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Similarly, winners of 3 Gold bars, 21carat, were extremely happy with the hearty welcome of SabaFon and the precious prizes. Mr. Ali Mabrouk Ali Tri mentioned that he had not expected to win the Gold bar, conveying appreciation to SabaFon.



Other valuable gifts were also handed over to the rest of the winners, including SAMSUNG Galaxy Notes, Duos handsets, and SAMSUNG 43" screens.

Mr. Mohamad Al-SHAMI, Strategy and Business Development Senior Manager, congratulated the winners and stated that this event comes as the first in a series of monthly draw events, where SabaFon has increased the number of winners from 15 to 200 a month (comparing current offer with phase1, which was conducted in

2013), marking this as the biggest telecom offer in the Yemeni market.

Al-SHAMI also stressed the fact that there will be new winners next month, where all customers can participate in the offer by recharging their prepaid lines with 80 unit cards. Postpaid subscribers can also join the offer by recharging their line with 80 unit cards to pay their bills, wishing all customers best of luck in the months to come!



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Heavy fighting in Amran

■ Madiha Al-Junaid

SANA'A, May 25 — Renewed fighting broke out Sunday between Houthi rebels and military forces in Amran governorate, bringing to an end a short-lived ceasefire brokered by a presidential committee at the beginning of the weekend.

The Al-Mekshash mountain area near the town of Al-Jannat, which lies about two to three kilometers from Amran city, has witnessed some of the heaviest fighting, according to Faisal Al-Shelaif, the general manager of Amran governorate's security office.

He said that on Sunday Houthi forces hit Al-Jannat with mortar fire from a range of about three kilometers, adding that a Saba Phone building and another building owned by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar appeared to have been targeted. Saba Phone is owned by Hameed Al-Ahmar and both he and Abdullah Al-Ahmar are members of the Islah Party, which has particularly tense relations with the Houthis.

Waleed Saif, a reporter in Amran, told the Yemen Times on Sunday afternoon that "the conflict is still ongoing as artillery shells periodically rock the city".

Houthi forces are surrounding the city of Amran but have not yet entered it.

According to Yahya Tawwaf, the governorate's public relations manager, army reinforcements were

sent from Sana'a.

"Mortar fire has been hitting the mountain overlooking Jannat city and Thafan area in Amran," Tawwaf said.

According to the governorate's security management, the air force bombed a Houthi armored vehicle as well as howitzer and three other military vehicles, which the Houthis captured during previous clashes with the military.

Casualties are at this stage very difficult to determine and reports vary widely. Many of the wounded are taken directly to Sana'a, a short drive south of Amran.

Dr. Abdulghani Faris, the general manager of the Amran Hospital, said that medical services in Amran are struggling to cope with the high number of injured people. "Since the start of this conflict, we are seeing 40-50 cases of injuries and 5-10 deaths of citizens and soldiers each day," he said.

He said that Houthi fighters do not bring their wounded to the hospital because their bases are far away and the city is not controlled by them.

Officials at the Amran Hospital said that people are fleeing the city



The Houthi rebellion began in 2004. Since then, Houthi rebels have fought an on-off conflict with Yemen's military.

to Sana'a or nearby villages because of the shelling which has hit civilian areas.

According to Al-Shalaif, most of the city's inhabitants have fled.

Nawal Al-Suraihi, a local citizen who remains in Amran, said that

areas like Thula and Al-Ma'akhath were devoid of civilians.

"The war is occurring on the surrounding mountains, and we [the citizens] are in the middle of all that," said Al-Suraihi, who added that she and her family have no-

where else to go.

Both sides have traded blame over the collapse of the ceasefire

According to Tawwaf, staff at the governorate's public relations office were informed about the ceasefire via SMS, but they did not receive

any details. He said that if the truce had been properly signed and implemented it could have prevented a recurrence of fighting and bought more time.

Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, a member at the political office of the Houthis, acknowledged that the fighting is more severe than before and that residential areas are affected.

"In wars there are mistakes. Moreover, the shelling happens from far-away areas where they [the military forces] use their many weapons from hidden locations, and that provokes a response," said Al-Bukhaiti.

He refused to reveal the number of dead and injured Houthi rebels.

Al-Bukhaiti said that the conflict would end only with the resignation of Amran governor Mohammed Dammaj and the commander of the brigade that the Houthis are battling in the region, Hameed Al-Qushaibi.

Five Saudi nationals killed, one wounded in Seyoun attack

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, May 25 — The Defense Ministry on Monday morning published three additional names of the five Saudi nationals killed Friday in an attack by gunmen on several public institutions in Seyoun city of Hadramout in eastern Yemen.

The ministry cited anonymous sources naming the Saudi nationals as Dabab Bin Hussein Al-Sharori, Yarmook, and Abu Omair Al-Najdi, adding that another Saudi national known as Anas Al-Sharori was injured.

In a press release on Saturday, the ministry said that Faisal Al-Afi-fi and Fawaz Al-Harbi, two Saudi nationals, were among 15 gunmen killed during the all-out attack on Friday night by alleged Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) militants.

The ministry also said that Abu Ghareeb Al-Hadrami, a Yemeni citizen, was killed and Abu Khalid Al-Hadrami, also a Yemeni, was wounded. However, it didn't mention the names of the other gunmen. The Yemen Times was unable to verify the official claims from other sources.

A sense of uneasiness hangs over the city, and many residents are shocked by the bold and very sudden attack. Ahmed Shawala, a resident of Seyoun, said "the city is currently calm, but the citizens are still confused. They could not understand how the attack so abruptly took place."

The Defense Ministry's website reported that the attack took place at 11:00 pm on Friday night and targeted several security and financial institutions, including multiple government offices, the

headquarters of the First Military Command, the police headquarters, the National Security Bureau, and the Seyoun branches of the Yemen Central Bank, National Bank of Yemen, and Post Office.

The Defense Ministry said that the attackers used "various kinds of weapons" and bomb-laden cars, adding that 15 gunmen and 12 soldiers were killed and 11 soldiers were wounded.

The Hadramout Tribes Federation issued a statement on Saturday that read, "the militants attacked Seyoun with 30 vehicles. The attack lasted roughly five hours. This indicates the poor performance of the security forces."

Saeed Al-Jamhi, an Al-Qaeda expert and author of 'Al-Qaeda: Establishment, Ideological Background, and Continuity', said that the attack was in response to the

ongoing military offensive against alleged AQAP militants in Abyan and Shabwa. He said that the material losses as a result of the offensive would have encouraged militants from the group to target banks and financial institutions.

Al-Jamhi added that the scale of the attack is significant and could represent a shift in tactics from hit-and-run assassinations and attacks on checkpoints, to more ambitious offensives.

In 2011, Al-Qaeda militants took over monetary institutions in Zinjibar city of Abyan governorate. They also took control of many parts of the governorate but were expelled by the army and local militia groups in mid-2012.

Many foreign citizens are fighting for AQAP in Yemen. Saudi militants have a considerable presence in the country, especially because

the Saudi government has more effectively cracked down on militancy within its borders and because AQAP is a combination of Yemen and Saudi Arabia's Al-Qaeda branches.

President Hadi stated that 70% of all Al-Qaeda-affiliated militants in Yemen are non-Yemeni. Although this figure is likely exaggerated, many Saudi nationals have been at the forefront of AQAP activity in Yemen. For example, seven Saudis were involved in the Defense Ministry hospital bombing of December 2012 and the former deputy commander of AQAP, reportedly killed in 2012, was a Saudi named Saeed Al-Shehri.

This latest attack in Seyoun comes after the army launched an offensive against alleged AQAP militants in late April, leading to the displacement of thousands.

Government pledges 60,000 tons of diesel to alleviate fuel crisis

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, May 25 — Prime Minister Mohammed Salem Basindwa declared Saturday that the government is planning to import 60,000 tons of diesel in a bid to overcome the diesel crisis the country has been facing.

The fuel crisis continues to be a major cause for concern for ordinary Yemenis.

"Whatever the government does, the diesel crisis seems unsolvable as long as influential groups continue to control the diesel trade," Sana'a-based economist Ahmed Saied Shamakh told the Yemen Times.

"The government will import large amounts of diesel. But it will not go to everyone equally. Simple farmers, for example, will continue

struggling with this crisis. When you go to a gas station now, you see long queues of cars," Shamakh said.

Economists say the government is not adequately supervising the distribution of petrol and diesel, which provides an opportunity to some well-connected individuals and groups to monopolize fuel in order to create black markets.

Earlier this month, the general manager of the Yemen Petroleum Company, Mansour Al-Batani, told the media that the company shut down several gas stations in the capital city whose owners were accused of attempting to hoard fuel to sell on the black market.

"Only an influential group will be able to take advantage of the imported diesel. Even if the government imports billions [of liters]

of diesel, the crisis will continue as long as there is no monitoring," Shamakh said.

As the government is keen to point out, the fuel crisis is worsened in part due to the repeated attacks by tribesmen on oil pipe lines in Marib and Shabwa as well as tribal roadblocks on Sana'a-Marib road. Tribes usually carry out such actions as a means of airing their demands and pressuring the government into—for instance—providing better jobs or releasing imprisoned relatives.

Mansour Hamoud, the owner of Mansour Al-Abdi gas station at Al-Misbahi roundabout in Hadda, agreed with Shamakh that the crisis will worsen if there is no rigorous government monitoring and regulation.

"The government can import thousands of liters of petrol and diesel, but the [hoarding] is going to continue. This is the root cause of the crisis," he said.

For rural farmers, who are heavily reliant on diesel to operate water pumps, the crisis has come at a high cost.

Mahboob Hadi, a farmer in Hodeida governorate, expressed his frustration at the government's handling of the fuel crisis.

"I go to the station... so that I can get a few liters of diesel. I return empty-handed. We cannot grow as many crops considering this shortage of diesel. Some plants even perish because the water is insufficient. Also, some farmers cannot afford to buy from the black market," said Hadi.

Heba Al-Tairy, director of the Commercial Affairs Department at the Yemen Petroleum Company, said in a recent interview with the Yemen Times that the lack of cash flow is the main reason behind the acute shortage of fuel.

She also said the Aden Oil Refinery Company produces between 50,000 and 70,000 tons of diesel per month while the rest of the country's needs is imported from outside. The country's monthly consumption is between 250,000-300,000 tons, according to Al-Tairy.

On Wednesday, the Yemeni Parliament warned that it would withdraw confidence from the reconciliation government if the the fuel crisis and the security vacuum continue unresolved.

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Security forces raid house of alleged AQAP members in Arhab



The Arhab raid comes amid ongoing military operations in Abyan and Shabwa against alleged AQAP militants. Security forces have drawn criticism for the secrecy surrounding such operations.

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, May 26—Two Yemeni men and two soldiers were killed when security forces raided a house in Bani Hakm area of Arhab district, to the north of the capital Sana'a. Others were also arrested.

Six others were injured in the raid, four of them soldiers, according to the state-run Saba News Agency, which cited a security source from the Supreme Security Committee.

The Defense Ministry said the two who were killed were "members of Al-Qaeda."

The Defense Ministry's website said those arrested in the house raid were part of "a terrorist cell assigned to make explosives and prepare booby-trapped cars." The ministry claimed that three cars were destroyed, one of them explosive-laden, and a variety of weap-

ons and ammunition were found in the house.

Abduljaleel Sinan, a tribal leader in Arhab district, said that warplanes had attacked the area near the house on Saturday and that an exchange of gunfire took place during the raid on Sunday.

"There were seven men working in the house and they came from Hadramout... but we know nothing about weapons or their link to Al-Qaeda," said Sinan, who also said there were no women or children inside.

The Defense Ministry said that investigations are underway but did not provide further information about how many are in custody.

Saeed Al-Jamhi, head of Al-Jamhi Center for Studies that conducts studies and research on Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), said Al-Qaeda has affiliates in vari-

ous governorates and armed groups may flee from a governorate into another during clashes. In his view, the alleged militants residing in the house might have come from governorates where clashes are taking place between the government and AQAP.

Al-Jamhi said that he does not trust the information provided by the government. "The security apparatus often provides false information about terrorism in order to appear like they are successful and also to enhance the military's morale, but such information may affect them adversely later," he said.

In a statement released on Sunday, Sinan's tribe, which is the largest in Arhab, praised the security operation, saying that the alleged AQAP affiliates are not associated with people from Arhab district.

Houthis mobilize on outskirts of Dhamar



At the same time that Houthi fighters are embroiled in fighting with government forces in Amran, tensions are rising between Houthis and Salafis.

■ Abdulkareem Al-Nahari

DHAMAR, May 25—Houthi gunmen have been mobilizing in the area around Mabar city in Dhamar since late last week in what appears to be preparation for fighting with Salafi forces the city, according to security and local sources.

A security officer in Dhamar spoke to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity because he is prohibited from speaking to the press. He said that security forces in the governorate received information saying that the Houthis had set up mortars and dug trenches on Anwa hill overlooking Mabar city in preparation for an attack.

The Yemen Times has seen groups of people from the Bait Al-Maibadi area, who are in alliance with the Salafis, erecting barricades on the hills in front of Anwa hill. Houthi forces have also created roadblocks in Al-Manshea area, on the road between Mabar and Dhawran Anes district.

A tribal sheikh associated with the Salafis in the Bani Hatim area of Dhawran district, who requested anonymity in fear of being killed, said that the Houthis gathered fighters from various areas and attacked Samh area, destroying a Salafi center as well as several houses.

A Houthi fighter, who came from another area to back Houthi forces in Dhamar, said that both parties have brought fighters from other

areas.

"The security forces have been monitoring the Salafis and have taken precautionary measures such as evacuating the headquarters of the Al-Rashad Party and removing the party's sign from the building, because we believe the Houthis are plotting to blow up the building which is located in a highly populous neighborhood," said the security officer in Dhamar.

However, a spokesperson for Al-Rashad Party, Bassam Al-Shoja, said security forces on Thursday attacked the headquarters of the Al-Rashad Party in the governorate and removed the sign carrying the name of the party from the building.

"The security personnel claimed to have orders from Dhamar security chief but they didn't provide clear reasons for doing such things," he added.

The Yemen Times attempted to contact the Dhamar Security Department for comment on the issue but they declined. Previously, during Houthi-Salafi clashes in January, the Defense Ministry released a statement denying involvement in the fighting between Salafis and Houthis.

Mabar is home to an important Salafi center which teaches Salafi doctrine to thousands of local and foreign students. Many Salafis fled to the city in January after they were expelled from the

Dammaj area of Sa'ada governorate, a Houthi stronghold. There are also local tribes associated with the Salafis in the Mabar area.

Dhamar has been a flashpoint in conflict between Houthis and Salafis. In July last year, a tense standoff ensued after Houthi gunmen besieged the Salafi center in Mabar after one of their members was killed. Tensions died down after tribal mediators stepped in.

Saturday, however, offered some hope of averting conflict when a very localized truce was reached between Houthi and Salafi supporters in two villages in the Dhawran Anes district, about 10 kilometers from Mabar. The truce, which came after Salafi fighters fled to neighboring villages on Wednesday, was brokered by a mediation committee headed by Sheikh Dhaif Allah Zaid, a member of the local council in Dhamar, and Sheikh Faisal Ali Abdu Rabu Al-Taihi, a prominent local leader. It has put a temporary freeze on sporadic fighting that began about five months ago and which left dozens of dead and injured on both sides.

"Both parties signed the agreement and agreed to close the book on the past and commit not to attack each other," said Zaid.

Meanwhile, as tensions continue to rise in Mabar area, Houthi fighters have been embroiled in fierce fighting with soldiers in Amran governorate, north of Sana'a.

Tribal arbitration resolves assault on security commander in Dhamar

■ Abdulkareem Al-Nahari

DHAMAR, May 26—Major Bazil Al-Adhraei, the security chief of Jahran district of Dhamar governorate, told the Yemen Times on Monday that he accepted an offer of compensation from a tribal figure who assaulted him last week.

A source from Jahran Security Department, who spoke to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the press, said that Al-Adhraei refused to imprison a local resident after Sheikh Fawaz Al-Qawbani, the son of a prominent sheikh in the area, demanded he do so. He said that Al-Adhraei demanded to know the background of the case first and questioned the legality of arresting the resident.

"I refused to be a follower of the sheikh and send people to prison at his order. I represent the state and believe I should do justice to people and ban the illegal imprisonment of people," he added.

According to the source, "the sheikh then lost his temper and came to the security department. He argued with Al-Adhraei and then slapped him and left without being stopped by any of the soldiers."

Al-Adhraei told the Yemen Times that Al-Qawbani was imprisoned Thursday, the same day the assault took place. He also said anyone who attacks a policeman is sentenced to six months in prison.

However, Al-Qawbani only spent a few hours in jail.

Immediately following the arrest, Al-Adhraei said, "community leaders of Jahran district, including Mujahid Shaif Al-Ansi, secretary general of the local council in Dhamar, came to my house to resolve the matter via tribal arbitration."

According to the source, Al-Qawbani's father Ali, who is the tribal sheikh of Mabar area of Jahran district and assistant deputy governor in Hajja, was also in attendance.

The group went to offer a traditional apology.

Al-Adhraei accepted the apology, which involved an ox being slaughtered in front of him; an expression of remorse by those representing the Al-Qawbani.

"The security authorities in Dhamar stood by watching and did not take action to side with Al-Adhraei," said the source. "The tribal sheikh was supposed to be dealt with seriously and be referred to the court. However, what happened was he was kept in the headquarters of the military police in Dhamar for hours and then he was released based on tribal solutions, not legal procedures."

Tribal sheikhs often fill official and semi-official roles and, in the absence of effective state institution, act as arbitrators and enforcers. Sometimes tribal sheikhs send people to prison, and the security apparatus sometimes imprisons people at the orders of those sheikhs.

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More protection for healthcare workers needed

IRIN
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Experts are calling for increased protection to healthcare workers and patients in crisis situations in the face of growing attacks on health facilities, which challenge notions of their neutrality.

"We need multiple and reinforcing means to protect health care in situations of violence, including the well-developed mechanisms of human rights monitoring, reporting and accountability," Leonard Rubenstein, chair of Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, a group of humanitarian and human rights organizations, told IRIN from the World Health Assembly, which is being held from May 19 to 24 in Geneva.

A 2014 report by the Safeguarding Health Coalition and Human Rights Watch documents attacks in 18 countries and claims that both the frequency and severity of violence against health care has increased in recent years—including killings and torture of staff, and damage to facilities and ambulances.

A resolution in 2012 by the World Health Assembly committed the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to "provide leadership at the global level in developing methods for systematic collection and dissemination of data on attacks on health facilities, health workers, health vehicles, and patients in complex humanitarian emergencies."

"We are pleased that, as part of its humanitarian reform initiative, the WHO is moving forward in providing global leadership in methods for systematic collection and dissemination of data on attacks on health facilities, health workers, health transports, and patients in complex humanitarian emergencies," Rubenstein said.



[Pakistan] A doctor tends to a young woman at the PIMA field hospital in Muzaffarabad, after her house collapsed on her nearly three weeks after the 8 October quake. [Date picture taken: 10/30/2005]

Consultations with humanitarians and NGOs shaping the mechanism are ongoing. Activists and experts say a major impediment to combating increasing rates of violence against healthcare outlets is the lack of centralized data.

But experts say the picture is incomplete as many attacks go unreported and perpetrators are unnamed—a fact which has curtailed effective responses to the violence. They point to the complexity of protection at the local level as an important consideration as global systems emerge.

According to Rudi Coninx, coordinator for emergency risk management and humanitarian action at WHO: "The objective of the central data collection methodology we are spearheading is first to document attacks and to have information about trends. And second, to act—we need all actions taken against these horrific attacks to be based on evidence."

Hostilities and health
"Attacks against health workers and facilities undermine often al-

ready fragile health systems," said Joe Amon, health and human rights director at Human Rights Watch (HRW).

Ongoing conflicts around the world—from Ukraine, to Yemen, to South Sudan—have featured attacks on healthcare workers and facilities, and patients. On 29 April an attack on a healthcare center in the Central African Republic, embroiled in a brutal internal armed conflict, left 22 civilians dead.

A 2013 report by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) revealed 1,809 attacks on healthcare outlets in 23 countries between January 2012 and December 2013; 91 percent of the incidents involved violence against healthcare workers. The report was compiled by 23 ICRC delegations based on interviews with hospital staff, and victims and witnesses of attacks.

Health providers and humanitarian actors have used a variety of protection methods.

For example, the humanitarian medical organization, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), has stationed armed guards at some of its

facilities in Somalia—a tactic MSF officials admitted was "not ideal." Research in Myanmar suggests "community collectivity" strategies, in which attacks on health care are framed as affecting the population instead of individuals, are another violence aversion strategy. The ICRC has held confidential negotiations with attackers to curb ambulance attacks in Yemen.

Pierre Gentile, head of the Health Care In Danger project at ICRC, said, "there is no... one single recommendation that would change the landscape and provide safety for health care. There are a lot of measures that have been taken by stakeholders in various countries around the world to improve healthcare delivery."

Activists hope improved data collection will increase humanitarian and human rights actors' ability to react to violence by expanding the scope of protection methods for healthcare workers.

Doctors can't always be neutral

"The humanitarian value of neutrality is an important one but adherence to neutrality is not a predicate to the right to medical services without interference," explained Rubenstein, who directs the Centre for Public Health and Human Rights at Johns Hopkins University in the US.

In a 2013 article in the International Review of the Red Cross, he wrote, "unlike humanitarian providers... local doctors, nurses and other health workers need not and often cannot be neutral—that is, they cannot refrain from 'taking sides in hostilities or engaging in controversies of a political, racial, religious, or other ideological nature.'"

Studies have documented how healthcare workers in conflict areas develop coping mechanisms to continue their work, albeit with limited

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capacity to deliver much-needed services.

Experts say a human rights approach to protecting healthcare workers—including dissenters, minorities, and the marginalized who take sides in conflict—is essential to supporting healthcare workers operating in tense situations.

"Different contexts will require different solutions, but it's important we have the best information possible so we can act together," argued WHO's Coninx.

Rubenstein said, "protection must begin by changing norms and

expectations, so that it is no longer considered legitimate for states and armed groups to attack medical providers because they offer care to persons affiliated with a political opposition."

Speaking at this week's conference, Valerie Amos, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said, "we need to prioritize people's health over political maneuvering."

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Maliha Ali Ahmed: a mother to hundreds

Story and Photo by Amal Al-Yarisi

Maliha Ali Ahmed is an elderly woman who has lived for 25 years in a small room in an orphanage on Taiz Street of the capital city, where she cares for the 613 orphans living there. Despite her age she appears full of energy, doing her best to care for the children in the orphanage.

The orphanage, established in 1992, has three buildings for different age groups—6-8, 9-14, and 15 and older.

Ahmed was born to an illiterate family in Bani Hajaj village in Al-Soda district of Amran governorate, to the north of the capital Sana'a.

In her village, she got married to a man twice her age. "I got married when I was 14 years old," she said.

She shouldered a heavy burden at an early age. She began caring for her husband in addition to grazing the cattle and fetching water, like many other women in rural areas. "Years passed, but we did not reproduce a baby," she said. Because her late husband was infertile, she said, she did not give birth.

One day while she was on her way to fetch water, she found an abandoned child on the street and took him home. "My husband and I decided to adopt the child. He was named Mohammed," she recalled.

Years passed and her husband fell sick. He was taken to Sana'a for treatment, where it was determined he had kidney failure. Ahmed became her husband's companion every time he needed to go to the hospital for a dialysis session.

After six months of illness, her husband passed away. Then Ahmed

alone became responsible for Mohammed, who was four years old at the time.

Some months after the death of her husband, Ahmed moved to Sana'a in order to claim the inheritance of her husband's land. The court in Amran had sent her case to the judiciary in Sana'a. "I spent years calling for the inheritance of land plots my husband left," she said.

"My husband left a third of his possessions to his adopted child, but his cousins objected, claiming the child was adopted and shouldn't inherit anything. Therefore, I resorted to the court," said Ahmed.

While in Sana'a, she took the child to the orphanage on Taiz Street. She wanted him to study. "If he was taken to the village, I would not be able to send him to school and then he would be illiterate," she said.

Change in direction

When Ahmed was at the orphanage, intending to hand over her child, Abdulmalik Al-Wadei, the manager of Orphan House at the time, asked her to work and take care of the orphans in the elementary grades. She accepted the offer and was delighted to be given the chance to be close to her adopted child.

Since then, the orphanage has been her home. "I worked on a contract for seven years. Later I was given a salary raise to YR35,000 (\$163) per month and a permanent job in the orphanage," she said.

Although she left her village, her house, and her relatives to come to the orphanage, Ahmed found happiness among the orphans.

"My son studied at the orphanage and then got married and returned to the village with his two children," said Ahmed.

Mohammed wasn't the only child Ahmed adopted. "My brother died



Maliha Ali Ahmed left her village to work and live at the orphanage where she brought her adopted son to.

and I took his four children to the orphanage," she said. "Now two of them are in college and two are still in high school."

Ahmed spent 25 years in the orphanage looking after the young orphans. She took care of their appearance and health and resolved

their problems.

"Nothing makes me more happy than seeing the orphans studying and getting all their rights in life," she added.

During Ahmed's work at Orphan House several orphans from various governorates graduated

from high school while living in the orphanage. They are still in contact with Ahmed and visit her often.

"Most of those orphans who were raised in the orphanage call me mama," said Ahmed.

Ahmed has two dreams now—to return to her village and to go to

Mecca for the pilgrimage.

"I have spent several years here but now the employees don't respect me because I always object to injustice against the orphans; I have saved some money out of my salary for the pilgrimage," she concluded.



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Re-Energizing Yemen's Energy Sector

Murad Alazzany and Robert Sharp

Yemen is not a major energy resource producer when compared to its Gulf neighbors, but its economy is heavily dependent on oil revenue. In 2010, just before the uprisings, approximately 60% to 70% of Yemeni government revenues and over 90% of foreign exchange earnings came from the sale of oil and gas. Oil reserves and production are in two basins—one in the Marib and Shabwa governorates and one in the east in Hadramout. There is speculation that Yemen may have larger reserves which hitherto have remained un-exploited because of the enduring security situation. What can Yemen do to maximize its oil resources moving forward?

During the past three years since the uprising there has been much interest in new oil and gas fields, particularly in Al-Jawf governorate, just south of the Yemen-Saudi border. Yemen's oil and minerals minister said in January 2013 that Yemen's reserves of oil are higher than previously thought. A Yemeni government-owned oil and gas company (Safir) said that the new discoveries potentially offer a daily output of up to about 6 million cubic feet of gas.

These recent reports have received wide public attention as people hope for an economy on par with more affluent Gulf neighbors. Exploiting Yemen's potential reserves would be very timely coming as it does post-uprising and at a time when even the most generous of international donors are experiencing donor fatigue; new oil and gas output would re-energize Yemen's failing economy.

The issue of potential new oil and gas resources turned political as some politicians and activists used the opportunity to point a finger of accusation toward big brother Saudi Arabia—the Saudis are thought to be preventing exploration. Misleading claims were made that Saudi Arabia does not want Yemen to turn into a powerful and influential resource-rich country. Some of these reports even went as far as claiming that the new discoveries would yield six million barrels a day.

Unfortunately, the claims reported in the media and paraded by many Yemeni politicians and activists are not confirmed. More analysis is necessary. According to the January 2013 Oil and Gas Journal, Yemen has proven oil reserves of about three billion barrels. This might sound like a lot, but three billion barrels is less than Saudi Arabia produces each year. Yemen's current oil production is estimated only to be 173,000 barrels a day, with production in steady decline since peaking in 2001. Production reduced from 298,000 barrels per day in 2009, to 120,000 barrels per day by August 2013.

The decline in production is due to frequent attacks on pipelines which have cost the government many millions of dollars of lost oil revenue. In 2012, there were more

than 15 such attacks and oil exports were completely offline for most of the first half of the year. In the first eight months of 2013 there were at least nine attacks on Yemen's oil and natural gas pipeline system. Securing the country's pipelines and other critical energy infrastructure is a stated goal of Yemen's government, but to date the efforts have not been entirely successful.

The constant attacks on Yemen's energy infrastructure prevent the building of trust in the government because it cannot provide services to the people because of the lost revenue. According to BP, falling

oil revenues have stoked anti-government sentiment. Thus even if existing oil reserves are higher than initially thought or new resources could be found, the current security environment still restricts the ability of companies to produce and transport oil. Several smaller international oil companies have suspended operations. The sentiment against the government has increased with the current crisis of oil supplies all over the country.

But it seems that politicians and decision makers turn their eyes from the real problems facing energy security. They sell false hope to the

people about the future of energy exploitation when the reality of today is oil shortage with long queues of cars and trucks lining the streets at gas stations. People realize how facts on the ground desperately differ from the political banter. False hope leads nowhere.

Despite the difficulties, domestic consumption of oil is rising, meaning that more and more of Yemen's oil will be consumed domestically and will not be available for export. Government will surely have to raise prices to generate the necessary income and that will further alarm the populous. Alternatively,

the government will have to buy more foreign oil, which in turn will affect Yemeni prices.

The problem is aggravated by corruption and patronage permeating the energy sector industry. Every stage of the oil and gas sector, including awards of oil concessions, crude oil export sales and oil and gas service contracts, is affected.

Yemen's oil sector might be falling into the abyss. The country faces a national fiscal disaster if the ailing oil and gas sector does not recover soon. But this is unlikely without attracting investment from Gulf Arab states, which would again place Yemen at their beck and call. Only when Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries feel responsible for Yemen will matters improve, and only then will Yemeni workers be allowed back into their labor markets. If this does not happen, the GCC one day will find themselves

with a Yemeni refugee problem. Furthermore, there is a concurrent need to re-energize exploration in Yemen's onshore and offshore resources. The recent Government quest to improve security should help.

Murad Alazzany is an associate professor at Sana'a University, Yemen. Robert Sharp is an associate professor at Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESAS), Washington DC, USA. The views expressed in this article are the authors' alone.



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The day the music died in the Arab world?

Mark LeVine
aljazeera.com
First published May 25

As I write these lines, Moroccan revolutionary rapper L7a9ed (El Haqed, the "enraged one", whose real name is Mouad Belhouat) is once again in jail, after being arrested on May 19 at a football match for allegedly scalping tickets and assaulting a police officer. L7a9ed has already spent over a year in prison for his anti-regime rap songs, most infamously "Klab Dawla" (Dogs of the State), prosecuted for assaulting a pro-regime activist and insulting the police.

In our recent conversations, L7a9ed expressed growing concern that he'd soon return to prison, especially after the release of his new mixtape, *Walou* (Nothing). He previewed the album for me and other artists and activists during the 4th Arab Bloggers Meeting in Amman a few months back, a gathering which itself was dominated by the ongoing detention of bloggers, artists and social media figures from Egypt, Syria, and other Arab countries.

It was clear upon first listen that fans who worried that L7a9ed might tone it down after his stint in jail (at a press conference upon his release he intimated that he would focus more on his studies and less on politics) could rest easy—or better, again be as "enraged" as L7a9ed—as one song after another excoriated the ongoing corruption, police brutality, inequality, lack of freedom, and particularly hopelessness, that characterizes life in what for most Westerners remains one of the most "modern" and "moderate" Arab monarchies. As L7a9ed raps in the title track, "Walou," mixing defi-

ance and despair:

"Nothing satisfies us... We are so sick. No culture, no art, no creation... No, no way. We won't back down. It's my slogan. Choose my side or theirs... Put this in your head: Never give up your rights... This country is ours, not his [the king's]."

A prosecutable offense

The lyrics represent a far cry from the "nothing" of the title. In a country where even substituting FC Barcelona for the king in the slogan "God, Country, Barca" is a prosecutable offense, such a direct attack on the king's majesty [royal honor or dignity] is not likely to go unanswered.

Once upon a time in the not too distant past, just being a rapper or a metal-head in the Arab and larger Muslim world could get you beaten with cops, jailed and even threatened with death by religious authorities. Underground scenes began to win more public and official acceptance during the last decade as both governments and "moderate" Islamist movements realized that policing the tastes of young people was not a productive way either to win their support or avoid alienating them completely.

But the tolerance did not extend to more overtly political music, as evidenced most famously by the jailing of a then still largely unknown rapper, El General, at the start of the Tunisian revolution. As the revolutions grind on, young artists have become among their countries' most important public intellectuals.

Whatever the gains of the protests, the reality is that their growing politicization—of their music itself as well as their extracurricular political activities—has occurred in

what remains a highly and in some ways increasingly restrictive environment.

As a new report by the global anti-music censorship NGO Freemuse and the Egyptian Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression describes Egypt: "Artistic expression... is one of the most tightly controlled forms of expression, subject to numerous restrictions, both official, in the form of laws, regulations, and state institutions charged with implementing these codes, and social, in the form of constraints imposed by mainstream culture."

While religious and sexual themes or provocative video clips can still get a song banned from the airwaves, political expression remains a crucial arena where governments

Lost in a labyrinth

Governments love labyrinths, never tiring of using well-worn laws to prosecute free speech even when such practices violate the language or spirit of the post 2010 constitutions guaranteeing freedom of expression. Physical violence is also routinely deployed on artists, just as it is upon ordinary citizens.

Ramy Essam was tortured; L7a9ed has been brutally beaten by police, most recently during his latest arrest. Other artists have suffered worse fates, as epitomized by the assassination of Syrian singer Ibrahim Kashoush, whose throat was slit by Assad's forces in July 2011. More banal but ultimately quite effective, regimes keep music off state-controlled and allied radio

and TV and make it very difficult to perform live.

Ramy Essam's recent experience with security forces summarizes precisely what artists like he and L7a9ed are up against as they attempt to continue writing relevant music at a time when counterrevolutionary governments seem secure in their power. Upon recognizing him at a checkpoint near Suez, an officer walked up to him singing his song "Taty Taty" (Bow your head) and playing a video of him perform-

International support

For now, the wide support shown to Essam and L7a9ed by local and international comrades and fans, as well as activists and the media, have perhaps kept them from experiencing the harsh fate—long term detention and torture, or worse—suffered by so many pro-democracy activists. Within days of L7a9ed's latest arrest, other political rappers and rock artists publicly came to his defense, with tweets, Facebook posts and a media campaign lambasting the charges and the ongoing harassment against him. These supporters called on international artists like Alicia Keys, Robert Plant and Justin Timberlake, all of whom are scheduled to perform at the monarchy-sponsored Mawazine Festival in June, to speak out on his behalf.

The media attention to their plights might give L7a9ed and Essam a modicum of protection compared with the average citizen, but the situation could change at any moment. Next time Essam is picked up he might be alone; cameras might not be surrounding L7a9ed. As we've learned time and time again, the judicial system remains aligned against activists (L7a9ed's pre-trial detention was extended for another week after prosecutors introduced an unsigned accusation at his hearing). Anything can happen in a jail cell, while a simple prison bus can suddenly become a death chamber.

In this context, it's worth paying close attention to how the revolutionary artists of the Arab world fair in the coming period, as the revolutions either continue to become dormant or explode again into open conflict. However bad they might have it, for the average citizen of the Arab world, it's likely going to be much worse. Indeed, at the same time L7a9ed's trail was being postponed and his pre-trial detention extended, 11 members of the February 20 movement were sentenced to a year in prison. In Egypt, yet another activist was sentenced to two years imprisonment and security forces raided the offices of a leading human rights organization and, according to witnesses, sexually harassed female employees.

The revolution continues, indeed.

Mark LeVine is a professor of Middle Eastern History at University of California, Irvine, and a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Lund University. His new book is One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States, co-edited with Ambassador Mathias Mossberg.

From Morocco to Egypt, Arab governments are trying to settle scores with revolutionary artists

attempt to use the law to silence oppositional voices—not just by keeping their music off the radio or TV, but by keeping them from performing and otherwise being a public presence. As Freemuse Executive Director Ole Reitov explained after the launch of the report at Cairo's Townhouse Rawabet Theatre on May 21, "the censorship practices in Egypt [are] a labyrinth where you know how to enter but do not know how to exit."

and TV and make it very difficult to perform live.

Ramy Essam's recent experience with security forces summarizes precisely what artists like he and L7a9ed are up against as they attempt to continue writing relevant music at a time when counterrevolutionary governments seem secure in their power. Upon recognizing him at a checkpoint near Suez, an officer walked up to him singing his song "Taty Taty" (Bow your head) and playing a video of him perform-

Stability no nearer as Egypt elections loom

Aziz El-Kaissouni
middleeasteye.net
First published May 24

For the second time since longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak was deposed on February 11, 2011, Egyptians will once again line up at the polling stations to elect a head of state this coming week. Unlike the presidential election of 2012, no one is likely to wait with bated breath on the results of this vote.

It's looking somewhat reminiscent of the presidential election of 2005, when Mubarak handily defeated his two opponents, but with likely a higher margin of victory for the state's candidate this time around, if the results of the expatriate vote are anything to go by.

The result should surprise no one; after all, former army chief and presidential candidate Abdulfatah Al-Sisi has already received the endorsement of the military, the paramount institution of the state, and has been fawned over in state and private media for many months, with his apparent lack of a detailed programme glossed over. The Muslim Brotherhood, his political oppo-

nent, has been driven underground by a relentless crackdown.

We can expect some triumphalism after the vote. The interim authorities have made much of the fact that they have abided—for the most part—by the roadmap unveiled on 8 July, with every step on that path feted as evidence of Egypt's sure progress. This is irrespective of the fact that the roadmap's milestones were the product of the deliberations of a minority of actors and interests, subject to no popular oversight, and which have been arguably void of all meaning by the backdrop against which they unfold: thousands of detainees, mass death sentences, the jailing of journalists, and a total lack of accountability for the worst mass killing in Egypt's modern history.

Still, that train has, for all intents and purposes, left the station. It is more useful to consider what happens after Sisi receives the popular mandate he seeks.

Judging from his TV appearances, Sisi recognizes that he needs time, around two years, if he's to effect any sort of meaningful change in the average Egyptian's life. But with current levels of instability in the country, Sisi might not have two years. To be clear, the protests are

not currently at a level that can pose any imminent threat to the survival of the government.

But despite the repeated, oft-mocked assertions of parts of the protest movement that regime collapse is near, all indications are that the Brotherhood recognizes that it is in this for the long haul, and has accordingly geared up for a drawn out war of attrition. Still heavily reliant on Gulf largesse, Sisi knows the clock is ticking, and that Egypt, on the economic front, is not on what anyone would describe as sure footing. Stability, as Sisi doubtless knows, is at a premium.

It is possible that Sisi will undertake token gestures of magnanimity, perhaps commuting some death sentences, or pardoning some fraction of Egypt's sizeable population of political prisoners. With between 16,000 and 20,000 people in jail, Sisi can probably afford to release a few carefully screened hundreds without making a significant dent in the overall figure, and still be hailed as a reformer.

But we should not expect such initiatives to go very far. The government can probably ill-afford significant releases, given that these are likely to embolden a protest

movement that has survived for 11 months, despite ruthless repression. Detainees who have been brutalized for their political or religious convictions may not choose to go home and lead a quiet life. They may, in fact, join the growing number of Islamists who've decided that the government must be resisted by force of arms.

However, if carefully calibrated, such concessions will benefit the incoming president, allowing the government to paint its opponents as intransigent if they fail to respond enthusiastically to the gesture. There is also a good possibility that such concessions will be latched on to by parts of the international community, eager to justify continuing support for a government engaged in systematic and widespread human rights abuses.

There also appears to be recognition of the need for some form of reconciliation. Egyptian human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim has claimed that individuals close to Sisi indicate that he plans to unveil a proposal to that effect after the elections. And Helene Michou notes that EU Special Representative Bernardino Leon has stated that the EU is working on a reconciliation ini-

tiative to be unveiled after the elections. She is, however, rightly skeptical of any outside actor's ability to lay the groundwork for a reconciliation process when there appears to be so little inclination towards that possibility on both sides. Likewise, it is unclear that it will be any easier for domestic actors to break out of the toxic dynamic that has characterized Egyptian politics and society for nearly a year. Note, for example, Sisi's comments that the Brotherhood under his presidency, would be "finished." The pronouncements of both camps do not lend themselves to an optimistic reading.

Even if the government were willing to concede that some form of accommodation is necessary as a prerequisite for stability and economic recovery (and that is far from clear at this point), it might be uncertain that there would be any benefit to reaching out to the Muslim Brotherhood. This is in part because, with most of the leadership in jail, and authority devolving to younger, less-experienced (and possibly less-compromising) cadres, the leadership's authority may not be as certain as it was in the past.

But there is also a grimmer possibility, described by Professor Emad

Shahin in a recent interview with Al Araby. Sisi, empowered by a popular mandate, Shahin argues, will crack down more forcefully on his opponents. There is precedent for believing this: recall Sisi's impassioned appeal to the public to grant him a mandate to "fight terror," just days before the killing of around 1,000 people in Raba'a and Nahda Squares. This is a man for whom expressions of popular support and public adulation are headily empowering.

Or perhaps Sisi expects that winning the vote in a landslide will secure him an overwhelming mandate, one that obliges his opponents to concede that they are in the minority, and force them into some humble introspection. But a bitter lesson learned by the Muslim Brotherhood across the past three years is that elections do not a stable polity make, and voting rarely settles anything in Egypt.

It is a lesson to which the incoming president should pay heed.

Aziz El-Kaissouni is a visiting fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, and a former political analyst for the European Union Delegation to Egypt.

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Al-Muhawwari to the Yemen Times:

“Nothing has changed in Yemen. The former regime’s head, heart and mentality still exist”

Al-Murtadha Bin Zaid Al-Muhawwari is a prominent religious Zaidi leader and professor at the Law College of Sana'a University. He was born in 1952 in Al-Mahabsha district of Hajja governorate, in the north of Yemen. He studied Arabic grammar and Zaidi ideology in the Grand Mosque of Sana'a. He then went on to establish the Badr Center in Sana'a that teaches linguistics and jurisprudence based on Zaidi ideology.

■ Interview by Dares Al-Badani

You supported the 2011 revolution in the beginning but later you changed your mind. Why?
I was among the first people who took to the streets and I was their Imam for the prayers held at Change Square. I called on all youth associated with Ansar Allah [the Houthis] to join the revolution and civil society and to coexist with people from Taiz and Aden in the square.

Why have you changed your mind?

Everything was good in the beginning but things began to change later, particularly after the former Commander of the First Armored Division Ali Mohsen joined the revolution. I changed my mind because I believed that Mohsen would obstruct the revolution and turn it upside down.

The youth began to disagree with the Muslim Brotherhood who made Mohsen a sacred figure. Indeed, with the help of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohsen was able to control the revolution as I expected.

Do you think there has been coordination between former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Mohsen?

It seems so because neither Saleh nor Mohsen were affected throughout the revolution. Even if they didn't have complete coordination, they had mutual interests. The Muslim Brotherhood also helped Mohsen and convinced people that he is a pure man because they have the ability to mobilize people.

It's known that you are in disagreement with the Muslim Brotherhood. Why?

I will tell things and then you can be the judge. They don't accept other

viewpoints. Although I worked with them for a long time, they didn't accept me because I opposed their plots to eradicate the Hashemites. They implement their plots in the name of the Quran.

They were against me and defamed me. I would have been very rich if I agreed with them. They allied with Saleh against me, to the extent of closing down Badr Center and sending me to prison for two months. I hate them.

But wasn't Saleh a Zaidi?

Yes, but it seems that Saleh knows no religion. He attempted to make people hate the Hashemites. They claimed that I want to bring back the rule of Imams and that I distributed 7,000 CDs saying that I'm Masonic [a Freemason]. I thought they would change their opinion about me because we were together in the revolution, but I was mistaken.

So Saleh wanted to get rid of you but he didn't?

Only Allah can do everything. However, Saleh has told me that he doesn't want to kill me while all my family members want to do so. I think he was right.

Did he want to use you to serve certain agendas?

I don't know but he wanted to use me against the other groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

That is to say, Saleh used to pit you against each other and offer funds to both sides?

Who told you he used to provide us with support? He used to aid the Muslim Brotherhood with billions, but we did not receive any support.

What about supporting the

Youth Believers [a Houthi youth movement] and printing books that promote their ideology?

Do you really call this 'support'? This is not sensible. He used to give them a half million Yemeni riyal at a time when he gave the Muslim Brotherhood tens of millions.

That is, he used to offer you support?

He offered us destruction and sabotage and mobilized his followers, the Muslim Brotherhood and the icons of the former regime, against us either before or after the revolution.

Will you one day come to say 'mercy upon the former regime' given the current unfortunate situation Yemen is undergoing?

No, I seek refuge in God. Curses on the former regime. The former regime has led us into this situation. General Ali Mohsen was part of the former regime. The Muslim Brotherhood was also part of the former regime. The army was a clique of the former regime and even the revolution was hijacked by the former regime. How can we say mercy on the former regime? The former regime is behind every crisis Yemen has been undergoing.

You always complain about attacks on your center and mosque. Do these attacks still happen even after the revolution?

Of course there are still lots of attacks in the name of religion and revolution. My center has sustained a lot of attacks. My students and I also were exposed to attacks.



What do you think of what is happening in Yemen, including the war between the Houthis and tribesmen in Amran and Hamdan?

I understood that rebelling against the oppressor should be accompanied by the sword. The six wars in Sa'ada shook Saleh and his regime. So anyone torturing any group—killing families in Amran and Hamdan, for example—should be confronted with the sword. I want to stress that the Zaidism do not accept humiliation. I said this to the former president. I told him to not go on war in Sa'ada.

Annihilating people from earth will not happen. I think he has realized the veracity of my speech now. In terms of war in Hamdan and Amran, it is a matter of self defense. The Houthis are defending themselves. Look at these areas in which the war took place. You will see many things.

What will I see?

You will see secure roads. You will see everything has changed for the better. No one dared to go to Amran and Hashid in the past. But now it

is safe. This is by the virtue of Ansar Allah, the Houthis. I hope they maintain security in the entire nation and work to serve the people in other areas.

Can you explain it further?

Imagine if Ansar Allah expand to Marib. Will the electricity or oil pipelines be attacked? Will we experience this suffering? Can you answer?

No, answer your question.

The answer is clear. You and people with common sense understand the answer. Go to Sa'ada and you will see everything is all right. You will feel you are in a developed country, not a developing one. This is by the virtue of Ansar Allah.

Are Ansar Allah stronger than the army and are they a government inside the government?

Please retract your question. What government are you talking about? This is a gang that joins the army and police with the Muslim Brotherhood and controls the government institutions. How can you

call it a government? We are under threat day and night. There is no electricity. We lack the basic services. Where is the government? I cannot leave my home for fear of being killed. In spite of this, do you still call it a government?

Why do you not seek protection from the government?


The so-called government cannot protect itself. So, as long as this government cannot defend itself, how can I ask for protection?

Why do not you go to the judiciary?

Which judiciary are talking about?

I am talking about the Yemeni judiciary and courts.

Do you think we have judiciary? You are talking about the judiciary. I think you have come from the Brazilian jungles. Where is the judiciary in Yemen? What is the stance of the judiciary towards killing Abdulkareem Jadbani, a member of Parliament affiliated with the Houthis? And attacks on civilians? You are talking about the judiciary, but the judiciary does not exist.



Embassy of India Sana'a

TENDER NOTICE FOR VISA OUTSOURCING

The Embassy of India in Sana'a intends to outsource its visa services and seeks sealed quotations/bids (**only in English**) from competent service providers in Yemen. For the time being, visa collection/delivery centers will have to be opened by the successful bidding company at Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Hodeidah, Mukalla and Ibb.

The full details of the proposed outsourcing requirements are contained in the two documents:
(i) Invitation for Bids; and
(ii) Request for Proposal

This can be collected from the Embassy of India, Sana'a (Near Y. Company, Off Hadda, Sana'a), Tel: 433631 & 433632; Fax: 433630 & E-mail: hoc@eoisanaa.org between 11.00 – 12.00 hrs. on any working day (Sunday to Thursday). These two documents could be sent by e-mail upon request to bidding firms only from cities other than Sana'a.

The sealed tenders, containing Technical and Financial Bids in two separate envelopes, should be sent to or submitted in the Embassy on or before Thursday, 10 July 2014 by 1000 hrs.

The tender will be opened at the Embassy premises at 1100 hrs. on same day i.e. Thursday, 10 July, 2014 where a representative of each bidding company can be present. Factors like the reputation of the bidding firms, their prior experience in the field so far, the facilities that they intend to provide at the collection/delivery centers, service charges quoted by them etc. will be the key, in deciding the bidder, to whom the outsourcing contract will be finally awarded.



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Can Anyone Save Libya?

Barbara Slavin
atlanticcouncil.org
First published May 22

Libya's future looked promising after its dictator was overthrown nearly three years ago. But its recent history has been chaotic: a succession of weak prime ministers at the mercy of militias more loyal to regions, ideologies and individuals rather than to a central government in Tripoli.

In recent days, however, a new would-be savior—General Khalifa Hifter—has been gathering support from secular forces and—appears—the governments of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

On Wednesday, the United States ambassador to Libya, Deborah Jones, appeared to endorse Hifter, a defector from Moammar Gadhafi's army who spent 20 years in northern Virginia.

"I am not going to come out and condemn blanketly what he did," she told an audience at the Stimson Center in Washington.

Hifter's forces, who have battled militant Islamists in eastern Libya as well as storming the parliament in Tripoli last weekend, are "going after very specific groups ... on our list of terrorists," she said.

Among the targets is Ansar Al-Sharia, a group recently put on the U.S. State Department's terrorist list that is believed responsible for the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi in 2012 that killed Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

But Hifter is also going after more moderate Islamists who dominate Libya's weak parliament, the General National Congress.

After its building was ransacked on Sunday, and attacked in another location when it tried to meet on Tuesday, the congress has now agreed to dissolve and allow elections for a new body at the end of next month.

Hifter's anti-Islamic agenda fits with the views of Egypt's military-run government which is about to anoint former army chief Abdel Fattah el-Sissi as president in barely contested elections next week.

The UAE has also embraced a harsh crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood.

Jones, asked if these two countries were behind Hifter, said "I have nothing for you on that" but added that Libyan exiles in Egypt and the UAE "have expressed support" for Hifter.

The general, she added, has "already produced one thing many Libyans wanted"—a date certain for elections for a new parliament.

When the revolution against Gadhafi began in 2011, it put together an impressive group of exiles, the National Transitional Council, which attracted support from the Arab League, NATO and eventually the UN Security Council to establish a no-fly zone protecting Libyans from Gadhafi's forces.

But after Gadhafi was defeated and assassinated by the rebels, the new government in Tripoli embraced what a recent Atlantic Council report calls a policy of "appeasement," that entailed payoffs to local militias rather than attempting to knit them together into a coherent national army.

The result has been a kaleidoscope of militant groups; some quarter million armed men are on the government payroll.

Libya's cities and regions, never

that well integrated, have gone off on their own tangents, with Islamists dominating in the east and more secular forces in the west. In the middle of the Mediterranean coast, the city of Misrata has its own administration and security forces. It has so far stayed out of Hifter's offensive, according to Karim Mezran, a North Africa expert at the Atlantic Council.

The country has been in such disarray that the head of a force created to provide security for Libya's oil exports seized oil ports and tried in March to export oil on a North Korean-flagged tanker.

U.S. Navy Seals forced the tanker back to Libya and a new UN Security Council resolution gives the U.S. and other naval powers authority to block any further attempts at stealing Libya's key source of revenue.

But oil exports, which had exceeded 1.5 million barrels a day before the revolution, now amount to barely 250,000 barrels a day.

Foreign companies that had seen post-Gadhafi Libya as a potential bonanza for investment—given the country's large hard currency reserves, oil wealth and unspoiled beaches—are steering clear until some semblance of order can be restored.

Is Hifter the one to accomplish this?

Mezran calls Hifter—who helped Gadhafi seize power in 1969 but then took part in a disastrous war in Chad in the 1980s—"an ambiguous character."

Hifter may have developed ties with the CIA a decade later when he plotted against Gadhafi from a comfortable exile in Virginia.

Unlike Algeria, which went through a revolution against



Libyan Gen. Khalifa Hifter addresses a press conference in Benghazi, Libya, on May 17, 2014.

France in the 1960s, "there is no Boumediene" in Libya, Mezran said, referring to Houari Boumediene, the leader of the Algerian revolution.

Libya's fragmentation, Mezran said, "has prevented one figure from emerging."

U.S. ambassador Jones said her impression from talking to Libyans since Hifter's latest offensive began is that many support Hifter's actions but there is "less [support] for him as an individual."

The jury is still out because it's not clear what the agenda behind this is."

Hifter's appearance on television on Wednesday in military uni-

form surrounded by other uniformed men suggested that he has in mind a larger role for himself.

He said he had asked Libyan judicial authorities to form a presidential council to rule until parliamentary elections scheduled for June 25.

Although he insisted that the new council would be "civilian" in nature, Libyans—and those outside who care about the fate of the country—have reason to be skeptical.

Given recent trends in the region, it is entirely possible that Hifter will try to follow Sisi's example.

However, as Jones pointed out

on Wednesday, Sisi has a powerful national army behind him – something Libya is unlikely to acquire for many years to come.

Barbara Slavin is a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Center and a correspondent for Al-Monitor.com, a website specializing in the Middle East. She is the author of a 2007 book, *Bitter Friends, Bitter Enemies: Iran, the US and the Twisted Path to Confrontation*, and is a regular commentator on U.S. foreign policy and Iran on NPR, PBS, C-SPAN and the Voice of America.

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Sana'a's Maqashim

Story and photos by
Ez Al-Deen Al-Zain

The Old City of Sana'a is a listed world heritage site and home to thousands of centuries-old buildings—many of them several stories high—built in distinctive traditional styles.

The architectural integrity of the Old City is impressive, and according to UNESCO there are 103 mosques and over 6,000 houses dating back to the middle ages.

A unique feature of the Old City is its Maqashim (singular Miqshama), the green open spaces of land subdivided into plots for growing crops.

vided into plots for growing crops.

Mahdi Asba, 80, a resident in the Old City, said that water for the Maqashim traditionally comes from wells or Mosque fountains.

Some residents grow vegetables and herbs, including arugula, radishes, coriander, peppermint, and parsley, to consume and sell.

“These green spaces are not owned by particular individuals. The spaces are considered part of the mosques,” Asba said.

These days, many of these spaces are not as green as they used to be. The majority of them have gone dry due to a lack of water and residents' neglect.

Yahia Al-Kads is responsible for providing water to the Old City's mosques. He said the green spaces have dried up because some underground water supplies have run dry.

“Most of the artesian aquifers depleted. This has to do with the fact that the Salla (a drainage system that doubles as a road) has been paved and this has blocked the rainwater from reaching the aquifer,” he said.

These artesian aquifers depend on the rainwater and ground water, Al-Kads said, indicating that there is still one main aquifer located close to one Miqshama, called Al-Amri, which is greener in comparison with other Maqashim in the Old City.



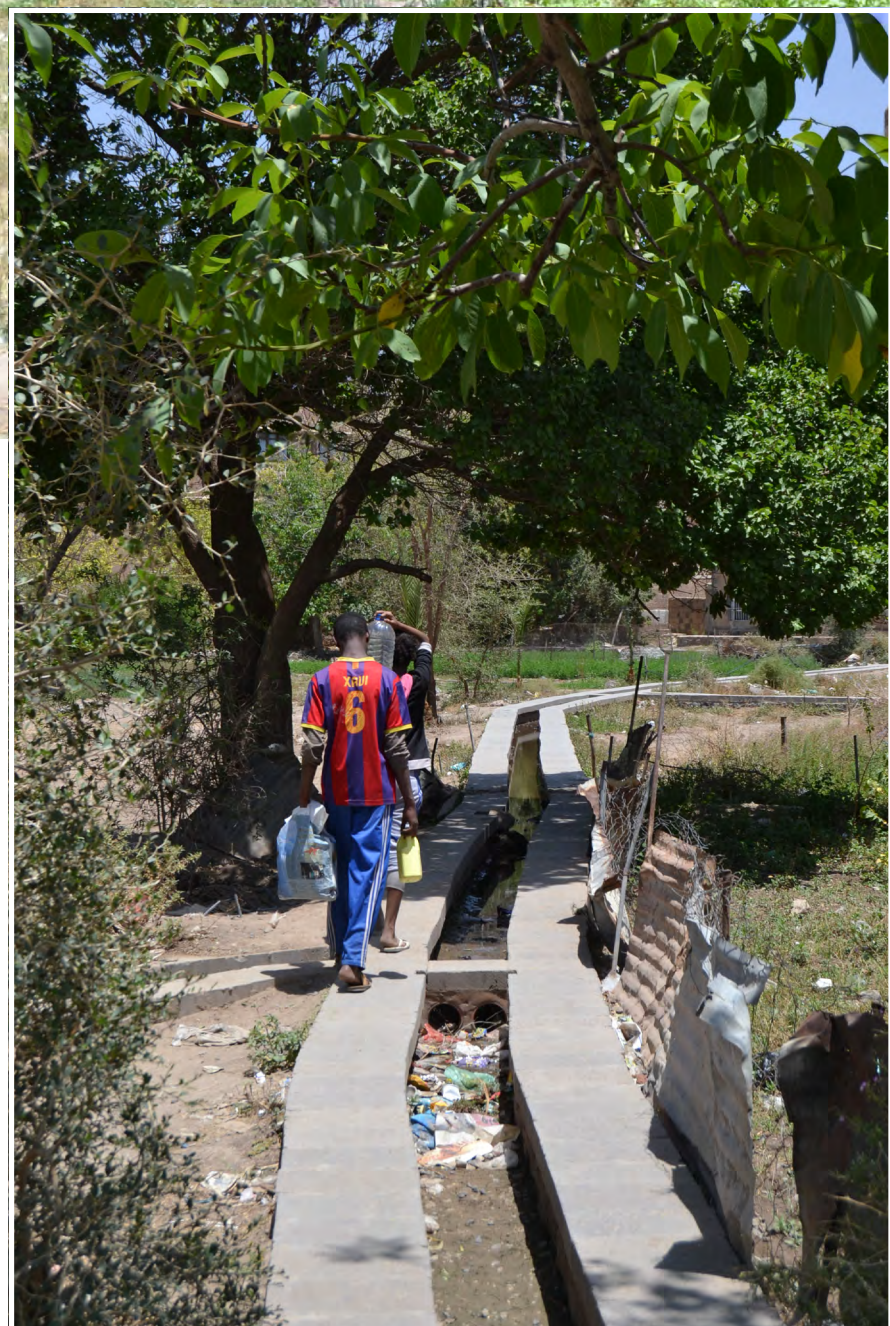
Al-Amri Miqshama still has a green spot. Formerly, it used to be called Qubt Al-Mahdi. Al-Qads said the Maqashim are named after the mosques and neighborhoods.



The workers of a well distribute water to houses and mosques including the Grand Mosque in the Old City.



Al-Qads said the bulk of the Maqashim are too dry due to water scarcity.



Surrounded by buildings, Al-Qasimi Miqshama is located in the old city. Along with his sons, Al-Qasimi takes a great deal of care tending their Miqshama. They try to keep it green even when other Maqashim are dry.

The water canal of Al-Amri Maqshama is clogged with dirt and litter.



Asba started working in his Miqshama 69 years ago. He is still working to make ends meet.



Asba collects his crops and sells them for YR5,000 (\$23) per week.



Many Maqashim have turned into dumping grounds.



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Bani Al-Harith district embraces annual student educational exhibition

Story by **Ali Abulohoom**
Photos by **Zakarya Dahman**

Abdulaziz Al-Bahri, a 15-year-old student, was asked what prompted him to build a model out of mud and cork of the hospital attacked during the Ministry of Defense assault by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in December 2013. He replied saying that he "wanted to show that sup-

porting Yemen with weapons has dire consequences. Instead support should be aimed at development projects to fight hunger."

Al-Bahri's model was part of an annual educational exhibition in Bani Al-Harith district that took place earlier this month from May 1 to May 5 at Omar Bin Abdulaziz school. Every year a school in the district is selected by a board of headmasters to host the exhibition, which is now in its tenth consecu-



like a prison for students. He said that the "exhibition grants students a free space to show their talents... instead of putting them in a class fenced by four sealed walls." It was through the exhibition that he noticed some of the most talented students at his school.

tive year.

This year's exhibition included a variety of activities including educational games, class performances, and handicraft and clothes-making.

The exhibition attracted people from different parts of Sana'a governorate. Yahia Farhan, 55, from Al-Hasaba district, brings his two kids to the exhibition every year. "I wait for this exhibition every year. It's impressive and shows how talented Yemeni students are," Farhan said.

Abduallah Al-Rauni, the Education Department manager for Bani Al-Harith district, was impressed by the students' performances at the exhibition. He explains that creative educational methods such as dancing, singing and fine art is an effective way to exchange ideas and experiences between students and teachers from different schools. The exhibition celebrates the talents of students and is a break from the routine that students get used to during the school year.

Ali Al-Shagdari, the headmaster of Omar Bin Abdulaziz school, also states that school can at times feel

aspect of the exhibition is its focus on alternative methods of learning that enriches the educational experience for students. Nora Al-Joohi, a teacher from Al-Dailami school has experimented with use of art in her classroom. Her students were tasked with making models of Mecca and Mount Arafat to show how Muslims do Omrah and Haj rituals. She feels that through creative methods of learning "ideas are more easily understood."

Several talented students stood out at this year's exhibition. Majed Al-Madori, a 12-year-old student from Sad Al-Ashwal school, created an early alarm device to warn people of rain. When water touches his device, electronic waves are emitted, triggering an alarm.

Al-Rauni was impressed by the students' work. He said, "being in charge of the educational process in Bani Al-Harith, I wish I could show all Yemeni people the talented students we have and how our country will be okay as long as we have such smart students."

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