

Protests continue over 'Life March' killings

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, Dec. 25 - Tension has returned to Sana'a, after a five-day 'Life March' from Taiz to the Yemeni capital protesting Saleh's GCC-sponsored immunity from prosecution ended in the death of at least 13 protesters on Saturday.

Although the interior minister had vowed to protect the peaceful march, at least 13 protesters were killed by live ammunition when they reached Sana'a on Saturday. Security forces were deployed all over the city. Tear gas and sewage were used to disperse the march.

However, the minister created a committee to investigate the killings involving all rumors that claimed he resigned because of this incident.

Mohammed Basundwa, prime minister of the new 'National Unity' government has said that he will resign if those responsible for the killings are not identified within 48 hours, according to Al-Khaleej newspaper.

President Saleh, in a press conference on Saturday evening, held the new government responsible for the

attacks, for the first time pointing the finger at the government rather than to his opponents, defected major Ali Mohsen and the Ahmar family.

At the time of writing, Sunday afternoon, violence continued in the capital's Change Square, where protesters rallied to denounce the killings. At least seven were injured and others were detained over fighting on the square's main stage. In other parts of the country, marches also protested the killings.

Independent youth had decided to set out on the 250-km-long march from Taiz to Sana'a to protest against the Gulf initiative signed in Riyadh last November by Saleh and the opposition. Under the GCC-sponsored deal, Saleh's power is transferred to his deputy but he remains honorary president until presidential elections planned in February

2012. The agreement ensures that 50 percent of government members are from the opposition, but grants Saleh and members of his regime immunity from prosecution.

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Though many who marched as far as 270 km met with violence at the hands of Sana'a's security forces, by nightfall a rapturous welcome awaited them.

No competition for Hadi

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Dec. 25 - The parliament of Yemen has voted by consensus to close nominations for early presidential election, scheduled to take place on 21 February 2012. Vice President Abd Rabo Mansour Hadi is the sole candidate in line with the GCC power transition plan and its implementation mechanism.

However, this action by the parliament violates Article 108 of Yemen's constitution which stipulates that presidential elections shall be by competitive election, where proposals must be submitted to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and whereby at least two candidates must run for the elections to be valid.

But MP Mohamed Al-Hazmi, a personal supporter of this decree whose party voted in favour of it, told the Yemen Times that "this decree came at an extraordinary time in line with the implementation mechanism of the GCC deal which was signed by both sides, and its 18th article stipulates that the mechanism overrides any contradictory constitutional articles to the GCC plan."

"We want to realize the goals of the revolution through the Gulf initiative," said Al-Hazmi.

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Saleh: Basundwa's government needs to do more than talk

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Dec. 25 - President Saleh held a nationally-televised press conference on Saturday, December 24, 2011, said to be his last as Yemen's president. He indicated that he will be leaving soon for the US - not for medical reasons, but to allow the new government to run the country without himself in the picture and to prepare for upcoming elections. He said he will be back soon because he wants to be with the Yemeni people.

"Our regime was never an oppressive one with only one point of view, and we respected human rights and freedoms and democracy, which through the last elections in 2006, yielded the General People's Congress as the ruling party," said President Saleh at the beginning of his media address.

He reiterated his position of support for the Gulf Initiative, signed by Saleh in Riyadh last month, yet accused the opposition of causing armed conflict and the destabilization of Yemen since the beginning of the uprising in January. "Couldn't you [opposition parties] have come to the negotiation

table earlier? You wanted to share the power, but did it have to be this way? Through killing people, disturbing the fuel and electricity services? Why do you kidnap people from the streets? Why do you kick people out of their homes and occupy them with your armed militia?" he demanded.

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Yemen's parliament back in action

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Dec. 25- Amid high security and power cuts, Yemen's parliament resumed its activities on Saturday with all political parties present, after a 11-month boycott by the traditional opposition since the beginning of the uprisings last February.

By the end of this week, the parliament is expected to endorse a two-year program for the reconciliation government, a new cabinet formed earlier this month in line with the Gulf agreement signed by both sides on Nov. 23 in Riyadh.

Members of the new government arrived to parliament, with armed tribesmen guarding MPs of Saleh's party and JMP loyalists exchanging fire outside. There were however no casualties.

Breaking with a previous tradition of ministers travelling to parliament in luxurious brand-new vehicles, members of the new Yemeni cabinet arrived in three white governmental minibuses.

"This is unbelievable, I have never seen anything like it!" said Abdullah Al-Maqtari, an MP of the Nasserite party, when he saw new members of government of different political affiliations sitting together in one white minibus.

A large number of MPs, particularly tribal leaders, however arrived in expensive-looking private cars with soldiers and armed men.

Central Security forces, run by Ali Abdullah Saleh's nephew Yahya Mohamed, and the Republican Guards, commanded by Saleh's son Ahmed Ali, guarded the parliament building. Armed tribal militias stood around the building carrying Kalashnikovs and bazookas.

None of the five Ahmar family MPs who clashed with Saleh's forces last May attended. Deputy parliament speaker Himyar Al-Ahmar,

who had resigned from Saleh's General People's Congress (GPC), is said to have returned home after his private guards clashed with the armed men of Sagheer Bin Azeez, an MP and a tribal leader loyal to Saleh whose brother had reportedly been killed by Ahmar loyalists.

Inside parliament, Yahya Al-Raei, the speaker of parliament and a prominent tribal leader loyal to Saleh, welcomed the new prime minister and his government members.

Abd Al-Razaq Al-Hajri, from the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) block, blessed the "souls of the peaceful revolution martyrs," and said, "The objective of the revolution aims to bring about the rule of law and reconciliation, and no party is stronger than any other in parliament."

Mohamed Al-Shayf of the GPC block also blessed the souls of the martyrs who were lost their lives during the attack on the presidential palace on June 3.

Each MP then received a draft copy of the government's new two-year program, and prime minister Mohammed Basundwa and other members of government read out all 38-pages of a plan to "restore political stability and security to achieve safe power transfer in line with the Gulf initiative."

Some of the MPs listened to the program, whereas many others chatted and shook hands with each other so that every five minutes the speaker of the parliament had to bang his gavel to silence them.

"It seems that they are not concerned," the prime minister said, interrupting his speech amidst the echo of the gavel.

In previous governments, MPs used to bring letters to present to ministers asking for funds or other public issues, but this time no MP dared to ask anything from a government formed to find a way of the

country's unprecedented political and economic crisis.

"The program of this government is to provide services to the citizens," said Basundwa.

After reading the long program amidst repeated power cuts, the speaker of the parliament pledged that the government and legislative authority would cooperate to implement the program."

A number of MPs however pointed out the program's weaknesses. Sultan Al-Barakani, secretary general assistant of Saleh's GPC and head of its parliamentarian block, was one of them.

"It will only deepen poverty as the government in this program said that it will expand the welfare fund network which means insolvency and poverty," he said.

"[Al-Barakani] has started to play the role of the opposition," commented one of the journalists who came to cover this important parliamentary session after nearly a year with not even half members present.

Abdullah Al-Maqtari of the Nasserite party was also critical. Neither the Gulf initiative nor the government's program had defined a specific time frame for the military reconciliation committee to restructure the armed forces, he said.

He also criticized the program for not including issues such as ending cheating on school exams, or plans to revive the economy.

"The crisis has depleted all the country's resources and without foreign financial support, the government will only be able to implement its proposed program partially," said Naser Arman, and independent MP.

He however added: "The old opposition and ruling party are no more. Now all of you are rulers here! You must work, and God will be your witness."

Houthis and Salafis reach cease fire agreement



Bab Al-Yaman in Sa'ada city showing the anti-US/Israel Houthi slogans. Houthis made use of lack of state control over the country to expand their influence in north Yemen.

By: Mohammed bin Sallam

SA'ADA, Dec. 25 - After intense armed conflict that claimed the lives of over 250 Yemenis since October of 2011, an agreement between Salafis and Houthis in Sa'ada has been orchestrated by a mediation committee. The agreement was reached on Thursday and stipulates a cease fire in the Dammaj area, as well as the removal of all military checkpoints and barriers by both parties.

The agreement also calls for neutral armed men from the Bakeel and Hashid tribes to monitor the opening of all roads and ensure that both parties adhere to the peace agreement.

Sa'ada's governor, military commander and a number of tribal sheikhs have guaranteed the protection of both parties to dissuade revenge attempts.

Yahya Al-Hajouri, Director of the Salafi Dammaj medical center, demanded that the mediation committee oversee the delivery of food, medicine and fuel to the center, which has been under siege by the area's majority Houthi sect for over three months.

"The war was imposed on us by the Houthis, who killed more than 70 men, women and children of the center's students and their families. More than 170 were wounded," he

said.

Saleh Murshid Jadban, a member of the mediation committee on behalf of the Salafis, said that only the implementation timeline remains to be resolved.

"Several checkpoints have been removed and those remaining will be cleared in the coming few days," said Jadban.

He added that around 500 vehicles, each carrying at least 5 men, came from tribal areas and entered Sa'ada on Saturday to prevent clashes.

The Houthis, however, accused those men of siding with the Salafis rather than holding a neutral stance. Saleh Habra, political office spokesperson for the Houthis, demanded that foreigners in Dammaj leave the country and return to their home nations.

He added that the Dammaj issue is a political one and not based on religious differences between the Houthis and the Salafis, who have lived side-by-side for the last three decades.

"We confirm that those at the center are an armed militia and not scholars seeking knowledge, as is being claimed. Everyone knows they have weapons and are killing our men," said Habra. "We have a recording of Al-Hajouri, head of the Dammaj Center, saying that they received 300 weapons from the Spe-

cial Forces led by Tariq Mohammed Saleh, the president's nephew."

He added that they gave a copy of this recording to UN Special Advisor on Yemen Jamal Benomar, who visited Sa'ada earlier this month.

The Dammaj District, which includes the Salafi center, is home to around 29 thousand inhabitants, 4,000 of whom are Salafis. The remaining portion of the district's population are Zaidis, who have also been subjected to the siege imposed by the more powerful Houthis, who entered from outside the district.

The conflict started when a youth Houthi boy of around 13 years of age ventured into the Salafi area of Dammaj with a placard featuring the Houthi slogan "God is great; Death to America; Death to Israel; Damned be the Jews; Victory to Islam." Salafis who were present physically assaulted the boy, sparking an armed conflict that has lasted for more than three months.

Sa'ada Governorate is heavily controlled by the Houthi sect, which is expanding its influence to neighboring areas of Al-Jawf, Hajja, Amran and portions of coastal areas on the Red Sea, in effect maintaining control over three-and-a-half million Yemenis.

According to a local teacher in Hajja, Houthis are creating new armed checkpoints in Hajja in order to further impose their influence.

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Protests continue over 'Life March' killings

On the Life March's Facebook page, organizers had written: "It is a live expression of not recognizing the former government a part of which has been kept, and an expression of not recognizing the GCC initiative. It is a demonstration that we will uphold the objectives

of our peaceful revolution until they are achieved."

Protesters marched to "show loyalty to martyrs and the injured in Taiz," "demand the trial of those involved in crimes against protesters and those who steal our country's resources," "renew revolutionary energy in the different governorates crossed," and "affirm the unity of the Yemeni people."

Around 2,000 protesters left Taiz on Tuesday, Dec. 20, and were received with joy in the villages and cities they passed. Others joined them on the way, and by the time they reached Ibb they were 4,000 protesters. By the time they reached Dhamar, they had become 7,000. At Naqeel Yasleeh, 60 kilometers from Sana'a, they were 100,000

protesters. Finally by the time they reached Sixty-Meter Road in Sana'a, they were over 500,000 protesters, according to a protest leader.

By the time protesters reached Sana'a they were exhausted. They marched peacefully in areas and neighborhoods that marches in Sana'a had previously not reached. Protesters danced and chanted that the revolution would win and that Saleh would be executed. Residents received the march standing by the side of the road, with women ululating and men chanting "Welcome!" Some distributed candies.

"This is truly a historical day, we shall kiss the feet of those who came all the way from Taiz to reclaim our revolution after it was hijacked by the politicians," said Mohammed Fare'e, a protester.

The march aimed to protest in Saba'een area near the presidential place, and parliament to protest against Saleh's immunity from prosecution. The march however split in Sana'a, with part of the protesters marching through Sixty-meter Road to Change Square, while others at the end of the march decided to camp in Forty-five Street, less than two kilometers away from the presidential palace. They were attacked by security forces.

Meanwhile, controversy has stirred up over a statement made by US Ambassador to Yemen Gerald Feierstein in an interview with Yemeni journalists on Saturday saying, "Provocations could lead to further reaction and violence."

On Facebook, some Yemeni users have read this statement as justification for killing the protesters. A page entitled "US ambassador Gerald Feierste leave or apologize" has appeared on the social networking website.

However, a source at the US embassy said that a day before the march, the embassy was in contact with Yemeni officials urging restraint and advising them to allow peaceful protesters to march to the square.

Saleh: Basundwa's government needs to do more than talk

He commented on the recent activities of the military committee, which has aimed at removing

all signs of armed militias from Sana'a, and said that the opposition is not committed to removing its checkpoints and that it is, in fact, adding more.

President Saleh also again brought up his assassination attempt in June and said that it was treason and vengeance and that it wasn't only against him, but also against the nation's stability. "The presidency is not something to own. I rejected it in 2006, but was forced to accept it and now I am rejecting it and will leave it again. To me, Yemen's well-being is the most important priority."

"We are in support of Basundwa's government and handed over to it USD 4.7 billion of foreign reserves, even with a crisis that has lasted for eleven months."

This is an indication that we have preserved the country despite the paralysis of state institutions and conflict."

Regarding the killing of participants in the march of thousands of Yemenis from Taiz to Sana'a, he accused the opposition of being behind this, directly or indirectly. The bad end for the protest was termed the fault of Basundwa's government.

"You [the new government] knew they were heading to Sana'a over five days ago."

Why did you not create a protection mechanism to ensure the protesters' safety and prevent them from getting into any conflict?"

"Taking up positions of power is a responsibility, not a privilege. Now you see that it is not an easy task. But I will continue to support this government because I want what is good for Yemen."

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Benomar to the Yemen Times: “Inclusiveness, inclusiveness and more inclusiveness”

During his visit to Yemen this December, Jamal Benomar, the United Nations Secretary General's Special Advisor on Yemen, urged stakeholders in Yemen's future to shape up for the next few crucial weeks.

Interview by Nadia Al-Sakkaf

This December, Jamal Benomar visited Sana'a, Taiz, Aden and Sa'ada to encourage all political players to engage in the national dialogue conference to take place after the presidential elections on February 21, 2012.

His visits have been received very positively, not only by the politicians, but also by many ordinary Yemenis who appreciate that someone of this high level took the time and effort to talk to them.

Expectations of the progress

Prior to coming to Yemen, Benomar had anticipated more progress in the implementation of the Gulf initiative, but this does not deter his optimism, especially since he knows how complicated Yemen is.

"I am happy that there is an agreement, that implementation has begun, that the government has been formed on time, and that a military commission has been formed," he said. "And the date for elections is set and this has a huge symbolic value."

He believes there is tangible progress and that preparations for the elections are underway for February 21, 2012.

However, there are a number of places like Taiz where there has been a lull. But he insisted that the agreement is a step in the right direction.

"But it is a step in a long road," he explained. "A road which is full of surprises and sometimes obstacles, ups and downs. What is important is for those who want peace to stay focused on advancing this process."

The military committee

The big challenge now, as he sees it, is for the military commission to implement the decisions it has agreed on. Benomar met with the members of the committee and felt that they can work well together.

"I saw very good cooperation between the minister of interior and the minister of defense, and the vice president is providing very good leadership," he said. "We may have to give them some time, but they are definitely moving forward and we wish them every success."

According to the military committee's decision, the military and all militias were to open up road blocks and remove militia signs from the capital city within a week of Saturday December 17, 2011, so that people would be free to come and go.

He admits that, although this is a key issue, it is a difficult one. Reducing the numbers of armed men



It does not matter who is found guilty because, as far as the UN is concerned, people who committed violations need to be held to account regardless of who they are.

and check points in the capital are only the first steps.

"It was clear that they could not complete the task, and in all cases there was some progress and this is going to be a process," he said.

Inclusiveness

When Benomar visited Aden, he met with all different groups of the southern secessionist movements to hear their views on participation in the national dialogue.

"The difference between our talks with the Houthi leadership in Sa'ada and the movement in the south is that, while the Houthis have one main leadership, the Southern Movement is fragmented and has many different views and perspectives, with no consensus on the southern question. Political views are very divided," he said.

The UN position is that the southern issue will need to be addressed in the transitional period within the two-year mechanism through dialogue.



There are various ways women can still make sure they are strongly present in the transition.

Benomar is concerned that Yemen is going through a very sensitive period and dangerous times. The lack of inclusiveness, whether because not all political players want to be involved or the unpreparedness of some actors to engage in politics, will be harmful for Yemen. He believes that Yemen's only solution for a successful transition is inclusiveness.

"The success of the next few months will be the foundation of what's to come," he said. "That is why what is happening now is very important. Reaching the February 21 elections is very important, and every effort will be made to get there with elections that will symbolically be a new chapter for Yemen."

"I will come again to Yemen if the Security Council decides to have another report on Yemen in 30 days, which means I would have to be in Yemen in mid January to deliver my report on January 21."

Women left behind

The number of women acting as ministers in the new government has come as a disappointment not only to the women's movement but also to all international advocates for women including the United Nations.

As a representative of the United Nations, Benomar and his team tried to influence the Gulf initiative agreement to include strong human rights protection.

"In the context of women, we made many suggestions to make sure that the agreement is in line with the UN covenants and standards of women's rights," he said. "We urged the parties to make sure that women's issues are addressed."

"The final outcome, what is in the agreement, is not completely what



we had hoped for. We had wished for more."

"Definitely, we want the government to make a commitment to make sure that women are represented adequately."

The suggestion was to have at least a minimum 20 percent quota of the women members of the government. Until some last stages of the drafting, this percentage was advocated for, but it somehow slipped off in the final version.

"The final outcome was language to support the adequate participation of women rather than a clear percentage," said Benomar. "But that's that, and I believe there are various ways women can still make sure they are strongly present in the transition and one is through the dialogue national conference."

He urged Yemeni women to be prepared with their agenda and advocacy strategies, and to play their rightful part in the transitional committees to be formed soon. The Gulf agreement states that all these committees will have to ensure adequate representation of women, and Benomar therefore believes that this is a positive platform through which Yemeni women can play a strong role.

The second platform is through the national conference which will address a number of issues that will obviously affect women.

"Yemeni women will have to be prepared well in advance so that they can raise their issues and lobby for them," he insisted.

Youth must shape up

It is a well known fact that the youth have been and will continue to be a key player in Yemen's uprising. But Benomar says the question is, To what extent are the youth shaping the political process? The fact that they are present in all squares and their voices are heard will create an opportunity for them to gradually ensure that their agenda for change is being implemented by the new government.

"The youth are organized, but they don't have one leadership speaking in one voice," he said. "They have a platform which they agreed on a long time ago."

"The question and the test is to what extent they want to be present and participate in the national dialogue conference and how they are going to shape the agenda and the outcome of the conference. That is what I am looking forward to."

Human rights violations

The government of Yemen is committed to implementing the resolution of the Human Rights Council which calls on the government of Yemen to establish an investigation into any violations of human rights that occurred during these last few months. It calls for an independent and impartial investigation committee according to international standards.

The new government of national unity has committed to this and has accepted this UN council resolution, and will therefore need to

ensure the implementation.

"We have to see what the outcome is," said Benomar on the investigation results. "But it does not matter who is found guilty because, as far as the UN is concerned, people who committed violations need to be held to account regardless of who they are."

He emphasized that this is clearly indicated in the Security Council resolution and in the resolution of the Human Rights Council: People who commit violations have to be held accountable.

However, whether this investigation will include for example the attempted assassination on the president or any other sensitive files is up to the Yemeni government.

"The government will still have to make the terms of reference and the scope of this investigation and I have not seen them, so I don't know what will be included in this inves-

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tigation and what is not," said the UN special adviser on Yemen.

Global interest

Yemen's dynamics are different from any other country's, even countries with a similar tribal structure such as Libya. These coming weeks are going to be a very complicated and a delicate period for Yemen as a first phase of the transition.

But Benomar says the international community and the UN will stay focused on Yemen.

"The international community will remain engaged and the Secu-

rity Council will remain engaged, and this is why, now when I look at Yemen's process, any entity responsible for derailing the presidential elections will have to face consequences," he warned.

Concluding on a positive note, Benomar said that there are good signs of cooperation among members of the government of national unity, and that hopefully they will be able to sail through the February presidential elections in a way to mark the start of a new era for Yemen.

"We'll see," he concluded.

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YT vision statement



"To make Yemen a good world citizen."

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

OUR
OPINION

Yemenis should participate in the upcoming presidential elections

Many Yemenis today are considering not participating in the presidential elections due on February 21, 2012. The reason is obvious: It is a done deal. I, like many others, thought: "Why should we take the trouble, when there is an agreed candidate? With or without our vote, Vice President Hadi will be the next president according to the Gulf initiative anyway."

But that was only recently when a new friend pointed out to me how participation legitimizes or delegitimizes elections. Even the agreed upon candidate needs Yemenis' votes to put him in office legally. Without the votes, even if he is there, his legitimacy as president becomes tainted.

These elections are not about Hadi himself. They are about turning a new leaf in Yemen's history. We need them to really put an end to the previous regime.

Imagine if, this time round, only a few hundred thousands of Yemenis went to ballot boxes to remove Saleh from power, instead of the millions that put him there in the 2006 elections. What would this say about the revolution and the transition? What message would it send out to the new president?

I used to think, since the political parties agreed on Hadi, let them put him in office. But whether I like it or not, Hadi actually is the best option now for Yemen's transition. And as a responsible citizen, I need to be part of making it happen. It is also my right to vote as an adult Yemeni, so why should I give it up?

Imagine, when all votes are counted this time, Saleh looking at the numbers and seeing that hardly anyone went to vote him out. Imagine the smirk on his face saying to the international community: "Didn't I tell you? Yemenis want me and would not vote for anyone else."

I don't want that.

I want us to go through a real transition, to get the regime off our shoulders, even if the new government is half and half, and even if the new president is from the GPC. But at least it is a coalition government with some color in it, rather than the old one party rule.

I will participate in the coming elections. A new candidate other than Hadi might even receive a majority of the votes. Who knows? Article 108 of the constitution says that at least two candidates have to run in the presidential elections for them to be approved, and already some potential candidates have voiced the will to run. Let's see.

In all cases, when it is time, I will go and "thumb" my imprint on Yemen's history. If you are Yemeni and older than 18, you should too.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SKETCHED OPINION

By Hajjaj

First anniversary of the Arab Spring sparked from Tunisia



www.mahjob.com

The Arab Spring's violent turn

By: Yoel Guzansky
& Benedetta Berti
The National Interest

Many pundits and government officials have praised the "Arab Spring" as a prelude to the rise of a new and more democratic Middle East. But it is difficult to reconcile this notion with the images of growing intersectarian violence within the region, such as the recent anti-Shiite attacks perpetrated in the course of the celebration of the Shiite Ashura festival on December 5 and 6. The event, a traditional catalyst for inter-sectarian violence, served as a powerful reminder that identity politics continue to play a major role in the region.

Indeed, these Arab uprisings, while fueled by widespread desires for more freedom at the grassroots level, demonstrate that preexisting religious identities were never abandoned in favor of new national ones and that Middle Eastern politics are still very much based on group affiliation and identity politics.

As the region undergoes massive political and social unrest, these pre-existing divisions seem to be heightened rather than lessened. Still, they have been taking different forms: from a growing religious-secular divide in Tunisia and Egypt to clan-based tensions in Libya and Yemen to a general worsening in the majority-minority relationship across the region. But one of the most important preexisting cleavages emerging to shape the Arab Spring is the Shiite-Sunni conflict.

In other words, the Arab Spring has deepened preexisting divisions in ethnically and religiously heterogeneous countries within the Middle East. These interethnic identities and loyalties have shaped the ongoing social and political struggle, notwithstanding that the initial protests centered on socio-economic grievances. In fact, the vaguely defined demands of the protests, the lack of cohesive civil societies and the obvious difficulties that the regimes face in responding to demands have all led to situations in which protest movements are increasingly resorting to sectarian identities as a means to promote cohesion and unity of

purpose. This, in turn, carries a tremendously high potential to spur internal violence and threaten local and regional stability, especially in states with a delicate ethnic fabric.

The case of Syria offers an example. There the ruling Alawite minority (which rightly or wrongly has been identified with the Shiites) is facing growing protests, mainly from the Sunnis. Meanwhile, other ethno-religious minorities within Syria, such as the Christians and the Kurds, have been mostly at the margins of the protests. Although they feared backlash against their communities, they now reportedly are starting to arm themselves. This ongoing sectarian strife in Syria also heightens the already high level of tensions between the region's Sunni and Shiite communities, particularly in neighboring Lebanon. Thus, ethnic and religious cleavages have not been subdued by the Arab Spring. Rather, a mix of identity and geostrategic politics has contributed to deepening preexisting divisions.

Bahrain is another example. The unrest there is fueled by serious sectarian discrimination against the Shiite majority. The achievements of the Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon and the rising status of Iran may have sparked the political awakening and increasing socio-political demands among Shiites in Bahrain. And the king's repeated attempts over the years to contain the protests by allowing greater Shiite participation in the political process has not soothed Shiite sensibilities. Actually, they have made the demonstrations more frequent and severe.

The same predicament also applies to Saudi Arabia. In Riyadh's view, these protests represent a serious threat that is part of a larger Iranian plot to incite the Shiite communities to insurrection. In this context, the beginning of the Syrian protests indeed represented a true watershed in the development of the Arab Spring.

Before the Syrian uprising, it appeared that the fall of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt would benefit the «Shiite Crescent» led by Iran. But the Sunni camp in general and Saudi Arabia specifically received a golden opportunity when the protests spread to Syria. Turning its back on Assad and on the post-2008 process of Syrian-Saudi reconciliation, the Saudis now wish to see him

overthrown, as this would result in both Iran losing a major regional ally and Saudi Arabia enlarging and strengthening its own Sunni camp. In Saudi Arabia's view, if Assad fell, Iran would return to its "natural" size. This would be a positive development for the Sunni camp, second only to the fall of the Islamic Republic itself.

The Saudis never stopped thinking of the Shiites as an internal as well as external security problem because of their geographical and ideological proximity to Iran and Saudi needs to protect its huge oil reserves. These Saudi fears were heightened recently when the Shiite community rose up in arms against the regime in October, hinting at a shift in the relationship between them and the Sunni royals.

In Yemen, the new government will have to confront a host of internal threats to the country's stability. Since the start of the current wave of unrest, the Shiite rebels have sought to take advantage of the power vacuum by expanding the areas under their influence. In practice, they now control the entire Sa'ada governorate as well as extensive areas along the border with Saudi Arabia. One of their goals is to gain access to the Red Sea and thus secure weapons-supply routes from Iran. This threatens not just to escalate the internal civil war within Yemen but also to draw in more outside forces. Yemen could thus become another battlefield in the war for regional hegemony.

These developments suggest that the 2009-2010 Saudi military intervention against the Shiite-Houthis on its border with Yemen might not have been the isolated occurrence many assumed.

In Iraq, the forthcoming US withdrawal is seen by some Iraqi Sunnis as an invitation for Shiite Iran to become more involved in Iraq. Recent events in Syria could heighten these concerns because the possible collapse of the Assad regime and the rise to power of a Sunni-dominated regime could increase Iranian involvement in Iraq in order to counterbalance the loss of an ally. Although the Arab Spring has yet to arrive in Iraq, the growing unrest at the regional level has so far had a negative impact on sectarian relations within the country, with both sects appearing to take a more confrontational approach vis-à-vis the other.

Most worrisome is the possibility that these trends could explode into a much larger geostrategic and political divide between two blocks – Iran and its «Radical Axis» versus Saudi Arabia and/or Turkey constituting a «Sunni camp».

Scholars and decision makers are still struggling to understand the complexities of this ongoing turmoil, in particular the Sunni-Shiite division. In this sense, developments within Syria are paramount since the fall of Assad could increase sectarian Sunni-Shiite tensions both within Syria and across the region.

Yoel Guzansky is a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University and a former member of Israel's National Security Council. Benedetta Berti is a research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, a lecturer at Tel Aviv University and the coauthor of *Hamas and Hezbollah: a Comparative Study* (John Hopkins University Press, 2012).

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Dr. Mahfouth A Bamashmus to YT: "Yemenis need to take more care of their eyes"

Dr. Mahfouth Bamashmus, FRCSEd FRCOphth, is Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at Sana'a University. He is also the Medical Director of the Yemen Magrabi Hospital in Sana'a and is a well known as a Cornea, Refractive and Phaco Surgeon. He talked to The Yemen Times about several issues that concern eye problems in Yemen.

You are one of few ophthalmic surgeons in Yemen for cornea transplantations. Is there a demand for this in Yemen? And where do you get the corneas from?

Corneal transplantation is a very important surgery everywhere and not only in Yemen. Corneal opacities disease is the fourth most common cause of poor vision and blindness in Yemen after cataract, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. For that reason, there is a huge demand for corneal transplantation

in Yemen and most cases are done by me and my team in the Magrabi hospital in Sana'a.

There are also other centers that offer this service in Sana'a and Aden. Corneas in our hospital come from the United States of America and from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Magrabi Eye Hospital is located in a cross fire range Did that affect your work and the number of patients during the clashes?



Dr. Mahfouth Bamashmus

Yes, it affected our work and the number of patients we routinely see. Also it affected the safety of our staff and patients.

The most dramatic effect on our

services was in the middle of September 2011 after the Zubairy Street and Kentucky roundabout massacre. We closed the hospital for two to three weeks, as no one was able to go in or go out that area.

Fortunately, things improved in the beginning of October and we were able to go back to our normal services gradually. During that period, we opened a new centre in Khamseen Road to follow up with our patients who were not able to come to our facility in Zubairy Street.

Are there any cases coming to you because of the armed conflict?

Most of the cases due to armed conflict were treated in local hospitals. Complicated cases, especially those who need a corneal or retinal specialist, were referred to our hospital for further management by all involved parties.

Is there any relation between the smoke coming from electricity generators and eye sensitivities?

The eye is very sensitive to changes in environment, so any smoke from any source can affect the eye and produce different types of allergic diseases and inflammations.

There has been an increase in the use of firecrackers since the Eid holidays. What dangers do these pose for children's eyes in particular?

Unfortunately, firecrackers damage to the eye is serious, and most of the time we lose vision and sometimes the eye itself has to be removed. Firecrackers during holidays or marriage celebrations are usually set off by inexperienced young children or adolescents.

They usually lose control of the firecracker or the firecracker is directed to the wrong direction and usually affects the eye and sometimes both eyes.

Also some of the new types of firecrackers are low quality, unsafe, and can blow up or burn the person before he starts using them.

We have spoken to the authorities many times and even written articles about the danger of firecrackers to the eyes, but still cases are on the increase.

Now as we in winter, what are there seasonal allergies that Yemenis should be aware of?

During autumn and winter, seasonal allergic eye diseases in Yemen are very rare because of the cold weather.

Seasonal allergic eye diseases start to appear during spring and summer because of pollens and dust and a majority of allergic eye diseases appear during these warm seasons.

Any other relevant information you think the readers must know?

An eye examination should not be performed only when we have problems with our eyes. It has to be done on a regular basis. When we are young we have to visit our eye doctor every three or four years, and when we get above the age of 40 we should visit him or her every one or two years. Prevention is usually better than cure!

HEALTH WATCH

By: Dr. Siva



This weekly column disseminates health information to readers in Yemen and beyond. Dr. Siva currently works at Aden Refinery Company Hospital. Lifestyle diseases and cancer prevention are his special interests. Complementary medicine and naturopathy are his passions.

Heart health by numbers

Heat diseases are the number one killer across the globe. It doesn't discriminate anyone. It strikes males and females, young and old - basically all and any. When we say heart diseases, we mean multiple conditions that affect the heart and blood vessels. Heart disease includes coronary artery disease, pulmonary heart disease, and hypertension.

The good news is that most types of heart disease are preventable and can be managed or even treated through a combination of diet, exercise, medication, and monitoring. While many people are aware they have should have a healthy heart, they may not know exactly what is used to measure heart health.

Heart health is determined by a few health indices such as blood pressure, weight, and blood sugar. Each health index is a number and each index has a range which is considered acceptable. If your number is outside the range then you should be concerned. Regular appointments with your doctor can help you keep track of these health indexes. Here are a few of the most important health numbers you should know and why they matter.

Blood pressure

One of the most principal vital signs of a heart disease is Blood pressure. Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against blood vessel walls. It's measured with two numbers:

Systolic: The top number is the pressure when the heart beats.

Diastolic: The bottom number is the pressure when the heart rests between beats.

Numbers: **Safe:** Lower than 120/80 mmHg (Less than 120 systolic and less than 80 diastolic is normal).

Risky: Equal to or higher than 140/90.

A reading over 120/80 up to 139/89 is considered pre-hypertension. However take the reading multiple times to verify. High blood pressure often has no symptoms, but increases the heart's workload and raises the risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, or kidney problems. Even if your blood pressure is normal, you should consider making lifestyle modifications to prevent the development of high blood pressure and improve your heart health.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a soft fat-like substance in your blood stream and cells. Our body uses it to make cell membranes, hormones, Vitamin D, and bile salts for absorption of fat. There are 3 different types of cholesterol:

High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is the healthy or "good" cholesterol. **Low-density lipoprotein (LDL)** is the unhealthy or "bad" cholesterol. **Triglyceride** which is the kind of cholesterol that comes from unhealthy fats.

Only about 20 percent of the cholesterol we need comes from the food we eat. The remainder (approximately 80 percent), is made by our liver.

Numbers: The numbers for LDL, HDL and triglycerides combine to give a "lipid profile" score, but the three individual scores are most important.

Safe: Total cholesterol: Lower than 200 mg/dl (milligrams per deciliter of blood)

LDL: Lower than 100 mg/dl. If you are at a very high risk for heart disease, then lower than 70 mg/dl.

HDL: Higher than 50 mg/dl for women, and higher than 40 mg/dl for men.

Triglycerides: less than 150 mg/dl

Risky:

Total cholesterol: Higher than 200 mg/dl

LDL: Higher than 160 mg/dl

HDL: Less than 40 mg/dl

Triglycerides: Higher than 200 mg/dl

Although cholesterol is essential for life, high levels are associated with atherosclerosis. Cholesterol builds up in the artery walls causing high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

Blood Sugar

Blood glucose level is also important number. Blood glucose, also commonly referred to as blood sugar, is used to evaluate the presence of diabetes. Blood sugar can be accurately measured after an eight-hour fast.

Numbers: **Safe:** Lower than 100 (mg/dl)

Risky: 100 to 125 (mg/dl)

High blood sugar leads to diabetes and, in the long run, ailments such as high blood pressure, kidney disease, visual problems, heart disease and stroke.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a mathematical formula of weight and height. This is an indicator of your body fat, a quick way to see if you are overweight. To calculate your BMI, take your weight in kilogram and divide it by your height in meters. Then divide that number by your height in meters again.

Numbers: **Safe:** 18.5 to 24.9 (22.9 for Indians)

Risky: 30 or higher

If it is higher, that means you are obese. Obesity, in the long run, is linked to several heart diseases. Proper diet and exercise will help you curtail it.

Waist Size

According to several recent studies, waist size may be better indicator of heart disease risk than the traditional Body Mass Index (BMI). The major drawback of BMI is that it does not take into account a person's body composition. For example, a body builder may have little body fat and yet have a BMI well over 25 due to the large amount of muscle he carries.

Waist size gives a good indication of the amount of fat a person is carrying, particularly around the stomach area. Abdominal fat is considered an important risk factor for cardiovascular diseases such as coronary heart disease and stroke.

Numbers: **Safe:** Should be 35 inches or less for women and no more than 40 inches for men.

Risky: Higher than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men.

Higher waist size increases your risk of cardiovascular disease, metabolic problems, diabetes and high blood pressure. To measure your waist size, get a non-elastic measure tape and measure around your belly button.

Numbers will reveal the hidden facts. Knowing your numbers will allow you recognize your actual heart health. So, if you haven't had a physical in a while, make an appointment and get your blood tests run.

Courtesy: Lifemojo



The Magrabi hospital had to close down for around three weeks during the armed conflict on Zubairy Street, now operations are back to normal although the bullet holes remained.

فرصة الموسم
ضاعف مشترياتك

هدايا
من إختيارك
بقيمة
مشترياتك

خلال الفترة من
22 ديسمبر الى 29 ديسمبر

مام

العربية للعود

جوردانو

ماجستي

رويال

Friendship between boys and girls

By: Naji Gazali
naji734@gmail.com

As a Muslim and a Yemeni, I think this issue can't be shunned or swept under the carpet for fear of diminishing religious values and teachings with respect to customs and traditions.

In fact, the Yemen Times is stepping into uncharted territory by entertaining and engaging with the above question. Friendship between men and women is not a new issue for our society; what is new is the mild reception of approval it has received in the last decade. This reception has come from the media, which sees that such relationships are very important for market growth.

Now every channel or TV station competes to show romantic or otherwise unaccepted relationships – the best example being the Turkish series, "The Forbidden Love" – without any regard for the sanctity of such relationships, bestowed upon both men and women by almighty Allah and spoken of in Surat Al-Hujurat: "O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the Sight of

Allah is the believer who has Taqwa [piety and righteousness]. Verily, Allah is all-knowing, all-aware."

Therefore, this honorable relationship, where a brother shares a thought with a sister to better their community, should not be misinterpreted as seduction or unlawful affection. Both are asked to protect their chastity equally. Allah sees us male and female – equal in our rights, dues and obligations. Allah said, "Surely for men who submit to Allah and for women who submit to Allah, for believing men and for believing women, for devout men and devout women, for truthful men and truthful women, for steadfast men and steadfast women, for humble men and humble women, for charitable men and charitable women, for men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, for men who remember Allah much and for women who remember Allah much, for all of them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a mighty reward." In fact, if we look closely at the law that punishes fornication or adultery, we would see that the main idea is to protect the honor of the community and to preserve peoples' honor and rights...not to punish them. Allah said "And those who ac-

cuse chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, flog them with eighty lashes, and reject their testimony forever. Indeed, they are those who are disobedient to Allah."

Still, this issue must be seen as a reality that faces our generation. We must be honest and forthcoming and encourage that its practice is in accordance with religious teaching and traditional values. Such is clearly stated in the Hadith which forbids the sexes from being alone with each other – this must include cyberspace also, with such forms of communication as chatting, unless such communication is open to viewers at both ends.

Friendship is a great idea and should be extended across sexes, but always with guidance, internal and external supervision and, most importantly, fear of Allah in every move and gesture. The worldwide film industry has sent out a shock wave of misinterpretation concerning such friendship.

That friendship which is geared by passion, looks, and feeling is definitely forbidden and should not be approved of. On the other hand, honoring human relationships and friendship based on chastity, honor, and dignity for both sexes must be celebrated and enjoyed.

Yemen and the GCC

By: Mohammed Ali Al-Raawy
alraawy007@yahoo.com

I usually buy the Yemen Times paper and I often read Nadia's articles. I do not agree with her in many of the topics she discusses in her editorials. But the last article on Monday Dec. 5, 2011 won my admiration and approval. Particularly the idea of angry protestors and revenge.

After signing the GCC deal, we all must think of the good of our beloved country Yemen, forgetting other things. It is not a matter of revenge, it is a matter of a whole coun-

try's future, which is at stake. It is a matter of lost security and a dying economy.

Yemen is bleeding money, resources, and most importantly souls of a young generation. We do not want to see more killings and more victims. We are all Yemeni and must protect each other.

The main goal of the revolution was achieved and others will come by time.

Let not our interests and dreams be superior or prior to Yemen's interest. Yemen should be first in all we do.

Those who sacrificed their souls

for Yemen, their dream was to see Yemen progressive and peaceful. Let us achieve what they died for.

Ten months passed, during which we missed many things, we missed security, peace of mind and love for each other.

We already won freedom in all types though. Therefore, let us now focus on improving education, refreshing the economy and fighting corruption.

Let us work together to see Yemen prosperous. Let us love each other and care of each other, proving our Prophet's saying, "Yemenis are most kind-hearted and affectionate".

Picture of the Week



A damaged mosque at the old city in Sa'ada which was affected by the shelling between government and Houthi armed groups in 2008.

YT Photo by Nadia Al-Sakkaf

The mobile phone in Yemen

By: Mubeen Esam
mibo_time@yahoo.com

Our world, particularly in the last 10 years, became like a small village where we can contact anyone in any country so quickly. This came as a result of advancements in technology, which have facilitated contact with friends and family, wherever they may be.

The mobile phone is an essential part of our lives

The mobile phone is soaring past all other traditional wireless means of communication, including the laptop computer, television, newspaper, library, personal diary, or even the credit card. It is indispensable for the great majority of people, to the point that we can't imagine our lives without it. The mobile phone can be seen

carried by men, women, students, workers, businessmen, laborers, children and even the unemployed.

Habit

When we meet our friends, we often boast about our new models of mobile phones and ask one another about the newest models introduced to the local market.

In Yemen

The country's telecommunications and information technology sectors have witnessed – since Yemen achieved unity and the republic was announced in 1990 – rapid steps in development, putting them in line with progress made by other nations. Such development has only been strengthened, particularly in the last five years, by covering Yemen with a modern communications network. They are therefore considered among

the most advanced telecommunications and information technology sectors in the Arab world.

A first step

In Yemen, mobile phone service was unknown before 1990. It was introduced two years later, in May 1992. Our country, then, was one of the first nations in the region to receive such service.

As a result of the state's concern for this sector, it has been open to investment projects.

Three private communications companies were established.

Besides these, the Thuraya service provides users with worldwide access.

The prevalence of cell phones has led to their use as a replacement for personal visits and meetings with relatives and friends during certain occasions, especially the Eid holidays.

The Embassy of the United States of America announces for immediate jobs opening within its organization.



"ELECTRICAL ENGINEER"

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B. Prior Work Experience:

From seven to nine years of experience in the field of electrical engineering work that is related to building construction and renovations is required. Two years experience with U.S. codes and criteria, with the Department of Stat is required.

C. Language Proficiency:

Level IV (fluent) English and level IV (fluent) Arabic both written and spoken are required.

D. Job Knowledge:

Incumbent must have knowledge in design and construction practices with U.S. electrical codes and specifications, thorough professional knowledge in electrical design calculations and criteria, preparation of engineering drawings and specification.

E. Skills and Abilities:

Incumbent must have skills and abilities on handling of U.S. standard construction electrical equipment and tools, communication skills and computer skills.

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*Note: All ordinarily resident applicants must be residing in YEMEN and have the required work and residency permits to be eligible for consideration.



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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Job Vacancy

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announces for an immediate job opening within its organization:

"Democracy and Governance Specialist"

The USAID/Yemen Democracy and Governance (DG) Specialist manages the DG portfolio within the Mission's Office of Technical Programs. Also provides overall leadership, strategic, and technical direction for the design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the USG-funded DG and Conflict Mitigation portfolio in Yemen and provides recommendations to the Technical Office Director and, when required, to the USAID/Yemen Mission Director.

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- Prior Work Experience:** At least 5 years post-graduate experience in democracy and governance development with demonstrated increasing responsibility for managing, analyzing, and coordinating DG projects is required. At least four years working in a developing country addressing DG and/or conflict mitigation issues is also required. Significant experience with USAID or another major international development/donor organization is an advantage.
- Language Proficiency:** English and Arabic level IV (Fluent) in reading, writing and speaking is required.
- Knowledge:** Must be knowledgeable and proficient in relevant sub-sector issues, including but not limited to: local governance, anti-corruption, DG policy, conflict, and civil society. Incumbent must understand the processes of DG strategizing, program design and development, DG program management and oversight and fundamental approaches to DG program monitoring and evaluation. S/he will demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the DG-related challenges, opportunities, and socio/political/cultural environments within Yemen. Understanding of and past experience with USAID policies, procedures, regulations, and reporting requirements are highly desired.
- Abilities and Skills:** Demonstrated financial, personnel, and program management skills. Incumbent will require strong interpersonal skills for effectively with senior officials in the ROYG, Embassy, donors and NGOs. S/he must possess good analytical skills in strategic guidance and program management oversight, including financial. S/he must have functional skills in basic office computer applications (i.e., Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint). As a program manager, must be familiar and comfortable working with numbers and budgets. Familiarity and experience with databases is a must. Demonstrated ability to design and manage complex DG projects and activities is also desired.

*For detailed Position Description and requirement of qualifications please go to our website

<http://yemen.usembassy.gov/yemen/vacancies.html>

SALARY: **FSN-10** (Trainee Level) US\$19,321 per year starting salary plus US\$6,000 in benefits and allowances.

FSN-11 (Full Performance Level) US\$ 24481 per year starting salary plus US\$8,000 in benefits and allowances (upon satisfactory completion of training period of not less than 12 months and confirmation of the appointment).

How to apply:

Interested applicants should complete DS-174 or submit a current C.V. (with awards, recommendation letters, copies of degrees earned). All applications also must include a letter which explains the candidate's past experience and how it relates to the required qualifications, and send it to the Human Resources Office, American Embassy, Dhahr Himyar Street, Sanaa or through e-mail address: hrosanaa@state.gov no later than January 7, 2012.

Please note that only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview.

* NOTE: ALL ORDINARILY RESIDENT APPLICANTS MUST HAVE THE REQUIRED WORK AND/OR RESIDENCY PERMITS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION.

"No danger in Yemen"

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

Mikael Strandberg, 49, a Swedish explorer who has traveled to 125 countries, recently completed a 14-day journey by camel from Tehama and Zabid to Sana'a to "prove that Yemen is a safe country."

On Thursday, Strandberg arrived at the Old City of Sana'a with his Yemeni companion, Amin, and a camel laden with luggage and water bottles.

Even after such an arduous journey, he was very vigorous and energetic.

"Three years ago, I fell in love with this fantastic country and its

people," he said while surrounded by hundreds of Yemeni onlookers in the Old City of Sana'a.

"The reason I came here this time was that I heard so much negative information about Yemen," he added, before describing Yemen as a fantastic country.

Strandberg decided to start a journey to show the world that there is no danger in Yemen.

"I've done it. There is no danger, no problem and I proved that Yemen is safe," he said. "Ninety-nine percent of Yemenis are hospitable, kind and helpful."

He indicated that Yemen has a potential for growth and conveyed a message to Yemenis, saying: "You have everything and you can lead your country towards becoming the

richest country in the world."

Strandberg faced several difficulties and challenges during his journey. "A lack of water and food and the hot weather were the biggest problems," he said.

He said however that the people he met along the way were very cooperative and kind. He was surprised when anonymous people provided him with food and water in his tent.

Strandberg named his daughter Bilquis to honor Yemen and express his love for the country.

"You can find everything in Yemen. It's never boring," he said. "I admire Yemenis. They are still kind and generous despite their suffering and and despite a difficult situation."



Strandberg, the Swedish explorer has traveled 14-day journey in Yemen by camel from Tehama and Zabid to Sana'a to prove that Yemen is a safe country.

YEMEN: Changing the narrative



Children lining up for propane gas in Sanaa amid unprecedented shortage of the community that increased its price by 300 percent.

By: IRIN

Aid workers in Yemen, the Middle East's poorest country, appear to have made some headway in broadening the mainstream narrative to include the deepening humanitarian crisis.

At a press conference in Dubai on 18 December, heads of UN aid agencies appealed to the media to better cover humanitarian needs which the UN says will continue to rise well into 2012, affecting more than eight million people.

"Whenever you hear about Yemen, it's always about security mat-

ters, anti-terrorism, Arab Spring, youth movement... Tagging onto that has been the fighting and the political concerns," the UN's humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, Jens Toyberg-Frandzen, told IRIN. "It isn't the humanitarian that gets the headline."

"In that whole messy picture, I don't think many people are aware that the situation is as bad as it is now."

The UN says some seven million people in Yemen are food insecure - meaning they go to bed hungry or do not know where the next meal is coming from. That number could well double - to nearly two-thirds of the population - as up-to-date data is collected, Toyberg-Frandzen said. Malnutrition rates in several parts of the country are already well beyond emergency threshold levels.

Yemen is also home to half a million people displaced by conflict internally, and more than 210,000 refugees and 500,000 migrants, mostly from the Horn of Africa. These figures are increasing, and the UN expects the number of internally displaced to rise to 700,000 next year.

Measles and cholera have broken out sporadically, and the Ministry of Health fears polio could re-emerge

as basic health services have broken down and people can no longer afford medication amid a shattered economy.

Aid agencies are appealing for US\$447 million to help the country in 2012, a 54 percent increase on last year's consolidated appeal. Where the UN used to target its aid towards those who were affected by conflict, namely refugees and displaced people, it now sees large needs among average Yemenis.

The humanitarian situation worsened significantly after anti-government protesters took to the streets in February 2011. Government forces cracked down violently on the protesters, who were eventually supported by armed tribesmen and opposition forces, bringing the country

to the brink of civil war. A political deal has returned some degree of calm to the most-affected cities of Sana'a and Taiz, but aid workers say the deal will have little immediate impact on the humanitarian situation, especially in the north and south, where separate conflicts involving rebels, separatist forces and al-Qaeda-affiliated militants continue.

Repeated warnings

"Maybe we haven't done enough to speak out and make everyone understand," Geert Cappelaere, the head of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Yemen, told IRIN.

That, despite repeated warnings for months of a "looming crisis" due to "shocking" malnutrition rates -

warnings that have led to little result.

"[It's] a broken record," he said. "But it is a record we need to continue playing because the day Yemen is going to hit the wall, then nobody will [be able] to tell us that we have never warned [that it would] happen."

The message seems to have reached several international media outlets, with headlines reading: "Worsening humanitarian crisis in Yemen" and "Yemen 'could be another Somalia'."

Now it's a matter of convincing the donors.

The UN also has appealed for more organizations on the ground to help deliver programmes to people in need in hard-to-reach areas.

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HELP US DECIDE!

YT Person of the Year

Every year The Yemen Times selects a person whom we recognize as being constructively active during 2011 for the benefit of Yemen. This person does not have to be a prominent figure, it could be a simple man or woman who gave to his community and helped development on a local or a national scale. The Yemen Times Person of the Year needs to have a good reputation and respect of the community.

Help us decide.. Cast your nomination to ytreaders.view@gmail.com telling us whom you have chosen and why. Don't forget to tell us about how you came to know this person and your contacts so that we reach you to know more.

Don't forget, this is your contribution and recognition of this person. Last date to send nominees is Friday Dec. 30, 2011.



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