that which will yield no concrete answers, and more misguided policies.

Ramzy Baroud ([www.ramzybaroud.net](http://www.ramzybaroud.net)) is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of *PalastineChronicle.com*.



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# Change and freedom squares in Yemen (part 1)

The Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions have inspired Yemenis to take to the streets and create their own squares of popular uprising, demanding an end to Saleh's 33-year rule and the establishment of rule of law.

The number of protesters increased day after day and the squares also expanded and increased to turn the whole country into one unified square with one objective: that "Saleh's regime must leave and a good regime with real democracy must come."

The Yemen Times presents here a detailed profile of each square, including how the square was created, who is in the square, and female participation.

By: Amira Al-Arasi

## Sana'a University Change Square

A group of students marched from the University of Sana'a to the Tunisian Embassy in solidarity with the people of Tunisia for their revolution against Ben Ali's 33-year rule. It was not the first time that demonstrators marched from the university campus. Many demonstrations have been going out of the university due to any action taken by the university administrating against any student, so students revolt against that and condemn any oppression against

them.

On February 11th, around 500 protesters in front of Sana'a University decided to spark the Yemen's revolution and set up a camp outside the university gates. The area was called "the change square," and eventually tents were set up and people moved into them.

Then on February 21st, media, security and organizing teams were established. The function of the security teams was to provide a number of youth and two women to stand at each entrance leading to the change square. At the beginning of the protest move-

ment the space between Al-Adl [justice] Street and the square was only around 10 meters, today it is 250 meters. Also, the space between the square and Al-Hasaba Street was 20-25 meters, today it is around 300 meters. The distance between Al-Dayri Street and the square stage was 15 meters, now it is one Kilometer.

The same thing applies to other streets that lead to the square stage, including the freedom square which is now 50 meters far from the stage, Mathbh Street which was at the beginning of the protest 150 meters distant from the stage, now 250 and Al-Rabat Street which is now 150 meters distant from the stage.

The massing of people increased due to attacks against protesters. The first attack on the change square of Sana'a was on Feb 22nd. It motivated many youth to leave home to join the protesters, and their numbers increased from 500 demonstrators to around 50,000-80,000. The number also rose sharply after the 'Day of Dignity' on March 18th, when around 57 protesters were killed. The number of tents also increased, and at the time of writing it reached 3,000 tents.

Security forces and Saleh's armed thugs repeatedly targeted the area with the aim of terminating the protest square, which now extends some kilometers and divides the capital into two camps. The eastern area of Sana'a is under the control of Saleh's loyal forces and the western area is under the defected army members who supported the peaceful revolution against Saleh's rule.

## Freedom Gulf Square in Ibb

This square is located 200 kilometers south of the capital Sana'a. Its name was derived from the name of a protest place known as Cert Gulf. Ahmed Damaj, one of the youth protesters at this square, said that "The protest started in Ibb after Taiz and Sana'a. The square used to have only three tents and now there are between 200-300 tents. The number of protesters was 30,000 people, and it is not more than 15,000".

According to Damaj, the reduction of



Change square, Sana'a

protesters in "Ibb Freedom Gulf Square" is due to the deteriorating security and economic conditions which have affected the existence of youth protesters in Ibb.

"We have started protesting according shift-system, some people stay in the square while others travel to their villages and come back to the square to enable those who did not travel to do so. Still, on Fridays the crowd of protesters is in the millions," Damaj said.

"As far as women participating in the change square, they do not attend the square except in demonstrations in which they march and then return to the square to read a statement in front of the people. Then they go back home. Their number is between 5,000-6,000 women," he said.

There are no female tents in the square and they are not available during the daily-revolutionary program, according to Damaj.

"A lot of problems occur inside the square, which the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) and especially the Islah Party are

behind. Many independent youth fear that Islah will be the ruling party in Yemen and feel that it has stolen the youth revolution," he said "All the problems are being contained, but the state media plays a very bad role vis-a-vis protesters and their existence in the squares."

## Freedom Square in Taiz

This square was one of the first squares in the country in which dozens of youth set up their tents on Feb 18th. Mohamed Al-Qatab, one of the youth protesters in Taiz Freedom Square, said, "We were sleeping on street pavements at the beginning of the revolution and later in small tents, and our number at the time was no more than 200 protesters."

"The youth started coming to the square and big tents began to be set up. The number eventually reached 50 tents. The square centered on four main points, the northern point where the field hospital is, the eastern point where the private-Safwa Hospital is located, the western point of Migrants Street and the southern point, which leads to one of the

public schools," he said.

According to Al-Qatab, on the first Friday of the revolution in Taiz (which was called "the day of beginning") the number of protesters reached around 30,000 people.

"There are no female tents, but we allocated part of the square for women. This area consists of an unpainted building surrounded by some security-check teams. Their participation is confined only to demonstrations and some other activities they perform from the inside the square. Their number at the beginning of the revolution was around 300 women and we are seeing them now in demonstrations of more than 2,000 women," said Al-Qatab.

The protesters re-took the square after security forces stormed it on May 29 and burned their tents. "We did not feel pessimistic and we built the tents again. There are now more than 30 tents and the number of protesters is on the rise, despite the daily attacks on the square... this will only enforce our determination and steadiness," Al-Qatab said.



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# Ramadan in Change Square

Photo Essay by Luke Somers

**W**ith much of Sana'a ankle-deep in rainwater, opposition protesters living in the "tent city" surrounding Change Square entered the holy month of Ramadan at dawn on Monday. While the rain kept many inside their tents, a good many prayed and broke their fasts on Change Square's wet concrete.



Breaking fast: Rows of protesters at Change Square, some anxious and other patient, awaited the arrival of food with which to break their fasts on the first day of Ramadan.



Reading from quran: Pro-democracy protesters read from the Quran in tents not far from Change Square and just before the evening prayer.



Selling tea: A tea vendor at Change Square on the first day of Ramadan.



Pro-democracy protesters perform the evening prayer at Change Square on the first day of Ramadan.



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Rabat and al-deiry: Pro-democracy protesters in their tent at the intersection of Rabat and al-Deiry Streets on the evening of the first night of Ramadan.



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## Bad eating habits during Ramadan increase disease among Yemenis

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

Many Yemenis pant for more food in Ramadan, regardless of the quality of that food, according to Dr. Ahmed Al-Safani, an internal medicine consultant at Al-Askari Hospital in Sana'a.

Restaurants and supermarkets become crammed with customers as Ramadan arrives. Subsequently, restaurants workers neglect personal hygiene and supermarkets display lots of canned food on sidewalks under the sun.

Although fasting [a period of refraining from eating for religious reasons] improves the health and corrects bodily imbalances and digestive disorders, during Ramadan many Yemenis suffer from other disease due to their bad eating habits. Hospitals and clinics receive more patients at the beginning of Ra-

madan every year, according to several Yemeni doctors.

As a result of eating contaminated food, many Yemenis complain about abdominal pain, acute diarrhea and other ailments, according to Al-Safani.

Al-Safani listed several diseases that are common in Ramadan, including dysentery, typhoid, viral hepatitis A and amoebic dysentery. He warned Yemenis about food poisoning caused by the misuse of pesticides as well as canned food that has spoiled before its expiry date because of poor storage.

Al-Safani explained the reasons behind patient increases during Ramadan, saying: "Lack of health awareness among the majority of Yemenis and lack of attention to personal hygiene leads to the spread of several diseases among Yemenis."

He indicated that dysentery is common during Ramadan, and transmitted through ingestion of Shigella bacteria

[a bacterium that causes food poisoning and diarrheal illness which is present in different kinds of salads and some uncooked vegetables].

He said that eating foods with other people who have dirty hands may also cause this serious disease, indicating that the common symptoms of dysentery are fever and acute diarrhea accompanied by blood.

He added that the disease also has complications such as acute renal failure, blood clots or death in some cases.

Typhoid is another serious and common disease that spreads during Ramadan because of dirty food or drink. It is transmitted by salmonella bacteria present in meats, eggs and chickens. The symptoms of the disease, according to Al-Safani, are nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, colic, fever, headache and the emergence of a notable rash.

Tough observation should be made Al-Safani criticized the spread of

canned food on sidewalks during Ramadan, saying it should be stored and kept in a cooler and cleaner place. He indicated that some food and drinks on sidewalks like milk, cheese and sweets often spoil because of exposure to the sun.

He said that many people don't care about the quality of food, voicing concern at how restaurants neglect personal hygiene during Ramadan.

Al-Safani urged the concerned bodies to keep these restaurants under observation, stressing the importance of checking workers' health and making sure that they have no contagious diseases.

He also called for regulators to impose effective and tough compliance observations on the food shops and restaurants to keep people away from infectious diseases during Ramadan.

Al-Safani said: "These restaurants should meet the specifications and conditions of safety and health; otherwise they should face tough sanctions."



YT photo by Sadeq Al-Wesabi

## Yemen 2011 inflation may soar to 30 pct on unrest -IMF

By: Martin Dokoupil and Martina Fuchs Reuters

Inflation in Yemen may surge to as much as 30 percent this year as ongoing unrest cripples the Arab country's economy and damage to an oil pipeline strains already weak government finances, an International Monetary Fund official said on Wednesday.

More than five months of protests against President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33-year rule have brought Yemen's economy to the brink of collapse, with its people facing fuel, food, water and electricity shortages.

"The situation is serious. Economic activity has ground to a halt," Hassan al-Atrash, the IMF's head of mission to Yemen, told Reuters in a telephone

interview.

"We are very much concerned about inflation ... We think that inflation could reach up to 30 percent in 2011," he said after meeting Yemeni government officials in Jordan last week.

In its April review, the IMF projected inflation in Yemen, some 40 percent of whose 23 million people live on less than \$2 a day, would accelerate to 13 percent this year from 12.1 percent in 2010.

It has also revised its view on real gross domestic product growth, which in April it forecast would slow to 3.4 percent in 2011 from 8.0 percent last year.

"The political crisis has taken its toll on the economy. We now think that economic growth will be negative this year," Atrash said.

Saleh, who has clung on to power de-

spite protests and international pressure, left the country in political limbo when he flew to Saudi Arabia last month to seek treatment after suffering serious injuries in a bomb attack.

Violence has gripped Yemen's south, while clashes have broken out in the north over the past week, bringing the turmoil closer to oil giant Saudi Arabia.

Yemen, where a third of the population faces chronic hunger, is the Arab world's poorest country with per capita income of below \$2,600. Poverty, corruption and soaring unemployment have helped fuel the protests, which began in January.

Atrash also said the Yemeni fiscal deficit may soar to around 10 percent of GDP this year, well above April's projection of 6.4 percent and 4.0 percent last year. Analysts have said it could

swell as high as 17 percent, a level unseen since a 1994 civil war with southern separatists.

"The damaged pipeline has serious implications for the fiscal account and also for foreign exchange reserves," he said, but declined to say how high the central bank's foreign currency reserves are. "They expect it to be repaired relatively soon."

Armed tribesmen attacked the pipeline in March, cutting the flow of crude to Yemen's Aden refinery, but have agreed to let the government fix it, the tribe's leader said this week.

### Ready to help

Atrash also said the central bank has so far avoided printing too much money, which is "critical" to keeping inflation under control, sustaining the value of the rial and preserving foreign currency

reserves.

The rial has lost around 14 percent of its value during the protests, nearing an historic low of 250 to the dollar seen last August. It has traded at around 243 to the dollar for the past two months.

The central bank's net foreign currency reserves, which the government uses to reduce its budget gap, dropped to around \$5.1 billion in March from \$5.7 billion at the end of 2010 but analysts have disputed the figure, which they say is inflated.

The IMF is ready to provide new financial aid to Yemen when the political deadlock is over, Atrash said, adding it was premature to speculate on the size of any package.

"The IMF stands ready to assist Yemen, including by providing new loans once the political crisis is resolved and the parties are able to implement a pro-

gramme of reforms that is consistent with inclusive growth, low inflation, and lower poverty," he said.

The fund approved a \$370 million loan for the Arabian Peninsula country last August, but only one disbursement of around \$50 million has been made, he said. The IMF and Yemeni officials did not discuss aid at their last meeting.

The country, whose government relies on oil for 60 percent of its income, will need at least \$2 billion from donors in the next six to 12 months to keep basic public services running, analysts have said.

Its foreign minister urged foreign donors in March to inject up to \$6 billion into state coffers over the next five years. A government official said in June that Yemen needs \$1.5 billion in foreign aid to meet the government's development commitments.



### NOTICE FROM BRITISH EMBASSY SANA'A

The British Embassy in Sana'a is trying to get in contact with individuals who have submitted applications for a British passport.

If you have applied to the Embassy in Sana'a for a British passport in the last 18 months and have not yet received your passport please contact us **urgently** by email at [feedback.passportservices@fco.gov.uk](mailto:feedback.passportservices@fco.gov.uk) by **14 August 2011**.

We are requesting you contact us because we may require additional information in order to progress your application. We will let you know what additional information we need and where to send it. If your application is more than one year old, you may be asked to complete another Passport Application Form and provide new photographs.

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## Arwa Othman

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

**A**rwa Othman is a philosophy graduate, a middle aged woman, and a mother of three daughters who are all revolutionaries.

Arwa is considered an inspiring figure in the country's 'Change Squares', and many describe her as kind, brave, strong, and one of a kind.

She has a different appearance from other women in Yemen, as she doesn't wear the traditional Abaya. She usually wears jeans and shirts instead, sometimes covering half of her hair. Arwa has always fought to establish new social concepts such as acceptance: in a conservative society such as in Sana'a, she has struggled to be accepted despite her different appearance. Now, in the protest squares everybody is included and accepted. It has been a turning point for society that Arwa can walk around among the tribesmen who know she is not a foreigner, that she is a Yemeni woman wearing jeans, and they accept her.

At the beginning of the demonstrations all of the protesters were happy about the new culture of acceptance, but as time passed and more people joined the protests, levels of acceptance diminished. Arwa herself faced lots of trouble inside the square from some members of the Islah Party. She once led a march condemning what President Ali Abdullah Saleh said about women protesters (he indicated that women protesting in Al-Tagheer Square weren't Islamically allowed to do so). In that march, Arwa and other female activists were beaten by the Islamists for marching with men.

She went out in public and announced that she would condemn all the wrongdoings both



inside and outside the square and outside the square and that she would struggle against the Islamists if they tried to control the revolution, and she did.

Along with her protest activities, Arwa has been creating a potage documentary of the Yemeni revolution since February, a film for which she was recently a winner of XXX. She treats her camera as a part of her, but the Islamists broke her camera to make sure they broke her weapon.

At one point, some of the protesters were more into becoming armed and fighting the state. However, Arwa remained peaceful and raised awareness of the peaceful revolution; she

was more focused on establishing the concept of a civil state rather than simply repeating the same chants of withdrawing the regime.

The revolution that Arwa helped establish was more about morals rather than politics. When the Hashid tribal confederation (to which the president belongs) joined the revolution, they started to spread the word that Saleh's real surname was Afash - in Arabic is a term to describe a bad person who also comes from lower social class. People started to use this fact against Saleh, writing the name on walls and on the streets. Arwa stood against it, saying, "We revolute to build a new society that accepts everyone. We didn't revolute against Saleh because his real name is Afash or because he is from a lower class, we revolute only against the injustice he brought to the country." Some people didn't like the fact that she made people find sympathy and morals.

Last week when the tribes of Arhab claimed to overcome Al-Samea' Mountain while fighting the state, some people congratulated each other, feeling it was a factory. Of this, Arwa said, "What are people congratulating each other for? Killing is killing, those who were killed are still our brothers, fathers, and neighbors, and most importantly they are Yemenis." According to Arwa military interference is never a solution; it will only start a bloodbath that will never end.

Her messages is not limited to the protesters; she always tries to build a better understanding in society because she cares. She

talks in a mother language to everybody. And although she is full of life, putting flowers in her hair, at the same she is brave to stand up and say that the opposition media is not different than the state-run press. They all serve the owners' interests and are not spreading any goodness.

When some of the Change Square residents came on the state TV and warned that they would use their weapons against the protesters if they didn't move, Arwa wrote to them that "no one forgets your brave stances with the protesters: many of your houses were always open to them whenever they needed it; you helped them when the security forces attacked them; you threw flowers during their marches. We know you bear a lot of troubles, but there will always be solutions besides killing...that's one thing that cannot be fixed."

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