

President calls for presidential, parliamentary and local elections

By: Malak Shaher

SANA'A, Sept. 25 — On his first speech after returning from his medical visit to Saudi Arabia, came back from Saudi Arabia, President Ali Abdullah Saleh emphasized once more his will to transfer power but only through elections.

"This time I add to the Gulf Initiative requirement of presidential elections, to have parliamentary and even local elections," he said in his recorded televised speech marking the 49th anniversary of the 26th September revolution.

Despite anticipation that Saleh would shed light on progress in the political dialogue or the way forward for Yemen, he limited his speech to thanking the US, Saudi Arabia and UAE among other 'partners' for their support to Yemen whether in terms of fighting terrorism or supporting his regime one way or another.

Addressing the current armed conflict in Yemen, Saleh condemned the killing and blamed the defecting generals, Al-Ahmar tribal family and the opposition coalition of the Joint Meeting Parties of causing the deaths of citizens.

"We call all the wise people to review their attitudes and to learn from



what is happening," he said.

Saleh added that results of the investigation into his attempted assassination on June 3rd will be revealed soon. And condemned more than once the islamists calling them Al-Qaeda and supporters of Al-Qaeda.

Although not revealing much, many Yemenis somehow anticipated that Saleh will not be announcing his resignation or that he is letting go of power although he did mention that the decree authorizing his deputy to negotiate and sign a deal with the opposition is still valid.

The Saudi newspaper; Okadh, anticipated in its recent issue that President Saleh would suggest solutions for the situation among which was conducting early elections

before the end of his term in 2013

Abdulla Abu Al-Ghaith, professor at Sana'a University said that the gulf initiative is the only solution for Yemen's crises. Al-Ghaith said that the only way the initiative would be implemented is only if Saleh is able to overcome pressure from his own family who are not eager to let go of power.

Muhammad Al-Nuwaira, a Yemeni citizen loyal to the regime agreed with the rhetoric of the president saying that the only solution for Yemen is when the wise men in the political parties put Yemen's stability as the priority.

"We do not want more killing from any side," he said.

However, Change Square protesters in Sana'a disagree and see that Saleh is being Saleh and that he is just wasting time.

"It is getting very violent and some protesters especially those from tribal areas who are used to carrying arms might be tempted to using force to get achieve their aims if Saleh does not allow peaceful transition of power," one of them warned.

UN Security Council calls for end to Yemen violence

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Sept. 25 — The UN security council on Sunday called for an end to the violence in Yemen after the death toll rose to over 100 persons. Hundreds were injured in the dark week of violence as Sana'a and Taiz fell victim to fighting between forces loyal to president Saleh and others loyal to the opposition.

Amnesty International, said on Monday that "security forces used snipers and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) against protesters who were marching. Their demand has been the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh."

The anti-regime protesters have been camping out and clamoring since last February demanding an end to Saleh's 33-year rule inspired. Those on the streets and on the change squares were inspired by the Tunisian and the Egyptian revolutions which toppled two despots; one of them -- Mubarak -- is already facing prosecution.

Since Feb some 200 people have been killed and more than a thousand have been injured in protests across Yemen as security forces have repeatedly used excessive force -- this has included firing live ammunition at peaceful protesters, according to the Amnesty International.

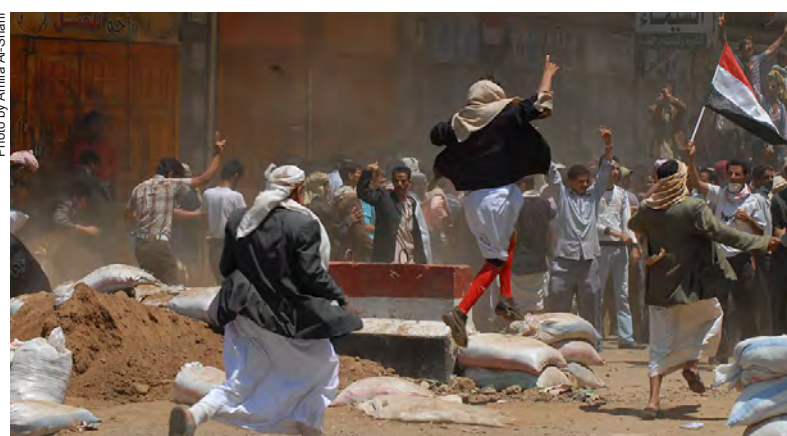
Around 44 people have been killed on Saturday in battles that ravaged several neighborhoods in Sana'a including Change Square. Change Square has been the center of the anti-regime demonstrations, according to the opposition media sources.

On Saturday also around 11 soldiers from the defected army have been killed and another 112 have been wounded by rockets and shells that were fired by the republican guards. The republican guards are still loyal to Saleh's regime; they opened fired at the headquarter of the defected first armored division in Sana'a.

On Sunday one protester was killed and another 20 were injured in a march that called for the departure and prosecution of president Saleh, according to a spokesman of the field hospital at the Change Square in the capital Sana'a.

The 15 UN Security Council members, which include the United States, China and Russia, issued the statement calling on all sides to "reject violence, including against peaceful and unarmed civilians, and show maximum restraint."

"They called on all parties to move



Protestors fleeing from open fire after they challenged state security by protesting outside the revolution's Change Square in Sana'a. Since last week over 100 protestors have been killed and hundreds wounded by state affiliated security men.

forward urgently in an inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led process of political transition," the statement said. Meanwhile Saleh finally returned to Yemen on Friday. He called for peace despite his three-month absence in Saudi Arabia. He was in the neighboring country undergoing treatment for wounds he sustained in a June 3 bomb attack on his palace.

Upon his arrival, the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council called on him, urging him to sign the GCC power transition brokered deal; he has already declined penning the agreement more than once he maintains that "the only way to reach power is by ballot boxes." Saleh criticized the traditional opposition for not accepting early presidential elections.

The British Prime Minister David Cameron on Friday criticized the government of Yemen during the United Nations General Assembly for its mistreatment of its people.

"Here at the UN, we have a responsibility to stand up against regimes that persecute their people. We need to see reform in Yemen, and above all,

on Syria, it is time for the Members of the Security Council to act," said Cameron.

"We must now adopt a credible resolution threatening tough sanctions. Of course we should always act with care when it comes to the internal affairs of a sovereign state. But we cannot allow this to be an excuse for indifference in the face of a regime that week after week arrests, intimidates, tortures and kills people who are peacefully trying to make their voices heard," he added.

A group of human rights organizations in Taiz city, around 260 km south the capital Sana'a, asked for an emergency intervention on Saturday. Taiz is vulnerable to shelling and attacks by tanks and mortar shells.

"Yemenis in Taiz and Sana'a have been and are subjected to different kinds of crimes by Saleh's regime amidst the international silence. This silence has meant more killing, mass punishments and genocide against the people of Yemen," read the statement which was released by the Human Rights Information and Qualification Center's, HOOD office in Taiz.

Teachers in Melhan strike for change of education office director

By: Ali Saeed

MAHWIT, Sept 24 — Anwar Ali, an 11th grade student in the Melhan district of the Mahwit governorate, 111 km northwest of Sana'a is frustrated. His academic year has not started as he would have wished for many subjects in the school where he studies have no teachers.

"Many students from my village often move for education and they study in other schools that are equipped with sufficient teachers especially for scientific subjects. But often students sit their final exams and succeed without studying three or four subjects," he said.

This news comes as over 700 teachers from 70 schools in the Melhan district of the Mahwit governorate have been on strike for over one week. They are demanding the change of a newly appointed education office director who was placed in his office recently by the governor.

Teachers told the Yemen Times that they had a "bad experience" with the new director who held that office for two the academic years of 2008-2010.

They explained that during his previous management of the education office he sold school books, chalks and the country's flags to private schools instead of distributing them to the public schools.

They also accused him of foul play as he took monetary gifts -- in the form of salaries -- from absent teachers; the teachers used to skip



Al-Eslah School in Beni Maleek sub-district of Melhan-Mahwit where students complain of shortage of scientific subjects teachers.

school in order to join in private work in agriculture. Some even left Yemen for the southern border shared with Saudi Arabia.

We do not want this director who was authorized by the governor. We have already had bad experiences with his management and have seen how he sold students' books and even chalks," said Ibraheem Sharif, principal of the Al-Eslah school in Beni Maleek in the sub-district of Melhan.

He demanded that a new education officer be appointed, one that comes from the same district so that he would feel responsible for the education of the youth in the area. In fact, he went as far as say-

ing that "anyone who can do the job professionally and with no embezzlement" was welcome.

Continued on page 2

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Yemenis consider Saleh’s return as ‘harbinger of doom’

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA’A, Sept. 25 — Yemen now teeters at the brink of the civil war with President Saleh's abrupt return to Yemen last Friday, say political activists.

The week gone has seen Sana’a embroiled in deadly clashes between the Republican Guard, Central Security and dissident soldiers of 1st Armored Division. It is estimated that up to one hundred protesters and dissident soldiers were killed in the fateful week.

President Saleh has called upon all conflicting parties to declare a truce and eliminate armed mani-

festations.

Sofyan Jubran, a journalist and one of the anti-regime protesters expects that President Saleh will, yet again, refuse to sign the GCC initiative and this may well drag Yemen into a civil war in the short term.

“I expect the dissident army will storm the presidential palace,” he said to the Yemen Times.

Jubran called for the Yemeni youth in Yemeni governorates to coordinate with the pro-revolution army and to take control of the governorates without bloodshed.

“Yemeni revolutionaries in Sana’a should escalate their ac-

tions and march to the presidential palace, whatever the cost,” he said. “The embattled regime is dying day by day and the peaceful demonstrations frighten them.”

Hasaba unrest

War-torn Hasaba district suffered a wave of bombings that targeted the house of tribal leader Sheikh Sadeq Al-Ahmer and houses of unarmed locals, according to witnesses.

Mufeed Al-Rawhani, one of the locals in the war-torn Hasaba district has said that the locals are entirely distrustful about the truce.

He indicated that although President Saleh had called for a truce and

an elimination of all armed manifestations, barracks and trenches of the gunmen continued to be stationed near the locals’ homes.

“The only victims of these clashes are the every day people. Unfortunately, the conflicting parties don’t care about the interests of Hasaba’s locals,” he said. “Those people want to sleep safely and they seek departure of gunmen and all soldiers.”

Al-Rawhani indicated that some people in Hasaba cannot evacuate their homes and the location for they have nowhere else to go. “Our families and children are scared of the fierce shelling. Many children are now suffering from psychologi-

cal problems due to the sound of shelling and gunfire.”

“One of my friends was killed three days ago as he was trying to help one of the injured people,” he said sadly. “The conflicting parties should make rational decisions to stop bloodshed in the area.”

A source at the Ministry of Interior accused the Al-Ahmer family of breaking a truce and attacking public facilities and people’s houses.

For his part, Abdulqawi Al-Qaisi, the spokesman for Sheikh Sadeq Al-Ahmer’s office told the Yemen Times that Sheikh Al-Ahmer continues to be committed to a truce

that called by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and vice president Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi.

“We show restraint despite the frequent provocations by the regime and the regimes attempts to drag us into fighting,” he said. “If the attacks on us continue we will run out of patience.”

Al-Qaisi indicated that 18 loyalists to Al-Ahmer were killed last Friday and 65 were wounded. “Unfortunately, the regime always accuses us of starting attacks. They commit their crimes and accuse us of committing these crimes.”

International condemnation to the violence in Yemen urging the GCC initiative

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA’A, Sept. 24 — Yemen received the International day of peace with pain and death, following three days of shelling and the killing of civilians in areas that have left at least 82 dead and hundreds injured. The anti-government protesters faced increasing violence ad they took to the atreets for a martyrs funeral on the day of peace.

Thousands of protesters marched to the Funeral at Al-Steen street passing by the vice president house. Clashes also resumed in Kintakiround between the Central Security and the First Armored Division.

“My family and I were all gathered in the furthest room in the house. We hid from where we thought the soldiers were . Then a blast hit our house; thank God we survived,” said Amani Ali who lives in Kinaki round, the exposed area of the shelling.

Others experienced mind blowing pain as they saw their family member or a friend or even passersby exploding to pieces directly in front of them by blasts.

“I was walking in Kintaky round when I saw three passerby crumbled with a blast. I have never seen such inhumanity,” said Ahmed AL-Arhabi, a blood donator from the field hospital in Change Square.

A family who live on Al-Khamsen Street told the Yemen Times that a blast hit the main bedroom in their house. No one was inside due to the fighting between the republican guards and the first armored division [the defected army] over a hill the belongs to General Ali Mohsen. The hill is located in a very strategic place.

Increased violence has been seen in several cities in Yemen. Yemeni activists abroad are planning silence protests around the world to condemn the international commu-

nity’s “negative” role in Yemen.

A committee of the Arab Parliament called on The Arab League Parliament to suspend Yemen’s membership to the bloc due to the rising spectre of violence.

“We call on the Yemeni leadership to respond to the Yemeni people and accept the Gulf states initiative ... or we call on the Arab League to suspend Yemen's membership in the Arab League and all its organizations” said the head of the committee as reported by Al-Jazeera.

The call for signing the Gulf Cooperation Countries Council initiative to transfer power peacefully was also sounded by the US embassy “The United States continues to support the Yemeni people’s aspirations for a peaceful and orderly transition that is responsive to their aspirations for peace, reconciliation, prosperity, and security. A political solution is the best way to avoid further bloodshed. We remain hopeful

that an agreement will be reached that leads to the expeditious signing of the GCC political transition initiative.” Read the US department of states statement.

Japan also urged signing the GCC initiative as the only solution. “In order for Yemen to avoid further conflict and to restore its stability, Japan strongly expects that the initiative offered by the Gulf Cooperation Council be signed at the earliest possible date, leading to the implementation of peaceful transition of power”, the statement said.

German Minister of State Hoyer condemned escalation of violence in Yemen, and also encouraged signing the GCC initiative.

On12 September Saleh authorized his vice president, Abd-RabbohMansour Hadi to carry out negotiations with the opposition on the GCC initiative to sign it on Saleh’s behalf.

The Latest Buzz

By: Mohammed bin Sallam

- ▶ Hassan al-Wadhaf, Al-Hurra channel photographer, who had been shot in the head by a pro-Saleh sniper while covering demonstrations demanding regime ousting , died Saturday in Sana’a.
- ▶ Yemeni government announced on Saturday recalling its ambassador in Qatar for consultation after president Saleh had criticized Doha accusing it of interfering in Yemen internal affairs.
- ▶ Nabeel al-Arabi, secretary-general of the Arab League urged president Saleh to respond to GCC call by signing the Gulf Initiative to settle the crisis in Yemen. The statement was issued during a meeting with GCC secretary-general Abdul Latif Al Zayani on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York.
- ▶ Tens of Yemenis staged a demonstration in New York in protest against US and international community’s silence towards what pro-Saleh forces are doing against demonstrators in Sana’a and Taiz. The protestors also denounced the Saudi position which they considered biased with the regime. They called all to support Yemeni people, not what they dubbed as the “corrupt” regime.
- ▶ A huge fire erupted in the relief warehouses dedicated for the Zinjibar, Abyan displaced in Aden that had been provided by Oman early this month.
- ▶ A number of politicians, PMs and social dignitaries issued a political statement in which they denounced president Ali Abdullah Saleh’s return home. They deemed this, under the current complicated and exceptional conditions, as a declaration of war against revolting Yemeni people and a further ignition of the already explosive situation.

Continued from page 1

Teachers in Melhan strike for change of education office director

"The education office director should be one of the teachers from the district and should be accepted by instructors, students and their parents," said Al-Sharif.

Ali Dahem, principal of Al-Najah school in the Beni Hajaj area said that "every four months the governor of Mahwit appoints a new education officer from outside the district while sufficient candidates exist in the district."

Six months ago teachers in the district elected one such to be the education office director and they met the governor to approve their nomination that but that was declined, according to Dahem.

However, Abd Al-Rahman A-Guzhi, the newly appointed director who has worked in the same job a year ago, in a telephone call with the Yemen Times aggressively degraded the teachers and said "the allegations are untrue and the district had privileged good education while I was in the office for the past, two years."

He added that teachers are on strike to bring about a change because he was strict with the absent teachers. He said

that they were annoyed since he cut their salaries and saved around YR 9 million for the state budget.

But, Abdo Faraj, principal of Al-Tagadum school in Al-Qibla sub-district of Melhan said that

Al-Guzhi had only harmed the education when "he shared absent teachers' salaries. It was his policies that left schools with no teachers for some subjects and did not refer them to the ministry of education to take actions against such cases."

Abd Al-Fatah Dahan, the head of the teachers' union in the district told the Yemen Times that "Al-Guzhi had committed many violations that have negatively affected the education in the district and documentary evidence exists."

He explained that the appointment of teachers to schools by the director was not done according to the school's needs, but "on how much the teacher would bribe him to let him work in the area where he or she (teacher) lives near the school of his village."

"This has naturally affected the education procedure adversely as many schools have been left with no teachers especially in areas where that are no local residential teachers," he said.


"We will continue the strike until a new director is being designated," he said.

General Secretary of local councils in the Mahwit governorate, Ali Al-Zaikm has said in a telephone call with the Yemen Times that "Teachers in Melhan have assaulted the newly appointed director Al-Guzhi while he was on his way to the district in Bajel and they have broken his vehicle."

"They are really looking to appoint an education office director from their district and this is discrimination," he said "now the policemen are investigating the assault against the director and we are working to resolve the issue smoothly,"

"If he was bad and has been involved in corruption cases why did they not report the matter at the time of his work? Why have they only raised these issues as his re-appointment period nears. We

chosen him again this year because he has proved his capacity to run the post in this remote area," said Al-Zaikm.



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OUR OPINION

The way forward

Yemen's revolution is unlike that of any of the other Arab Spring countries. There are a host of reasons this is the case. For one, there are more stakeholders with interests in the outcome of this instability than in any other country experiencing similar uprisings. For another, there are so many variables—most evident in the fickle-minded politicians who consistently disrupt the continuity of any political process, even if it is a revolution.

What is happening in Yemen may be less of a revolution, per se, and more of a period of unrest. Yemen still suffers from a “silent majority” syndrome. Until this majority speaks up, we are likely to continue the uprising in the same way way, with many killed in the name of the whole nation.

In what might be a necessary catalyst in this process, the President Ali Abdullah Saleh has returned to Yemen. The president is back. And he's come with lots of big talk for the country, assuming the role of national father and telling us that in his heart of hearts that he wants what is best for Yemen, that he is willing to talk to anyone as long as they speak legitimately and in accordance with the constitution. But can Yemen listen to him promise peace while protestors are being shot dead every day? There is a contradiction here—one that must be explained or at least acknowledged.

The good news is that he is back. This means that there is a breakthrough from this political stalemate. It's true that winds of change are so aggressive that they are blowing heads off, but the escalation means only that we are nearing rock bottom. The only way from there is up.

Here are two indicators that I am right. One, if you read the Yemeni state press you will find statements that just a few months ago were not even fathomable. Things such as “change is a necessity for all” and “any solution must be inclusive.” The best line in my opinion came from an editorial in Al-Thawra state newspaper, which read said, “The new president will...” [emphasis added].

To outsiders, these statements might seem normal. But for us in Yemen, these are far from ordinary. Just last year the regime refused, for example, to acknowledge the Houthis or the Southern Movement. It called them terrorists and launched wars against them. Today the regime is calling them stakeholders with legitimate demands.

The other indicator is in the regional press, especially those statements coming from the Gulf countries. A recent article in the London-based Saudi newspaper Al-Sharq Al-Awsat lashed against President Saleh and effectively told him off. A recent statement by the Gulf Foreign Ministers was very harsh and straightforward, calling on President Saleh to let go of power now—the key word being “now.”

It is very difficult to be optimistic when my fellow people are being killed left and right and when Saleh's rhetoric does not show much inclination to change. But I am one who tries to find a bright side in everything, and I believe that soon Yemenis will get a break.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Dodging ultimate chaos:
Yemen's destiny
on the ropes

**By: Ambassador Mohamed
Abdul-mageed Qubaty
FRCS, PhD***

For the past seven months, Yemen has been trying to abate the dysfunction it has fallen into over the past seventeen years. It looks as if all the evasions it has come out with have never helped to keep it far away from the frontiers of chaos. For millennia, all throughout its history, anarchy has been the paramount enemy of Arabia Felix; especially whenever a tyrant tried to rule it without sharing power with the constituent parts forming its mosaic structure.

The revolution for change of 11/2/11 has articulated demands for a total revision and a complete overhaul of the political system in Yemen. The demands for inclusive participatory politics, federalism and the call for a move towards a parliamentary system emanate from the several-month long dialogues which culminated in the signing of the Agreement of Accord and Reconciliation in Jordan in February 1994.

Instead of shifting towards decentralisation and a parliamentary system, Saleh getting more arrogant following his Northern forces capture of the South after the 1994 civil war, moved towards a dubious, ostentatious and an ostensible presidential system which made him an omnipotent president after only being chairman of the Presidential Council of the Unified Yemen from 1990-1994. Such totalitarian powers formed the root and basis of the patrimonial system created steadily by him following the 1994 civil war.

It is fair to say that unlike other parts of the Arab world, the recent revolt in Yemen was not directly instigated by the events of the 2011 Arab Spring. Nonetheless, the latter added a new momentum and dimension to the long-lived instability and upheavals in Yemen giving it its current form. The Southern Movement or Hirak which erupted in 2007 and continued since then was a manifestation amongst others of such wide spread upheavals.

The important geostrategic position of Yemen and its 1500km of shared borders with Saudi Arabia seem to have been a liability rather than an asset as far as the stance taken by Yemen's global and regional partners towards the Yemeni revolution. The group of The Friends of Yemen, formed in London in January 2010, committed itself to the objective of preventing Yemen from sliding into a failed state. Unfortunately,

such an objective does not mirror their stance towards the Yemeni revolution vis-à-vis the measures taken by them against the tyrants of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. Unlike Saleh's other counterparts, the dictator and his regime were not subjected to any punitive measures such as UN sanctions, embargo on arms import, freezing of assets, travel bans and a referral to the International Criminal Court for the perpetuated war crimes and atrocities against humanity.

For the past three months, the regime has been launching airstrikes against supporters of the revolution in Arhab 30km north of the capital, where the supporters of the revolution managed to block the entry of three brigades into the capital. These three brigades were attempting to join up with other brigades of the Republican Guards, who have been positioning themselves over the surrounding hills and mountains, and threatening an overall assault against the eight-month long sit-in of peaceful protesters in the capital.

By any norms and all standards, the brutal crackdown on the peaceful unarmed protestors on 18-20 September amounts to indiscriminate genocide. The perpetrators committing such criminalities with impunity are obviously relying on a controversial article in the GCC Initiative which offers the president and his entourage an amnesty and immunity from future prosecution.

In a letter dated 18/9/11 addressed to the President of the UN Human Rights Council, the Yemeni National Council, a wide umbrella organisation of the opposition parties and revolutionary forces, called the international community to meet their obligations and respect the Yemeni people's choice. The letter concluded that: “Without international intervention Yemen will explode and disintegrate. This explosion will spill over into the neighbouring region and international trade routes. Action must be taken now to prevent the crisis from spreading and becoming far beyond repair”.

Six months following the indiscriminate killing of sixty peaceful protestors during the “Friday of Dignity” on 18/3/11, the recent 18-20 September massacres of eighty peaceful protestors by heavy and medium range weapons have taken Yemen past a new turning point in the trajectory of its revolution.

It looks certain that the course of events in Yemen have crossed the point of no return. The question is: a point of no return towards what destination?

come after Saleh could be worse, and that you would be able to help bring about change, without bloodshed, because initially you had the trust and respect of both sides. But the excuse of “Apres moi, le deluge!” has been there for centuries, since Louis XV.

However, in my view, you grossly underestimated the phenomenon of hereditary entitlement to the “throne”, which was vehemently, and even violently espoused by Uday in Iraq, Saif-Al-Islam in Libya, Bashar in Syria, and now Ahmad in Yemen. This was sufficient, on Sept. 18, to cause the murder of 26 peaceful young protestors, and the massive injuries to another 300, not only with bullets but also with heavy weapons. This was a clear sign of the desperation of the regime, of which you are part, whether actively or tacitly or reluctantly.

This is what I predicted, well be-

fore the Arab Spring began, in my novel Final Flight from Sanaa. And thus you find yourself trapped, having given your total loyalty to a cause that is bound to lose, if not now, then soon, notwithstanding any Saudi tanks rolling onto Yemeni soil. I hope that you will choose wisely. I know what I would have done, but cannot presume to know what is best for you. Either way it will be a difficult and potentially dangerous decision.

To sin by silence when we should protest makes cowards out of men, as Ella Wheeler Wilcox said. Believe me when I say that writing this has also been a painful decision, provoked by the sight of the two Yemeni doctors on TV, who might have been the two of us 30 years ago, clamoring for medical equipment and ambulances and international help to save their blood-drenched young patients.

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Is it towards the grip of anarchy as the usual history of Yemen entails, or the point crossing a threshold towards inclusive participatory politics? I am inclined to bet on the latter; however, the true answer for such a historical paradox can only be offered by nothing else other than time.

Dr. Mohamed Qubaty is an opposition political activist and is the spokesman on international affairs for the Yemeni National Council. He was a former ambassador of Yemen to Lebanon and Cyprus and a former senior political advisor to the last two Yemeni Prime Ministers.

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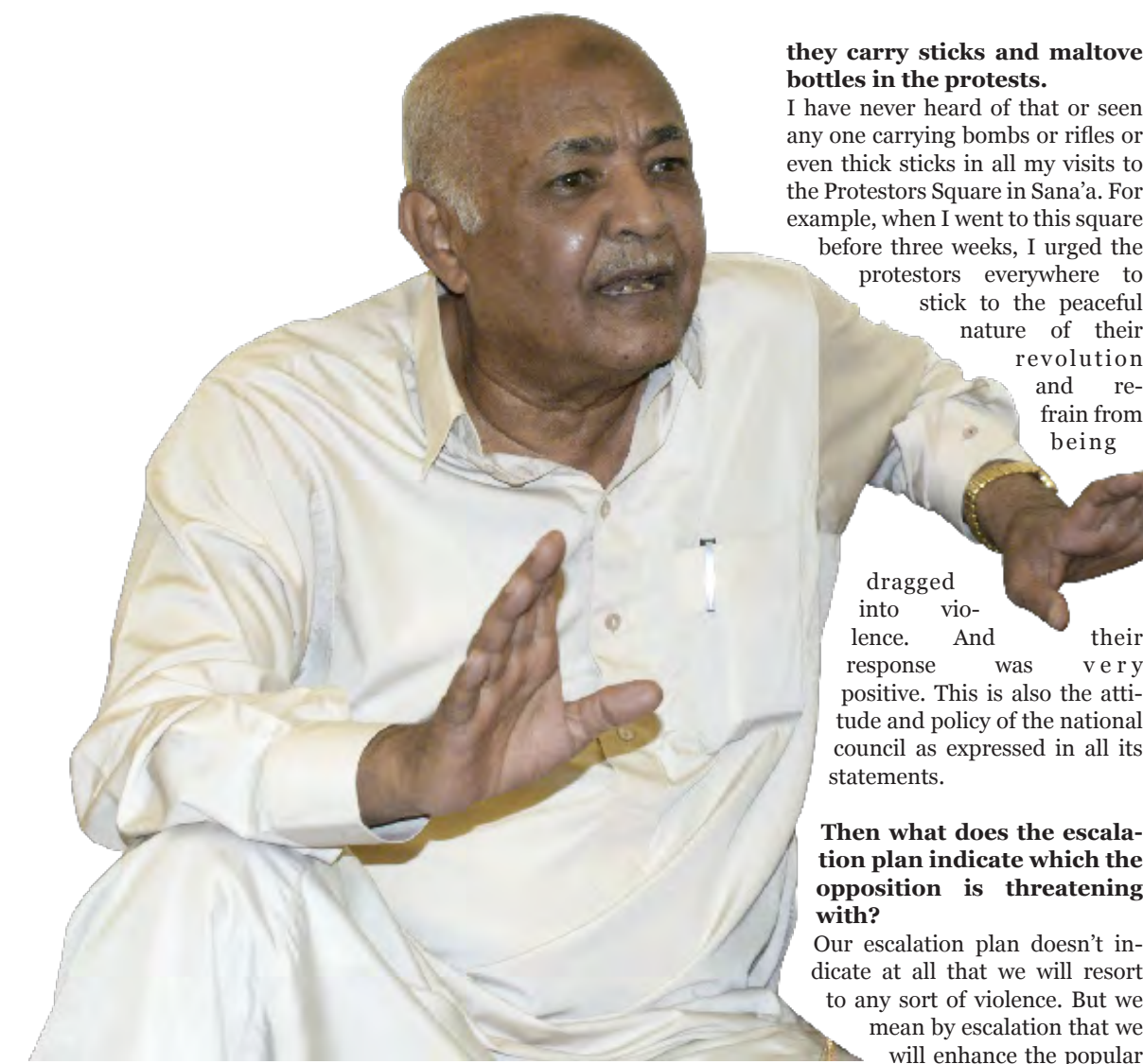
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Basendwah: “We want the international community to take a firm stand towards the regime.”

Mohammed Salem Basendwah is considered one of the Yemeni figures who contributed to the history of Yemen for many decades since he started his political career as part of the Socialist Party leadership. Although he was born and raised in Aden, he moved in 1970 to participate in the founding of the Yemen Arab Republic before Saleh gained power in 1978. He was appointed at several high level positions inside and outside the country last of which was being an advisor to President Saleh in 2002 until he joined the protests early 2011 being a leader in the opposition coalition the Joint Meeting Parties.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf met with Basendwah to discuss the current political situation of Yemen and potential perspectives for the future.



Mohammed Salem Basendwah

Let's start with the most urgent question; are we on the verge of a civil war?

In spite of all what happened and is still happening in some parts of Yemen, and the excessive use of force and violence by military and security units loyal to the ruling family, I doubt very much that Yemen will be involved in a full-scale civil war.

It is not only because I am optimistic, but there are many reasons that make me rule out civil war. First, because it is not in the interest of neither the current regime nor in the interest of either the opposition or the protestors, who are very keen to preserve the peaceful nature of their revolution whatever sacrifices they render and high costs

“I don't think the Houthis are refraining because they want a higher number of seats but if they do then it will be no problem.

they pay.

Secondly, because the neighboring Gulf States and the international community realize that any civil war in Yemen will be detrimental to their interests and might affect the stability of the whole regime due to our country's unique strategic location on the Red Sea and the Arab Sea.

In addition to its having long borders with both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman. That is why I expect them to do their utmost best to prevent a civil war and chaos in Yemen.

After all, the party that starts the conflict will be accountable to the Yemeni people and those involved in massacres and genocide will be taken to the international criminal court.

But as such there are no guarantees to stop from an actual war from happening?

I don't claim that those reasons constitute actual guarantees, but still we can count on them to prevent civil war from happening. Yet, as long as the leaders of the Popular Youth Revolution are determined to pursue peaceful means and ways in their struggle as they have done until now, how can they be dragged into violence. Maybe you are also aware that even those tribes and army and security units that joined the revolution are abiding by its peaceful nature and don't hold arms when they participate in any demonstration or while they attend any event in the squares. Yet, they use limited force for self-defense in the event of any aggression on them.

But there are accusations against the protestors that

they carry sticks and maltrove bottles in the protests.

I have never heard of that or seen any one carrying bombs or rifles or even thick sticks in all my visits to the Protestors Square in Sana'a. For example, when I went to this square before three weeks, I urged the protestors everywhere to stick to the peaceful nature of their revolution and refrain from being

dragged into violence. And their response was very positive. This is also the attitude and policy of the national council as expressed in all its statements.

Then what does the escalation plan indicate which the opposition is threatening with?

Our escalation plan doesn't indicate at all that we will resort to any sort of violence. But we mean by escalation that we will enhance the popular protests and demonstra-

tions and might use other means and ways such as general strikes for example. But all our activities will be peaceful. Anyhow, those in charge of the plan will have to decide what means to implement and when.

But protests heading to government institutions is a call for trouble don't you think?

The National Council has never called on the protestors to seize any government institutions while we always call on then bit to attack private and public properties whenever they hold their demonstrations, though noting of this has happened so far.

Then who is pushing the youth to lead protests to 'un-safe' ar-

eas?

It could be that some of the revolution's youth are enthusiastic and depressed of waiting long and suffering much. And this makes them sometimes try to overtake military and security barriers that restrict their marches or movements, despite the risks they take because they are prepared to sacrifice their lives. But, as long as they demonstrate peacefully, and abide by law and order they have the right to move to whatever area they want while the duty of the security forces is to protect them since they don't commit any breach of law and public order.

The revolution is approaching its ninth month, would you consider it a success?

Yes, by all standards. First because it has made millions of men, women, young and old, from different factions and fractions civilians, tribesmen and military and security officers and soldiers father together across Yemen as President Obama said in is recent speech before the current session of the UN General Assembly in public squares for months. It also created a new national spirit among the vast majority of our people and united them around one just national cause, and several legitimate demands, while no one in any square even the tribesmen and the splinter army and security men who joined the revolution except those belonging to the First Brigade and other military units that declared their support for the peaceful Youth Popular Revolution.

In addition to all that, it has made a vast number of people in the Southern Governorate restore their strong belief in the unity. But this change in their attitude does not mean that they still support this current unitary system and want a federal system definitely.

What about you? Do you support a federal system?

Of course, but not on the basis of two states, because that will make re-session or separation quite possible in time in the future. In my view, it would be in the interest of our people as a whole to have a federal system of 3 or 5 states or even more. Anyhow, this issue could be resolved in a comprehensive national dialogue conference that will be held after this regime has been changed and since we have tried both session and unitary system, let us try a federal Yemen with a number of states as my widely respected and highly esteemed brother and colleague Dr. Yasin Saeed No'man had said before.

If the political solution is gone, and you think no civil war is going to happen what does that leave us with?

The GCC initiative provided a political solution that was more in favor of the ruling party, and that was, also, not acceptable by the protestors. Yet, the JMP and its partners have signed it. But, the president declined to sign it through five leading members of his party signed it in his presence. This does not mean that the political solution is no longer feasible. Still a political solution could be reached with when the other side feels that it has no other choice but to subdue to the demands of the protestors and the opposition. And when that time comes, and I am confident that it will come soon. That solution could be just and more in favor of the opposition and the protestors alike. As far as civil war is concerned I still rule it out as I have already told you why.

You must have heard deputy minister of information saying that any escalation towards government institutions will be stopped vigorously, are you worried?

There is no intention to head towards any government institutions in our escalation plan. I believe the solution will come through diplomatic pressure and there is a chance that some countries take the issue to the UN Security Council if the transfer of power deal is not signed.

When will that be?

No one knows, but the UN Secretary General envoy had a plan and said...

But don't you think the UN initiative is heading to the same direction the gulf initiative ended with?

It could be, but the ruling party is the one that refused to signed the GCC initiative as well as the UN proposed mechanism initiative. However, we count on our people in the first place, and on the support of our brothers and friends and their pressure on the regime in the second place.

So what diplomatic pressure are you talking about?

There are many kinds of pressure they can exert on the regime, and I am sure it won't be able to resist any intensive pressure for long. However, external pressure is now accumulating as we can see from the recent United States and the EU and GCC statements.

What's new? Why should he sign today what he rejected yesterday?

Still the president can refuse if he doesn't want to sign the GCC initiative. But his refusal will not stop change from happening sooner or later.

I am still not sure what international pressure you are talking about. The US has just sold weapons to the Republican Guards..

What you said could be true, but I am not aware of that. Yet the US administration has repeatedly called for transfer of power though the regime is not responding positively to such calls. But let us wait and see whether the western countries in general will continue to deal softly

“This is no time for judging or point fingers. A person's positions through history are valued and we need to respectfully recognize the positions of those people who joined the revolution. Joining the revolution forgives what was done before and we have to adopt an attitude of forgiveness and tolerance and abandon revenge and hatred.

What about the grievances of some people whose lands for example were taken by some so-called revolution heroes today? Such problems have to be resolved by legal courts or through arbitration if the quarreling parties agree to that.

with the regime for the sake of fighting terrorism though they know that it is not serious in that either.

Talking about terrorism, who really liberated Zunjubar? Doesn't the news that it was done by a defecting army unit give any indicator that the west can trust in the opposition's position on fighting ter-

“we have tried both session and unitary system, let us try a federal Yemen with a number of states

rorism?

The army unit that cleaned the city from Al-Qaeda, as far as I know, is division 119 commanded by brigade Faisal Rajab who had joined the peaceful revolution despite the regime claiming that it is their victory. And yes, I do believe that this incident may pose as an indicator for the west to trust that the new government will be a stronger ally against terrorism than the current one.

Let's talk about the national council now..

We stated more than once that the council is not an alternative for the regime or a shadow government. It was created to lead the youth popular revolution and maintain the stability of the country.

How will it maintain that?

For example in places where there is no state control such as Al-Mahara now, local popular committees are formed and directed by the council to ensure the areas don't head into chaos in the absence of state rule of law. In Al-Mahara the locals who are with the revolution took over in the absence of state institutions and are governing their own area. This can happen in Al-Jawf, Abyan and Taiz is not far from that.

But there are questions about the integrity of the National Council itself.

First of all many of those who declined to participate in the council in the beginning are now part of it and we still hope that many of the key opposition figures abroad will eventually join. We are in constant communication with them. Also the Houthis said they are reconsidering their position and we assured them that their places are reserved once they feel convinced enough to join us.

But there are questions regarding the backgrounds of some of the council's members.

This is no time for judging or point fingers. A person's positions through history are valued and we need to respectfully recognize the positions of those people who joined the revolution. Joining the revolution forgives what was done before and we have to adopt an attitude of forgiveness and tolerance and abandon revenge and hatred.

What about the grievances of some people whose lands for example were taken by some so-called revolution heroes today? Such problems have to be resolved by legal courts or through arbitration if the quarreling parties agree to that.

Back to the National Council, why were the Houthis given limited seats?

The distribution of seats in the Council is based on certain standards. All parties for example are represented equally while women have a bigger number of seats. Anyhow, I don't think the Houthis are refraining because they want a higher number of seats but if they do then it will be no problem. And I am confident that they will eventually join the council.

Will there be a quota for women in the new government?

For sure, we want women to have no less than 20% representation in the new government as a temporary step.

As the national council of the opposition what do you want from the international community?

We have been recognized already by the international community as opposition and any high level for-

“Even those tribes and army and security units that joined the revolution are abiding by its peaceful nature.

“Many of those who declined to participate in the National Council in the beginning are now part of it.

sign or Arab leader comes to Yemen meets with us. We have been even invited to Riyadh. And this means that no one can ignore our significance and that the regime is no longer totally in control.

That being said, what we really want from the international community is to take a firm clear stand towards the regime once and for all.

We have no authority to impose on the international community what to do. They know what to do and they should start doing it in order to make this regime surrender power peacefully. As for us in the national council, we made our position towards the regime clear in our statement on September 8, in which we said we no longer recognize this regime or its political decisions.

Does the national council have an economic vision for rebuilding Yemen?

Yes we do and we are counting on our neighbors and the international community to help. I think they may agree on establishing a fund

for Yemen's rebuilding moreover, the World Bank has dedicated 80 billion dollars for the Arab Spring countries and Yemen is one of them.

There are many countries willing to help Yemen and we do request them that instead of giving money for projects to the new government to please create their own establishment that oversees the implementation of the projects in order to minimize corruption and ensure transparency. As for our operations costs such as salaries and so on I believe that if the national revenues are accounted for fairly we will cover our needs and more.

If there was a call for early presidential elections will you agree?

Yes, but it depends on how the elections will be conducted. And it has to be after transfer of power.

But the gulf initiative has failed, right?

Who is responsible for that do you think? And will they stay at their re-

“We want women to have no less than 20% representation in the new government.



fusing position?

What is going to change their minds now?

The regime will realize that matters have slipped from its hands now and I am very optimistic that the peaceful escalation we are working on now will force the regime to let go of power soon on its own accord.

What is soon, are you talking about a month or more?

I can't say. But what I can tell you is that we have an escalation plan for the youth and that if not for us holding them back they would have gone

wild. They say they are ready to do anything and that death is better than the life they are living today.

What you are saying is like if there are two thieves, one that steals ten dollars and another that steals a million. Should I reward the one who stole the ten dollars and consider it a point in his favor?

Will we be seeing you playing a key role in the new government?

I really hope not. I plead that my friends who gave me their trust today will me to be an advisor for them and not push me into a major

role. Today I know my responsibilities and will not shy away from giving my knowledge and experience to help my homeland. I have been serving my country for a very long time.

I have known president Saleh since 1970 before he was president and know him quite well personally. Today my position comes from my social and political responsibility and is not personal.

In the end I really hope Yemen sails through these difficult times and is able to be the Yemen it deserves to be, happy and prosperous by God's will.



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The students should further:

5. Meet the university/institution's admission requirements
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Yemenis still reject people living with HIV

By: Malak Shaher

Four years ago when the AIDS Association was established in Al-Raqas neighborhood, stones were thrown at the building, said Ali Al-Alkami, a social activist at the association.

The people of Yemen need an awareness campaign, explained Al-Alkami, because they still reject people living with HIV. They believe that HIV and AIDS are transmitted through illegal sex, forbidden in Islam.

On Monday, Progressio and USAIDS held a workshop on HIV and AIDS and the rights of people living with the virus, with 25 participants from the private sector and the government.

“One of the impacts of AIDS worldwide – other than the infection – is the stigma and the discrimination that affects the social integrity of that person,” said Wondimu Guyassa, Progressio coordinator in Yemen.

“HIV is not only a problem of health but it is also a social problem.”

Progressio is a health organization that started its work in Yemen in 1974, expanding into the field of HIV and AIDS in 2005.

HIV is not transferred through

social contact, shaking hands, living together, eating from the same dish, going to school or working together and playing, said Dr. Sameer Jubari, a coordinator from the Interaction Company for Development, which works with the UNHCR.

He explained that HIV can only be transmitted through direct interaction with infected blood, vaginal fluids or semen, or through breast feeding.

An earlier workshop was conducted for preachers in mosques in order to spread awareness to fight the stigma against those living with HIV.

“HIV is not only a health problem in Yemen, it is also related to the society, as Yemenis reject infected people and ignore the fact that these young people are still part of society and can be productive,” said Fawzya Gharama, UNAIDS representative in Yemen. “We should not neglect these people since the more people that hide their infection, the greater the increase of infected people in Yemen.”

The first HIV case appeared in Yemen in 1987 and the number of the people with HIV is now approaching 3,000, according to the World Health Organization.

In 2009, the Yemeni parliament approved a law to protect the rights of people living with HIV.

“However, the law is not practiced and people with HIV are not treated well by their society,” said Sheikh Jabri Ibrahim from the Ministry of Endowments who took part in the workshop.

In Yemen Almost 80 percent of women get the virus from their husbands and a large number of those women are prevented from visiting a hospital because of the stigma of having HIV, according to Ibrahim.

Some 17 associations have been established in Yemen to help people with HIV – the AIDS Association in Al-Raqas neighborhood is one of them with other three branches in the governorates of Aden, Hadramout and Hodaida, according to Al-Alkami.

They are currently dealing with 380 HIV cases, he said, most of which are people abandoned by their families and societies once they were discovered to have the infection.

The head of the association Fu’ad Al-Sabri mentioned the case of a family – a husband and his wife – who were rejected from their neighborhood after they were found to have the virus. They moved into another area, but people from their previous neighborhood told the couple’s new neighbors, continuing the stigma they faced.

Yemen's midwives call on world leaders to take action for maternal mortality

By: Ali Saeed

Around 200 Yemeni midwives have signed a petition urging world leaders who will meet in the UN annual General Assembly session in New York this month to take action to reduce Yemen’s maternal mortality rate.

According to the UNICEF statistics of 2009, around 370 mothers per 100,000 live births die in Yemen every year due to the lack of access to health services during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as the shortage of medial workers at health facilities around the country. This rate is just under the international average for maternal mortality, which was 260 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008, according to the World Health Organization. The ratio is highest in Yemen’s rural areas.

The midwives wrote the petition in coordination with the International Confederation of Midwives, Save the Children and the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood.

The midwives have called on the heads of states, governments and world leaders to put midwives and health workers at the heart of their agendas at the UN General Assembly meeting to improve the health of mothers and their children and to decrease maternal

and neonatal mortality.

The same petition was also signed by thousands of midwives worldwide. It is to be delivered to the UN General Assembly in their meeting on September 19.

This petition was one outcome of the Midwifery Conference held in Durban, South Africa, in June 2011. The meeting was attended by members of the International Confederation of Midwives, representatives of national midwifery associations from most of the countries in the world.

The 200 Yemeni midwives who signed the petition are working in different governorates around the country. It has been delivered to the White Ribbon Alliance to be presented in the UN General Assembly meeting.

Later this month, the same petition will be also delivered to one of the acting official leaders in Yemen’s Ministry of Public Health and Population. The National Association of Yemeni Midwives will deliver the signed petition to the official in conjunction with Yemen’s National Safe Motherhood Alliance.

The shortage of midwives around the country is one of the key factors behind Yemen’s high maternal and newborn mortality rates. There are three to seven midwives for each 10,000 women in Yemen, according to Dr. Jamal Nasher,

Yemen’s Deputy Minister of Public Health and Population.

The greatest proportion of mothers in Yemen who die during pregnancy and delivery live in rural areas, where over 70 percent of Yemen’s 25 million people live without adequate health services. This deficiency is largely due to the lack of medical personnel.

“I was a doctor in rural areas for some time, and from my experience of working there I found that a midwife is the best actor who can provide healthcare for women during pregnancy and delivery,” Dr. Rami Al-Maqtari, a doctor of public health who advocates for women’s health in Yemen, told the Yemen Times earlier this year.

This was one of the core messages the midwives aimed to communicate in their petition.

“We know what’s needed,” the petition read. “More midwives means more lives saved. If births were routinely attended by midwives or health workers with midwifery skills, with the right equipment and the right support, the lives of 1.3 million newborn babies and 350,000 mothers would be saved every year.”

It concluded: “We call on you to show bold leadership and put midwives and other health workers at the heart of your efforts to improve the health of mothers and their children.”

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Faces from Yemen's revolution

Fakhr Al-Azab

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

Fakhr Al-Azab, 24, is one of the few students and youths who have been actively contributing to the Yemeni revolution since it began earlier this year.

After the success of Tunisia's revolution last January, he led the first student march to the Tunisian embassy in Sana'a, demanding the ouster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Moreover, he wrote the first statement issued by revolutionaries on 18 January.

Al-Azab is a good speaker and known for his poetic talent, journalistic activities and notable revolutionary contributions.

He has participated enthusiastically in all the demonstrations and different events of the revolution. He can mobilize many students, friends and relatives to join the cause.

"Yemenis have made a legendary revolution and showed unbelievable determination to continue their peaceful struggle," said Al-Azab. "During the last months, the revolutionaries have resolved their problems and differences. Now they are working in harmony."

'One of the greatest revolutions'

Unlike many revolutionaries, Al-Azab completely believes that the length of the revolution has actually had some positive effects. "We have rearranged our ideas and our priorities," he said. "Although some Yemenis are depressed about the delay of our revolution, we have taken important steps during these last months."

Speaking enthusiastically about the Yemen's revolution, Al-Azab



Fakhr Al-Azab

said: "The revolution didn't only raise the political awareness among Yemenis; it has created social and cultural harmony among them."

"It is one of the greatest revolutions in the world because Yemenis were able to continue their great revolution peacefully despite the provocations of the regime's security and thugs," he said.

Al-Azab has faced several assassination attempts as well as threats that he would be arrested by the National Security. "In the beginning of the revolution, some

figures from the National Security were looking for me in the Faculty of Mass Communication at Sana'a University to arrest me because of my political activities."

'In Change Square I live among a big family'

Change Square in Sana'a is one of the most inspiring places for Al-Azab, where he has witnessed many unforgettable moments and developed great friendships with many other youths and students.

"In Change Square I live among a big family. I live among tens of

thousands of people who seek justice and democracy," he said.

On the other hand, Al-Azab has seen many tragic scenes in Change Square. "It was one of the saddest moments in my life when I saw my friend Shehab Al-Sharabi covered in blood after he was shot in the shoulder by one of the thugs of the corrupt regime," he remembered.

Al-Azab proudly recalled the first days of the revolution: "The beginning of the revolution was exceptional. The determination of the youths was so great that I felt that they were angels."

"I felt so proud when I saw hundreds of thousands of Yemenis chant against the regime. I felt proud because I was chanting against the regime with tens of my friends in the beginning of the revolution and I didn't expect that a huge number of Yemenis would join our dream of change," said Al-Azab.

'The power of Yemeni people will win'

He totally rejects any military options for the revolutionaries or the dissident army, firmly believing that the protesters will win their revolution peacefully. "The power of Yemeni people will win," he said.

He called for the Republican Guards to be a national army and

put Yemeni interests above all else.

According to Al-Azab, although the opposition parties made some mistakes during the revolution people must not deny that they made a positive contribution and pushed their people to play a big part in Change Square.

He called on the revolutionaries to avoid disputes and differences. "They shouldn't allow any power to cause rifts between them. We all aim to overthrow the regime and build our new civil state so we should work hard to achieve our aims."

The civil state that Al-Azab seeks should be based on equal citizenship, respect for law, freedom of beliefs and political pluralism, he said.



Youth Talk

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:

What does the date 26th September mean to you?

Noman Al-Khadhmi

It is the day when our people were able to conquer injustice, ignorance and oppression to start a new phase towards progress and prosperity.

Ibtisam Al-Farah

21st September means a new and modern 'according to Yemeni history lessons', one that we never seen from that date up to today.

Arafat Hazza Gassim

26th September means a lot for me and every one. It took the Yemeni society forward, but this revolution, I hope is the solution of

our hard situation. I'm waiting for the time when our authorities view the country through patriotic light away from other interests.

Randa Hussien

It is a national day and we all celebrate that day. It is the day when revolution was successful from the Imamate rule. I remember the revolutionaries that we studied in history and that time it was a real revolution not like this time when they don't stick to their objectives.

Emad Algabali

26th of September means the beginning of new bright epoch and

the end of the tyrants regime.

When the freemen get what they want and achieve their goals even though they paid their lives to get it. Eventually 26th of September means revolution, dignity and freedom.

Fuad Ahmed

It is a vacation. A national holiday and a time to rest. In the past there used to be some signs of celebrations such as fireworks and parades, now there isn't even that.

Abdulbaset Ali

It was supposed to be an occasion to get out of ignorance during the

imamate rule to the revolution's dawn but we found that ignorance is still very much here. It is also a time for military parades and a power show it also includes an occasion for graduating military batches.

Malak Shaher

It is the independence day. Freedom and victory over the imamate rule. Despite the fact that some are not optimistic I feel it would be the beginning of a new Yemen.

Watheq Al-Kadhi

The date reminds me of the 26th September revolution which I feel

was incomplete and was taken off-track. I believe that today's revolution is complementary to the first one on 26th September 1962. On a

more personal note when I think of the date 26th September I remember it is a national holiday so I feel good, I have a day off.

Next Week's Question:

Is the president here to stay as president until 2013 or is he here to organize transition of power under his supervision?

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!