

## NDC concludes first session, working groups incomplete

Amal Al-Yairisi

SANAA, April 3 — The National Dialogue Conference, which began March 18, ended its first session on Wednesday. The conference's nine working groups, which were formed on Sunday, will reconvene on April 13.

All working groups—except for group which will be discussing the contentious issue of Sa'ada—have agreed on their presidential committees, made of a president, two deputies and a rapporteur.

"The delay in the Sa'ada group is because of disagreements between the Houthis and the Islah participants, because [Islah]

did not accept us nominating a woman," said Ali Al-Bukhaiti, a Houthi representative at the conference.

Abdullah Sa'atar, a member of the Islah Party attending the NDC, belittled the disagreement saying that it just needs more discussion and will be resolved soon.

The conference's secretary general explained that according to the internal charter when such disputes take place—and if presidium fails twice in reaching an agreement—the issue will have to be raised with President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, who is also president of the conference.

In a press conference on

Wednesday, the secretary general highlighted some of the most pressing concerns which will be discussed in the coming months—such as grievances in the South, the disarmament of armed militia and restructuring the army.

The secretary general said despite the general goodwill of the NDC participants there are some "troublemakers" who do not want the dialogue to succeed. Participants should not pay attention to them, the secretary general said. This was made in reference to the excessive force used by security against protestors in Aden and Hodeida, as well the assassination attempt made on one

of the Houthi representatives at the conference.

Earlier on Wednesday, the final session of the conference was disturbed by an argument between tribal participants and security forces. According to the conference's secretary, the problem started when the guards at the gate discovered a forged ID on one of the participants, a member of a prominent tribe.

The problem was resolved peacefully. A report will be sent to the Order and Standards Committee, which will investigate the issue and take the required measures, Sultan Al-Atwani, the chair of the session, said.

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## Protests against ammended Saudi labor law, experts predict Yemeni economy to take a hit

Rammah Al-Jaubari

SANAA, April 3 — Hundreds of Yemenis staged a protest on Tuesday in front of the Saudi Embassy in Sana'a to demand an abolishment of a new Saudi labor law that many say will lead to the expulsion of tens of thousands of Yemeni expatriates working and residing in

Saudi Arabia.

Last week, Saudi Arabia ratified amendments to their labor law. The changes stipulate that foreign workers cannot work for anyone other than their sponsor—the Saudi Arabian individual or company that originally brought them to the country—and they cannot open their own business.

The Yemeni Migrants Organization, a group that works on expatriate issues, estimates 300, 000 Yemeni migrants could be put out of work.

A Yemeni delegate, including representatives from the Expatriates Affairs Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Ministry, is supposed to visit Saudi Arabia after President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi returns from his current visit to Russia.

Mujahed Al-Qohali, the Expatriates' Minister said the delegation has prepared a letter from President Hadi to King Abdulla Bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia's leader, to ask Saudi to reconsider the amendments.

Al-Qohali said they knew Saudi's decision was coming, and they had taken action to try to avert the backlash by presenting Cabinet with solutions, but "procrastination and irresponsibility on the part of concerned officials" allowed for Saudi Arabia to go ahead with changes.

Experts say this could be a big blow to Yemen's economy. According to numbers

provided by local organizations, Yemenis send back an estimated \$2 billion to Yemen that they earn in Saudi Arabia every year.

An estimated 3 million Yemenis reside in Saudi Arabia currently.

Prominent Saudi sheikhs like Mohammed Al-Areefi and Sulaiman Al-Oda, called on the Saudi government to exempt Yemenis from the amended labor law.



Experts predict that around 300,000 Yemenis, currently working in Saudi Arabia, will be out of work.

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## Cleaning workers threaten strike, Cabinet asks for more time

**Amal Al-Yarisi**

SANA'A, April 3 – The Cabinet asked for three months to sort out issues related to the contracts of street cleaners, via a statement issued on a government-owned news agency on Wednesday.

The General Syndicate of Municipality Workers issued a statement on Monday threatening a nationwide strike to begin Friday unless Yemen's estimated 25,000 street cleaning workers are offered official contracts that stipulate desired terms of employment like job security, meaning they cannot be fired without just cause.

According to Yemeni law, once government employees are offered an official contract, they will receive pay for life unless they are fired for not performing their duties as required.

As of press time, it was not clear if the workers would call off their strike.

Only about 3,000 employees have been offered official gov-

ernment contracts, said Mohammed Al-Marzooki, the head of the Cleaning Workers Syndicate.

The statement also stipulated the workers' other demands, including a salary rise from around YR25,000 (around \$115) to YR60,000 (\$280) a month, as well as healthcare services.

Following a Cabinet decision in January to offer cleaners official government contracts, the Street Cleaning Syndicate postponed a planned strike pending fulfillment of government pledges to meet demands.

Al-Marzooki says the government has not kept their end of the deal.

"This has triggered us to call a strike," he said.

Last year, cleaning workers went on strike several times, leaving the city's trash to accumulate on the street.

One cleaning worker, Sultan Fare', said he doesn't feel good about the mess that will be left if they go on strike, but he sees no other way to pressure the gov-



**If the cleaning workers strike, local officials are worried about the mess it could create.**

ernment to take action regarding their contracts.

The manager of the Cleaning Project in the capital city, Jamal Juhaish, said he is concerned about the demands of the cleaning workers, but ongoing financial difficulties in the state have

led to a delay in implementing the Cabinet's decision.

Juhaish also said Sana'a's Mayor Abdulkadir Hilal is meeting with workers to avoid the strike.

Hilal has warned the Cabinet of the "environmental catastrophe" a strike could cause.

## Yemen and Turkey officially remove visa requirements



**President Hadi shakes hands with Turkish Ambassador Fazli Corman. The two countries having growing diplomatic ties.**

**Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANAA, April 3 – It's official. After months of promises, the Turkish government has ratified an agreement between Turkey and Yemen to remove visa requirements for travel between the two states beginning May 1.

Turkish and Yemeni citizens who have valid passports will not need visas to travel between the countries, provided they stay for no more than three months.

Yemeni residents planning to reside, study or establish a new business, or intending to stay more than 90 days in Turkey still need to acquire appropriate visas.

"Turkey has a policy of making visa-free travel for Turkish citizens as much as possible in our own region," said Fazli Corman, Turkey's ambassador to Yemen, who praised his country's move.

"We do this as a way to boost relations in every field," he said, referring to not only the tourist benefits for each country but increased economic opportunities as well.

Yemen is also banking on the visa elimination to jump start its struggling economic sectors.

"This agreement will [help] recover Yemen's economy and facilitate trade and tourism between the two countries," said

Mohammed Al-Ashbei, the head of the Asian and Australian Department at the Yemeni Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Economics experts say Yemen, especially entrepreneurs who can now travel without restrictions and exchange ideas, can learn from Turkey's economic experience.

"Turkey has broad economic experience," said Saeed Abdulmo'men, an economist familiar with Turkish relations.

About 15 percent of tourist coming to Yemen are Turkish according to estimates from Al-Ashbei.

Yemen recently announced a new plan from the Tourism Authority dedicating money to marketing Yemen as a tourist destination abroad.

Due to Yemen's still questionable security situation, the influx of tourists in the countries may be one-sided.

"Unfortunately there aren't many tourists around," said Corman. "But, more and more stability and increasing safety in Yemen can attract more tourists. I am sure the Turks will be among the first to come in this regard."

Yemen and Turkey recently signed an agreement allowing for Turkish factories to be built in Al-Hodeida, said Al-Ashbei, but didn't provide any more details about the plan.

## Political parties file court appeal, claim should have been included in National Dialogue Conference list

**Mohammed Al-Hasani**

SANA'A, April 3 – Eight new political parties, calling themselves collectively the Youth and Opposition Parties, presented an appeal to the Administrative Court in Sana'a on Sunday.

The coalition is objecting to President Abdu Rabu Mansur Hadi's decree that specified the National Dialogue Conference's (NDC) participants and participating parties.

"In the appeal, the eight parties demand representation in the NDC just like other similar parties," said Doctor Ibrahim Bin Abood, head of the legal team for these parties.

In 2012 the eight parties: the Development Democratic Justice Party, Arab Spring Party, Justice and Freedom Party, Social Peace Party, Yemeni Labor Party, Development Freedom Party, National Wifaq Party and Youth Development Democratic Party were all recognized by the Cabinet's Political Parties and Organization Affairs Committee as legitimate political organizations.

At the same time, the Al-Rashad Salafi Party and the Justice and Building Party were also granted



official party status. Both parties received seven seats each, upsetting the other eight parties who say they are not represented at Yemen's historic conference.

"We have received several promises to be involved in the NDC. But the names of our representatives and the other seven parties weren't included among the names of the NDC participants," said Salah Abdulwarith, the secretary general of the National Wifaq (Reconciliation) party.

Other party leaders like Doctor Ali Ezi Faqih, the secretary gen-

eral of the Justice and Freedom Party, said the conference's seat allocations were not based on any real standards and is unrepresentative of all of Yemen's powers and parties.

The groups says they have presented their case as a violation of the Gulf Initiative, claiming the document which stipulated a dialogue conference take place as a part of Yemen's transitional process, said all political parties were to participate in the event.

Asked why the Al-Rashad Salafi Party and the Justice and Building

Party were allocated seats in the NDC while the other eight parties were excluded, Yasser Al-Ro'ini, deputy secretary general of the NDC, said the Technical Committee had no control over this. He said the President's list, Hadi's hand-selected 62 seats, was meant to include small political parties for balance. Al-Ro'ini would not comment further.

A local lawyer, Ibrahim Bin Abood said the appeal process could take at least a month for the court to make a decision regarding the appeal.

## Moth damages tomato crops in Yemen

**Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANA'A, April 3 – The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation said that it has been unable to wipe out the tuta absoluta moth that was discovered late last year. The moth decimated 90 percent of Yemen's tomato crops, causing economic losses estimated at \$350 million.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Ghashm, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation said they have been spraying a pesticide on crops which kills the male moth, leaving the female's eggs infertile.

Yemen has received significant funds from other countries to combat this problem. Al-Ghashm said the United States and Community Livelihood Project, a USAID program, granted Yemen \$555,000 and \$238, respectively. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization donated \$120,000 to help combat the invasive moth in Yemen, according to Al-Ghashm.

The Yemeni government provided YR200 million (around \$930,000), in addition to YR50

million (about \$232,000) from both the Credit Agriculture Cooperative Bank and the Fishing and Agriculture Fund.

Al-Ghashm said the ministry has also launched educational programs, distributing brochures and reaching out to other media outlets.

This first known appearance of the moth was in South America, in 1970. In 2006, the tuta absoluta was found in Spain. The following year it spread to France, Italy, Greece, Malta, Morocco, Algeria and Libya. In 2009, Turkey started to experience damages caused by tuta absoluta in their farms and greenhouses.

Wajeeh Al-Matwkil, the head of Researches and Guidance Department at the Ministry of Agriculture, said the moth was first discovered in the northern governorate of Sa'ada in 2012 and later in the country's west, in Tehama.

Al-Matwkil said the tuta absoluta is a surprisingly resilient pest, immune to many types of pesticides. When farmers sprayed



**After the breakout of Tuta absoluta moth in Yemen, tomatoes become hard to find and harder to buy.**

chemicals, the moths' population grew.

Yahiya Al-Salami, a farmer in Dhamar, said the damages caused by this worm led to a rise in tomato

prices across the country.

One kilogram of tomatoes used to cost YR200, less than \$1. Now tomatoes cost as much as YR700, about \$3, Al-Salami said.

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# Suspects in murder cases, soldiers and in armed tribes: When are Yemenis old enough to carry a gun?

Story by Najala Hasan  
Photo by Sadeq Al-Wesabi

There are around 52 million guns in Yemen — ranking the second highest country in the world in terms of weapons possession per capita—and ownership is largely unregulated. There were 1,141 reported murders committed by guns this past year in Yemen, the Ministry of Interior said, but the actual number is likely higher. In 100 of those recorded cases—about 9 percent—the shots were fired by minors.

For many, guns are a prized possession.

“Families have weapons at home. Fathers always carry them,” Dr. Afaf Al-Haimi, a sociology professor at Sana’a University, said. And it’s only natural for children to want to imitate their fathers, she said.

Judge Afrah Badwailan, the head of the Juvenile Court in Aden, says that many killings committed by children are dealt with between families and outside of court. For minors, she says, this means they are not receiving the protection they have the right to under Yemeni law.

“Crimes go unreported and others are solved by tribal arbitration,” said Mohammad Al-Jumai, the director of the Family Protection Department in the Ministry of Interior. This is often the case when the suspect is a minor, he says.

The deceased’s family will demand a death sentence, regardless of the suspect’s age, Badwailan said. “So, the judicial authorities keep the child in the Juveniles’ House during the prosecution period, in order to



Specialists say children learn by example. If they see their father carrying a gun, they will want to as well.

protect him.”

In an annual survey, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimated that there are 11.5 million civilian-owned firearms in the country. Al-Haimi said the availability of guns inside homes can lead to “tragic events.”

This past November, President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi made a public statement, urging security forces to stop recruiting children as soldiers. Child-recruitment in armed conflict—by tribes as well as the army—continues to be a serious problem in Yemen, Layla Zoroki, the Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General, said in a visit to Yemen this past fall.

In theory, arms traders must be licensed to sell arms, but in practice this is not the case, a 2005 study from the Jamestown Foundation found. In the past two years, following the revolution which ousted former President Ali

Abdullah Saleh, the proliferation of weapons throughout the country has increased.

Children learn from their surroundings including the influence of family and ever-

increasing media, Al-Haimi said. “[They will] imitate what they see on TV,” she said. But they may not be mature enough to understand the consequences. “They don’t think that using weapons will kill.”



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# Drone policy hurts the U.S.'s image in Yemen

Danya Greenfield and David J. Kramer  
Washingtonpost.com  
First published April 1

Most news out of the Middle East these days is dispiriting: the devastating civil war in Syria, the autocratic nature of Muslim Brotherhood rule in Egypt, continued militia activity in Libya, a coalition collapse in Tunisia. Less discussed, and surprisingly positive, is the political situation in Yemen.

The United States has played a significant role in Yemen's transition, which ushered out former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, in exchange for immunity, and inaugurated a unity government and consensus president that are overseeing a national dialogue launched last month. The United States has pledged support for the dialogue, which will lead to a constitutional referendum and new elections.

To many Yemenis, however, Washington is narrowly focused on short-term security concerns and the fight against terrorism; the United States, they think, cares little about real political change. As Yemen's transition enters a critical stage, Washington has an opportunity to change this image by redirecting its policy to greater emphasis on stability, prosperity and democracy, which would advance both U.S. and Yemeni interests.

Despite considerable U.S. humanitarian aid and development support to their government, most Yemenis associate U.S. engagement with the ongoing drone campaign to destroy Al-Qaeda in the Arabian

Peninsula (AQAP), and they see it as having little regard for its effect on civilians. A number of former U.S. military and intelligence officials argue that the drone program's costs might exceed its benefits. Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal has articulated the hazards of overreliance on drones, and Gen. James E. Cartwright, former vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cautioned last month against unintended consequences, arguing that no matter how precise drone strikes may be, they breed animosity among targeted communities and threaten U.S. efforts to curb extremism.

With drone attacks breeding discontent and anti-American sentiment, the Obama administration must rethink how the United States can advance its objectives without letting tactics dictate strategy. Washington seeks to balance multiple priorities in Yemen: supporting stability in the Arabian Peninsula, disrupting terrorist networks, securing waterways and aiding Yemen's transition to democracy. By focusing primarily on acute, short-term threats, the United States risks the long-term security that benefits both nations and can be achieved only through a sustained investment in the humanitarian, economic and political development of the Yemeni people.

Thirty-one foreign policy experts and former diplomats — including us — sent a letter to President Obama last week that said the administration's expansive use of unmanned drones in Yemen is proving counterproductive to U.S. security objectives: As faulty intelligence leads to

collateral damage, extremist groups ultimately win more support. The lack of transparency and accountability behind the drone policy set a dangerous global precedent and damage Washington's ability to influence positive change in Yemen and the region. Drone strikes heighten animosity toward the United States and President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi's government for compromising Yemeni sovereignty.

The United States, the letter counseled, should reduce its reliance on drone strikes and instead invest in a long-term security agenda. This would include strengthening institutions that enhance the capacity and professionalism of Yemen's security forces — not only counterterrorism units — to address threats to internal security. Washington already supports the restructuring of Yemen's military, a step mandated by the transition agreement, but the Defense and State departments should ensure that our military assistance does not repeat the mistakes made during Saleh's tenure, such as ignoring power concentrated in the hands of elites or not prosecuting human rights abuses. And building a capable police force recruited from residents in partnership with local communities is essential to securing this territory.

Americans and Yemenis have a strong shared interest in combating extremism, as Al-Qaeda and its local affiliate, Ansar Al-Sharia, spread in the south and pledge acts of terrorism against both Yemeni and U.S. targets. The United States should not ignore this threat — but beyond the security portfolio, Yemenis need to feel that Washington

is committed to supporting democratic institutions and the prosperity of the Yemeni people. Although the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development are engaging Hadi's government on development and humanitarian issues, most Yemenis feel only the negative effects of U.S. counterterrorism policy. Rather than the steady stream of military delegations, a more robust economic assistance program and public diplomacy strategy — including a visit by Secretary of State John Kerry and other high-level diplomats — would signal support for Yemen's transition and its democratic aspirations.

Yemen's national dialogue is an ideal opportunity to break with a legacy of corrupt leaders who sought personal gain at the nation's expense. The Obama administration can encourage this process by providing international cover for the difficult decisions delegates must make to craft a new political system based on equitable power-sharing, active citizenship and tolerance. This requires the administration to examine its own policies and shift course where the status quo undermines our shared interests. Despite negative attitudes toward U.S. policy, Yemenis are eager for an authentic partnership with the United States — built on transparency, accountability and a demonstrated commitment to their future.

Danya Greenfield is deputy director of the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. David J. Kramer is president of Freedom House.

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## OUR OPINION

### Other benefits of the National Dialogue Conference

As the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) moves forward, sometime smoothly and sometimes painfully, there are things happening during this process that are worth highlighting and that have never happened before.

The first is that the conference is a national representation of people from all over the country and different societal groups. There are participants from remote governorates like Al-Mahara and Socotra as well as tribes, marginalized populations and special needs groups. Of course women and youth are also represented.

When the NDC's Preparatory Committee decided on whom we wanted to be represented at the conference, it led to long debates. While we wanted people from every governorate to be present, we realized that this might by default led to the inclusion of less experienced people. At the expense of not including professional and experienced people from urban centers, we would have to fill a quota.

However, by choosing to ignore these hesitations, we indirectly empowered those who are usually excluded from processes like this and gave them a push into the decision-making arena.

This brings me to a second highlight of the conference. For some of the participants this was the first time they have been exposed to some high-ranking officials and social leaders. Yet, they feel at ease with them. This has been the first time many women, including those representing conservative groups, have indulged in debates with a mixed crowd. This includes people who they say they would have never have come in contact with pre-conference.

The versatility of participants is an amazing opportunity for Yemenis to learn about each other without judgment or applying stereotypes perpetuated by unprofessional media. Many participants have expressed their disillusionment with media. They say misrepresentation happens all the time.

Another highlight has been quite practical. The Secretariat of the conference has opened bank accounts for almost 95 percent of the participants. At least 40 percent of participants, most of whom are women, are opening accounts for the first time in Yemen. More than 100 participants are also getting state ID cards for the first time ever.

I spoke to a female participant who said she never needed a card before as she did everything through her husband. Now the conference has prompted her to have an individual bank account and ID card. She was on the verge of tears when she told me that while in her working group the group's leadership counted her vote equal to that of a powerful, tribal sheikh.

The National Dialogue Conference aims to solve Yemen's long-standing issues, but I never expected some of its outcomes would happen so soon.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

# Yemeni CERT could turn the tide for millennials

Chris Blask  
searchsecurity.techtarget.com  
First published March 2013

The youth of Yemen are reaching for a cyber future. To get there, 13 million Yemenis under the age of 18 (fully one half of the population) need an Internet infrastructure that provides stability and access to the world. For that infrastructure to exist, the country needs the same basic components that make any nation's information systems stable and secure. Yemen needs a national cybersecurity center, a Yemen CERT.

In 2011, the students of Sana'a University in Yemen's capital city rose up along with Arab Spring movements across the Middle East and ousted their dictator, Ali Abdullah Saleh. Prior to that date, Internet penetration in the country stood at less than 1.8 percent, and what infrastructure existed was unreliable and insecure. Today, the use of smartphones to access the Internet, particularly among the young, is skyrocketing, while the nascent private sector strains to keep up with demand.

But when I initially looked at the Yemeni cyber infrastructure in the summer of 2012, the first

thing I saw was a Zeus Trojan virus embedded on the Yemen Central Bank website, siphoning off scarce resources. This was only one of several easily found validations that the Yemeni cyber landscape was not to be trusted. An almost complete lack of security capabilities in the nation has this emergent Yemeni Millennial population living in an Internet backwater rightly seen by others as a cyber-pariah.

With no national control of basic security for its Internet infrastructure, the nation is ripe for exploitation by cyber terrorists and organized crime. There can be no opportunity to create virtual businesses or export the legitimate skills of a cyber workforce when any diligent Western IT manager correctly views a Yemeni IP address as a virtual Typhoid Mary. Where there is not sufficient trust to perform even the simplest Internet business activity, there can be no opportunity for Yemen's Millennials.

In November of 2012, I talked with several hundred Yemeni students at Sana'a University about this choice of two worlds. In the lecture hall with them were the deans and politicians who will need to take responsibility for providing them the opportunity they seek. After my talk, dozens of these students

crowded the stage looking for guidance and reassurance. I cannot do justice relating in text to the intensity, sincerity and desperation of these young people for someone to show them an alternative to the reality that has been around them all of their lives.

With the support from regional allies such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Yemen can build the basic cyber security infrastructure necessary to make the Yemeni cyber landscape safe for international engagement. These nations are willing to provide that assistance and in turn deserve the support of Western nations, and the United States in particular.

Those of us in America who have an interest in encouraging the next working-aged generation of Yemen to follow a path other than crime and international terrorism have every reason to support the development of a stable cyber culture there. With a tiny splinter of the cost and effort we spend hunting down and killing a handful of Al Qaeda in Yemen, we can provide the expertise and guidance to keep millions of Yemeni children from following malignant examples. The cost of not providing an alternative to the poverty-driven desperation that supports these terrorist groups will be exponentially higher in human

and economic terms.

Supporting the establishment of a Yemen CERT aligns with all of America's foreign policy goals in the region. It denies a cyber safe harbor to our declared enemies. It denies these same enemies the legions of impoverished and enraged foot soldiers they need to carry their evil legacy forward. It demonstrates the goodwill of our nation in the only way that matters: giving the parents and children of Yemen a reason to hope for a better future. It strengthens the budding public sector in Yemen, allowing the people a chance to build an economic future of their own, free from the cloying darkness of poverty and the shame of surviving on donations.

A Yemen CERT strengthens the position of the entire region in resisting the advances of the enemies of peace. As the Assad regime crumbles in Syria the terrorist sponsors in Iran seek other footholds on the Arabian Peninsula. An economically sound Yemen populated by an educated and connected Millennial generation is the last thing Iran wants to see; a well-founded Yemen CERT is the first solid step on the road to denying Iran influence. The bulwark of nations across the Persian Gulf from Iran are further strengthened with a reliable ally to their south in

Yemen; a Yemen CERT is a key to providing them that support.

The current political leadership in Yemen is aware of the demands of their youth population. I met with senior federal political leaders during my visit and they expressed strong support for the creation of a national cyber security center. Some basic physical and organizational structure exists in the Ministry of Telecommunications and could be used as a foundation for early Y-CERT development. The political motivations of Yemeni leaders to be seen by their powerful youth population as advancing their best

interests is evident throughout the public sector.

Today, the only conversation in America regarding Yemen is on the ethics and efficacy of drone strikes. It is time for America and other nations to start helping the youth of Yemen find a positive direction for their passions and energy, to provide a demonstration of the tools we use at home to keep our own nation strong.

Chris Blask serves as chair of the Industrial Control System Information Sharing and Analysis Center (ICS-ISAC).

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The Muhamasheen's National Dialogue Conference representative makes history

# “We don't have any tools to empower ourselves. We only have our brooms.”

**Sadeq Al-Wesabi**

Three weeks ago Noman Qaed was only responsible for his seven children and two wives. Now he is responsible for what he estimates to be 3 million people.

On March 18, the well-spoken man was named as the sole representative of the Muhamasheen community—also commonly and derogatorily referred to as the Akhdam (meaning servant in Arabic)—at Yemen's National Dialogue Conference. The conference brings together 565 representatives from across Yemen tasked with restructuring the state two years after the beginning of the country's popular uprising that dethroned former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Qaed's name made what is called the President's List, 62 seats that were reserved for minority groups and meant to bring balance to a conference population skewed towards political parties.

It has been clear from the beginning that Qaed takes his job seriously and is quick to remind others of his community's complex history in Yemen's social hierarchy.

“Let me finish my words. I've not spoken for 1,300 years,” he replied in the opening speeches at the NDC as the head of the session asked him to end his speech.

Qaed's emotion-filled words drew applause from the audience.

“I have a big responsibility in these historical moments,” he said in an interview with the Yemen Times following the praise he received from other NDC delegates for his speech. “If we cannot take our rights from this conference, our suffering will last another 1,300 years.”

Qaed, who is typically dressed in a suit, provides a stark contrast to the population he represents. The Muhamasheen, meaning “marginalized ones” have a long his-

tory of discrimination in Yemen dating back over a thousand years ago. Historians believe they were originally used as slaves and now generally assume low-income jobs like street cleaning. Although other estimates of their population are much lower than Qaed's approximation of 3 million, the majority live in isolated communities with a lack of education and health services.

“It's a moral disaster to select only one representative from this huge community,” Qaed said, challenging the NDC decision makers who did not allot more seats for the Muhamasheen. He says originally they were supposed to receive nine seats but that politics were at play and those seats went to other groups with more clout.

For Qaed, the participation of his community in the NDC is decisive.

“Poverty is the biggest obstacle in the way of our willingness in establishing a political party,” he explained. “We have no tools to empower ourselves. We only have our brooms.”

Emboldened by his new position, Qaed wants others from his community to take charge and seek out opportunities to elevate the Muhamasheen's status.

“We have no voice in the Parliament or government,” he said. “We have not been involved in any decision-making process.”

Although Qaed is a member of the General People's Congress (GPC), a party that received 112 seats at the NDC, he isn't necessarily supportive of party lines. He says politically the Muhamasheen have been exploited, especially during elections, when candidates vie for their vote. The GPC sometimes supports the Muhamasheen “not because they love them but because they use them,” Qaed said.

The only way to compete with these forces as Qaed puts it is to “play politics” instead of “being politically played.”

Outside of his role at the NDC, Qaed is also the head of the National Union for the Marginalized, an organization with a mission to empower the Muhamasheen through education.

Education is the biggest challenge facing the Muhamasheen, Qaed said. Due to the impoverished circumstances the Muhamasheen often find themselves in, many families never send their children to school but rely on them to provide income at a very early age, typically through street begging. Qaed says children who do find their way to Yemen's struggling education system will drop out due to discrimi-

nation and teasing from students and teachers.

When confronted with the criticisms often put forward about his community, Qaed admits there are some that may play the victim.

“I know some families that have a reasonable income but are still begging,” he said.

“We don't have a culture of [saving for the future],” he added, explaining that most of his community lives hand to mouth.

The Muhamasheen rely on local and international organizations for support to not only provide funding for communities but to advocate on behalf of their perceived plight. But, Qaed is not a fan of these non-governmental groups. He says most of their work is superficial and very little real money makes it to those in need.

“[They] pretend they support the Muhamasheen,” Qaed said. “I always tell donors [I work with] that we don't want money but projects provided by them.”

Notwithstanding challenges and difficulties, Qaed assumes his responsibility at the NDC with a sense of pride and looks at his community's unprecedented representation at a national event as a turning point.

“The future of the Muhamasheen will be prosperous,” he said. “The issue of the marginalized for me is a matter of life or death.”



“I have a big responsibility in these historic moments,” Noman Qaed said. In the past, the Muhamasheen have been completely excluded from national politics.


“If we cannot take our rights from this conference, our suffering will last another 1,300 years.”



The Muhamasheen number around 3 million and many live in cramped quarters, like this one in the Ramah area of Sana'a.



Qaed, speaking at the opening session of the National Dialogue Conference, described the plight of the “marginalized ones” in Yemen.



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# Hospitals preference for Indian nurses upset Yemeni counterparts

Samar Qaed

Though approximately 18,000 nurses graduated last year across Yemen, few of them have found work in their field. At a time when thousands of Yemeni nurses are jobless, hospitals in Sana'a are bringing in foreign workers to fill their positions—primarily from India—and paying them more.

As per Article 35 in Yemen's Labor Law, a hospital has the right to hire foreign personnel, but these employees should not exceed 10 percent of the entire staff. Another stipulation of the law is that the foreign staff should train the Yemeni staff, so that the latter will replace the former.

In the Tumors Center of Al-Jamhour Hospital, one third of the staff is Indian and every nurse at the Military Hospital is Indian, according to the Ministry of Health and Population.

Shafiqah Ahmed, a nurse at Al-Thwara Hospital—a state-owned facility in Sana'a and one of the biggest in the country—said that there are 50 volunteer Yemeni nurses in the hospital, but none of them have been given the job benefits typically associated with government work. They say they are waiting to join the ranks of the approximately 1,000 nurses that have official contracts with the hospital, an estimated 225 of them are Indian.

Ahmed compared her work experience with that of the Indian nurses who have an official contract when she does not.

"They have privileges like provided accommodation and travel and transportation allowances," she said. Ahmed does not.

Hani Murtada graduated in 2007 at the top of his class. Now, he works in Al-Sabeen, a state hospital in the capital. Murtada explained that he earns YR40,000, about \$200, a month. The Indian nurses are paid more than double that amount, YR108,000, or \$500.



"How can I work when there is this kind of discrimination in the country?" he asked.

Indian nurses are hired through intermediary recruiting organizations, based in India. Indian candidates pay these agents around

\$1,000 dollars to take their applications forward to the hospitals. Applicants are certificated by the Indian Embassy in Sana'a and the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Yaseen Al-Jahmi, the manager of Nursing Department in the Military

Hospital, explained the hiring process. "After choosing the resumes of the applicants, they come to take an exam here, in the hospital. They also work for three months [on a trial basis]. If any nurse's performance is not fit, she [is fired]. The company is responsible for all expenses."



Yemeni nurses say they are being overlooked for jobs in favor of hiring ones from abroad.

If they stay on, they will sign a contract which lasts for two years. The contracts may be renewed afterwards.

#### Why Indians?

Al Jahmi said foreign staff is sometimes preferable.

He went on to say, that by their nature, "hospitals have emergency situations," but it is hard to keep nurses there all the time. Because Indian nationals tend to not celebrate Yemen's national holidays, they are typically more available than their Yemeni counterparts, Al Jahmi said.

Hospitals are operating outside of the law, Altaf Al-Habibi, the coordinator of the Women's Department in the Medical Professions Syndicate, said.

"We object to [Article 35] in the labor law because the Yemeni staff doesn't ever replace the foreign staff [as the law dictates]," Al-Habibi said. "Instead, the administrations of the hospitals renew the Indians' contracts."

During the 2011 revolution, many Indian nurses left Al-Thwara hos-

pital. Their number dropped from 500 to 225. As a consequence, the hospital employed 200 more Yemenis, but those hired say their salary doesn't measure up to what was offered to those that left.

Currently, the hospital has started to bring back Indian nurses, Al-Habibi said.

#### Entrenched in their customs

Mohammed Al-Bukari, the manager of Nursing Department in the Tumors Center in Sana'a said he has a hard time finding Yemeni nurses who can fully commit themselves to the job because a traditional backgrounds can pose a problem.

"The Yemeni staff is entrenched in their customs and traditions," Al-Bukari said. "For example, the male nurses won't enter the women's ward for medical tests and vice versa."

For Al-Bukari this is a problem. He also says that nurses, once married, often request shifts off from work, especially at night. Often, Yemenis will also ask for time off because of "family-related problems," he said.

For these reasons, Al-Bukari said, the administrations of the hospitals bring in the Indian nurses. They're committed to their work and have no excuses, he said.

Afrah Al-Twaiti, the head of Yemeni Nursing Association, rejected the criticism of Yemeni nurses. They are completely professional,

she said.

Al-Twaiti said most Indian nurses can't communicate with the patients, due to their lack of Arabic skills.

"They're trained by the Yemeni staff," Al-Twaiti added.

#### "No longer under our control"

Yousif Al-Sha'bi, the manager of Nursing Department at the Ministry of Health, said doctors employing Indian nurses for another reason. They're only bringing in the Indian nurses so that they can make a profit, he said.


The managers extract one-month's worth of pay out of each Indian nurses' salary, he said.

Al-Sha'bi said the Nursing Department at the Ministry of Health used to supervise the hospitals; however, this connection came to an end when the Medical Council declared the separation of the hospitals' budget from the Ministry of Health.

The hospitals then used independent administrative and financial departments, added Al-Sha'bi.

"The situation is no longer under our control. We follow what happens without an authority. The [hospitals] act without reference to the Ministry of Health."


Al-Sha'bi said that if the Yemeni nurses are given the same privileges as the Indian nurses—and better pay—they'll have more incentive to work harder.



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## Big marketing: one shop takes innovative approach

Photo essay by Sara Al-Zawqari

In Yemen, small shopkeepers with limited budgets, say they can pay little attention to marketing and advertising outside of the neighborhoods they call home. Wide-reaching media advertisements, are generally a product of huge enterprises, who can afford to advertise on television, radio, and in newspapers. To compete, smaller stores utilize decorations, signboards, and word of mouth to lure customers. Words, colors,

and logos are used as communication platforms in this scheme.

The streets of Sana'a, are distinguished by their random displays of goods and signs that characterize Yemen's small business community. But, in order for a shop to differentiate itself from the next, owners are using innovative ways to attract that next sale. Without a specialized education in marketing where design elements and marketing techniques are studied to maximize profit, shopkeepers in Sana'a rely on their own ingenuity as entrepreneurs to propel sales.



The Al Waraq Electronics store uses an over-sized billboard, almost as big as the shop to set itself apart. People who stroll by often stop to look twice. "We wanted to maximize the exposure for our little shop, we had the opportunity and the space to go bigger, and we went for it," said Majed Abdul Qader Al Waraq, who is the son of the shop's owner.



Majed is in the shop for 9-10 hours a day. He says the design of the exterior and interior of the shop was completely done in house by the family. "We don't have a specialized person who does our designs. Having a good taste is not a profession, our taste came from experience, working many years in different businesses," Majed said.



Psychologists have long theorized that colors trigger certain emotions. Marketing specialists have capitalized on this concept and specifically design ads with colors and associations in mind. Majed doesn't necessarily buy into consumer psychology but he does understand its power. "We focused on the color orange because it's a vibrant color that attracts attention. It's all in the mind," he said.

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Although the sign displays items like refrigerators, one glance at the small shop and it's apparent such products are not offered. "In the beginning we thought we were going to get into all kind of electronics, but when we started the shop things changed, we never had the intention to trick or deceive customers," explained Majed. He says they will keep the sign as is so they can expand in the future.



"Marketing is half of the business, and display is the key to selling," said Majed. He says he is proud of what he did in such a small space with his display of electronics.



Located on Bab Shuub, a busy commercial area, the shop's business is based on street traffic. Abdulaziz Al Matarym stopped in to buy a phone. "I just liked how the shop looked so I entered," Al Matarym said.