

Back-and-forth accusations between Islah and Houthis continue mounting

Mohammed Al-Samei

Accusations continue between the Houthis, a Shia group, and the Islah Party, Yemen's main opposition party, which encompasses the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist factions. The two groups have waged a campaign against one another regarding violence and human rights violations.

Certain officials in the Islah Party say the Houthis resort to frequent violence when dealing with locals in Sa'ada—a governorate in northern Yemen that borders Saudi Arabia—and that there are continuous detentions of those who don't support Houthis in all Sa'ada districts. The Houthis deny any violations in Sa'ada, saying stability and security is prevalent in all areas of the governorate.

Adnan Al-Odaini, the deputy head of the information department in the Islah Party, said there are clear human rights violations committed against people in Sa'ada owing to the political situation, which triggered rifts between armed groups of some political parties in the governorate and the Houthis. Violations occur in Sa'ada because of the ideologies and the different political viewpoints, Al-Odaini said.

Al-Odaini said feeble government presence in areas including Sa'ada governorate has led to the increased power of armed groups. Citizens cannot exercise their rights through state institutions, and this human rights situation

heralds further danger, he said.

Islah-owned media outlets have published many reports saying Houthis launched a broad detention campaign in Sa'ada districts and stormed houses, turning them into military barracks; the Houthis launch continual attacks on the Islah Party headquarters in Sa'ada.

Mohammed Al-Makaleh, a writer and a political activist, said Islah has committed several violations against Houthis in Sana'a's Change Square, the most recent being months ago at dawn when an Islah group and the First Armored Division assaulted the tents of Houthi campers in the square.

"We have heard the Islah Party accuses the Houthis of committing human rights violations in Sa'ada," Al-Makaleh said. "Yet we are not certain of the accuracy and veracity of such charges."

He went on to say, "The Islah Party's claims are many, which indicates that this party attempts to capitalize on these events to serve its purpose in this dispute."

Al-Makaleh said the Islah Party thinks the "freedoms and human rights card" could defeat the Houthis, particularly following military confrontations.

"We are against any human rights breaches, be they Houthis or from the Islah Party."

Citing an example of the Islah Party's "unfounded" accusations, Al-Makaleh said the Islah Party

claimed Houthis murdered a man because of his clothing (trousers) and his good command of the English language.

"In the end, it was discovered that some members of the Islah Party engineered a mortar attack on the man's house."

A recent, local report published by the Civic Initiative Support Withaq Foundation disclosed reported crimes and violations against Sa'ada and Hajja civilians from 2004 until 2012, and many of the reports suggested Houthis were responsible for the violations.

The report disclosed that 13,905 violation cases were reported in Sa'ada governorate from June 2004 until December 2011. Reported Houthi-responsible violations in Hajja reached 4,866 from August 2011 to June 2012.

According to the report, death cases allegedly committed by Houthis reached 531, among them 59 children and 48 women. Four hundred ninety-seven houses were reported as either looted or sabotaged.

In Hajja governorate, located southwest of Sa'ada, 124 civilian murder cases were allegedly committed by Houthis, the report found. These crimes made up 2.55 percentage of a grand total 4,866 violations.

Abu Hashim, a leading Houthi figure, refuted the claims of the human rights violations in Sa'ada governorate.



A banner in Sa'ada reads that the city complains about injustice on the part of Houthis. The banner was written by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Sa'ada.

"Sa'ada lives in a state of stability and security. What is brought forth by the media is only rumors for the purpose defaming the Houthis."

The local council, not the

Houthis, governs Sa'ada, Hashim said.

Political analyst Ahmed Al-Zurka said the Houthis and Islah Party exchange accusations that could spark future political dispute as the two sides have religious and doctrinal agendas and hope to make political gains through the accusations.

"The exchange of charges could drive to the breakout of further military clashes claiming the lives of innocent civilians," Al-Zurka said.

He said the ongoing accusations exchange between the two sides is emblematic of the absence of press discipline, which breeds the aggravation of turmoil and doctrinal differences.

He said some attempt to depict the situation in Sa'ada as a doctrinal conflict, and others attempt to project it as a regional conflict between the supporters of Saudi Arabia and Iran. The conflict has grave repercussions on Yemen, Al-Zurka said, asserting that President Abdu Rabu Mnansour Hadi and the National Dialogue Preparatory Committee, as well as political parties, ought to find a solution prior to large conflicts.

"If these disagreements and agitation go on unresolved, it could turn to violence and a military confrontation."

Murad Al-Saeedi, a human rights activist who launched a campaign against Houthis on Facebook, said there are gross human rights violations committed by Houthis against Sa'ada residents, affirming that there are hundreds of civilian detainees in Houthi prisons.

Salah Mahfal, the head of the

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The Islah Party's claims are many, which indicates that this party attempts to capitalize on these events to serve its purpose in this dispute.

—Mohammed Al-Makaleh, writer and political activist

information unit of the Islah Party in Sa'ada, said the Houthis constantly commit human rights violations in the governorate. He said there are attacks, detentions and investigations and months-long torture of some detainees.

"Every day, violations take place in all the districts of Sa'ada because of the spread of the Houthi armed men and the absence of the local council and the public security," Mahfal said.

Mahfal said he hoped there would be dialogue and understanding in order to establish peace, though there are differences in ideology and standpoints.

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The exchange of charges could drive to the breakout of further military clashes claiming the lives on innocent civilians.

—Ahmed Al-Zurka, political analyst



Soldiers from First Armored Division try to halt clashes between Islah and Houthis this past March.

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Women gain ground as activists, but some question the extent of progress

Story by Mohammed Al-Samei
Photos courtesy of Nadia Abdullah

Recently, the number of female activists in Yemen has increased, largely as a result of the 2011 peaceful revolution. Many women have emerged as political and human rights leaders.

Although the media focused on the role of Yemeni females during protests and sit-ins at change squares across Yemen, many believe their role is still lacking, despite growing numbers.

Thekra Al-Wahedi, a human rights activist, said there were few female activists before the revolution due to the lack of self-confidence and absence of opportunities for the advancement of women.

Al-Wahedi said that women should be empowered to understand their role, focus on social issues and find suitable solutions for them. She also is a proponent of women's solidarity, and recognizing that all females have different abilities.

Elham Al-Hadabi, an activist for the Women Journalists Without Chains Organization, said that although females continue to emerge as activists, their activities

are limited. During the revolution, their roles were mainly restricted to registering and documenting what happened she said.

"Currently, there are many female activists, but their roles are still weak. Violations continue and women should be able to exert great efforts in several fields," Al-Hadabi said.

On the other hand, Abdulrahman Barman, a lawyer for the HOOD Organization for Defending Human Rights and Freedoms, said it is unjust to say women did not play an important role during the revolution. He boasted that women's wide participation in demonstrations amazed the entire world.

Barman added that there are many female activists in civil society organizations who play great roles in defending human, women and children's rights and are very efficient at organizing empowerment activities.

Self-seeking Motives

Some criticize the performance of female activists in civil society organizations, saying that they are driven by a desire to make money, not a commitment to specific causes.

Basma Al-Asbahi, a journalist, recognized the important contributions of women during the revolution, but asserted that she wit-

nessed too many working for their own personal gain.

"I heard many female activists gained fame, but I don't see any of their roles [currently] in society," she said.

Al-Asbahi claims there are many forums and organizations that organize workshops and training courses only to make money, without teaching or enlightening the people who join them.

Equality between men and women

Azooz Al-Samei, an activist in the Taiz's Freedom Square, said that most of Yemen's laws, particularly the civil ones, assert the importance of equality between men and women. However, many dominant prejudices are a result of prevailing social factors and traditions.

He added that it is clear women have begun to liberate themselves from socially-imposed shackles. There is a noticeable number of female activists in different fields who have proved their ability to participate in political, legal and civil activities, he said.

"Women in Yemen participated effectively in the revolution and were appreciated by the international community...[This] asserted that women played a great role in and supported the escalating momentum of the revolution in Taiz's Freedom Square."

He pointed out that women in Taiz's Freedom Square were the hallmark of change in the country, calling Taiz the "womb of the revolution." Al-Samei recognized women's participation in the well-known, "Life March" that marched from Taiz to Sana'a on foot, covering 260 kilometers.

Women are eager to learn

Sadeq Al-Hamadi, a writer, believes that the number of educated females in Yemen has increased because they are eager to finish their studies in alongside men.

Al-Hamadi said the 2011 revolution provided an opportunity for women to denounce many preju-

dices against them like male dominance in society.

He said that prominent women in Yemen emerged after the revolution like the female activist Tawakel Karman.

Karman was the first Arab woman to receive the Noble Peace Prize.



Despite seizing the opportunity to assert their rising role in society during revolution protests, some believe women's role in events was too limited.



Human rights activists claim there is a sense of female empowerment now that was not present prior to the 2011 revolution.



Women, women and more women march during a peaceful protest. Media reported heavily on the role of the female during the political uprising that swept the country last year.

Engineering students struggle at Sana'a University - need money and resources

Ahmed Dawood

Enrollment at the College of Engineering at Sana'a University is not easy. Applicants work hard and resort to extreme studying sprees just to pass the admission examination. However, according to many current students, that is the easy part. They say the graduation project is where the real obstacles and difficulties come into play.

Limited financial resources is still the number one problem facing graduates according to many students. They find it difficult to purchase necessary materials and scientific references for projects.

Abdullah Ahmed Al-Soufi, a student in the Telecommunications

Department at the University, said the major problem graduates encounter is the financial burden. He said the graduation project cost him more than YR 200,000, a figure he's not sure he can come up with.

Some students have the option of receiving funding from the Dean, but resources are limited.

Sulaiman Al-Safi, the Deputy Dean of the college, said graduation projects are frequently proposed by the teaching staff at college, and sometimes the students' nominations are accepted to help with funding.

Thabit Hamza, a graduate student in the Department of Civil Engineering, said there were many problems he went through while completing his graduation project,

including a lack of scientific references for paper writing. He says the college needs more specialized modern references that could contribute to more in-depth papers.

"I surf the net in order to obtain further information, yet the online information is not adequate. I often feel disheartened and frustrated when I cannot find the information that I look for on the net," he said.

With regard to providing the students with tools for scientific research, Al-Safi acknowledged the problem.

"It is true that some specialized scientific sources are unavailable at the college even though they are fundamental to the students. We have no choice but to make them available," he said.

Al-Safi pointed out that Yemen is a developing country, and there is inadequate attention given to the importance of the availability of the scientific research tools.

However, he added that knowledge is not limited to the college. He encourages students to do their own research.

"Some students at the College of Engineering are creative. Some of them surprise us because they obtain information that the professors cannot get themselves," he said.

Ahmed Al-Shaiba, another student in the department, considers the lack of cooperation between the college and the students a constant hurdle in his education.

"The college provides us with nothing, no financial support or

guidelines. We live in a constant nightmare of worry," he said.

Al-Shaiba went on to say, "Every day I attempt to find a company or a foundation to help me conduct my graduation project, which I want to be excellent and different. I often feel bad when I have no support assisting me with my graduation project."

Though Al-Shaiba continues to put a great deal of effort into his project, he said he is discouraged when he sees former students' graduation projects sitting un-cared for on the shelves of the college's library.

Despite these obstacles, the Engineering School has continued to experience growth in recent years. These students have started competing with those of other Arab

Nations, according to Al-Safi. However, it is a little worrisome for him because the students often fall short.

Little to no command of international languages, an inability to successfully convince others of their ideas, in addition to truancy issues all concern the Deputy Dean. He says that not only do they inhibit student's graduation projects, but also leave them less competitive.

To help assist students, the College of Engineering now holds an annual fair that aims to help graduates make contacts in government offices and the private sector that can mentor them or possibly lead to employment.

Al-Safi hopes to have other countries to partake fair in the future.

Eid season marked by more than celebrations for those unable to afford traditions



To celebrate Eid, one of the most popular gift items is clothing, something that teacher Muneera Othman considers a "must."

Story and photos by Amal Al-Yarisi

As Eid approaches, the demand for items such as clothes, furniture, desserts and other essentials increases as shoppers flock to pick up items in recognition of one of Islam's most celebrated occasions.

Markets during the Eid season experience a revival, often doubling their typical gains, as shopkeepers compete by increasing their stock because they know shoppers will buy in bulk.

"[During] Eid, the shopping centers stay open until late at night," Sadeq Al-Dibiani, a salesman at a clothing center in Shumaila market, said. He said shop owners offer attractive discounts in order to draw in customers.

One of the most sought after gifts during Eid is clothing. Some locals deem the joy of the holiday incomplete unless new clothes are bought.

Muneera Othman, a teacher at the Khadeeja Bint Khawailid School, considers new clothes a must.

"This is the sole thing we can [buy to] make our children happy," the married woman, who is raising four children, said.

Mohammed Saeed, an employee in Al-Tadamon Bank, also customarily takes his children to the market to pick out their clothes and shoes for the week-long celebration.

"It is impossible to receive Eid without providing my children with whatever they need," he said.

On the contrary, many people believe Eid is about more than purchasing items.

Sabah Mohammed, a factory worker, said "The real Eid is about being sound and free of diseases." To her, it is a little unsettling to see people flocking to markets when Yemenis are in the middle of uncertain economic and political times.

"Our only concern is collecting money for food," she said.

Abdul Hameed, another Sana'a local, is of the same mind. He sees many Yemenis not having an income to survive and wants to shift the focus away from shopping.

"We should think about serious things, not about trivial things," Hameed said.

Many struggle to cope with the expectation of providing special goods for their families and not being able to afford such luxuries.

Noman Al-Jarmouzi, a government employee, said, "I wish I could provide my five children with every-

thing, but the hard circumstances make our aspirations unfulfilled."

The price of clothing is a contentious topic on the streets building up to Eid. Although the markets are crowded, Yaseen Abdul Wahed claims shopkeepers do not take advantage of increased demand for products.

"Most people complain about the prices of clothing, but this is the price and we cannot sell at a loss," he said.

However, Maha Mohammed, an employee at Sana'a University, disagrees and argues that consumers are exploited.

"Just one week prior to Eid, I was surprised to find the prices had jumped. I found it obligatory to buy the clothes for my son. In spite of the fact that I have one only child and my income is somewhat good, I pay the price of my child's clothing, whatever it costs," he said.

Wafa Al-Hameedi, a resident in Sana'a, agrees, saying that merchants capitalize on the social custom of purchasing clothes.

"It is necessary to buy Eid clothes even if [they are] expensive," she said.

On a bigger scale, the inability to purchase Eid clothing reflects a common situation in Yemen where prices have increased while salaries

have not kept up.

"The Yemeni society suffers from a deteriorating economic situation, in particular following the political crisis the country has been experiencing," said Ahmed Shamakh, a local economist. He added that goods are extremely expensive though low-quality.

Shamakh recognizes that merchants raise prices during Eid to make up for scarce income the rest of the year, but he calls on the government for more regulations on merchants who raise prices, but not quality of products.

During Eid, many have to rely on charities for support especially the marginalized group, known as Akhdam. This population is often characterized by large families, making the burden of purchasing new clothes even larger.

Um Lutf, a mother of seven children, said she needs her husband's two salaries to be able to buy her children clothes for Eid.

"We barely can provide the children with food. It is absolutely difficult to buy Eid clothes because prices are exorbitant," she said



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Some people say merchants raise prices during Eid so as to make a higher profit.



The inability to purchase clothing for Eid is a common situation as prices have gone up, but salaries have stayed the same.



"It is impossible to receive Eid without providing my children with whatever they need," Mohammed Saeed said.

Drones: Undeclared and undiscussed

Geoff Dyer
FT.com
First published Oct. 21

If there is such a thing as an "Obama doctrine", it was probably first suggested by the advice of Robert Gates, defence secretary for the first two and a half years of the administration.

"Any future defence secretary who advises the president to again send a big American land army into Asia or into the Middle East or Africa," he said shortly before leaving office, "should have his head examined."

Given President Barack Obama's political and economic aversion to launching new wars with lots of ground troops, it is perhaps no surprise that he has latched on so powerfully to the use of armed drones to go after suspected terrorists. U.S. officials claim Al-Qaeda's leadership has been "decimated" over the past few years.

The surprise is that the subject has hardly come up in the course of a long election campaign – even one dominated by a sluggish economy – because it ignores one of the more remarkable and controversial aspects of the Obama administration. The president has made such extensive use of secret military tools that he would have provided himself with years of seminar material were he still a constitutional law professor.

"It is arguable that, through covert wars, this administration has violated the sovereignty of more countries, more times, than any other administration," says David Rothkopf, chief executive of Foreign Policy magazine and a former Clinton administration official.

Mr. Obama, a Nobel Peace laureate, did not invent the new approach but he has dramatically expanded it. The use of targeted killings was authorised one week after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and in the next seven years the administration of George W. Bush ordered about 50 operations. Mr. Obama has signed off on more than 350.

And while the Bush administration began the planning for what later became known as the Stuxnet computer virus, it was Mr. Obama

who ordered for the first time a cyber attack on the infrastructure of another nation – in this case, Iran's nuclear programme.

These ventures in modern warfare have been conducted in almost complete secrecy, with little congressional oversight and almost no discussion with the public.

The political logic of the campaign explains much of the silence about Mr. Obama's covert wars. Mitt Romney, his Republican challenger, has used every opportunity to accuse Mr. Obama of being weak: high-tech bombings of alleged Al-Qaeda ring-leaders do not fit very well into this

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When drone strikes were an occasional option, questions about their legality were easier to set aside. But the dramatic increase in their use has pushed those questions centre stage.

attack line.

Yet the administration's widespread use of drones is starting to come under the sort of sustained criticism that the next president will find it hard to ignore.

A flurry of legal challenges is calling into question the ethics of using unmanned combat aircraft to kill terrorist suspects. There are also growing questions about their long-term effectiveness in targeting terrorism. Whatever the outcome of the Nov. 6 vote, the next president is likely to find himself under intense pressure to discuss the subject more openly.

Under Mr. Obama, drones have killed targets in at least six countries: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia and Libya. Their use has become so extensive in Somalia that there have been reports of com-

mercial air traffic being disrupted.

In the absence of official disclosure, researchers have used local news to try to put together a picture of the programme. According to the New America Foundation, a Washington think-tank, CIA drone strikes in Pakistan have killed 1,907 to 3,220 people since 2004, of whom between 1,618 and 2,765 were reported to be militants. It calculates that 15-16 percent of those killed are "non-militants".

When drone strikes were an occasional option, questions about their legality were easier to set aside. But the dramatic increase in their use has pushed those questions centre stage.

Legal critics, including legal campaigners, constitutional law academics and libertarians such as former presidential candidate Ron Paul, argue that the only place where the U.S. is officially at war is Afghanistan – and that the use of drones in countries such as Yemen or Somalia is therefore illegal under U.S. law. They also question whether the secret decisions about who to place on the "kill list" prepared by White House lawyers and officials meet the legal standard of due process.

For several years, the American Civil Liberties Union has been trying to use lawsuits to push the administration into greater disclosure. In its latest action, launched last month, the ACLU is accusing it of abandoning legal due process in the killing last October in Yemen of Abdulrahman Al-Awlaki, the 16-year-old son of an alleged Al-Qaeda leader, and believed to be the third US citizen to have died in targeted killings.

In the face of mounting pressure, John Brennan, Mr. Obama's counter-terrorism adviser, has given two speeches this year on the policy. His April speech was the administration's first public acknowledgment of its drone strikes. He has countered legal criticism by saying the U.S. is in an "armed conflict with Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and associated forces". The White House believes that defining the enemy in such broad terms – similar to those of the Bush-era "war on terror" – provides the legal basis for pursuing terrorists in other countries.

Mr. Brennan also insists that the

administration adopts "rigorous standards and process of review" when deciding who to target "outside of the 'hot' battlefield of Afghanistan". The New York Times has reported that Mr. Obama personally approves the names on the "kill list".

Even if these arguments prevail in court, they have left a lot of observers deeply uncomfortable with the way the "war on terror" can be used to blur the terms of where and when the U.S. is at war. As Georgetown University legal scholar Rosa Brooks put it recently: "That amounts, in practice, to a claim that the execu-

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According to critics, the large number of recent strikes means not all the targets can have represented an imminent threat to the U.S.

utive branch has the unreviewable power to kill anyone, anywhere, at any time, based on secret criteria and secret information discussed in a secret process by largely anonymous individuals."

While Mr. Brennan has attempted to address the strikes against alleged terrorists, he has largely avoided the issue of "signature strikes", where the targets are individuals whose identities may be unknown in an area where terrorist activity is believed to be taking place. According to critics, the large number of recent strikes means not all the targets can have represented an imminent threat to the U.S.

The White House has not spoken about allegations that the U.S., in the belief that any rescuers are likely to be connected to the alleged terrorist has, conducted follow-up strikes af-

ter bombings. Christof Heyns, U.N. special rapporteur on extra-judicial killings, said this year that if it was true that "there have been secondary drone strikes on rescuers who are helping [the injured] after an initial drone attack, those further attacks are a war crime".

The legal waves are being felt in the U.K., where a High Court case brought on behalf of the relatives of a Pakistani man killed in a drone strike alleges that British security services provided intelligence information used in U.S. drone strikes, which could be deemed illegal under U.K. law.

Amid the legal questioning, there is also growing unease in Washington foreign policy circles about the long-term effectiveness of drone strikes. Even some observers who have worked in the counter-terrorism field who support their deployment against terrorist groups believe they are being overused.

"In lots of ways, drones have taken the place of U.S. strategic decision-making," says Joshua Foust, a former intelligence official now at the American Security Project think-tank. "People think if there is a problem and it is difficult to get to, then let's use drones to solve the problem."

Mr. Romney has said little about how he might use drones but in a speech two weeks ago he echoed some of this criticism, saying they were "no substitute for a national security strategy for the Middle East".

In recent months international opposition has become harder to ignore. In April the Pakistani parliament unanimously called for an end to drone strikes within its borders. In Yemen, a series of witness accounts suggests that the increased pace of U.S. drone attacks has contributed to a rise in anti-Americanism and could be encouraging recruitment to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the local affiliate of the terrorist network. "Drone policy at its current tempo does put the U.S. at the very top of the bad-guys list," says Will McCants, a former counter-terrorism official at the state department.

However, in an August speech about Yemen, Mr. Brennan dismissed such suggestions. "Contrary to conventional wisdom, we see little

evidence that these actions are generating widespread anti-American sentiment or recruits for AQAP," he said.

There are growing calls, particularly among Democrat-leaning foreign policy experts, for the next administration to establish clearer rules about exactly how drones can be used. Anne-Marie Slaughter, who was head of policy planning at the State Department in the first two years of the Obama administration, compares the situation to the early years of nuclear weapons, when the U.S. was first to develop the system but other countries soon caught up. "We do not want a world where we are saying that we can decide who a drone can take out," she says. "We will suffer enormously for setting this precedent. I do not want to be in a world where China can decide who to target."

Supporters of drones say that whatever the moral and legal problems of targeted strikes, the alternative policies are much worse. When Pakistani authorities launched an offensive in 2009 against insurgents in the Swat valley, the U.N. estimated that as many as 1.4m people were displaced in the violence and instability that ensued.

In an era of tighter defence budgets, drones are also cheaper than fighter jets. A new-generation F35 fighter jet is expected to cost about \$130m, for example, whereas a new Reaper armed drone costs about \$53m. Given the large number of highly trained people needed to operate them, however, the cost advantage is less than the price tags suggest.

Those who back drones also say the administration could address many of the criticisms about the identity of targets and the number of casualties if officials provided much more information about their activities. Only more disclosure, they say, will fend off mounting criticism of targeted strikes.

"Even drone-supporters like me will benefit from [ACLU] lawsuits, because evidence is what we are all looking for," says Christine Fair, a Pakistan expert at Georgetown University. "Without doing this, the drone programme will simply not be sustainable."

Drone strikes: a scandal ... or just a sideshow?

Jenny Holland
Guardian.co.uk
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Peace activists and human rights groups have been vocal in their condemnation of the U.S. policy of drone strikes against militant targets in Pakistan and Yemen.

The narrative often repeated by these groups is that drones are loathed in both countries, and are driving the population into the arms of militants. But the reality on the ground is much more complex.

According to Brian Glyn Williams, professor of Islamic history at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, and author of the upcoming book *Predators: The CIA's Drone War on Al-Qaeda*, many local people in tribal areas support surgical strikes by drones over

large-scale ground offensives by the Pakistani army. While public opinion in the rest of the country may be strongly anti-drone, he found, for those Pakistanis living under Taliban rule, it is not so clear-cut: "The local tribes turned on the Taliban for killing hundreds of their maliks (tribal leaders), enforcing strict sharia law, executing 'spies', closing schools for girls, carrying out suicide bombings, and generally terrorizing the population."

What has gone largely unreported is the fact that not only have drones been successful in disrupting terrorist plots and militant networks, but that the number of civilian casualties is actually low. According to the New America Foundation, which tracks data from major news sources in both the west and Pakistan, drone strike accuracy has been steadily increasing – going from a 9% to 10% civilian death

rate in 2008 to a 0% civilian death rate in 2012. Two other studies, also working from both Pakistani and western data, came to similar conclusions.

Comparing the threat posed by militants and terrorists – both to Pakistani society and to the west – to the threat posed by drones, Williams is emphatic: "The drones are saving civilians, not killing them." He cites the failed 2010 plot by British jihadis to carry out a "commando-style" attack on civilian targets in Europe – all of the plotters involved were killed in drone strikes.

And the threat is even greater to the Pakistani public. Those who beat their chest in fury over the small amount of collateral damage rarely speak out against the slaughter of thousands by the Taliban.

The claim that drones are turning locals into militants is also far from proven. In the tribal regions,

Williams says, "there are very few undecideds – you are going to tolerate the drones because they go after your enemies, or you are going to be with the Taliban. Drones aren't going to drive people into the arms of the Taliban".

A strikingly similar point is made by Christopher Swift, a lawyer and political scientist who conducted 40 interviews with Yemeni tribal leaders and Islamist politicians across the country in June. In Yemen, "drones aren't the primary driver of Al-Qaeda recruiting," Swift says. "Economic desperation, corruption, breakdown of traditional culture, they are driving recruitment."

Swift's research echoes Williams' fieldwork among Pakistani tribal leaders.

"The closer I got to people who are actively fighting Al-Qaeda in Yemen, the more they wanted the U.S. to maintain its drone programme,"

Swift, an adjunct professor of national security studies at Georgetown University, says. Away from the battleground, in cities and in educated circles, people were militantly opposed to drones and saw them as a neocolonial instrument. The closer you are to the problem, says Swift, the more you understand the value of force as a policy instrument.

That proximity to danger can make for some surprising – if wary – allies. Swift recounts meeting a Yemeni member of the Muslim Brotherhood: "his general feeling was very sceptical of U.S. intervention in Yemen and the Middle East as a whole, inclined to see this as part of the clash of civilisations paradigm," says Swift. "But also as someone who was dealing with Al-Qaeda and knew how bad they are." He supported the U.S. drone strikes, "with conditions", such as

no civilian casualties and minimal force.

When it comes to drones, Swift says, we are asking ourselves the wrong questions. Drones have become a free-floating signifier in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East for all the other debates we are having about security and politics, he argues.

Ultimately, the debate over the drone campaign is a distraction from other, more important issues in Yemen: maternal and child health, access to water, adherence to the rule of law. Drones are a sideshow.

The problem is not drones per se, but the fact that by using them the U.S. government is applying short-term solutions to long-term problems. Drones may not be driving Al-Qaeda recruitment, but neither are they bringing peace and stability. That would take sustained reform.

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Doctors use artwork to enter minds of children

Story by Samar Qaed
Photos by Ashraf Al-Muraqab

We've all seen it, the elementary picture a student has etched on paper or in the sand. While they earn our praise or a congratulatory smile for the young artist, experts are now saying that the basic graphics are not just that simple, but rather a more complex way of communicating to parents ideas that the young are often unable to convey with words.

Doctor Salah Al-Deen Al-Jomaei, a professor of psychology at Sana'a and Amran Universities, supports this theory. He says drawing can reflect a particular situation children are experiencing. A child's ambitions, wishes, fears and interests are often reflected in subjects they choose to draw according to the Doctor. They can reveal much about a child's emotional relationship with the world round them. For example, Al-Jomaei says children's drawings are often of bright colors and different sizes, however if a child starts to draw objects smaller, it may reflect a loss in self-confidence. In other words, drawings often enable children to introduce themselves to others.

"Deaf children express what they want by drawing. Since people don't pay attention to the things they don't use, deaf people do not tend to draw ears because they can't hear. So drawing is very important [way] to connect with and learn about deaf children," Al-Jomaei said.

Mahmoud Al-Mamari, a psychological consultant, says drawing as self expression dates back to ancient times. Our ancestors drew on caves, temples and museums as a way of expressing fear, happiness or victory, he said.

Today, Al-Mamari says drawing can be used as treatment, especially for those who find it difficult to connect with others directly. Doctors are now able to diagnose a problem by coaxing a potential issue trapped in the unconscious into the conscious through artwork.

Al-Mamari said using drawings to treat children is very effective because young patients do not feel flooded with questions. He often uses the technique to determine a patient's relationship to others by

having them draw pictures of their fathers, mothers, relatives and friends.

Al-Mamari uses these techniques to treat children who suffer from ailments such as thumb-sucking, stuttering, bed-wetting and self-imposed social segregation.

"Once, I studied several drawings of a child who isolated [himself] and [suffered from] excessive anxiety," he said. "I found out that he drew repeated pictures of cruel men and viewed their genital parts. After several sessions I discovered that he sexually harassed by one of his relatives and couldn't tell his parents."

"After that, I informed his parents and gave them instructions to deal with him, and eventually the worry and disappointment he suffered was reduced."

The researcher Sumaia Hosam, in her book entitled, "Drawing is a Successful Way to Treat Children," found similar data to support the theory that children draw to express their feelings and internal agitations. She said they will draw to feel appreciated, entertain themselves and imitate others in a way they cannot do with actions.

Mohammed Amir, a human communications specialist at Al-Amal Hospital, said it is important to teach parents and teachers how to read and interpret their child's handwriting so as to tap into their emotional state.

"Minute details about children's agitation and adults' characteristics appear in their drawings," he said. "The rule, 'a photo is worth a thousand words,' must be implied to our children because it is vital to understand their drawings which may be full of pain, hope, thoughts, feelings and stress that they experience or we unintentionally cause them."

He said it is important to let children express what they are feeling using colors and papers because children's drawings will inevitably reflect what is in their minds.

Amir said enlightened families pay attention to the drawings of children because it is a way of effective communication. It is very easy to spot a happy child because they tend to draw happy things, where as an upset child with tend toward dark colors and unpleasant images according to him.



Children use paints and colored pencils to create artwork. What they design could reflect their emotions.



Doctor Salah Al-Deen Al-Jomaei said artwork can reveal much about a child's emotional relationship with the world around them.



Consumers get more than bargained for with chemicals used to grow fruits and vegetables

Story by Ahmed Dawood
Photos by Sadeq Al-Wesabi

Yemeni farmers are currently caught in the practice of using various chemicals to speed the harvest cycle and to increase their crop yields, which in turn leads to higher profits. However, this agricultural procedure comes as a surprise to many consumers and affects them in many negative ways.

Ibrahim Nasser, 25, an employee at the Ministry of Tourism, said, "I

always rush to buy some vegetables or fruits in markets, but when at home, I find they have a weird taste."

"The fruits we always eat lack natural taste because they don't ripen naturally," he said. "I hope we will taste natural fruits one day."

The Ministry of Agriculture has laid out guidelines for a safe harvest period, 10 days after the crop has been sprayed with pesticides, but farmers regularly ignore this regulation due to loose enforcement. Also, due to low oversight, consumers are often left in the dark

about potential health risks associated with chemicals that cause rapid ripening.

Doctor Shawqi Abdulwali Al-Doba'ai, director of the Pesticides Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, said chemical substances gather in the body when people eat fruits and vegetables tainted with pesticides. Consequently, they weaken the immune system and expose it to cancerous elements and strokes. In addition, some of these chemical substances gather in the liver or kidneys, causing kidney failure. They have also been linked to fetal abnormalities in pregnant mothers who consume industrialized crops, according to Al-Doba'ai.

Farmers are also at risk when using pesticides due to poor practices. They often do not wear safety clothes and glasses, exposing them to the potentially harmful chemicals. Al-Doba'ai said farmers spray their crops and then immediately smoke or eat, which is like ingesting the pesticides directly.

Saleh Ghailan, and engineer and head of the Technical Department at the Consumer Protection Association, said farmers are motivated to sell their fruit early to avoid competition from others. If they grow their harvest naturally, they will be subject to an oversupply and forced to reduce their price. Thus, it is much more lucrative for a farmer to resort to industrial chemicals that speed the harvest process to get the crop to market before season, ahead of everyone else.

Ghailan said industrial ripening affects fruits and vegetables negatively. It changes the sweet taste of fruits because their chemical compounds are not given enough time to convert to sugar.

Farooq Mohammed Qasim, the general manager of Marketing at the Department of the Agriculture Ministry, said that in spite of the harmful effects of industrial ripening, it is necessary for some crops that do not ripen easily such as bananas.

Economically speaking, Qasim supports farmers earning higher profits by using industrial chemicals. He argues that some of the harvested fruits can be kept on trees to ripen naturally and sold at a lower price after farmers have earned enough from earlier yields.

Al-Doba'ai said many farmers do not commit to the regulations of the ministry regarding pesticides' usage, pointing out that they resort to randomly and excessively spray pesticides on vegetables and fruits.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the department instructs farmers not to harvest crops before the safety period. However, due to high levels of illiteracy amongst those who toil in fields, the regulation often never reaches them.

Al-Doba'ai said the ministry has taken several procedures to eliminate using random pesticides. It established the "Pesticides' Remnants Lab" to study the pesticides that remain on crops and also to set a limit on the quantity of pesticides that can be used.

He said the ministry issued a list of 335 pesticides used in Yemen, including the 79 that are now banned.

The agricultural department says it is committed to reevaluating and registering pesticides used currently in Yemen in accordance

to international standards.

Currently, Al-Doba'ai says they are working on the quantity of imported pesticides and also adopting new techniques to check the already in use chemical substances and to make sure they minimize their effect on human health.



Industrial ripening is often used on crops such as bananas.



When people eat fruits and vegetables with chemical substances, the chemicals weaken the immune system, according to Shawqi Abdulwali Al-Doba'ai of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Young men tap their basic business skills to combat unemployment

Amal Al-Yarisi

Many young Yemenis are starting their own small businesses to make a living. Some went to college, some are still in high school and others never completed their studies. These often inexperienced start-ups struggle to survive in tough economic times, but their ingenuity and spirit is contagious.

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Dares Al-Janad studied accounting in college but was unable to find a job. Now he finds himself fixing watches next to Al-Dobaibi's cotton candy.



Mohammed Al-Shara'abi supports his family by selling icecream. "I looked for a better job but couldn't find," he said.



Mahfood Ali Hassan brings corn from the Ibb governorate and sells it on the streets of Sana'a. A lack of other viable opportunities led him to his current endeavor.



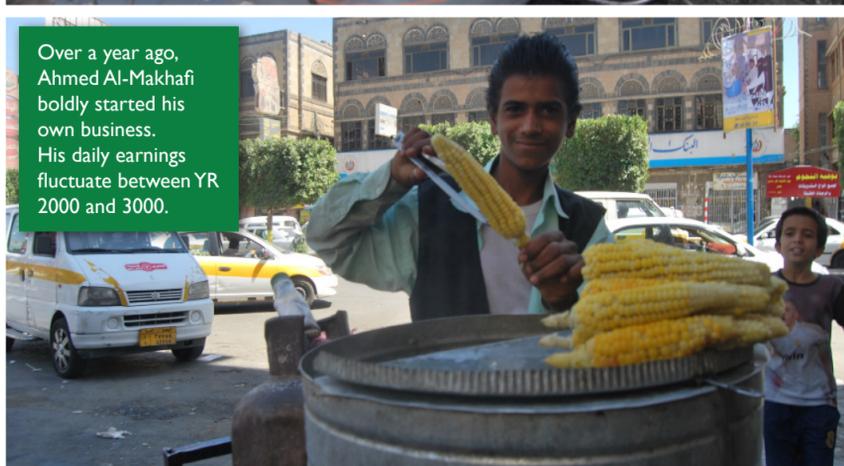
Khaled Al-Dobaibi faithfully goes to Hadda Street everyday to sell cotton candy. It is the only source of income he has. He makes around YR 2000 a day.



For four years, Malik Al-Zoraibi has brought jasmine from Tehama to sell. He usually makes a meager amount, but sometimes he goes home empty handed.



Over a year ago, Ahmed Al-Makhafi boldly started his own business. His daily earnings fluctuate between YR 2000 and 3000.



Moa'een Al-Azazi, an eleventh-grade student, sells various goodies from his father's wheelbarrow after school.



Selling potatoes and eggs is the only source of income for Nabeel Al-Maqtari. He gets up every day and roams Sana'a's streets with his heavily-loaded wheelbarrow. "Thank God I'm better than many unemployed people," he said.



In spite of the thorns that injure his hands, Abdullah Al-Nehari considers selling prickly pears to support his six siblings better than begging.



Coffee shops on the rise in Sana'a thanks to youth

Story and photos by Nadia Haddash

A trend of the young spending their leisure time in cafes is becoming evident in Sana'a. You can spot them off of major streets with their laptops, and sipping coffee.

Moreover, the free wireless that

allows for hours of surfing the web, lures new customers.

Fee Coffee Company, a Yemeni owned brand that started four years ago with multiple locations in Sana'a, is among the most prominent cafes in the city.

Omar Al-Dharafi, the operations director for the company, said the group has established itself by its name and logo, a Qameria, which is

a stained glass decoration typically placed above windows in Yemen.

"Fee Coffee provides coffee mixed with modern things, so we have many customers. Moreover, we provide points of sale in multiple places and this [has] helped introduce Fee Coffee to people," he said.

People have varying reasons for frequenting coffee joints that often offer pastries and lots of seating.

Osama Al-Dabiani, a college student, said he spends over three hours a day with his friends in cafes. During the weekend, he spends much more time because more of his friends go to the establishments.

"I enjoy being with my friends, so I come to the coffee shop on a daily basis," he said.

For Nabeel Al-Baladi, a private sector worker, going to a cafe everyday does not sound appealing. He said "going to cafes must be systematic and in certain occasions because it is boring to go to a certain place continuously. It is fun to go to cafes at certain times like the weekend."

Al-Baladi criticizes a lack of space for non-smokers because many people tend to smoke in these cafes.

Arwa Al-Soma'ai, an employee at the medical company, A-plus, said she goes to cafes to pass her time free of restraints and to escape her usual routine at home with her family.

Six years ago, Coffee Trader emerged as the first cafe of its kind in Sana'a. Mohammed Bawazeer, an employee, said the joint is known to be a calm place. He says those looking for loud music and fun should look for another spot.

Mari Adel, the spokeswoman for the cafe, said, "The one thing motivating youth to come to this club is it has turned into a cultural center. It is not just a place to sip coffee and pass time. We welcome cultural works such as reading, drawing and bazaars. We aspire to expand these cultural activities."

Safa Al-Basheeri, an employee at a local foundation, said the clubs have become a matter of routine for the Yemeni youth, and accord-



Coffee shops are popular in international circles.

ing to her experience "the majority of those coming to this club are the open Yemenis, the expatriates or the foreigners."

Stewart Johhans, a German national who works remotely for a foreign company, is among the young demographic you can find sitting at Coffee Trader on any given day. He describes himself as a regular. He says he likes the alone time the place provides and prefers a break from the external chaos of the streets outside.

Coffee shop culture is still new to the Yemeni society and the idea of the opposite sexes mingling is still sometimes unacceptable in the Yemeni community. "Yet there is gradual acceptance [here], said Al-Basheeri.

Ibtisam Al-Dharaei, a university student sitting with a pool of her female friends at Coffee Trader, said, "It seems unbelievable to tell you that I meet with my girlfriends here and do our homework and revise some of our lessons. We come here to have a change of atmosphere and study together. Probably, some think we waste our time here for nothing."

Dr. Mohammed Saeed Al-Zahrawi, a social researcher at Sana'a University, indicated that such places have become inevitable in current times, "given such attractive venues are limited and the entertainment they give is grand."

He added that relaxation and access to services that the cafes provide helps create intimacy among friends.

However, Al-Zahrawi asserted that it is not good to squander long hours in these places. He said such cafes are for entertainment and not to waste time or neglect duties.

"There are other responsibilities

“

Going to cafes must be systematic and in certain occasions because it is boring to go to a certain place continuously. It is fun to go to cafes at certain times like the weekend.

—Nabeel Al-Baladi, private sector worker

the families should take into account. It is not reasonable to spend long hours in such places."

Al-Zahrawi stressed that the importance of time, stating that the real sense of the significance of time is what motivates the young to search for beneficial things for themselves and for society. He warned against accompanying friends for such long hours, which could lead to acquiring bad habits such as smoking. The majority of these establishments have special rooms for smokers, non-smokers do not have such advantages, he said. He reiterated that young people should do everything they can to avoid this addictive habits.

Recently, a new cafe called Frisco was launched. It joins other well-known coffee establishments in Sana'a like Mocca Bun Club and News Bun Club.

“

We come here to have a change of atmosphere and study together. Probably, some think we waste our time here for nothing.

—Ibtisam Al-Dharaei, university student



Although new, coffee culture seems to be on the rise in Sana'a. New shops are still popping up to meet the demand of their young demographic.



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Fee Coffee has established itself as a leader in the coffee shop movement. They have several locations all over Sana'a.