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Guns spread in Aden amidst insecurity

By: Ali Saeed

ADEN, Aug 14 — The Yemen Times has learned from local citizens in Aden that guns were recently distributed among civilians on a large scale, amidst insecurity in the city.

Aden is well known for being the most civilized area of Yemen, with limited gun ownership among the population. Reports from the Ministry of the Interior indicated that no single case of firing was reported in Aden. By contrast, the report named the capital, Sana'a, the city in Yemen with the highest incidence of reported gun violence cases, with 27 killed by gunfire.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who now faces popular uprisings, mandated in 2006 that Aden should be free of guns. In subsequent years the Ministry of the Interior applauded the city as a model for security, stability and rejection of violence. Reported killings in

Aden were limited to persons being shot dead or injured in demonstrations for the separation of south Yemen from the central state in Sana'a.

But, with the nationwide protests challenging Saleh's 33-year rule, Aden saw the killing of the first martyr of Yemen's 2011 peaceful revolution. Afterward, people in Aden began to notice people wandering in the city with guns, Marwan Al-Shuaibi, a local citizen in Al-Muala district of Aden told the Yemen Times on Wednesday.

"These guns were distributed to some citizens by Abd Al-Kareem Shayf, [the acting governor of Aden who fled Aden to Jordan on a civilian passport at the beginning of July] during the anti-government protests," Al-shuaibi said.

He explained that the guns were given to citizens through members of the ruling party in Aden who were on close connection with Shayf.

At the beginning of this month,

another local citizen told the Yemen Times that he heard gunfire near his home while having dinner with his family.

"When I went outside to see what it was, I saw some of the youth in my neighborhood armed with guns. They were attacking the premises of the local council in our area," he said.

"This new development in Aden has been scaring the citizens because it did not exist before," said Al-Shuaibi.

A Yemeni journalist who made a two-week visit to Aden described the situation to the Yemen Times, saying, "Shayf has armed some Adeni youth to bring about insecurity and to scare people in case the regime falls or he is expelled from Aden."

"Now, he uses them to implement his agendas," the journalist said.

The military and security checkpoints in Aden do not attempt to disarm any of these gunmen, according to Al-



Violence has been happening in Aden on and off since the beginning of the uprising in Yemen. Many times anti-government protesters blocked roads and were attacked by state security who open fire on the protestors.

Shuaibi. "They move in the city freely and no one even speaks to them about the guns," he said.

"If one of the armed youth has a quarrel with his neighbor, he brings his gun

and calls his friends to gather and scare him," he said. "If I called the police station, they would not do anything."

"Now everyone is responsible for his own security and that of his family. The

police are totally absent," he said.

"Until now no one has been killed by these armed youth, but we do not know what is going to happen," he concluded.

Three terms in the new academic year at public universities

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Aug 14 — "I was going to graduate last July and my family has prepared a party for my graduation at home, but I lost the graduation plea-

sure, the party... I lost a year of my age," said Mona Hadi, 22, a fourth-year social service student at the University of Sana'a.

Hadi is only one of thousands of students at public universities who were

supposed to graduate last July. The six-month nationwide protests demanding an end to President Ali Abdullah Saleh's 33-year regime have deterred them from that. Most administrations of public universities decided to suspend studies until the political situation is normalized.

The Ministry of Higher Education selected September 17 as the beginning of the compensation term. It will end on December 12 of this year. This means that the new school year at public universities will include three terms.

The first trimester will allow students to complete the second semester of the previous academic year (2010-2011) at universities where their study was completely or partially suspended or where they were unable to take ex-

ams.

The second term, which will comprise the first term of the new academic year 2011-2012, will start on December 31 of 2011 and end on April 5 of 2012. The third term will start April 14 and end on July 12, 2012. This will be the second semester of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Many students hope their university administrations will implement this plan to avoid losing another year of study, as well as to separate between politics and education.

"I demand that the administration of Sana'a University carry out the scheduled proposal so I am able to get my certificate," said Thuraya Al-Bana', a fourth-year student at the University of Sana'a.

Al-Bana', who spoke vehemently

with the Yemen Times, considered the administration of the university accountable for allowing protesting professors and students to press for the suspension of study.

"I hold the university rector accountability for delaying us one extra year. He is supposed to be strict and separate politics from education," she said.

On the other hand, Hadi, another student who spoke with the Yemen Times, said it is the anti-government protesters who are responsible for delaying the students at public universities an extra year.

"The government was going to respond to their demands, but they kept increasing the demands until the classes were suspended. So it is the protesters who are responsible for delaying us one more year," Hadi said.

Khaleel Thabet, 21, a second year student in the faculty of economics at Hodeida University and a protest activist in Hodeida's Change Square said, "We have sacrificed one year of our university study for the sake of the revolution and change. It was not good to continue our education amidst others being killed on a daily basis."

He considered the idea of a compensation term during the coming year to be a positive step, but he wondered whether it would be achieved while the current regime is still clinging to power.

There are around eight public universities nationwide which contain more than 150,000 students in different academic majors. Around 30,000 students graduate every year from public universities.

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Yemeni Youth Volunteers Celebrating Youth International Day

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A Aug 14 — United Nations Volunteers organized an event celebrating the International Day of Youth with young people who have formed different initiatives to bring about change in Yemeni society.

The youth this year showed increasing importance after the Arab Spring revolutions and pro-change demonstrations began in February.

"In the Arab world we used to look at the youth within limits, mostly engaged with sports and nothing more. There was little mention of their real ability for change, said Waleed Baharon on behalf of the United Nations representative. "The youth in the Arab World were looked at as dead. Today they have proven their ability to facilitate change. They changed their regimes"

He pointed out of the importance of initiating and volunteering instead of waiting for help from others, saying that Yemenis has always been special in sucking in other societies but not in their owns.

More than 200 active youth attended the event, which was held at Taj Sheba Hotel. In addition to recognizing their work, the aim of the event was to build bridges among those active youth, to allow them introduce their activities and ideas to each other and to discuss the difficulties they face.

Some youths discussed what they have accomplished so far. Although many of them represented planned activities and campaigns which they have already started, several shared an interest in reacting to crises or planning for certain occasions. One outgrowth of this interest was a major fund-raising drive for families in Al-Hassaba who suffered the effects of warfare between opposing tribesmen and the state.

Youth for Humanitarian Relief also have two more projects targeting the same families. One is supplying 200 families with water on a weekly basis. The other has created a summer center targeting 200 children from the same area to help them overcome the psychological effects of violence.

The Ayoon Shaba Initiative and Amerha also launched campaigns in Al-Hassaba, in which the youth helped to rebuild the areas most damaged by the fighting.



helped 3600 poor families. "We don't wait for sponsors to start working" said one member of the initiative.

Another group, Al-Safwa Initiative works to raise awareness against drugs. They have remarkable events in which they were the first to establish different ideas, such as the drugs campaign and by bring the shade theater to Yemen and activate it in raising awareness as well.

Basmt Shabab initiative is another initiative working on raising awareness and developing youth capacities through specialized training, for example, in sign language.

Some initiatives were founded in response to the recent political situation and unrest. One of these, Adwams, aims to raise political awareness and to increase the role of the youth in building a new national strategy. Another initiative, which its members describe as "The Organization Project" is Rushd. It was founded to bring about social change by raising the public awareness in hopes that this will give people better security in their rights.

In Ramdhan especially these youth have found more motivations for voluntary work. Ayoon Shaba continues for the third year its project of reforming restaurants' foods. They have also arranged for restaurant meals to be delivered to poor families, starting from Monday until the end of the month. Last year they managed to provide 715 meals from leftovers, after raising the customers' awareness of how to keep their food clean.. By doing that they have also provided temporary jobs for youth in poor families. This year they managed to make the project permanent.

Another initiative called Ikram al-Ne'ma also works on transferring leftover food from different restaurants to poor families.

Athr Foundation has an initiative called "Voluntary Unites" that was founded by five youth volunteers. The unite created several different programs to engage youths in development and voluntary activities.

Youth involved in the "Hemt Shabab" initiative are well-known on social networks for mobilizing people to help the poor. So far they have

Yemenis fear of new clashes in Al-Hasaba

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, Aug 14 — Accusations and campaigns of incitement among dissident army factions, the Minister of Defense and Republican Guards have increased the fears of many Yemenis about the potential outbreak of violent clashes. A day after loyalists to President Saleh attacked activists in Sana'a's Change Square, the Minister of Defense accused the dissident 1st Armored Division of illegally recruiting and exploiting journalists.

This week, Change Square in Sana'a was attacked and a dissident officer survived an assassination attempt. All these developments came amid unprecedented exchanged accusations.

Abdulmalik Al-Fuhaidi, editor of the state-run website Al-Motamar.net, said that the dissident army is a rebel army and that its officers and soldiers have breached the constitution and laws.

He accused the army's soldiers of committing terrorist acts in different areas in Yemen.

"They stand with terrorists and Al-Qaeda against the patriotic and honest soldiers of the Republican Guards and Central Security," he told the Yemen Times. "The 1st Armored Division is involved in recruiting illegal soldiers. The leader of the division, Ali Mohsen, has no right to recruit any soldiers without the permission of the Ministry of Defense."

Al-Fuhaidi called on Al-Ahmer to return to 'his home town. "He should feel that he committed crimes against our army," he said.

He confirmed that the army loyal to President Saleh will not drag Yemen into violence and will not use violence

against the demonstrators.

"We are afraid of an armed rebellion led by the Islah party and its supporters," he said.

For his part, Vice President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi warned of the "serious consequences of sliding into chaos."

Major Mohammed Al-Khadari, a dissident officer, told the Yemen Times that the dissident army has only a duty to protect the revolution.

"We didn't attack or beat up anybody. We have been ordered not to assault anyone," he said. "Even if we are attacked by Republican Guards or the Central Security we receive orders to be calm and patient."

He indicated that the accusations and incitements leveled by President Saleh's security aim to provoke Yemenis against the dissident army.

Al-Khadari replied to the recent statement of the Ministry of Defense, saying: "They are liars. The Minister of Defense is submissive and does not make any decisions for himself."

Al-Khadari called for the soldiers of the Republican Guards and Central Security to join the revolution and to keep away from the 'killers'.

Many tribesmen loyal to Al-Ahmer family are still staying in many areas of Hasaba district in Sana'a.

Locals of Hasaba are wondering whether they should evacuate their homes.

"Actually nothing can be noticed at this point except for the huge existence of Alahmer's tribesmen," said Osama Al-Rowhani, one of Hasaba's locals.

"Last week one of them killed his friend because he cursed him," he said. "One of the neighbors was shot and that made the situation unsafe."



One of Al-Ahmer's gunmen in Al-Hasaba district, north the capital Sana'a where the opposition tribal leader entered a 13-day war with Saleh's security forces.

Study shows WB contributes to information technology sector reform

A new study released by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank Group (WBG) shows that the group was effective in promoting sector reforms for information and communication technologies (ICT) and in promoting access through private investments for mobile telephony in difficult environments.

The study indicates that countries with WBG support for policy reform and investments have increased competition and access faster than countries without such support. IEG finds, however, that the Bank Group's targeted efforts to increase access to the underserved beyond what was commercially attractive were largely unsuccessful. The World Bank also undertook a significant number of initiatives in ICT applications, such as e-government platforms, but the results in this area were modest.

In Yemen, the Social Fund for Development in Yemen was intended to improve access of low-income groups to basic social services, while providing an example of an effective, efficient, and transparent institutional mechanism for providing social services in Yemen. ICT was successful in supporting the Governorate Local Authorities through transfer of information technology, with special emphasis on assisting local authorities in the inventory of public assets in their jurisdiction using geographic information system tools, field surveys, computers, and mapping equipment."

The study also shows that the Arab countries are lagging with respect to the worldwide average of Internet users. Developing countries cannot begin to overcome the international or national digital divides in Internet access and use, or any other services, until a significantly higher proportion of the population has access to basic network connectivity. Basic connectivity is essential to determining the potential for development of all services. Challenges related to access to high-speed Internet include the cost of broadband access and devices, availability of wireless broadband, and availability of high-capacity transmission backbones.

The WB has supported ICT through lending, policy advice, investments, advisory services, and political risk guarantees in the past decade, committing a total of \$4.2 billion in assistance to the sector between fiscal years 2003 and 2010, of which about \$2.9 billion was to the poorest countries. In this period, by volume of operations, most of the Bank Group funding in the ICT sector has focused on fostering private sector investment.

The most notable contributions by the WBG in the ICT sector were in

promoting sector reforms and in private investments for mobile telephony. The World Bank showed strong results in promoting sector reform, with the majority of operations helping to create more efficient and competitive sectors and enabling enhanced access to ICT services. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) – the private sector arm of WBG, achieved strong results in fostering private sector investment in mobile telecommunications through private investments, especially in poor and conflict-affected countries.

The study also finds that the both the World Bank's and IFC's effectiveness was limited in targeted efforts to increase access to the underserved beyond what was commercially attractive. In this area, general, non-targeted interventions focused on the enabling environment were more effective in increasing access for the poor and underserved. But positive examples of Bank Group support, such as projects in Chile and Pakistan, point to the potential of targeted approaches, including those carried out through public-private partnerships.

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Turkish International Schools hosts Iftar banquet

The Turkish International Schools hosted its annual Iftar banquet as part of its social activities in Yemen last Wednesday at its headquarters in Sana'a.

The Iftar was attended by the schools' friends and education pioneers and a number of ministers, community figures, educational experts and parents of TIS students.

H.E. ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Yemen Mehmet Donnez, also attended the banquet and present-

ed a welcoming speech.

Mr. Mehmet Yilmaz TIS director in Yemen explained how the schools contribute to improving the education level in Yemen. He added that the competition in providing best quality of education pushes TIS to providing highest standards that reach university education level.

He also mentioned that there is a slight delay in the



construction of the latest building in the school which should be ready by the second term of the coming academic school year.

It is worth mentioning that the design of this building which is located in the Aser area is according to the most sophisticated educational standards and according to the European style and is equipped with modern equipment and scientific laboratories, as explained by public relations officer at the schools Ahmed Al-Sorory.

On behalf of the guests, Minister of Education Dr. Abdulsalaam Al-Jawfi delivered a key note praising TIS efforts in enhancing the educational system in the country.

Congraduated the staff in the school both Turks and Yemenis who are working together to create a role model in the education in the private sector.

The event was also attended by State Minister Ahmed Kohlani, Sheikh Hamoud Al-Dharihi and others.

Ja'ar relative calm after 3 days shelling

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

ABYAN, Aug 14 — After three days of continues armed conflict Ja'ar district in Abyan has seen relative calm lately. However the locals are still anxious and not sure whether the shelling will return or not. They also are affected badly because of the scarcity of water now that the main water tank was attacked as well as the local hospital.

Locals from Ja'ar, Abyan, confirmed that shelling on the governorate has resumed since last Sunday. Some of the displaced families have returned to the governorate after a few days' ceasefire between militant groups and state security forces in Ja'ar. The attack, launched by state forces, leveled the governorate water tank on Khanfer Mountain. It was the first military action to occur this Ramadan.

"The attack on Sunday started in the morning and lasted till now, more than seven air strikes" Ahmed Yaslem, a local reporter, told the Yemen Times. "The strikes targeted local interests such as the water tank, a workshop and an empty health institute."

According to Yaslem, when the state target these places, they have usually received intelligence that militant groups are located there. But by the time the state reacts and initiates its attack, the groups have already long vacated these locations.

"When the water tank was shelled and polluted the locals cooperated to empty it of polluted water. They also separated the damaged part and disposed of it," said Yaslem.

Locals, who for few days felt safer, are back to worrying. Most of the air strike victims in Ja'ar, they note, are locals and not militant groups. Apart from the war in the governorate, the governorate also suffer from fuel shortages and continuous power cuts. These strongly affect the one hospital they have.

Dr. Mohammed Fadhl the deputy of Al-Razi Central Hospital told the Yemen Times that most of the medical staff has left the governorate. Only 120 employees out of 443 employees remain in Abyan. Most of those who left lived in the areas most stricken by violence, such as Mudyah, Zunjbar, Al-Kod, and al-Musimer.

The emergency department is the only department still functioning in the hospital. General emergency, de-

livery, X-rays, and the lap and general services are all the hospital can provide now.

According to Dr. Fadhl diarrheea cases are increasing. "We have been receiving diarrheea cases since April 28," said Dr.Fadhl. "In June and July we treated 1890 case from diarrheea, yet no one knows what the causes are, though only some of them got it from polluted water from different areas."

Another problem plaguing Ja'ar is the lack of security on the roads between Aden and Abyan. Emergency cases that can't be treated in the Al-Razi Central hospital must be transferred to Aden's hospital, but the road has been blocked since the spring. "We used to take Al-Alam road, which is only 45 minutes from Ja'a to Abyan, but as it's blocked now we take other roads. The shortest takes four and half hours and puts the patients in danger because of floods and air strikes as well", he added.

Moreover, the hospital is short on stored oxygen, according to Dr.Fadhl. He has contacted the local authority. "The local authority didn't but they haven't done anything about it yet," he added. The Financial Ministry stopped the hospital's allocation since July because the hospital treats injured militants. According to the hospital administration, the medical mission is humanitarian and should never be linked to any political point of view. This financial cut put the hospital in a critical situation as there is no chance to pay diesel or fuel for the generators.

Some of Abyan's tribe came together to expel the militant groups, according to Ahmed al-Aydaros, the governorate's council member. After successfully expelling the militant groups from Launder, they formed popular committees.

"The tribes now discuss their plans to free Zunjbar from the militant groups, but there is a dirty game being played by the authorities to hand Abyan to the militant groups, groups without who believes that the Central Security was under the militant groups without even one bullets" said al-Aydaros.

On the other hand, the main military camp 25 Mika in Abyan has been surrounded by the militant groups for more than three months now. Abdalrahim al-Aswary, public relations officer at the 25 Mika camp, told the



Unknown armed Islamists have taken control of Abyan capital Zunjubar late May.

Yemen Times that this week things have improved at the camp. "We managed to evacuate the martyrs and casualties from the camp." Although the camp is still surrounded by al-Qaeda

from Zunjbar's side, the state is using air strikes to free the camp, said Al-Aswary. Food is provided well there but al-Qaeda has managed to cut the phone coverage.

Food assistance reaches all internally displaced people in Aden

SANA'A, August 10 - The World Food Programme is expanding its food assistance to the total population of 50,617 internally displaced persons who have fled fighting in Abyan governorate and who are now residing with host families or in vacant schools in Aden. WFP was already providing assistance to 18,168 IDPs living in schools, but the agency will now include the whole displaced population in Aden in its food distribution.

"The recent unrest in Yemen has pushed thousands of people into the countryside," said WFP-Yemen Country Director, Gian Carlo Cirri. "Many are being generously hosted by other families that have already been under stress and whose resources are diminishing. Our assistance will help not only those

who have been displaced by the conflict; it will also relieve host families of their huge responsibility."

The current IDP crisis began in June 2011, when fighting between government forces and alleged affiliates of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula erupted in Zinjibar, the capital of the southern governorate of Abyan. The violence has prompted a mass exodus of some 80,000 civilians, who have scattered across the governorates of Abyan, Aden and Lahj.

WFP is also looking in to the possibility of extending its assistance to the IDPs in Abyan. Food needs in Lahj are currently covered by the ICRC.

"Whereas previous displacements in Yemen's south have tended to be relatively temporary, there are indications that the most recent displacement in

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Divided by Yemen's Saleh: Two brothers fight on opposite sides

One brother is fighting to oust Yemen's President Saleh; the other is a proud member of his Revolutionary Guard. They respect each other, but could end up divided by civil war.

By: Jeb Boone
The Christian Science Monitor

In the eyes of Hashim, an antigovernment activist and writer fond of quoting Islamic philosophers, Yemen's peaceful struggle for democracy is divinely ordained.

But his brother, a member of Yemen's elite Republican Guard, sees it differently. Ghazi says Yemen's uprising is driven not by democratic aspirations but by bandits trying to incite chaos. "They have attacked power stations, cut off supply lines to major cities," he points out.

Hashim loves and respects his brother, but challenges his loyalty to the Republican Guard, which is part of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's state military apparatus that has violently suppressed protests since soldiers opened fire on demonstrators in February.

Hashim recently asked him point-blank, "If you were ordered to shoot protesters, would you?"

"He said yes," recounts Hashim, seated next to Ghazi in his modest Sanaa home. "It was unbelievable."

"Of course I would shoot them," responds Ghazi, partaking of tea and a traditional stew prepared by his brother's new wife. "They are criminals and are traitors to our leader. I would follow orders."

Hashim and Ghazi, whose real names could not be used for fear of retribution, illustrate the deep fissures within

Yemeni society that threaten to tear the country apart. Tribesmen, rival military factions, peaceful protesters, and even brothers may end up on opposing sides of a prolonged civil war should President Saleh or his relatives insist on retaining power.

President Saleh makes first appearance since June 3 attack

So far, the conflict has been largely contained to one powerful tribal confederation battling Saleh loyalists in the capital. While Mr. Saleh is convalescing in Saudi Arabia from a June 3 attack on his compound, his son Ahmed relaxes in the presidential palace and security forces patrol the streets.

Saleh appeared publicly last night for the first time since the June attack, giving a prerecorded interview on Yemen TV. He offered, not for the first time, to share power under a constitutional framework approved by the people, but also struck a note of defiance — saying he would "confront a challenge with a challenge." He said he had undergone eight surgeries; his face appeared darker than normal, possibly from severe burns, and his arms were heavily bandaged.

As Saleh's condition and Yemen's economic stability become more uncertain, the conflict could spread. Some say that Ahmed has neither the credibility nor the connections to hold the fractured nation together as his father did, though he and his cousin Yahya, commander of the security forces, may well try.

"Saleh's boys don't have a chance at ruling Yemen," says Yemeni political analyst Abdul Ghani al-Iryani. "Even with all of Saleh's skills and connec-

tions, he was losing control of the country. However, ... should Ahmed or [Saleh's] nephew Yahya feel his exit is dishonorable, they may be compelled to take up arms against all that oppose their patriarch."

Powerful tribes, powerful state media

Throughout Yemen's modern history, no imam or president has ever been able to take on the tribes. North Yemen's third president, Socialist Party leader and Army officer Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, was assassinated when he attempted to strip power from Yemen's tribes.

Many in rural areas, such as the northern mountain village where Hashim and Ghazi grew up, strongly support Saleh, who has held the country together for 32 years.

Their father is one of them. Like many rural residents in this deeply impoverished country, he can't afford satellite TV and so depends solely on state-run radio and TV for his news.

"It's not his fault that he supports the regime; he is bombarded with government propaganda on a daily basis and has been for most of his life," says Hashim.

Two paths to a better life

It was in this village, where their father still toils in the fields to grow khat, corn, peanuts, and other vegetables, that both brothers developed aspirations for a better life.

Hashim saw education as his ticket, earning a bachelor's degree in English literature. For Ghazi, serving in one of Yemen's most elite military units fulfilled his sense of adventure.

"You must be invited to join the Re-



A member of Yemen's elite Republican Guard monitored a June 10 rally in support of President Saleh.

publican Guard. An officer sends a letter to the local council," the governing body of a tribal village, "with a list of names. Those people get to join," says Ghazi, who at first failed to make the cut.

"He walked up and down the mountain to the military camp every day for a month. Finally, someone vouched for him and he was invited to join," says Hashim.

But now, Ghazi's role in enforcing Saleh's tentative hold over the country is a major point of contention between the brothers.

"Ghazi's belief in loyalty to a leader instead of to a nation or a people is a symptom of Yemen's tribal government," Hashim explains. "We want to be rid of this tribal patronage system and institute a civil state."

Respect between two brothers on opposite sides

There seems to be no bitterness or hostility between the brothers, however.

"He's dead wrong," says Hashim, "But I love and respect him and he respects me as well."

Hashim also feels sorry for his

brother. "The Republican Guard are paid 30,000 Yemeni riyals [about \$150] per month. He is just being used by this regime," says Hashim.

Hashim tries desperately to convince his family that Saleh is a dictator and a criminal and that it is their religious duty to institute freedom and democracy in Yemen.

"Every Friday, I invite my brother to come pray with me at Change Square so he can see that the Yemeni people yearn to be free," says Hashim. Ghazi replies: "I can only tell him that if he goes, he has to go without me."

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YT vision statement



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

**“To make
Yemen a
good
world
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OUR
OPINIONWill he return? What
will happen then?

A quick scan of international reports on Yemen shows great discrepancies as to whether President Saleh is going to return from Saudi Arabia after he recovers or not. The Yemeni national TV for the last few weeks has been announcing that he will return in a few days, then when the few days pass they say next week and so on.

This has been dragging for sometime but the question remains: will he really return and what happens if he does?

At first, the prospective of Saleh returning to Yemen was far-fetched especially since he sustained massive injuries post the assassination attempt on June 3, 2011. However, it seems that he is much better now and has even been discharged from the hospital and has been meeting with officials and diplomats.

But the significance of him returning to Yemen now lies in his attitude. Will he come back with vengeance and take it out on all those who tried to remove him from power? Or will he decide that it is time for a new policy in Yemen, something fairer and more inclusive.

So far the news is that on 17th of this month the Joint Meeting Parties opposition coalition will push forward either a transitional council or according to an official sources a coalition government headed by the opposition.

In both cases it seems that the revolution has failed and that for better or worse Saleh will remain Yemen's president at least until 2013, or that is what the political parties on both sides are pushing for.

The opposition keeps demanding that nothing will take place until or unless Saleh hands over power to his vice president but I know it for a fact that they are talking behind the scenes with the ruling party and trying to figure out how to divide the cake between them.

This leaves Yemen with two scenarios: One is that the new-old government runs the country the same old way even more strict now that they have seen how angry citizens could cause trouble. The second is with the near death experience that Saleh's finds it in his heart to hear his people and what they are demanding and work out some solution for reform.

The problem is that Yemen is so complicated it cannot be compared to Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria or any of the other Arab countries going through uprise. Yemen is different because the culture in a way does not encourage much organization or even free thinking. It does sound awful putting it this way but unfortunately it is true. Yemenis generally are very warm and kind people. We are passionate and social but individuality and change scares us so much that we would stick to the routine even if it meant dying a little every day. Even our revolution was not that of hungry people wanting their rights, it is rather politically motivated.

The protests were never about jobs or equality or even poverty. It was all about toppling the regime. I came to this conclusion because the protests stopped despite the fact that living conditions became worse not better.

Now the news of Saleh returning and the impact of this on the protests and on the state of the country scares me. Now it is just the waiting game...

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

U.S. steps up Obama's secret war in Yemen

UPI

Three days after U.S. Navy SEALs assassinated Osama bin Laden in May, the Americans mounted a major air operation in Yemen to kill a U.S.-born Muslim cleric they've branded one of al-Qaida's most dangerous leaders.

Anwar al-Awlaki just escaped the missiles fired from several U.S. aircraft but the operation marked a significant escalation in the secret war against the jihadists in Yemen, known as al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

Awlaki's importance as a target can be measured by the forces sent to eliminate him: U.S. Marine Corps Harrier fighters, a Special Operations aircraft armed with short-range Griffin air-to-ground missiles and a Predator unmanned aerial vehicles carrying AGM-114 Hellfire missiles.

The multi-aircraft strike May 5, during which U.S. fliers chased a pickup truck supposedly carrying Awlaki across rocky terrain, was part of a significant escalation in the largely secret U.S. campaign against AQAP, currently deemed the most dangerous jihadist group on the planet.

"This marks a major escalation in Washington's fight against the group, which is widely considered the most threatening to the U.S. homeland of all al-Qaida's affiliate," observed IPS Washington analyst Jim Lobe.

The intensification of covert operations mounted by the U.S. military's Joint Special Operations Command and the CIA underline how U.S. President Barack Obama, while scaling down U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, is cranking up secret wars, not just in Yemen but also in Somalia across the Gulf of Aden.

The Americans conducted their first known attack in Somalia June 23 using UAVs armed with supersonic, armor-piercing Hellfire missiles. The target was a camp used by al-Shabaab, an Islamist group linked to al-Qaida and designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. State Department in 2008.

This means the Americans are conducting clandestine airstrikes in six countries, a list that includes Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya.

Indications are that Washington also plans to turn up the heat on al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, the jihadist's North African branch, as well.

The May 5 attempt to kill Awlaki, a

U.S. citizen who has been involved in at least three plots against the United States over the last two years, failed but only just.

Awlaki, AQAP's ideologue and a key recruiter, remains a marked man as the Americans step up another clandestine conflict.

U.S. operations in Yemen are unlikely to come under congressional scrutiny, as the Arab country teeters on the brink of civil war after a six-month uprising against longtime dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, a flawed ally of the Americans who has frequently had dealings with the Islamists to stay in power.

In Yemen, security officials in Sanaa say there was a sharp intensification of remote-control UAV strikes in the first week of May, mostly targeting oil-rich Shabwa province east of Sanaa.

There were more than 18 in the first three weeks of June, with some 140 people killed.

Six of these strikes were in Abyan province in the south, on the Arabian Sea, where AQAP has flourished. Among the fatalities were longtime Yemeni jihadists Ali Abdullah Naji al Harithi, a senior operative, and Ammar Abadah Nasser al-Waeli, described as a key arms dealer.

The two men, veterans of the Iraq War, were killed June 13 in an airstrike on AQAP-held districts of Zinjibar, capital of Abyan province.

Officially, the Americans say that it's only in recent weeks that systematic secret operations against AQAP have got going. But such operations have been under way for at least two years.

This underlines how Obama's administration has increasingly come to rely on covert counter-terrorism operations even as it withdraws U.S. forces from Iraq and Afghanistan.

This, critics say, is a template for how undeclared wars involving U.S. forces will be waged in the future, increasingly secret and free of congressional oversight.

"The important difference between Obama's wars in Pakistan and Yemen and his war in Libya is not in the level of hostilities or security interests, but rather in the ability to call one kind of war secret and another kind public," observed John Glaser of Antiwar.com, a Washington Web site.

"This realization, coupled with the cutting-edge technology that enables such shadow wars, carries dire prospects for the future."

As Yemen crisis drags on, risks grow

By: Elizabeth Arrott
Voice of America

Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh says he is working on a plan for a peaceful transition of power, even as opponents announce they will unilaterally create what looks like an alternative government.

The main opposition coalition will meet next week to form what it's calling a "national council" to step up the pressure against Saleh, who is currently in Saudi Arabia for medical treatment. The opposition Joint Meeting Parties want to unite the demands of street protesters and other anti-government forces seeking an end to Saleh's decades-long rule.

Government officials are warning against any such council, saying it would be a declaration of war against the state. Moreover, they say, it is unnecessary. Yemen's state media report that the president is again considering a plan by the Gulf Cooperation Council that outlines the

steps toward a post-Saleh Yemen. The president is quoted as saying late Wednesday that his government is committed to finding solutions to the "disagreement" with the opposition.

Saleh was shown in a video from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where he has been recovering from a bomb blast at his presidential compound in June. He appeared more vigorous than in previous images. However, his comments about the GCC plan came under question. He has agreed to the GCC proposal three times in recent months, each time backing out at the last minute.

The ongoing stalemate, now in its seventh month, is raising further alarms abroad. The U.N. Security Council this week expressed its concerns, which range from a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen, to the instability being exploited by the Yemen-based terrorist group, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

U.N. Security Council President Hardeep Singh Puri urged all parties to reject violence as a solution to the political crisis.

sis.

"The members of the Security Council also called on all parties to move forward urgently, and an inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led process of political transition that meets the needs and aspirations of the Yemeni people for change," said Puri.

Yemen's government stresses that change will not be brought about by any external pressure.

Officials this week rejected a report that the United States and Saudi Arabia are urging Saleh not to return to Sana'a. A U.S. State Department spokesman also denied the report, saying it was up to the president to return or not. Washington has long supported Saleh as a bulwark against al-Qaida.

Yemeni political commentator Nasser Arrabyee says Saleh's whereabouts are likely not as important as his actual involvement in the process.

"Saleh still has a lot of support," he said. "His supporters are millions here and that's why the international community is focusing on a constitutional transition, which

means that it is only President Saleh who will do this constitutional transition."

Arrabyee says the alternative, more violence between government forces and its opponents, is in no one's interest. But he adds that the longer the situation drags on, the greater the chance that militant forces can coopt the original pro-reform movement.

"The protesters are still there in the streets," said Arrabyee. "But their leaders are doing something else. They are now involved in military confrontations, under the leadership of al Ahmar, and they have also the defected general Ali Mohsen, who also supported the protests but he is involved in many military confrontations."

Tribal leader Sadiq al-Ahmar, whose members have already fought fierce battles against government troops, joined forces late last month with other tribal groups to form the Alliance of Yemeni Tribes. The well-armed tribes say any aggression against the protesters will be considered an attack against them.

War of words in Yemen and contradictions

By: Catherine Shakdam
Foreign Policy Association

A few days ago, the London based Saudi paper, Asharq al-Awsat, published that officials in Saudi Arabia are claiming that the US and the KSA have successfully convinced President Saleh to remain in Riyadh for good.

The paper further wrote that under the pressure of both of his strongest allies, the US and the KSA, Saleh would have somewhat agreed to sign a GCC agreement granting him total immunity from prosecution alongside his family members.

On the same day of the publication, the Yemeni government denied the statement in its entirety, saying that Ali Abdullah Saleh had never made such a deal and that his return was in no way probable, but rather certain. The Yemeni state news agency later published that Saleh "will return to the country following the period of recuperation that has been specified by his doctors," quoting a Yemeni senior official.

The regime

Today, Abdel-Hafez al-Nahari, the deputy head of the media department of the GPC, the ruling party, told Asharq al-Awsat, "the people of Yemen are awaiting the return of the President to exercise his constitutional duty. His return is not subject of debate, rather the General People's Congress party and the Yemeni people are eagerly awaiting the return of

the President, for his return is necessary to manage the crisis, because he represents the safety valve for all factions." The deputy further added, "what has been circulated by some media outlets with regards to rumors that Saleh will not be returning to Yemen are nothing more than unsubstantial claims."

Interestingly enough, al-Nahari stressed in his phone interview with the Saudi paper that the US was fully backing up Saleh in his political struggle and in his determination to return as acting President. "The US position today towards the situation in Yemen is more understanding than at any time before, and they are aware that the return of the President is part of the solution, not part of the problem. The Americans also understand that change must take place on the basis of the [Yemeni] constitution and the people's will."

When asked about the negotiations which allegedly took place in Riyadh between the regime and the opposition, al-Nahari said that there was no truth to it. "We in Yemen thank our allies for their efforts to preserve Yemeni unity, security, and stability. However we are not aware of any undisclosed negotiations taking place. He added "even if this were proven to be true we are afraid or concerned about this, because negotiation and dialogue are the only way to bring about change."

The media

Despite the Yemeni government's best efforts at silencing rumors about Saleh's political fate, reports of him being pressured by the White House and the Saudis

continue to stream in the media. On Tuesday, diplomatic sources reportedly told Reuters that the US was trying to convince Saleh of prolonging his stay in Riyadh as his return to Yemen would spark a civil war. The sources did not specify whether the embattled Yemeni President responded positively or not to those wishes. However, the fact that Saleh agreed to be moved from the hospital to a private residence in the Saudi capital led many to believe that the 69 year-old dictator was coming around.

The Associated Press quoted on the same day Yemeni officials saying under cover of anonymity that, "the President reluctantly caved in to American and Saudi pressure to stay on in Saudi Arabia... he will continue to listen to them until he makes a full recovery from his wounds and then he will decide what to do." They added later that although Saleh was in the KSA he was still very much leading Yemen, daily conversing with his son, Ahmed Saleh and his nephews, entrusting them to carry through his orders.

Mark Toner, the US Department spokesman did not actually shed much light on the matter by refusing to confirm clearly whether indeed the US and the KSA had brokered a deal with the Yemeni autocrat. He only said: "all we can do is continue to press our belief that this transition needs to happen immediately and cannot wait until a decision is made about his [Saleh's] future. What we're working on, through our embassy and our ambassador is trying to move the process forward now, rather than wait."

A similar message was later conveyed

by Gerard Feuerstein, the US ambassador to Yemen when he told the radio Sawa: "We believe... dealing with political, economic and security problems in Yemen cannot happen without a transfer of power in the country, and the arrival of new leadership."

The US ambassador also said that he was in talks with VP Hadi regarding a GCC proposal which would announce the terms of a timely transition of power. "I have met with Hadi 12 or 13 times since 3 June, and we are confident in him, he has met with a number of US officials and I believe he enjoys the complete confidence of Washington, not just to accomplish the transition of power, but to lead Yemen during this transitional period. We do not believe that it is possible to wait any longer, and we have complete confidence in [Yemeni Vice President] Hadi to complete the transition of power, all that we are waiting for is for President Saleh to sign the Gulf initiative."

Meanwhile, the JMP, the Yemeni opposition parties' umbrella is announcing that it will hold its first National Council of the Revolutionary Forces on August 17th, in a bid to unlock the current political stalemate and mobilize people's dwindling support for politicians in favor of that of the tribes. The Council wants to become according to its own statement the "national guardians of the people's revolution."

But if Yemen's politicians are still willing to sit at the negotiating table, al-Islah is hardening its tone, warning that if Saleh comes back it will declare war on the regime.

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Why desalination should be the last option for the Mideast

By: Taffine Laylin
The Green Prophet

One of humankind's worst tragedies is currently unfolding in the Horn of Africa, and it is caused by the absence of water. Two years of failed rain, and subsequent drought and famine, is responsible for the daily deaths of roughly 2,000 people in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. According to the Director of Yale's

Environmental Engineering Program, water scarce countries like these in Africa and the Middle East can achieve greater water security by developing desalination plants. However, as you might have guessed, this conviction does include a rather large caveat.

De-salting the sea

Menachem Elimelech also told PBS that even the most advanced desalination technologies, which are becoming increasingly necessary in countries like

Israel, Singapore, and Spain, still use three times as much energy as conventional water treatment.

There are two kinds of desalination technologies at work in the world. The Gulf Countries such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which have been hydrating their citizens with desalinated water for decades, still rely on archaic thermal desalination plants that boil water and condense the resulting steam in order to produce potable water.

This process uses a lot of energy

But even new technologies such as reverse osmosis, which involves blasting seawater at very high pressure through molecular-sized perforations in a plastic membrane that captures all but 0.05% of the salt pumped through it, is energy intensive.

The most advanced desalination plant requires as much electrical energy to produce 1000 liters of clean water as 30 100 watt lightbulbs left on for an hour. If this doesn't seem a lot to you, consider this: Israel's fifth desalination plant along the Mediterranean produces 500 million cubic meters of water every year. A cubic meter is equivalent to 1,000 liters.

That's a lot of lightbulbs, particularly for Israel, which has very few of its own energy sources with which to power these plants. But even oil-rich nations have to exercise caution.



When is energy-intensive desalination a last resort.

Climate change caused by such devastatingly high carbon emissions notwithstanding, though this alone is a serious enough, increasingly pinched oil supplies should inspire managers in the Gulf to seek out more energy efficient technologies. Otherwise, they will become even more expensive than they already are, and eventually, when oil runs out completely, they will cease to exist.

The solar option

Menachem Elimelech from Yale did not mention solar-powered desalination plants in the brief interview published by PBS, but the United Arab Emirates have been testing this new technology as a potential alternative to the current model. In the meantime, the Gulf countries have no choice but to continue burning up electricity for water. But for everyone else, it should be the last resort after water conservation and wastewater reuse.

Hello... global warming

Arwa recently posted a Carboun infographic that maps the carbon emissions of Middle Eastern countries. It is no coincidence that water scarce Qatar - a major oil and gas hub - has the highest per capita emissions in the world, or that Kuwait and the UAE came in 3rd and 4th given how richly they depend on desalination for their water resources.

Women football making headway in Saudi Arabia Dream of competing in Olympics despite sexist barriers at home



Saudi members of the King's United women football club train at a stadium in the Red sea port of Jeddah on May 20, 2009, despite strict religious taboos in the desert kingdom.

By: Rob L. Wagner
The Media Line

Shaima Sabri, 12, dreams of the day when she plays football on a stadium field of green grass with her father and brothers in a crowd of thousands cheering her on to victory.

On the first day of Ramadan after Maghreb prayer, Shaima was running barefoot through a hard-scrabble patch of dirt off Madinah Road in Jeddah. Playing with the neighborhood kids, she was kicking a frayed football. Her dreams at that moment of playing before thousands were as elusive as the sweeping green fields that she hopes to play on.

"Some day I will play like Salem Al-dawsari with Saudia," said Shaima, referring to one of Saudi Arabia's leading footballers. "But sometimes I think this is as far as I will get."

Yet Shaima, and girls and women like her, have an unlikely ally in helping them organize football leagues: the men's Saudi Arabian Football Federation.

Ahmad Eid Al-Harbi, vice president of the Player Status Committee for the Saudi Arabian Football Federation, which plays under FIFA, has been quietly visiting university campuses to help women develop football teams. Al-Harbi said meetings have included consultations on how to negotiate with the international football unions from Germany, Brazil, the United States and the United Kingdom in order to help women qualify for trainer positions. The Federation has also developed a physical education curriculum for women's university campuses.

"Three weeks ago I visited CBA (College of Business Administration) University in Jeddah and we had long conversations with officials there with regard to women's sports," Al-Harbi told The Media Line. "We formed a group of women who are willing to play basketball and volleyball. We also convinced another group of women to form a football team. Now, they are considering organizing a league among all women's universities in the region as a step towards participating in the Olympics Games." At least seven Arab countries presently have women's football teams.

The meetings mark the first acknowl-

edgement from a sanctioned Saudi sports body that women could someday compete in the Olympics Games. Competing in the Olympics is a tantalizing goal for women athletes who believe that Saudi society might never recognize that women should have equal footing with men in sports. In the past two years, young Saudi women decided that they could no longer wait for government permission and funding to start their own football league. Instead, they organized their own teams and paid trainers out of their own pockets to develop competitive teams. One such team is the fledgling all-women's Kings United Football Club in Jeddah.

Al-Harbi cautioned that although he wants to see women on the playing field, the road to government-funded leagues still is fraught with many obstacles.

"Saudi Arabia is a tribal society that doesn't believe in speedy change," Al-Harbi said. "However, I believe there is a quite sizable number of the society that is ready to accept women social sports that contribute to women's good health and her main role in the family as a leader. When it comes to competitive sports, this needs quite longer time to be accepted."

Although Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal joins Al-Harbi in supporting the right of women to play football, Al-Harbi characterized the atmosphere in Saudi Arabia as "hostile" to competitive women's sports. "I'm all for [women's football leagues] if we prepare the right atmosphere for such participation. We need to build a very strong infrastructure and we need human resources. Above all, we need to prepare the social atmosphere to accept such competitions to make it friendlier than it is now," he said.

Indeed, Rima Abdullah, the founder of Kings United, told the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya TV last month that she has been criticized for organizing her football team.

"As for society as a whole, when we first appeared in public, we were attacked," Abdullah said. "One of the most vehement attacks against me was during a Friday sermon. The entire sermon was about Rima Abdullah, as if I were pushing Saudi women towards promiscuity, or something."

Kings United began playing in secret around Jeddah in 2005. The team rented

secluded football fields to keep away the curious. Players paid their own expenses. Each player must have written permission from a male guardian to participate. The team then initiated a publicity campaign to drum up support. Last year, the team sought to participate in a women's tournament in Bahrain that included teams from Oman and Kuwait. The Saudi team did not receive permission to play because FIFA and the Saudi Arabian Football Federation do not formally recognize the team.

Al-Harbi advised patience. "One should first work on providing suitable places such as playgrounds or stadiums that are specially equipped for women in our segregated society," he said. "Second, women's organized leagues should be operated under a very strong umbrella that protects women and the ultimate goals of which leagues are formed. I suggest it should be at least as a first step operated under Ministry of Education. It should also follow the Islamic regulations so it doesn't upset the religious authorities."

And there-in lies the obstacle. Religious conservatives have not only railed against women's sports leagues as unseemly and undignified activities, but as a threat to players' virginity. As perhaps the leading voice in domestic matters, religious leaders hold considerable sway over what is permissible and what is forbidden in Saudi society. Earlier this year, clerics demanded the resignation of the dean at the all-women's Princess Noor University for Women in Riyadh for implementing a physical education program.

A 2009 Al-Riyadh newspaper survey of 2,250 Saudis reported that only 4 percent opposed female physical education. But Saudi Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Asheik told Al Eqtisadiyah TV that, "Women should be housewives. There is no need for them to engage in sports."

Kings United has been careful not to rock the boat. Players wear the hijab, sleeveless jerseys and shorts at mid-thigh in front of all-female crowds, but long white clothes and the hijab that complies with Sharia, or Islamic law, for male audiences.

Jeddah-based blogger Susie's Big Adventure, who prefers to be identified only as Susie and writes extensively on Saudi women's health issues, told The Media Line that physical education and participating in organized sports can improve Saudi women's health. The Salman Medical Center at King Fahd Health City in Riyadh reported last year that half of the Saudi women between the ages of 30 and 45 suffer from obesity.

"If Muslim men truly cared about the health of Muslim women, they would encourage and support physical activities for women," Susie said.

The good news is that government funding for women's leagues may be more than just wishful thinking with the backing of the Saudi Arabian Football Federation. The bad news is that it might not be what women footballers want.

Al-Harbi noted that women's groups should receive government-funding equal to men, but money should first be allocated for physical education or "soft" sports, such as basketball and gymnastics, as a means to integrate Saudi women into competitive international sports.

However, as for a FIFA-approved Saudi women's team like the Iranian Football Federation, Al-Harbi doesn't see a quick solution. "Saudi society is a very conservative one, even when it comes to men's clubs. No one can imagine his daughter playing in front of thousands of people wearing shorts, such as in football."

The Taqwacores: The birth of punk Islam



Agencies

Yusef, a first-generation Pakistani engineering student, moves off-campus with a group of Muslim punks in Buffalo, New York. His new "un-orthodox" house mates soon introduce him to Taqwacore- a hardcore, Muslim punk rock scene that only exists out west. As the seasons change, Taqwacore influences the house more and more. The living room becomes a mosque during the day, while it continues to host punk parties at night. Ultimately, Yusef is influenced by Taqwacore too, as he begins to challenge his own faith and ideologies. The Taqwacores deals with the complexities of being young and Muslim in modern-day America.

Adapted from the novel of the same title by Michael Muhammad Knight, this 84 minutes film tells the story of Yusef, a conservative Pakistani engineering student, seeking to move off-campus while going to school in Buffalo. Trying to be true to his religion, he finds himself among an unlikely group of Muslims—skaters, gays, and a riot girl in a burqa. What they have in common is the philosophy of Taqwacore, the Muslim punk-rock scene. Full of trepidation at first about his housemates' unconventional approach to being Muslim, Yusef is eventually influenced by their ways.

The Taqwacore is an identity narrative, a coming-of-age story, and a tale of what happens when two seemingly dissimilar cultures collide. Yusef struggles to make sense of his faith and ideologies in the midst of a wholly new, yet still Muslim, culture presented by the characters in his house. The film reminds us that identity is a choice to be

discovered, not a cultural mandate.

Questioning the treatment of Muslim culture in the media, director Zahra has constructed a low-budget masterpiece interlaced with music from the real life

Taqwacore scene. Here we find an original, complex, and sometimes humorous portrait of being young and Muslim in contemporary America. (In English and Arabic with subtitles).

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Ramadan around the world in pictures

By: World Bulletin and agencies

Muslims all over the world marked the start of the Holy Month Ramadan. The world's one point two billion Muslims, around one-fifth of humanity on Monday began this year's observance of the Ramadan fasting season, regarded as one of the five pillars of the Islamic faith.



Pakistanis pray before their Iftar (fast breaking) at the Dervesh Mosque in Peshawar.



An UAE police fire a cannon, as a signal for the end of the fasting day during Ramadan, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 01 August 2011.



Children break fast at King Fahad Mosque on the first day of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in Culver City, Los Angeles, California August 1, 2011.



A Nepalese Muslim reads the Koran on the second day of the month-long fasting during the holy month of Ramadan in Kathmandu August 2, 2011.



A man reads the Koran on the first day of Ramadan while taking shelter from rain on a sidewalk in Lahore August 2, 2011.



A Palestinian boy plays with fireworks to celebrate the beginning of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan in Gaza City on 01 August 2011.



Tunisians buy bread on the first day of Ramadan at a market in the capital Tunis.



A boy takes part in prayers at Strasbourg's new Grand Mosque.

A Magued/AFP

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Yemeni man reads a copy of the Koran at the Great Mosque on the first day of the fasting month of Ramadan, in the Old city of Sana'a, Yemen, 01 August 2011.

EPA



Women pray inside a mosque in Parañaque, Philippines.

EPA



Yemeni anti-government protesters pray as they hold the Iftar meal to break their fast on the first day of the fasting month of Ramadan, in Sanaa, Yemen, 01 August 2011.

Fayez Nureldin/AFP



Saudis buy and sell dates on the eve of Ramadan at a market in Riyadh.



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A street fruit seller awaits customers gloomily in a vegetables market in Sana'a but does not anticipate much because of the economic recession.

YT photo by Yousif Ajlan

Justice: dictatorship, democracy or caliphate?

By: Sharique Naeem
shariq_n@hotmail.com

With the Arab spring in full flow, it is becoming clearer that many players are competing for the space created by the overthrow of some rulers in the Middle East. Whilst the masses braved the brutal crackdown on the streets to end the architecture of client rulers, foreign interference and foreign dependency constructed by the Western colonial powers, the West continues to call the Arab spring as a call for democracy, Western values and more Western involvement. The decades of oppression by the dictatorial rulers has led to some confusion on where Capitalism ends and where Islam begins.

The debate as to what should replace fallen tyrants, is now taking place in the Arab world. The western media, has cleverly equated the demand for justice and removal of tyrants, with the notion that only democracy can meet those demands. This however is not true. Firstly, the masses have not stood up for a 'secular democracy' as envisioned by the West, and secondly that democracy itself has fundamental flaws.

However, the Islamic system is fundamentally different, because it takes the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (pbuh) as the basis of governance. It therefore has the capacity to offer true justice to the people, irrespective of their creed, ethnicity or language.

In the Khilafah, the state applies the Islamic constitution, and it will replace the existing plethora of constitutions that keep the Muslim world subjugated and backward. The Khilafah guarantees elections, and regional and 'nationwide' assemblies which form the pre-requisite

governance institutions, including a judicial authority to check the actions of the executive, and protect the rights of all citizens – men and women, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. It is imperative to note that the Islamic state will neither be theocratic nor does it model itself on any other contemporary Muslim state.

The new Islamic constitution will have one head of state (Khalifah) to replace the current unstable and ill-defined roles of Monarch, President or Prime Minister. A new People's Assembly (Majlis ul Ummah) will replace the plethora of lower and upper houses and a strengthened judiciary, with a new court targeting state injustice (Mahkamat ul-Madhalim), to replace the existing politically manipulated legal system. Both the new judiciary and elected People's Assembly will provide the requisite institutional checks and balances in the Islamic political system.

Also, both the head of state and the new People's Assembly will be elected via an open, transparent and fair process. The People's Assembly comprises representatives from across the Khilafah and will include Muslims and non-Muslims. The council is designed not only to make representations to the state, but also has the power to scrutinize and overturn state policy, analyze the budget and hold leaders to account. In this way accountability is focused. Whereas in Democracy, shared ruling results in shared accountability, that results in diluting any efforts towards accountability.

Moreover, all judges in the new 'Court of Injustices' and other courts will be independent from the executive and consultative assembly. No individual – not the Khaleefah, armed forces and their chiefs, the elite, or industrial barons – is above the law. The rule of law will be implemented without fear

or favor. All policies of the state can be challenged in court. Where the court is actively investigating a complaint against the head of state, the head of state has no right to remove any judge involved in the case. Any verdict by a judge is final irrespective of the wishes of the ruler.

The appointment of a Chief Justice and Qadi in the Court of Madhalim (injustices) creates a dedicated office of the judiciary charged with checking the state's compliance with the law. The Madhalim court does not rely on a plaintiff raising a specific complaint against the state and is charged with ongoing monitoring of all organs of state. The 'Madhalim' has the power to remove the head of state if he breaches his terms of contract. Contrary to this in the present democratic system, the court's jurisdictions are restricted. For example in Pakistan the court cannot order to stop drone attacks, XE operatives, NATO supply lines etc. Similarly in Bangladesh the court is unable to stop the increasing influence of imperialist America or India, because many such actions have legal protection from the legislature or establishment.

Islam obliges the people to criticize, account and denounce, if necessary, any action of the ruler, his advisors or any policy carried out by the state that disagrees with Islam or oppresses the people. This is done by individuals, scholars, the media and political groups and parties.

In Khilafah, the independent judiciary and People's Assemblies institutionalize the culture of accountability and scrutiny that is a collective obligation in Islam. On the other hand in a Democracy, accountability is considered as a mere right, and not an obligation.

Unlike in dictatorships and democracies, the Khilafah state believes torture,

spying and arbitrary arrest as carried out by the Muslim world's intelligence and security apparatus under the supervision of the US as forbidden under Islamic law. Such activities therefore are absolutely illegal (haram), have no place at all in any civilized society and would be prosecuted under the Shariah.

The Khalifah will introduce radical Islamic policies that tear down any provisions that enforce the Police State. Citizens of the Khilafah, Muslims and non-Muslims, will have the right to take any member of the enforcement agencies, regardless of rank, to court and/or register a complaint to an independent judiciary (Mahkamut ul-Madhalim) without any implications for his/her wellbeing.

Whilst the West has a short history of developing checks and balances, fundamental problems exist in every secular democracy, advanced, emerging, large, small, Western or Eastern. They all show the same thing: they serve the elite and not the public; their politicians are largely corrupt; wealth remains confined to a tiny minority; and long term challenges are consistently ducked – this is the reality of democracy. To copy and paste this system in the Islamic lands will just turn the uprisings from dictatorships to examples of democratic failures. Pakistan is one such example, where both democracy and dictatorship have been tested again and again, and have continued to fail. In Bangladesh too, the people have witnessed the failure of democracy. It's independence from India, and then from Pakistan, has not brought any meaningful change, because the flawed capitalist system continues to date. The only natural and viable option left for the Muslim world, is to opt for a Caliphate which will deliver the much needed justice to the masses.

Polarization come!

By: Hamza Alshargabi
latenightsurgery.blogspot.com

I was talking to a young Egyptian politician the other day prior to me meeting a prominent American official, I knew this Egyptian guy for years as a friend and as a doctor, and although our political views differed we managed to be very good friends.

The question that I had to ask him and delay his sleep for 90 minutes was: why do you guys in Egypt have it heavy against the Americans in your politics and what does he recommend regarding this big meeting of mine? he simply answered don't meet the man your interests don't match (just like our interests in Egypt don't

match with the Americans! I could understand his logic, but I had to dig a little further knowing our situation in Yemen differed a bit, so I went further.. I know your party speaks to the American here and there! and he kept denying and he said it is a core fundamental issue for them not to speak to the Americans unless it's all in the open and very well documented and on Camera.

After 90 minutes of back and forth along those lines, I had to hang up our little chat and let my tired friend go to bed!

That was the starting point for me to think, how did all the parties ended up here, and where to head from here to the future?

My answer to self was (stupid ass

governance along with dictatorships from the end of 70s till now) surly did no good from the Arabs side to present themselves to the world in one side.. and overly pragmatic and overly (lets stand with Israel for this time only) policy from the Americans that led to more polarization and to slogans like (American is the greatest devil).

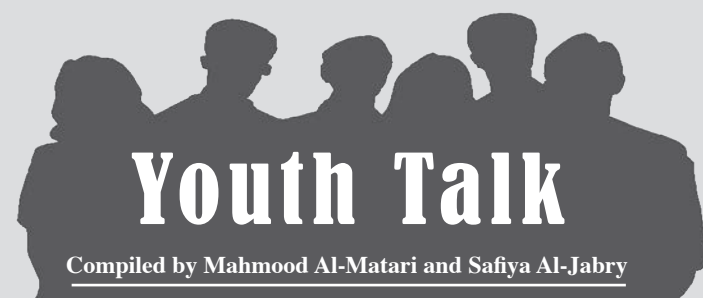
The Arab spring is bringing an unprecedented chance for this polarization to end, however I still see all sides not investing to make it fade, in the contrary one can clearly see how limping the US foreign policy is behaving when it comes to expressing discontent towards their old dictator friends (we know he is a SOB but he is our SOB) to the over blaming of the

US role in Arab politics and insisting on the the Americans said not to do this to us ??? (I thought in your country u should be more relevant than the us (if u wanna play politics) other wise go do some gardening!

I don't like any anti sentiment, anti American or anti Iran for that matter in the Arab world right now, we wasted our chance to alliance with Iran in the 80s with our stupid Iraq/Iran war and we wasted our chance to play it well with the Americans in 50s.

I can understand how difficult it was back then, since no one knew anything about the other rather than orientalist tales and pillars of wisdom of the one and only Lawrence of Arabia (which I hate).

But this is not accepted now! why? because you are reading this!



Compiled by Mahmood Al-Matari and Safiya Al-Jabry

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

This week's question:

How has the lack of electricity affected your life especially during Ramadan?

Fatima Al-Azzani

We can't work well in the kitchen and the cooking becomes more difficult as we can't use any of the electric gadgets. Also candles have become more expensive and smaller in size. When there was no power during the taraweeh (after evening prayer) we were scared as women, to walk in the dark streets and go to the mosques so we did not go. I did not get to enjoy many of my favorite TV series because one day I can watch it the other not so I could not follow the story.

Mohammed Sharba

The problem with Yemenis is that we don't even care if we are deprived of our basic rights by our careless government. We feel lucky if we get something as simple as electric power and try to make the best of it while it is there. Then when it is not life stops.

Abdulnasser Al-Abdali

Actually, we have been affected a lot because of the power blackouts especially during Ramadhan which is supposed to be the month of mercy and blessings. The lack of electricity has caused loss of life and damaged machines. It has really become a nightmare in our lives.

Lisa Al-Absi

Working in the kitchen has become a nightmare and we can't store things in the fridge they get spoiled. Also time is boring and moves slowly as we can't watch TV. In the office it has not affected me because there is a generator but at home it was a problem. These days it is better as the electricity does not get disconnected as it used to be.

Noman Al-Khadhmi

At home we face problems with the lack of electricity especially we can't get water because the water pump needs electricity and I had to carry water in jerry can. Also we used so many candles which is dangerous as I have young kids at home. I have a generator but I try not to use it because of the noise and also the lack of diesel. At work when we want to get things done everything stops even a simple fax or email becomes too much. We also fear buying goods that require the fridge because they might be spoiled.

Maryam Al-Yemeni

It has not affected my life because we have electricity all the time as we live near the Jumhuri Palace in Al-Qaser Street.

Sami Shamlan

I wonder if we have electricity in Yemen or not because it only comes for one or two hours a day. Because of the lack of electricity we can't do anything. Think about how cut-off affected our brothers who live in the hot coastal areas in this warm summer. I have heard that many persons died because of the heat.

Shoura Shamlan

Yes the lack of electricity affected us in many ways, but there the bright side is that I have free time to worship Allah and read Holley Quran especially in a month like Ramadan.

Kamal Yahya

As a matter of fact I become off when the power is off. Everything seems dark to me and gloomy. I guess this is the nature of things unfortunately this happens during the holy month of Ramadan which we should benefit from spiritually and socially.

Wagdi Al-Shameeri

The story of electricity in Yemen is like a nice dream which we get woken up from when the electricity goes off and we remember that we are living in such a country. It is ironic that when the electricity lasts for long hours we start to wonder what is going on and whether something bad is going to happen. As if electricity is the exception and the norm is being without power.

Shihab Al-Ashhab

When the electricity is gone I think about the many stores, companies and factories which stopped and the money lost. Also there is much pollution now especially in Sana'a because everyone uses generators. I can't imagine how Sana'a will improve in the next five years unless there is an improvement in the government to resolve this problem and I hope this happens soon.

Next Week's Question:

Do you think the president will come back to Yemen before the end of Ramadhan, and why?

Follow this section for a new question every week and feel free to reply with your answers or feedback by sending an e-mail to ytyouth@gmail.com. So this is your chance to share your humorous stories, poems or opinions with other young readers!

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Faces from Yemen's revolution

Mohsen Al-Aghbari



By: Shatha Al-Harazi

Mohsen Al-Aghbari is a third-year physics student at Sana'a

University. At 32 years old, he is a member of the Free Independent Youth Coalition, one of the most active independent coalitions in Change Square, where anti-government protests have been taking place since February.

Al-Aghbari joined the protests during the last week of February after his first-term exams. Since then he has been facilitating awareness-raising sessions in Change Square. Al-Aghbari has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the need for cooperation between the independent youth and opposition political parties. But this has come at no small cost. He, like many of his fellows, suffered at the hands of the Islamists trying to control the square.

He speaks with respect of those who attacked him. On April 15 he was participating in a mixed march with female human rights activists, in response to President Saleh's speech denouncing women's participation in protests as forbidden by Islamic law. During the march, a group of Al-Islah Party members and divisional soldiers assaulted the female activists. Al-Aghbari, with six of his colleagues, tried to defend the activists but were detained and held at the Science and Technology Hospital for almost seven hours.

"We should be grateful that we are luckier than those who attack us, that we have better education and that we differentiate between wrong and right," said Al-Aghbari.

At his detention Mohsen said he won the soldiers' sympathy to his cause as he spent time chatting with them and raising their awareness.

That caused a split between the different constituencies in Change Square has emerged over which groups ought to control the square, as well as whether change should come through a political solution or revolutionary actions.

Many of the independent youth in the square lost their trust in the opposition political parties, whom they accuse of being too slow with respect to the revolution.

The opposition political parties [Joint Meeting Parties] opted for a different path than that advocated by the independent youth at the square when they accepted the Gulf Countries Council [GCC] initiative. This agreement guarantees a peaceful transfer of power in Yemen only if President Ali Abdullah Saleh is granted immunity from prosecution.

Al-Aghbari, like other independent youth in Change Square, condemns the Joint Meeting Parties' [JMP's] acceptance of the GCC initiative. Still he thinks it was a mistake by the JMP and the independent youth should

forget it to continue their revolution and should work with the JMP as a partner in the revolution

“We need to work hand to hand with the Joint Meeting Parties, it’s so wrong to take a side and isolate the others.” Al-Aghbari told the Yemen Times. He believes the independent youth should be included in the National Council that the Joint Meeting Parties are forming; the JMP has vowed to announce the final form of the National council on Ramdhan 17th.

"The JMP made a mistake by accepting the negotiations with Saleh but that doesn't mean that we can ignore their political role in the past, or deny their experience," he added.

Al-Aghbari explains that both the National Council and the Transitional Council are necessary but the Transitional Council



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missed two key opportunities. First, they failed to inform the representatives they chose that they were chosen to represent the protesters in the Transitional Council. Second, they were unable to explain what the Council's needs were to be successful. In his view, the National Council is a step toward ending the revolution the way it should be ended.

Al-Aghbari encourages the independent youth to take part in the National Council because it will give the youth the chance to be political partners in the crucial transitional decisions. The independent youth, he notes, are the main players in this revolution,

but they are still unorganized. "I think the JMP has the right intention – to end the revolution by forming the National Council – and it should be considered a primary goal to form a transitional council," he adds.

Al-Aghbari says that although revolutionary actions have proceeded slowly, the political awareness one gains from being in the square is incomparable.

"We [the youth] will never be fully aware of the depth of the Yemeni cause," he noted. "For my part, I have discovered just how strong is the foreign interference from such as the US, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran."

