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Commemorating 15 years since the death of the Yemen Times' founder.

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Private sector agrees to buy diesel at market price

Sory by **Bassam Al-Khameri**
 Photo by **Ezzadin Al-Zain**

SANA'A, June 1—The National Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Sunday said it agreed with the Ministries of Oil and Finance to accept a decision that diesel is to be sold to private companies at the unsubsidized price.

The agreement comes after the Yemen Petroleum Company (YPC) on May 27 announced that diesel would be sold to industrial and commercial enterprises at market rates.

The state-run September 26 news website on Sunday quoted Mohammed Abdu Saeed Anam, head of the chamber, as saying that representatives of the private sector will sign a mechanism on Monday to import diesel through the government for YR150 (\$0.69) per liter.

Anam added that diesel will be distributed to companies and factories based on a plan to be prepared by the chamber, adding that suggestions were put forward to establish a private joint-stock company to control the distribution process.

Individual consumers including farmers will still be able to purchase diesel at the subsidized price of YR100 (\$0.47) per liter, said Ali Al-Haimi, the deputy head of the Public Relations Department at the YPC.

Khalid Taha Mustafa, the spokesperson of the chamber, said the body agreed with the Ministries of Oil and Finance to either purchase diesel directly from the Aden Refinery or import it from abroad at the unsubsidized rate.

"This is a temporary mechanism until the government comes up



Selling diesel at different prices may encourage black market trade, but some argue this is a necessary temporary move.

with a resolution for the lack of cash to pay for the fuel subsidies," he added.

Mustafasaid that the government's decision to sell diesel for two different prices may open the door for manipulation. He warned that gas station owners may hide diesel to sell to the private sector for higher prices.

"Selling diesel for different prices is problematic but we have to deal with it to avoid business interruptions in factories and companies," said Mustafa.

Fuel shortages have reached

critical levels in the past few months, forcing some businesses to shut down.

The Ministry of Oil and Minerals attributed the shortages to the scarcity of cash to pay for fuel imports, the impounding of oil tankers by armed groups, and fuel smuggling.

"The average price the YPC pays for one liter of oil derivative is YR190-215 (\$0.90 to \$1). This price includes the additional cost of transportation, and we sell fuel at different prices," said Heba Al-Tairy, director of the Commercial

Affairs Unit of the YPC, in a previous interview with the Yemen Times.

Mahboob Hadi, a manager of multiple farms in Hodeida, said that the diesel scarcity has badly affected his trade.

"We were excluded from the Oil Ministry's decision but we still can't find diesel and resort to purchasing from black markets for higher prices because we don't want to lose our crops," he added.

Hadi said that farmers cannot afford diesel for higher prices because agricultural products are sold at lost cost.

Fighting in Amran continues unabated



Both sides have traded blame for the conflict and have called on the government to keep the peace.

■ **Amal Al-Yarisi**

SANA'A, June 2—Clashes between the army and Houthi rebels are ongoing in Amran governorate and mediation efforts have failed thus far, according to Mohammed Nabhan, a coordinator of relief organizations in Amran.

"The sound of artillery can be heard in many areas of Amran governorate," said Nabhan.

He said there are no accurate statistics for the number of casualties over the past two days.

Brigadier Mohammed Saleh Turaik, the security manager of Amran, told the Yemen Times that the fighting is fierce and requires the immediate intervention of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi.

Houthi militias have spread out across many parts of Amran, according to Turaik. He blames the political parties and the government for what is taking place in Amran. "The government has not played its part in containing the current conflict in Amran although it is capable of bringing it to an end," said Turaik.

Ali Al-Bukhaiti, a journalist

with links to the Houthis, said the Islah Party's tribesmen attempt to spread chaos via their attacks on the Houthis. "It is normal that the Houthis react to defend themselves," Al-Bukhaiti said.

Al-Bukhaiti said the Houthis are ready to cease fighting if the government is able to stop attacks by the Islah Party's tribesmen.

Zaid Al-Shami, the head of the Islah Party in Parliament, said ending the dispute in Amran is the business of the government. "The government should beat with an iron fist anyone who intends to breach security and safety," said Al-Shami.

About two weeks ago, fighting erupted when Houthi rebels attacked a military base in Al-Jamimah in which the 310th Brigade is stationed.

Parliament presses Hadi to change government

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

SANA'A, June 1—Members of Parliament on Sunday sent a petition to President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi urging him to change the current government given what they say is its inability to resolve pressing issues the country is facing.

"The head of the political factions in the parliament signed a petition and dispatched it to President Hadi. Parliament has acted according to the Gulf Initiative and based on the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC). Parliament wants an end to the terrible situation Yemen is undergoing and President Hadi should seriously take this move into account," Shawqi Al-Qadi, a member of Parliament told the Yemen Times.

Among the issues Parliament is pressing the consensus government to resolve are the repeated power cuts and fuel shortages which have plagued the country in recent months.

"The fuel crisis is ongoing. Attacks on power infrastructure are unstoppable. The continuation of these troubles is unjustifiable," said Al-Qadi.

Disgruntled tribesmen have sabotaged electricity lines in some governorates, including Marib



Much of the criticism directed at the government centers on repeated power cuts and cronic fuel shortages.

and Shabwa, and have set up roadblocks which have disrupted fuel supplies. Al-Qadi accused the government of failing to tackle the root causes of these troubles.

The consensus government was formed in the wake of the 2011 uprising that led to the ousting of former President Ali

Abdullah Saleh from power in February 2012. In line with the the Gulf Initiative signed in November of 2011 in Riyadh, half the government is made up of members of Saleh's party, the General People Congress (GPC), while the other half consists of opposition parties. The Gulf

Initiative gave birth to the NDC which began on March 18, 2013 and wrapped up in January, 2014.

Parliamentarians who spoke to the Yemen Times said that this was not a vote of no confidence despite some websites reporting that Parliament decided to withdraw confidence in the consensus

government.

"Withdrawing confidence from the government is risky. It will lead the country to slide into further chaos and instability. Unfortunately, some political factions do not realize the gravity of the matter, namely withdrawing confidence," said Zaid Al-Shami, the head of the Islah Party in Parliament.

Last week, Parliament reportedly threatened to withdraw confidence if the fuel crisis and power cuts continued. However, Al-Shami said that petitioning the president to reshuffle the cabinet is a safer way of dealing with the matter. He warned that a vote of no confidence could result in a political vacuum that would worsen the current crisis.

"We want an organized change of the consensus government," said Al-Shami.

Adnan Al-Rajehi, a Sana'a-based political analyst, downplayed the parliamentary move.

"The petition that Parliament sent to President Hadi is complaint-like. The President cannot solely rely on this petition to change the consensus government," Al-Rajehi told the Yemen Times.

He said that changing the government would "[entail] further debate among the heads of the political factions."

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Central Market in Taiz gutted by fire

■ Emad Al-Saqqaf

TAIZ, June 2—A fire broke out Friday at the Central Market in Taiz, lasting more than six hours and leaving one person dead, 20 wounded and dozens of stalls gutted.

Mohammed Al-Haj, secretary general of the local council in Taiz, said that the fire broke out because of a short circuit due to improper connections by stall owners.

"The governor of Taiz gave orders to investigate owners who rented out shops without providing adequate safety means," added Al-Haj.

He said that initial estimates of the financial losses were put at around YR200 million (\$930,000).

He added that the presence of benzene—which stall owners use for generators—fed the fire.

"The governor gave orders to the Public Works Office and the Civil Defense to visit other markets in the city to ensure safety measures are in place and to avoid a recurrence of such incidents," Al-Haj added.

Muwafaq Qasim, an eyewitness from the area, criticized the performance of public bodies.

"The fire trucks arrived at the scene two hours late. They didn't have water in their tanks, so residents resorted to getting water from trucks that sell water to people's homes," he added.



Losses are estimated to be around \$930,000

Al-Qaeda executes four people accused of aiding US drone program

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, June 2—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) on Sunday published a video detailing the execution of four Yemenis alleged to have been involved in drone attacks against Al-Qaeda affiliates.

The four were said to have installed electronic chips in the cars of Al-Qaeda members in Shabwa over the last two years.

The 28-minute video, titled "Harvest of Spies", was published on Al-Malahim website.

The film interviews a person identified as Abi Islam Al-Muhajer, representative of AQAP's Security Department, and the four executed people.

"The number of drone strikes has decreased in the six past months since Al-Qaeda gunmen stormed security and intelligence institutions accused of cooperating with the [U.S.] drone program targeting jihadists," claimed Al-Mujaher.

"Discovering the spies who install the electronic chips has decreased the opportunities for targeting Al-Qaeda affiliates," he said.

Al-Muhajer said that they decided to execute the four individuals after collecting information and data about the cars targeted by the drones.

The film gave the names of the executed individuals as Ahmed Abdulwahed Al-Mansour, a resident of Al-Hawta district in Shabwa, Essa Abdu Ahmed Mohammed Al-Samhi, a street vendor in Azan city, Ahmed Hussien Ahmed Marjan, a major associated with Ataq's Security Department, and Mohammed Ahmed Hussien Marjan, an employee at the Migration and

Passports Department in Shabwa.

The four were first referred to Al-Qaeda's "courts," according to Al-Muhajer. The video also showed the accused confessing to the accusations leveled against them, though the level of duress under which the confessions were extracted is unclear.

In March, Al-Qaeda executed one of its members in Hadramout after he was accused of installing electronic chips in the cars of Al-Qaeda affiliates and providing information to the security services.

Education Ministry prepares alternative examination centers in conflict-stricken areas

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, June 2—The Education Ministry said Sunday that it would provide alternative examination centers in conflict-stricken areas of Shabwa and Amran governorates for primary and secondary school students who are due to start their exams on Jan. 10.

Shukri Al-Hamami, the general manager of examinations at the Education Ministry, said, "the ministry already received a list of alternative centers in Shabwa, and

efforts are underway to arrange centers in Amran."

In Shabwa, Maifa district is witnessing clashes between the army and armed groups alleged to have links to Al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, Amran is witnessing fighting between armed Houthis groups and military forces. The fighting has displaced thousands of families in the two governorates.

"If the fighting stops in the coming days, the students can sit their exams in their schools," said Al-Hamami.

He added that "the emergency committee at the Education Ministry has closely followed up on the issue and will take appropriate measures. The emergency committee will provide the students with shelter and food in an alternative examination center."

The Education Ministry says it has taken into account the difficulties faced by students when designing exam papers.

Ayman Abdughani, the principal of Al-Nour School in Taiz, said the conflict has been highly

detrimental to the psychological well-being of students. According to Abdughani, because the conflict has deprived them of a quality education, it makes sense for the exams to include easier questions this year than in previous years.

Zabin Atia, a journalist in Shabwa, told the Yemen Times that thousands of internally displaced people in Shabwa are living in Ataq and other parts of the governorate. He added that schools in Maifa district remain closed and calm has not yet been restored.

CBY management holds meeting to overcome labor impasse

■ Madiha Al-Junaid

SANA'A, June 2—A Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) management team held a meeting in Al-Jawf governorate with the deputy governor on Monday to discuss how to proceed with work after the Al-Jawf branch's closure, which has lasted for over a month.

On April 20, Al-Jawf's CBY employees suspended work in protest against the abduction of four of their colleagues and a Finance Ministry member who were abducted by armed tribesmen on April 17.

Salih Mone'm, deputy manager of Al-Jawf CBY, stated that these latest talks—aimed at discussing employee's grievances and finding

ways to get staff back to work—come after the abducted staff were released on Wednesday, May 28.

Mon'em said that "the union representatives at the CBY didn't attend the meeting since they planned to meet the bank's governor whose role it is to solve issues at the Al-Jawf CBY."

Mon'em added, "the governor of the bank is away on travel and they are awaiting his return."

The CYB employee's union was active in the strike and called for an escalation in protest action while the employees were still in captivity.

Rasheed Al-Barakani, the deputy president of the union, said that the Al-Jawf CBY is still closed and employees are refusing to return

to work as issues concerning the security of staff remain unresolved.

According to Al-Barakani, the union demands guarantees from the CBY that it is taking action to prevent kidnappings to occur in the future.

Al-Barakani said that since the strike government employees in Al-Jawf have had to visit Sana'a to receive their salaries from the CBY's branches there.

"I can say that almost all employees of Al-Jawf receive their salaries from Sana'a's CBY while the Al-Jawf CBY is closed," said Al-Barakani.

However, both Mon'em and Al-Aswad say that employees from some offices in Al-Jawf did not receive their salaries.

The abducted individuals were released after their families personally met a representative of the group that carried out the abduction, Abdussalam Al-Ajji. They were told the abductors had specific demands for the Al-Jawf governor.

Mon'em said that the abductors could not refuse the families' tribal mediation, offers.

According to Al-Barakani, Al-Ajji released the abducted individuals on condition that they travel to Sana'a and not work in Al-Jawf.

Al-Aswad said that although the CBY in Al-Jawf is open, work is not carried out. This is because the abducted individuals, who have not returned to work, held essential roles at the bank.

Commander's convoy comes under fire, two soldiers injured

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, June 2—A vehicle that Brigadier General Abdullah Dhaba'an, commander of the 33rd Armored Brigade stationed in Al-Dhale governorate, came under fire by armed men on Monday, according to the Ministry of Defense website. Dhaba'an survived unscathed but two other soldiers traveling with him were injured.

Dhaba'an was on duty inspecting military positions in the governorate, the ministry's website read.

According to Waleed Al-Khateeb, spokesperson for the Local Coordination Council in Al-Dhale [a local militia formed in January to provide security for the city], it was not an assassination attempt.

Al-Khateeb said that on Monday Dhaba'an inspected a number of military positions and troops fired celebratory rounds into the air

upon his arrival and departure. He said that firing continued for over half an hour, causing panic among locals who thought there was an attack. This prompted them to fire on Dhaba'an's military convoy.

In Al-Dhale, along with other southern governorates, calls for secession from the north have been increasing since 2007.

Bloody clashes between forces of the 33rd Armored Brigade and local armed men alleged to be members of Hiraq [the Southern Movement] broke out at the end of December 2013 after the brigade shelled a funeral tent killing 15 civilians.

A presidential committee signed a peace agreement early February between the two sides. However, the fragile peace was shattered last Tuesday when clashes erupted again. Two soldiers were killed and eight civilians were injured during last week's clashes, according to local tribal leader Mohamed Qaed.



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Social Marketing II and Yemen Reproductive Health IV

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Social Marketing II and Yemen Reproductive Health IV

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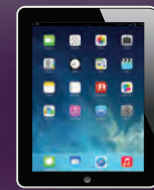
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Nastati tours Yemen to spread tolerance

■ Ali Abulohoom

Half way through the play a 12-year-old boy was singled out from the audience to join the actors on stage. He was asked to hold a fake pistol and point it towards one of the actors.

The director of the play wanted the scene to be inset as an additional plot.

The boy aimed the gun at the actor as a voice from backstage told him to "shoot," which he dutifully did. He pulled the trigger and the man pretended to be shot, tottering and falling over.

The director appeared and halted the performance while the audience stared in astonishment, wondering whether or not these scenes were scripted. The director asked the boy why he killed the man, and the boy stuttered for a while before replying, "I do not know but the voice prompted me to kill him and I responded at once."

The director turned around towards the audience and shouted "The terrorists murder people without reasonable justification because they are incited to do so and the victims have no sins to be killed for!"

Once the director finished his strong words, he received a standing ovation from the audience as they realized the dramatic intent.

This was the scene at a recent performance in Sana'a by Nastati, or "We Can," a youth group which seeks to promote peace through performances and lectures. They also help raise funds for those in need.

The team was established by a group of young Yemenis in January 2013. According to Nastati's founder Shadi Nasher, 27, the group was es-



Nastati, or "We Can," is a youth group that uses performances and lectures to promote peaceful values and raise funds for those in need.

tablished to heal the rifts left by the violence of the 2011 uprising.

Yemen has witnessed widespread violence in recent years, including conflict between the military and AQAP militants in the south and an ongoing Houthi rebellion in the north.

Nasher says that the violence often has the effect of turning people against the state. "The Nastati team aims to instill tolerance in people, not only in war-torn districts but anywhere the team is able to reach," he said.

Nasr Mohammed, the team's activities coordinator, said that the activities adopted by the team are modified based on the group they are targeting.

"Displaced people are certainly in urgent need of commodities, health services, and shelter, but people who have been affected by conflicts and still stationed at their homes such as those in Arhab, a district north of Sana'a, and Hamdan district, west of Sana'a, also need psychological support through lectures and speeches delivered by experts the team temporarily hires," Mohammed said.

From May to November 2011, parts of Sana'a, including the neighborhoods Al-Hasaba and Sofan, witnessed confrontations between armed tribes loyal to Sadeq Al-Ahmer, a prominent figure of the Hashid clan in Yemen, and Republican Guards led by the son of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. As a

result, many locals of Al-Hasaba and Sofan fled to more stable areas of Sana'a, returning once the situation calmed.

The first event the team conducted, according to Nasher, was in Al-Hasaba last year. It took place in an open yard in the neighborhood.

"As I praised them [the residents] and their determination despite the repeated calamities they endured during confrontations in 2011, they started to smile. Although there were no chairs for them, they sat on the ground, focusing on what I said," Nasher explained.

The speech was followed by a show about violence performed by young men volunteering for the team. It culminated with a competition among the attendees which involved questions on various topics.

"Once we realized that the show and the speech left a positive impression on people, we decided to conduct more shows in different places, especially those which were rocked by conflicts, so our next destination was Abyan," he said.

He added that "our youth-run initiative doesn't belong to any political or tribal parties. It is dedicated to spreading peace and principles of coexistence among people through very accomplished staff from different social and educational backgrounds."



The group travels to many war-stricken areas, including Abyan governorate, where they believe they can help the most.

A month later, the team headed for war-stricken Abyan governorate.

According to Nasher, they chose Modia, a district in Abyan known as a breeding ground for extremism. The team organized a cultural event in one of the district's schools.

"For Abyan locals, especially in Modia district, it was strange that a team consisting of outsiders came to the place to conduct a show because nothing like that happened before," Nasher said.

The team was able to perform for displaced people in parts of Sa'ada and Amran, where many displaced people, including children, live in temporary tents. The team helped provide them with blankets, food, and medicine.

"We in the team work on two parallel things: one is psychological support and the other is helping people in need get access to food and necessities," said Mohammed.

As for how the team is funded, Nasher said they are mostly self-funded from the members themselves.

Nastati now claims offshoots in

Tunisia, Brazil and Ethiopia. The branches were created when Nasher visited Ethiopia last year and met with youth from the three countries.

"We agreed to establish branches in their countries to conduct similar activities relevant to our team's values, spreading peace and tolerance, through shows, speeches, and other activities. We keep in touch, passing around our ideas and experiences," said Nasher.

Yahia Hussein, 45, a resident of Al-Sunina, west of Sana'a, said Nastati team was in his area a few months ago distributing blankets to poor people in the neighborhood.

"I hope that we see such initiatives common in our society. If so we will not see poor people," Hussein said.

Nasher confirmed that their tasks will be intensified in the upcoming period because of the current war being waged between Al-Qaeda militants and the Yemeni Army in Abyan and Shabwa.

"We have activities that will target affected people in Abyan and Shabwa and other governorates where our help can be enlisted."



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Amid fuel crisis, clean energy increasingly attractive for farmers

■ Ali Saeed

Mufrih Saleh, a farmer in Darb Wada'a area in Sa'ada governorate, is pleased he no longer hears the sound of his diesel generator pumping water. Nowadays, the underground water he uses for the grapes, pomegranates, and other vegetables he grows is quietly extracted from a 210-meter well by means of a new solar pump system.

Diesel has been in very short supply in Yemen for the past three years, which has meant increased hardships for Yemen's already hard-pressed farmers. Most of the country is arid and water scarcity is an ever more pressing concern in Yemen.

Renewable energy now saves Saleh the significant amounts he used to have to fork out for diesel. It also saves him the many hours that he used to spend queuing at petrol stations.

"I'm really happy with this technology and it saves money and

time," he said in a conversation with the Yemen Times.

His diesel generator used to consume 120 liters of diesel per day, costing him YR12,000 [\$56].

Around 12 percent of Yemen's total consumption of diesel, estimated at 270,000 tons per month, goes to water-pumping generators, according to Iskander Al-Aghbari, manager of the Agricultural Irrigation Department of the Agriculture Ministry. And about 405,000 acres of Yemen's cultivable land, totaling 1.5 million acres, is irrigated by water pumped from beneath the ground by diesel generators.

Using solar pump systems for irrigation in Yemen's agriculture sector is still new, but Saleh receives regular visitors to his farm who come to see how the system works in practice.

"Many people come to my farm every day to see the solar pump system. I encourage farmers to stop using the diesel generators and adopt solar panels," said Saleh.

Despite massive potential, renewable energy use is negligible in Ye-



This solar water pump in Al-Safra district of Sa'ada produces 4 liters of water per second.

men. In a country where the bulk of the population is rural and many communities are not connected to the grid, localized solar pump systems are a highly appealing alternative.

However, the start-up costs can be prohibitive for some.

Saleh says that the start-up cost for his solar system amounted to two years worth of diesel bills.

Ahmed Al-Qatabri, secretary general of the local council of Sa'ada

governorate, said that the government should do more to support farmers in adopting solar technology. In his view, money from fuel subsidies would be better spent on financial support to assist farmers in purchasing modern irrigation systems and solar pumps.

He recommended that the Ministry of Trade and Industry be involved in the process of importing the solar panels as a check against counterfeit products.

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Visitors come every day to see in person how the solar pump system pumps water for agricultural irrigation.

"This is an economical and environmental alternative. The water is pumped up with no sound and no smoke," said Qatabri.

The initial cost for the system might be difficult for some farmers, but the Ministry of Agriculture could coordinate with a solar panel factory to provide the systems to the farmers at affordable prices, said Abdullah Al-Wadee, director of the Ministry of Agriculture in Sa'ada.

Imad Al-Saqqaf, manager of Sehab Tec, a solar pump systems company based in Sana'a, said that "the cost

of the system depends on the depth of the water well and the desired quantity of the pumped water."

The maximum cost of a solar pumping system for deeper wells can reach up to \$70,000, while the cost for shallower wells runs at about \$10,000, according to Al-Saqqaf.

Al-Wadee said that the Ministry of Agriculture should supervise the installation of solar water pumps at farms and ensure that each farmer installs efficient irrigation systems to minimize the amount of water lost.

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Commemorating 15 years since the death of Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf

In this issue, the Yemen Times marks the anniversary of the death of its founder, Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf, who died in a car accident on June 2, 1999. Al-Saqqaf's exciting and accomplished life journey is told here through his own words and the memories of his family.

Al-Saqqaf was born Oct. 24, 1951. He is from Al-Hadarim village in Taiz governorate and received his secondary school certificate from Al-Sha'ab school in Taiz city. He was among the top students in the republic, receiving a scholarship to Egypt which he turned down after his first daughter Haifa was born from his wife Aziza, whom he married in 1971.

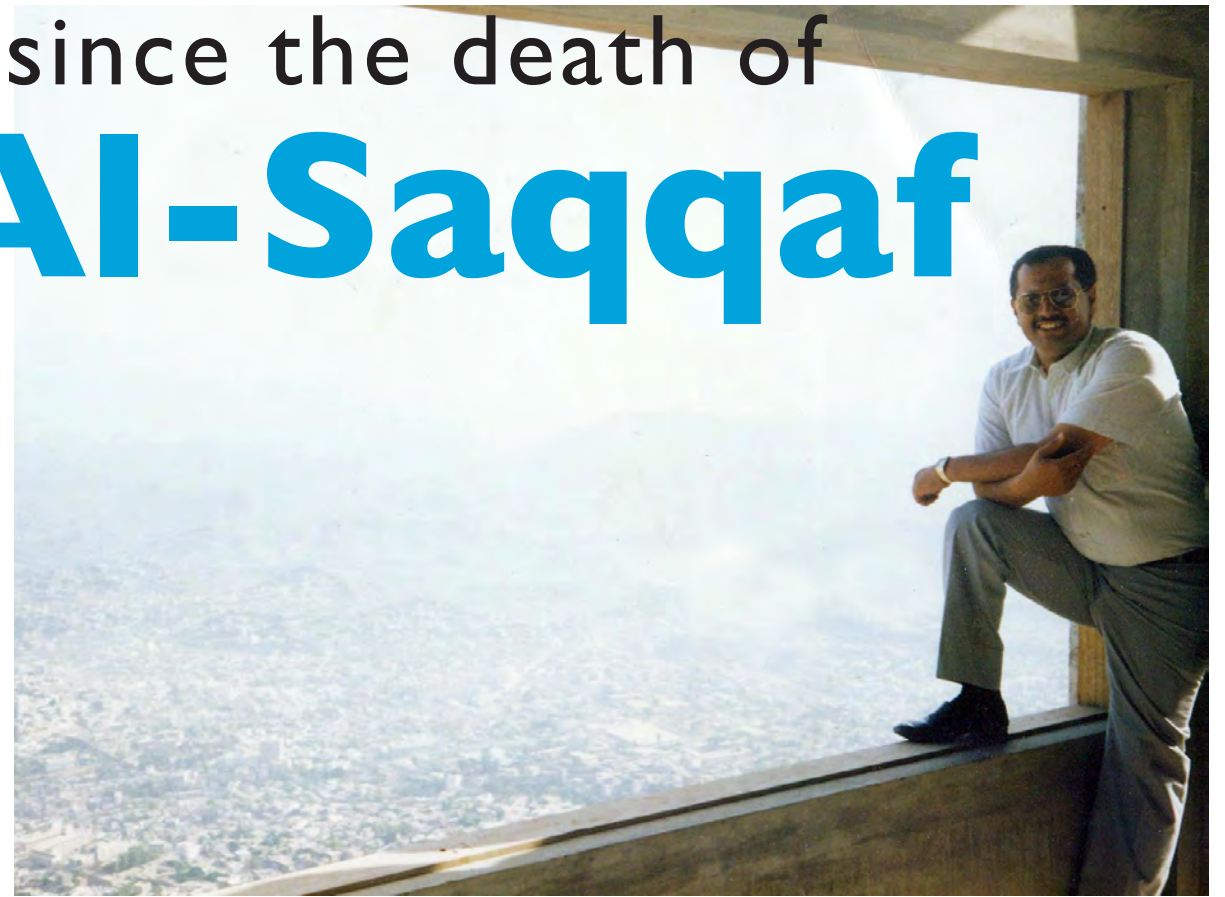
While studying English at Sana'a University's Faculty of Arts he worked at the United Bank Limited as a translator and at the Bank of Pakistan. He would also take free-

lance assignments, writing commercial correspondence letters in English for businessmen. He went on to work with the German-sponsored Taiz-Sana'a road project for one year during his university education. In his last years in college he decided to work in media and got a job with the Ministry of Information. He introduced Sana'a TV's first English broadcasts and created one of the first documentary films on Yemen in English.

After graduating from college with honors, he got a scholarship to study in the United States, where he received a master's degree in English literature from Ohio University

in 1977. Following this he received another master's degree from Harvard University in general administration. He got his third master's degree in the same year from Tufts University in international economics, becoming a member of the Middle Eastern Studies Association and American Economists Association. He continued his studies at Tufts university, working towards a PhD in international economics, which he received in 1980. He then returned to Yemen to work at Sana'a University's Commerce and Trade College teaching economics and accounting. He also introduced the subjects of Islamic economics and finance in Islam, which were taught for the first time in Yemen. His books on these topics are still used today.

During his stint at Sana'a University he also taught economics and governance accounting at the Na-



Dr. Al-Saqqaf was a visionary and a role model for many.



His two sons (left) at the funeral which was attended by thousands



Al-Saqqaf was a staunch advocate of human rights

tional Institute for Administrative Sciences as well as the Police Academy College.

During his career he published numerous books, research papers, and articles. He also organized and took part in local and international conferences. As a man of the world, he used his sabbaticals to teach in the USA, Jordan and France, and was fluent in French. He also played active roles in the Arab Thought Forum in Amman in 1984, the Yemeni Human Rights Association in 1986, the Arab Economists Association in Baghdad, the Yemeni Institute for Democratic Development in 1994, the Committee to Protect Journalists in New York, Amnesty International in Yemen, the Child Rights Association in Yemen, and the National Committee for Fighting Against Torture. He also was a founding member of the Yemeni Business Association and worked as an international consultant across the globe.

The Yemen Times, which he established in 1991 as the first English language newspaper in Yemen, could be considered one of his most significant achievements. He used the paper as a platform to continue promoting human rights, democracy, good governance and fair economics.

In 1998 he established the Yemen 21 Century Forum think tank.

During his lifetime Al-Saqqaf advocated for the release of numerous prisoners of conscience, and helped expose many cases of corruption, landing him in prison several times. He was also abducted and tortured in the Political Security Prison on more than one occasion.

In 1995 he received the Press Club Award for his coverage on the civil war in Yemen.

OUR VIEWPOINT

LIVING BY THE LAW!

Many Yemeni officials and citizens stress the need to preserve our democracy and multi-party political system. It is unfortunate many of these individuals do not see the tie between a democratic system and living by the law. Respect for the law and the constitution is the basic element of a democratic system. It is not enough to clamour about the need for democracy while simultaneously breaking the law. Even those in power clamour and complain, while they are the first to break the law. It is the duty of all of us - those in power, those in opposition political parties, the media, the educators, the laymen, everyone has to promote the need to observe the law. Breaking the law is the first step in breaking the system. When the soldiers and officers who attempted the coup in the USSR failed, deep down in my heart, I had a glowing feeling of satisfaction. Not because I am aptrial to this party or that in the USSR, but because I oppose, by nature, those soldiers and officers who usurp power and pretend to be doing it for the general good.

We in Yemen need to nurture within us the automatic inclination to respect the law. As citizens, we should respect the law, as businessmen, we should respect the law, as government bureaucrats, we should respect the law, and as leaders, we should respect the law. Living by the law is the other side of the coin called democracy. Let us help stop those citizens who break the law, let us help stop those bureaucrats who break the law, and let us be ready to stop our leaders when they break the law. This is the way to safeguard our freedom and to preserve our democracy.

The Publisher

This editorial was published on August 28th 1991.

OUR VIEWPOINT

Waiting for GODOT

History tells us that the destiny of nations is shaped by a few individuals. It is often a small group of people who have the courage and vision to lead the population out of stagnation and frustration. Yemeni leadership today needs to do much more to prove that it is qualified to play that role.

The repeated promises of the good times to come have not come true. In fact, as more promises are showered on the public, they become more and more difficult to realise. The economic dimension to the promises is probably the most alarming and pressing one. It looks like at intervals of every five years, new promises are unleashed, which unfortunately, do not come true.

Some ten years ago, promises were made that once oil was pumped out of the Mareb/Al-Jawf fields, life would be more comfortable for all Yemenis and nothing of that happened. The output of oil from the Mareb/Al-Jawf fields is falling. In less than ten years, it will be depleted, without showing much of a change in Yemen.

Then came unity five years ago, in 1990. The people of Yemen were told that with unity, things will improve. The idea was that economies of scale will bring dividends. Instead, there was more misery and suffering.

Today, promises are made on the basis of revenue from the gas project. The people of Yemen are told that once the gas project gets under way, things will improve. We all hope so, but the lessons of our contemporary history do not encourage anybody to be optimistic.

The problems of Yemen are not those of resources. The main problem is that we do not have a system. Putting it simply, whatever we have in the name of system just does not work. Otherwise, how can one explain the irresponsible behavior of so many of our officials and officers? How can we explain the lack of even the most basic accountability? How can we explain cities going for weeks without water?

The general masses are probably waiting for Godot. I am afraid that Godot, like in the play by Samuel Beckett, will never come. But the possibility of a few individuals taking the initiative and coming through for Yemen is there, and it is the only way to open up a path for better future.

Most of the world is getting ready to move into the 21st century. Yet, Yemen has to put together a working traffic system or a proper examination method in the schools. Languishing on like this will only make the problems grow and get more complicated.

Our government is responsible for all that. But it is not the only one to blame, we all have our share of responsibility to shoulder it, instead of wait and see then complain.

The Publisher

This editorial was published on November 20th 1995.

OUR VIEWPOINT

Preparing for the Future!

The Republic of Yemen is a country that is enduring, at the moment, lots of hardships. It is groping to find political harmony, within itself, with its neighbors, and with the rest of the world. It is trying to achieve a socio-cultural transformation which is in keeping with its Arabo-Islamic heritage. And yet, it wants to take in as much of a dose from the advanced world as it can. It is working on an economic reform which will correct internal price distortions and imbalances. It is doing all that to prepare for the new century.

No wonder, then, there are so many unsettled issues. It is as if the nation is biting more than it can chew. While these changes represent hardships, they also represent strength. The reality is that Yemen is addressing the issues and facing them head-on. It is accepting the price of change. It is an investment in future harmony and progress.

By investing in the future, the Republic of Yemen has staked a claim in the 21st century. That it has done, by moving along with the world in many ways. Let me go back to the changes to explain my point.

- 1. Political Change:** Yemen has embarked on a democratization process. Its system today, professes to accept multi-party politics, press freedom, respect for human rights, tolerance of the minorities of special groups, a bigger role for Non-Governmental Organizations, etc. Of course, none of these are fully implemented, but at least, the nation is working on it. In terms of political structure, Yemen is moving to a system acceptable to the world of the 21st century.
- 2. Socio/Cultural Transformation:** Yemen is an Arab Islamic country, and the people of Yemen are mighty proud of that. Yet, that has not given rise to an attitude that belittles the socio-cultural contribution of others. That is why no extremist religious fundamentalism has been able to develop roots in the country. Thus, in terms of socio-culture, Yemenis feel at ease with others and display no xenophobia or paranoia.
- 3. Economic Reforms:** Yemen has been implementing a major reform program over the last three years. The thrust of the package is to liberate trade and investments, remove price distortions, integrate with the world economy, and promote those activities in which the nation has comparative advantage. As such, in terms of economic policy, the country is moving along on a market-system.

Those are some of the reasons why the international standing of Yemen will inevitably grow in stature. They are also the reasons for hope in the future.

The Publisher

This editorial was published on February 3rd, 1997.

OUR VIEWPOINT

What Price Integrity?

As a society caught in the endless transition from a traditional way-of life to one trying to catch up with this modern civilization, we are stuck with a set of values which are often the subject of controversy and confusion, to say the least. One such value is integrity.

It was a big thing in the old days, this integrity business. But today, it has been often compromised, and we see people "selling" their integrity. Think of it. Would you sell yours?

Nonsense. Stout answer. "My integrity (honor) eez not for sale!" you would hear many clamor. Of course not. Perish the thought.

But think about it again. When did you last give your integrity a brush, a lick of paint, take it out of wherever you keep it and dust it? Actually, the more pertinent question is, "Do you even know where it is? Even if you found it, would you 'die' for it?"

In short, does your integrity have a price? They say every one does, it is just a question of finding it. I have often wondered at what point I would cast my integrity aside and settle for the price tag.

It is said that these days integrity is a bit of a pain as it comes in the way of "deals" and quick gain. Who needs it sticking its face into things and stirring up the old conscience just when you have it under control?

For most people it has become obsolete and has been replaced by a curious mixture of expediency, exploitativeness and contempt for the values of the past.

The reason why I am writing on this 'heavy' subject is that friends in a qat chew last week were talking about some journalists who were lucky enough to get nice gifts for the correct employment of their "pen". Everyone agreed it was a sad thing, or even a quixotic thing to happen. Many spoke of honor and professional integrity. Surprisingly, they all concluded, "What luck bastards. They have it made!" What a striking conclusion to make - generally light-hearted, but with more than a kernel of truth in the jest.

I realized then and there that these articulate, intelligent and well-educated journalists, were very capable of "selling" their honor and integrity if the price were right. Many of them, have done it many times in the past. One question started troubling me. Would I do it? Would the kind of "gift" be the deciding factor in my choice rather than the pressure of my values. Damn it, would I do the honorable thing and refuse the gifts. That is the rub. You never really know how much swash would buckle if the stakes were high enough. Aaaaah, but I do know. I had resisted under such situations in the past, even when the temptations and tribulations were high.

There's one more thing I am now sure of.

The Yemeni people's priorities - especially among the educated urbanites - have changed. People are more tolerant of deception, subterfuge and compromise, rooting more for the winner than the way he/she won. Not only does winning count most, but the three great crimes have become losing, getting caught, and then allowing oneself to be held accountable for it all. These are the values professed by the leaders of society.

As long as you can get away with it - and people do get away with murder (literally) - the whole morality bag is just a lot of hype. And integrity and honor are integral to that bag, a stuffy outdated concept not really worth giving it so much of our time and thought.

We see people conniving to keep their jobs, they steal openly to make a fast buck, they pass the blame, shrug off responsibility and even plot to put someone else in the hot spot. So often, we explain away all this skulduggery as playing the game according to the rules of the day. After all, everyone else is doing it!

And that is the worst crime of all.

The Publisher

This editorial was published on September 21st, 1998.

The late Professor Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf in the eyes of his children

Walid



I learned from my dad the virtues of modesty and dedication to people around you. He taught me not to expect anything in return and that to gain the respect of others and be remembered, you need to give and give without regret. He showed me that petty material things are nothing compared to the love that you get by genuinely helping others and making sure that everyone knows they are not expected to give anything back. Despite being among

the most prominent personalities in Yemen, his down-to-earth character, nobility and philanthropic personality made him a beloved person by all Yemenis regardless of social or economic status.

Some of my father's acquaintances disagreed with his philosophy in helping others and instead, they amassed tremendous wealth and power by steadily receiving funds and privileges. My

father did not die super rich, but what he left us was love and respect by many people who admired him for what he did for others. I would bet that he was on the winning side, for material things expire while memories and good deeds last forever.

I believe that if my father was here he'd just say we can still make things right and would directly start working on reforms without delay.

If I got the chance to talk to him again I would thank him for his company and the good example he set for us. I was lucky to have been one of his children and the one who worked alongside him the most at the Yemen Times. His example helped make me a better man and showed me that the way to success and gaining respect is to give without asking for anything in return. Those lessons enriched my life. Every day, I wake up with ambition to see how I could help others, whether my students at the university, colleagues and friends, the youth in Yemen, or anyone I feel I could be of help to. When I am asked "why do you do this for nothing in return?" I tell them I have learned from my father that helping without expecting a reward gives you a feeling of fulfillment and happiness like no other.

I would also tell him to rest assured that his example of modesty and dedication to others has helped shape me and I will assure him that I will strive to convey his example to my children so his influence will last for generations to come.

Haifa



I learned from my father that if you do something you have to do it well. While others would tell you to do your best, he would say you can do anything you put your mind to—where there is a will there is a way.

He would always give the utmost dedication and energy to what he did, setting the example for everyone, especially for us, his children. Sometimes it was difficult to catch up with him but that was just the point—you would have to push yourself to the limit and you would find out that nothing is impossible.

If my father were here today I think he would have had a lot to say. Unfortunately, things didn't work out as they should have, and certainly not according to his thoughts. He had great expectations for the future of the country and, despite the difficult situation, he was optimistic and would always try to find a solution. But one thing I am sure he would say is "we can get there, let's start working on it!"

If I could tell him anything it would be to express my deep love for him.

Raydan



I learned from my father to value time, the one resource that is irreplaceable and controls our prosperity and future. He has shown me by example that investing your time in something positive and productive now, today, will reap rewards tomorrow. He told me one Friday morning while I was driving him to his office, "son, we are accountable for what we spend time on. Do we spend our time sleeping and enjoying ourselves or do we utilize our God-given skills and intelligence for the betterment of our communities?"

If my father saw what's happening today, he would be appalled at the idea that our leaders are the same people who proved their incompetence fifteen years ago or more. I think he would be horrified to see that those who created Yemen's problems are still plotting for more of the same. I feel that he would work to marshal radical change for the country, and allow fresh minds to take charge. If he

could, he would push to retirement everyone involved in the country's governance, replacing them with young qualified persons.

The thing I regret the most is that he did not get to meet my beloved wife Rasha—I think he would've loved her.

Nadia



I learned from my father to keep thinking, to use my mind and question everything. He has taught me that by reading, analyzing and questioning, we can do miracles. My father always told me that "hard work never hurts" and that we all must do our part and not to worry because the pieces will fall into place.

If my father were here living with us today I bet he would say, "I told you this would happen, nobody listened to me when I said it in the 90s." Then he would raise his sleeves and say, "so here is how we are going to get out of this mess" and start strategizing.

If he could hear me now I would tell my father that it's true that "hard work never hurts" but hard work is hard and I wish I could have got to know him more and discovered how he managed to do everything he did and be everything that he was. I miss him and hope that he is proud of me.

Feeling the loss when it happened 15 years ago

OUR VIEWPOINT

These are the LAST WORDS written by the deceased. The article is about water, which is yet another topic that reflects his aim of helping the people of Yemen. Until the last moment of his life, he wrote for the people and only for the people. May God have mercy on his soul...

WATER ... Please Some WATER!

At best, rainfall in Yemen is erratic. The population lives in a precarious state given the acute shortage in the water supply, even though actual per capita consumption - 120 liters, averages about 12% of the average per capita consumption at the world level.

This year, the problem is further complicated by lack of rainfall. "The rains have not come!" The impact of this fact is enormous. Consider the following:

1. Agricultural Output
The impact on agricultural output is direct and immediate. This year's harvest will be a record low, even when compared to some bad years in the past.
2. Income of the Poor:
The farmers of this country are among the poor of our society. Therefore, the fall in agricultural output will affect a low-income group negatively.
3. Balance of Trade:
As a result of the fall in agricultural output, the expected level of import of food and other agricultural products will rise. Our agricultural exports will also fall.
4. Price Level:
Given tight supplies, prices will rise. They will initially rise for food and agricultural products, but will later extend to most sectors, thus leading to a visible increase in the cost of living. But the impact of scarce rains will also impact the replenishment of underground water reservoirs, thus affected the drinking water network. Most Yemeni cities are already unable to find water for their residents. Taiz is a famous case. Sanaa is also in trouble. Sa'adah has similar problems. Most urban centers, growing madly at unprecedented rates - because of a rural-to-urban migration and very high population growth rates, face major challenges in many aspects of life, including water supply.

Water is a precious resource in Yemen. Many studies and seminars have been carried out to explain the gravity of our situation and the need for a future-oriented vision regarding water management.

A law draft was proposed to parliament two years ago, but has yet to be enacted.

Irresponsible drilling/pumping is making the situation even worse.

The Publisher

We have to attend to this matter now.

THE MAN I USED TO CALL: "DADDY"

I asked him once: "Daddy, you know, if I wasn't your daughter, what would I have wanted to be?" He said: "Yes, my daughter." He was always too good. He was also the threat mom used to use to make us behave. Yet, he was so tender, so warm. He was our idol. We used him as an image of perfection. Whatever he said or did, not only had to be right; but also wise. There were times when I could not understand him and although he sounded vague to me then, I was convinced that whatever he did had to be something smart. It was just me who wasn't getting it then and maybe I never will!

He was a man with no patience. It's true he had time for almost everybody, still it was something like time slots. You had to say whatever you wanted to in so many words and so much time, otherwise he switches off, then you know he's not listening to you anymore. And if you were lucky enough; he won't kick you out, he just ignores your existence in front of him!

I count myself lucky. People are pleased to just meet him, I lived with him for almost 20 years. In all those years, I looked up to him, he used to repeat whenever we complained about the pressure of work: "hard work never hurts, hard work never hurts!" He raised us to love what we are doing, he always encouraged us to give our best and to do it now! He used to say: "If you can do something today, why leave it for tomorrow?"

I loved him, I still do. He was my reference in life. Something to depend on, a constant. I was so sure that whenever I needed him; he'd be there.

Oh, I believe in God, death and all that stuff. But somehow I thought my dad to be immortal. I'm not regretting his leaving us. I just wish he stayed a while, a little longer. Maybe till I graduate. I wanted him to be there when I become an engineer. I've always looked forward to that day, just to make him happy, to make him proud of me. Now he's gone... There are so many things I want to tell him; how much I love him, how much I miss him. I had so many bright plans for the future. I drew so many pictures of the days to come, and he was in all of them. There were times he was misunderstood, times I thought him to be cruel, or stubborn. Sometimes I just couldn't get to him, or get my message across. Yet, behind his awfully angry mask, I knew he had a tender heart.

He hated to be weak; just a headache could make him upset, because he wasn't at his best, he couldn't give his best. He was like a tough principal who won't get the losers. He was never a loser and he wanted us to be at the top. He was someone who, even if he was wrong, had enough reasons to be right. He had the ability to sway minds. Yet, he always meant well and did good. Maybe once he was wrong; when he replied to my question I stated in the beginning of those lines. I remember clearly how he raised his eyes in surprise and pride when I replied back: "No, if I wasn't your daughter I would have wanted to be you..."

Daddy, I will be missing you.

Nadia

I will not ask why you left us this early. I will not ask why you left us at all. It is the will of God, and no one can change destiny. I just want to tell you that I am your son whom you know very well, and whom you can trust. I learned everything from you. Wasn't being a strong man and a person who can withstand difficult moments something that you taught me? Weren't you the person who always kept on saying "if I one day go and do not come back, you have to carry on life and be responsible for your brother, sisters, and mother. You have to run the establishment that I created and loved so much, the Yemen Times?"

You had many dreams and ambitions for the country, for the newspaper, and for our family. You had trusted in me and knew that I would be able to run the paper and take care of the family. Now that you are gone, I say "You were right." I have self-confidence and trust in myself. I will now be the person responsible for my family, for the newspaper, and for everything you left.

You were a brave, strong, hardworking, and successful person. You were an ideal father. You were a thinker and an intellectual. Most important of all, you were a teacher. Not only were you a beloved teacher in Sana'a University, but you were a teacher to me as well. You taught me many things in life that I could never have learned easily. You always inspired me to love my work, because you believed that whoever loves his work would devote himself and therefore eventually succeed.

Dad, I promise you, I will succeed.

I know that it will be hard to take your position in the family. I will now have to be father and brother at the same time. You left me with a huge responsibility that I will have to carry. But I know I can do it. You prepared me for it, and I will not disappoint you.

I will carry on your mission of seeking the truth and reporting it whatever it is. The Yemen Times will stay, as it is, strong and mighty. You knew how to raise us as responsible men who devote themselves to their country, their family, and of course, their work. I know that there will be many obstacles, but I have your strength and power along side with me. I will use this strength to overcome any difficulties that may arise. You didn't merely leave me the paper. You also left me the love of others, from every layer of society. Yemenis and foreigners, poor and rich, and virtually everyone. They all loved you. I believe that these people will continue to be faithful to you by supporting your establishment, Yemen Times. Finally, I want to say: "Your body might have left us, but your spirit is alive and Yemen Times will survive." May God have mercy on your soul.

Walid

To my dear and beloved husband, Abdulaziz, May you be resting in peace sheltered in God's mercy in paradise in sha'a Allah. You left me, my love, you went out without coming back although you promised to. Fate was stronger than you and me.

We lived together for 29 years for good and bad, for better and worse I can't help the memories keep coming to me. You were such a gentle husband who made my world a better place. You who stood by who was in need, you fed the hungry, and sheltered those who had no where to go. In spite of that you were very modest, and never gave pride a space in your heart. You who did all you could for people's sake.

And now you left this world to your destination in heaven by God's will.

My dear, Your leaving us is very tragic and I can't wait to follow you and stay with you in heaven. We will never forget you.

Your loving wife, Aziza.

As I look to the sky with tears in my eye, I remember my dad, he was always beside me, he gave me all the love I need, he didn't hurt any one. All that he did was to say the truth, and help every one who needed his help. He didn't ever let me down. He worked hard day and night to prevent us from going down. He gave me every thing that I need. I miss my dad. He was strong and wise. It isn't easy to be such man, but we have got to keep on. We have a good reason. If it is not for yourself at least for your country, which needs such people. No one else can be what you have been to me or to your country. I'm very proud to be your son, and I want to thank you, because you taught us how to go on and hold on in any kind of weather. Thank you dad, I'll be the best that I can. I know that you will always stay with me in my heart.

Raydan

It is impossible to put into words the relationship between father and daughter, especially when the father was Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf (may Allah be merciful to him).

Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf was a loving father, always available to listen to whatever you wanted to say.

He never used to oblige you to do something but helped you to understand and choose the correct thing to be done.

He did not expect you to be perfect, but wanted you to do the best that you were able to do.

He always appreciated people who were willing to try, and used to say that success is the result of hard work.

He used to encourage good will, and loved to see you optimistic and faithful to improve yourself and the world around you. He never felt ashamed to be what he was, a Muslim Yemeni, and used to give us a lot of reasons to be proud to be sons of our beloved country. He was a friend ready to discuss any criticism and to apologize if he was wrong.

The most important thing: He taught us to be what we are. We are proud of you, DADDY, we will keep you in mind as a figure to look up to, we will go on as you taught us, so that you may be proud of us. We will always pray for you; may you rest in peace; may Allah cover you with his mercy and grace, and grant you the highest ranks of heaven.

Haifa

Graffiti flourishes on

■ Ezzadin Al-Zain

Graffiti is an art form as ancient as Sana'a's iconic Old City, but in recent years the art form has spread in Yemen. Artists use the city's walls not only to display their talents but to voice their political grievances. Small wonder then that across the Arab world graffiti has taken off with renewed vitality since the political upheaval that began in 2011.

Radfan Al-Muhamadi, a 28-year-old graffiti artist who started painting 13 years ago, explains that "graffiti is a promotional art. It provokes the audience. It becomes a means of connection between the audience and the painter. This art is important in Yemen."

Adnan Jamal, another graffiti artist, says that graffiti in Yemen has not reached "international standards." Whether or not this is true, there is little doubt that the art form is growing in popularity and holds promise as a means of popular expression.



This image depicts the disproportionate impact of poverty on women.



This piece—part of a series commemorating victims of the Dec. 5 attack on the Defense Ministry in Sana'a—is of a couple who was shot by gunmen.



The attack claimed 56 lives and resulted in over 250 injuries. Portraits of victims of violence—including those who were killed by the state—can be found on walls throughout Sana'a.



This piece by artist DiYazn's is an abstract image that aims to capture the collective confusion caused by the manifold problems in Yemeni society.



Hakeem Al-Bukari expresses the suffering of children through this artwork depicting a child on its mother's lap.



Al-Muhamadi's artistic repertoire is not limited to graffiti. He also paints on canvas and has a preference for still life. He holds a degree from the Fine Arts Institute in Sana'a.

the streets of Sana'a



DiYazn's image is of a street child neglected by his parents.

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Sisi and the Palestinians

Ali Jarbawi

nytimes.com

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The Palestinian cause has always had deep ties to Egypt, which has historically been the largest and most powerful Arab state. As such, it has played the most significant and influential role in defining the Arab world's position on Palestine, both regionally and internationally.

When relations between Egypt and Palestinian leaders have been good, like during the era of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt has played a central role and provided support. When relations have deteriorated, as they did under Anwar Al-Sadat and again over the past two years, Egypt's influence has diminished.

When Egypt is internally stable, it is externally active, which benefits the Palestinian cause. However, when it becomes preoccupied with its internal affairs and turns inward, then Egypt's regional and international roles recede, as do its desire and ability to support the Palestin-

ian cause.

Since the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution in 2011, Egypt has been consumed by its internal affairs, which has left it incapable of having any real influence on regional or international affairs.

The situation has been exacerbated by the increasing influence of non-Arab states like Iran and Turkey, which has led to a decline in the diplomatic power and effectiveness of Arab states. These days, most Arab governments are trying to deal with their own people, and grappling with revolutions and civil wars. The Palestinian cause has fallen by the wayside, and Palestinians have been left to face Israel alone, something they cannot do.

Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's election as the new Egyptian president has given Palestinians a sliver of hope that their cause will return to the forefront of Arab affairs—or that, at least, there will be a slight adjustment in the balance of power with Israel. This has nothing to do with any value judgments about the Egyptian revolution. It is a purely pragmatic stance, based on the fact

that Mr. Sisi's election will influence Palestinian affairs in three significant ways.

First, this election may mark the return of stability to Egypt, a stability that is important to Palestinians and to future support of the Palestinian cause. Mr. Sisi is not only supported by the army but also by a large swath of the Egyptian population that desires a return to stability, security and normalcy. This won't happen quickly, but its consequences will accumulate quickly.

Any new president of Egypt, in order to prevent protesters from taking to the streets, will need to bring the country out of its current decrepitude, modernize its infrastructure, update its education and stimulate its economy.

Second, achieving stability in Egypt is necessary for Egypt to compete with the new regional powers that have usurped its place. If successful, the Egyptian presidential election will have a positive effect on calming the rough waters of Arab politics. Egypt is a strong, central state, and if it begins to stabilize, this will have a positive influence

on its Arab neighbors in places like Libya, Syria and Lebanon, and even Iraq. Piecing together the fragments of the current Arab political scene is a crucial step in ending non-Arab actors' interference in regional affairs. In the near future, Egypt, with the support of the Gulf states, could play a central role in achieving this.

Finally, Egypt will not be able to rise to its former regional grandeur, the sort it enjoyed under Nasser, until it liberates itself from its absolute surrender to the United States, which has, since Sadat, transformed it into nothing more than a satellite in America's political orbit—so much so that by the end of the Mubarak era, it appeared to be merely following America's orders.

It appears that Mr. Sisi will have different relations with the United States than his predecessors did. While continuing to maintain Egypt's strong ties to America, there are signs that he plans to steer Egypt toward a more independent foreign policy; his recent trip to Russia is one indication.

If all of this happens and Egypt manages to avoid a new cycle of vio-

lence, then the situation in Palestine could also start to improve.

Palestinians will need to repair the relationship that was frayed during the period in which Hamas was being accused of interfering in internal Egyptian affairs (this led to growing Egyptian mistrust and negative sentiment towards Palestinians in general). This popular mistrust led the Egyptian authorities to take measures against the Gaza Strip, including destroying the hundreds of tunnels that made up Hamas's central lifeline in Gaza. Egypt's actions, in addition to other factors like the drying up of political and financial support to Hamas have produced results, the most significant of which may be the internal Palestinian reconciliation that brought an end to the bitter seven-year separation. In short, Hamas learned its lesson.

The end of the Palestinian political schism also marks a return to normal with Egypt. The Palestinian Presidential guard is taking over control of the border between Gaza and Egypt, which will lead to more Palestinian control over security and enable Egypt to better deal with

security in the Sinai Peninsula.

As a result, the Palestinian cause could once regain the strong regional and international ally that it so desperately needs. No one expects Mr. Sisi to renege on the peace treaty with Israel, since that has become important to Egypt's own national security. However, it is expected that there will be a cold peace with Israel, and that Egypt will take a strong and proactive role in confronting Israeli settlement expansion in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

High Palestinian expectations are linked to Egypt's internal stability. Some will materialize; others are sheer hope. But if Mr. Sisi's Egypt refuses to shy away from confronting Israel, as Egypt did during the Mubarak era when it was firmly under the American thumb, that will be a great boon for the Palestinian cause.

Ali Jarbawi is a political scientist and a former minister of the Palestinian Authority. This article was translated by Ghenwa Hayek from Arabic.

The empty promise of state-sponsored feminism in the Arabian Peninsula

Saher Naumaan

jadaliyya.com

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States in the Arabian Peninsula have maintained, and in some cases strengthened, their authoritarian structures in the shadow of the recent Arab uprisings. In spite of this, the U.S. government and many of its allies continue to herald a liberalizing shift in places such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait largely on the basis of potential reforms meant to further women's rights. Indeed, some of these states have taken actions to heighten their domestic and international legitimacy through increased political representation for women. However, such efforts are not necessarily indicative of structural or much-needed changes. Rather, they constitute part and parcel of a mechanism of rule that aims to preserve the existing power of regimes in the Arabian Peninsula and the authoritarian structures that undermine the political, economic, and social emancipation of all of their citizens.

Ruling regimes such as the one in Saudi Arabia have been able to placate different interest groups, including women, with patronage networks and public services made possible by oil revenues, especially in the wake of the Arab revolutions. Rising internal dissent directed toward politically restrictive government practices has compelled regimes in the peninsula to make more concessions to women in an attempt to maintain and further entrench the structure and power of the state. Some even promoted and financed the cultivation of civil society organizations or groups that are not affiliated with the regime on the condition that they advance their interests by organizing exclusively under the jurisdiction of the state.

Doing so has tempered what little criticism rulers in the Arabian Peninsula receive while ensuring these groups' loyalties to the regimes that endorse them.

It is in the context of social and political transformations and crises in the peninsula that women, marginalized as they are by their gender, class, ethnicity, or religious affiliation, became trapped in alliances with the authoritarian state. As they struggled to attain more political, social, and legal rights, they accepted what the state offered them in terms of limited gains, increased visibility, and an otherwise unavailable avenue for pursuing their self-empowerment. However, women's participation in these state-driven enterprises only facilitated the preservation of the status quo. In varying regional and historical contexts (the former Soviet Union and North African countries for example), as shown by Rema Hammami and Eileen Kuttub in their 1999 work "The Palestinian Women's Movement: Strategies Towards Freedom and Democracy," women's movements that became interlinked with policies of authoritarian regimes lost their agency and failed to develop. In fact, state-sponsored feminism has hindered the quest for gender equity instead of resolving the "woman question," that is, the fundamental issues of women's suffrage and their changing political and social roles in the public sphere. Instead, state-sponsored feminism has worked to contain and appropriate women's mobilization.

False Starts and Wrong Turns

In January 2013, for the first time in the country's history, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia appointed thirty women to the Shura Council. The latter was a nominal effort to promote the appearance of women's representation in the political sys-

tem, largely in response to the widespread controversy over restrictions on both driving and travel for women in the kingdom. Despite the much-anticipated move, the 150-person national advisory council has four times as many male as female members. No easing of restrictions on women has yet occurred and it remains to be seen what influence the female Shura members will be able to exercise. Little else has changed regarding the institutionalized ideologies of masculinity and patriarchal power, which continue to marginalize Saudi women by confining them to the private sphere. While the monarch appears to advocate for women's empowerment, his regime has moved to co-opt the women's movement as a means to serve regime interests. It is becoming increasingly apparent that King Abdullah's appointments are mere formalities, meant superficially to convey progress while maintaining power through the status quo.

In the spring of 2009, four women were elected to the Kuwaiti parliament for the first time after having won the right to vote and run for office four years earlier. While several bills granting full political rights to women have been proposed since the 1970s, they have consistently encountered opposition from the majority of the National Assembly, including both conservative and liberal members. Kuwaiti lawmakers even rejected a decree that Emir Jaber al-Sabah issued in 1999 granting women the right to vote and hold public office. They argued that the ruler issued the bill while the parliament was out of session. It was only in May 2005 that Kuwait's parliament approved a women's suffrage bill, just weeks after denying women the right to participate in city council elections. At the time, then Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah al-Jaber al-Sabah was attempting to distance

and indeed contrast himself from the conservative element in the political system in order to demonstrate his so-called progressive tendencies, especially for the benefit of U.S. leadership. Intended to convey a more democratic and liberal environment, the Kuwaiti regime was ensuring its own survival with this political strategy.

Yemen's National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the institutionalized post-uprising reconciliation process, concluded earlier this year with a proposal for a thirty percent quota for women in parliament. Endorsed by President Abd Rabu Mansour Hadi, the initiative would ostensibly ensure that voices of women in the country are heard. However, until implemented and demonstrated to be something more than pretense, this proposal should be read as merely a symbolic gesture aimed at showcasing the Yemeni government's so-called agenda for democratic change. The quota, after all, is only a recommendation for the new and as yet unwritten constitution, not a guaranteed provision. Further, the policy may or may not be implemented even if it garners enough support to be enacted; it could fail on the ground or simply be an avenue for politicians to promote the party line via women. Nonetheless, the NDC's actions have earned Yemen the support of the international community, eliciting praise from the U.S. government for an NDC "inclusive" of women. Despite such praise, Yemeni military and security initiatives, and not programs for political, economic, and social change, remain the major recipients of U.S. funding. Calling for social reforms, especially to further women's rights, remains a way for both the Yemeni and U.S. governments to ostensibly acknowledge social issues but focus efforts on maintaining their status quo priorities.

In Bahrain, the selection of a female minister of state for information appears to be another demonstration of the state embracing the feminist cause for its own benefit. The Khalifa regime, keen to emphasize its "inclusive" politics to the international community, selected Samira Rajab for this position in the spring of 2012. It was a strategic distraction from the human rights abuses that the regime has inflicted on activists participating in anti-government uprisings since February 2011. The appointment of Rajab—herself a controversial figure due to her support for Saddam Hussein and the promotion of sectarian tensions—evoked a convenient narrative that the monarchy propagated to illustrate its so-called progressive and liberal agenda in the midst of a brutal crackdown on Bahraini protesters and the increasing marginalization of the majority Shi'i population.

Assembling an Independent Movement

Across the Arabian Peninsula, the elections and discretionary appointment of women do not reveal substantive gains made toward women's empowerment and gender equality. Rather, they are token moves by the state to appropriate women into their political projects, discussed in depth by Madawi Al-Rasheed in her latest work. In the aforementioned case of Bahrain, for example, the state capitalizes on the dichotomous representation of women in the public sphere: placing emphasis on the trope of a glorified "liberated" Arab woman who is an indication of progressive politics rather than on images of women systematically subjected to the marginalizing decisions of autocratic regimes. Isolated political appointments are short-term solutions designed to appease and co-opt domestic activist groups,

convey a reformist image to international observers, and reinforce the divisions between conservative and liberal factions in order to neutralize any threat to the regime's survival. There is a lack of comprehensive policies that address systemic gender inequalities, leaving the state's foundational structures of institutionalized gender discrimination intact.

Women must be able to operate from a separate power base grounded in economic and social independence, one that develops parallel to the advancement of political representation within state structures. Instead of either being complicit with or participating in regimes' symbolic gestures and empty promises of future change, women's movements and their supporters should push for actions in policy and law—in areas of education, health, employment, political liberties, etc.—that will outlast an elevation of any one individual's position. Women disenfranchised by the state should thus strive to disassociate themselves from it by receiving independent funding, building prominence through higher visibility in media and the international community, harnessing the support of their communities and civil society, leveraging the state's need for legitimacy from women through increased demands, and establishing solidarity through connections across feminist movements. This will give women aiming to destabilize the state's patriarchal hegemony the opportunity to dictate their own agendas, create and fulfill their own visions, and help to weaken the control of the state over societal development. If the state continues to manipulate and co-opt the struggle for gender equity while appearing to address the concerns of the international human rights community, women will undeniably remain in the margins.

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Spare the rod—the biology of poverty and violence

IRIN
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Scientific advances in human biology may soon have a profound bearing on the policies that governments and organizations adopt towards young mothers, caregivers and babies in poor and stressed communities.

There is an emerging body of scientific evidence to show that the environment in which a very young baby develops is pivotal in shaping its brain in ways that can significantly influence its chances in later life.

"Toxic stress," depicting a relentless cycle of stress inflicted on a child whose parents may be battling to survive, unable to nurture it properly; or where there may be violence, neglect and/or poor nutrition, can result in negative patterning on the baby's brain that can inhibit intellectual and emotional growth and hamper his or her chances of success. This negative imprint, just like a positive imprint, gets handed down from one generation to the next.

University of Cape Town-affiliated neurobiologist, Barak Morgan, says, "we have known for a long time that early childhood is very important, but now science is telling us exactly how important it is." Whereas educational policies tend to stress the importance of the early school years, the new science suggests that the birth to three-year time frame could be the most cost-effective and critical period for intervention in a child's life.

In a paper entitled, "Biological embedding of early childhood adversity: Toxic stress and the vicious cycle of poverty in South Africa," Morgan explains how signals from the environment are known to add permanent "epigenetic marks" onto DNA during sensitive periods of early brain development—both before and after birth. Then a period of resistance settles in, where it becomes very difficult to change these pathways. It is not known exactly when all of these brief, sensitive windows occur, but the first two to three years in a child's life are critical for him or her to acquire emotional self-regulation skills that make the difference between failure and success later in life.

Spare the rod

Groundbreaking research by Canadian Michael Meany several years ago on lab rats showed that the amount of licking and grooming the baby rats received in their first days of life determined their responses to stress.

Those that received minimal licking and grooming were primed to survive their environment with "flight or fight" responses by having more epigenetic marks on the brain's major stress gene. Pups that were licked and groomed adequately, regardless of whether by their biological mother or a surrogate mother, had less of these marks, which made them resilient to stress and primed to thrive. Later studies on humans, also in Canada, showed that the brains of suicide victims had more epigenetic marks, similar to those of the poorly nurtured rat pups.

"The shape and impact of these pathways are sculpted in a once-off way during early development when environmental influences, as mediated by parental care, are most deeply embedded in offspring biology," Morgan writes. Crucially, the epigenetic marks hamper the development of more sophisticated, flexible "top down" brain functioning that is associated with strong self-regulation and the ability to thrive, as distinguished from more reflex, survival-oriented, "bottom up" brain functioning.

Morgan writes that children with poor self-regulation are shown to mature into adults with "signifi-

cantly higher rates of substance dependence, criminality, financial problems and single parenthood, and significantly lower income, financial planning skills, socioeconomic status and physical health."

He adds, "only very recently has interdisciplinary neuroscience begun to reveal and characterize the stress of chronic poverty as a major environmental toxin that becomes embedded in the biological fabric of bodies and minds in ways that cripple healthy development."

Nature and nurture

Things have moved very fast since these fairly recent research findings and an entire body of literature is now emerging around "how the environment gets embedded in biology," he says. The new findings render the "nature" versus "nurture" debate obsolete. Morgan says it is now clear that genes and the environment form an inseparable whole. "Genes can do nothing alone, something in the environment must tell DNA when and what to do. Nature versus Nurture turns out to be Nature and Nurture," he writes.

Furthermore, this embedding of the environment in the genes "gains intergenerational momentum," he says. The lab rat research shows that rat pups that were not licked and groomed properly, matured into adults that did not nurture their own pups properly either. This helps to explain how the cycle of poverty and deprivation can be reinforced from one generation to the next.

While there is always room for new science, those in the field are not contesting the latest findings. Some argue that there is enough evidence at hand to nudge governments into implementing new policies that aim to reduce the impact of violence and poverty on babies and toddlers. Leading the pack is Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child director, Jack Shonkoff, an expert in child health and development.

After a recent UNICEF panel discussion by scientists on the subject, Shonkoff said in a televised interview, "the quality of the foundation we build in the first couple of years doesn't completely determine everything that is going to come later, but it nevertheless sets you up for a lifetime of good prospects for healthy development, or it puts you in a deep hole that says the risks are much greater that you will have problems across the board."

In the interview Shonkoff says that the new science is leading to a much deeper understanding of why poor nutrition is so problematic in early childhood. "It's not just because kids are not growing well but it's because their brain development is affected by it." He adds that interventions that merely offer stimulation for children in poor communities are inadequate. "It's a matter of figuring out how to protect their developing brain from the stress—toxic stress—associated with chronic exposure to violence, really deep poverty and the day-to-day stress of just barely getting by."

Lawrence Aber, a psychologist from New York University's Steinhart School of Culture, Education and Human Development, is an expert on the impact of poverty and violence on early child development. "Before, policymakers didn't think very young children would be affected so badly because they didn't talk or didn't seem to be aware," he says. "Now however, science has shown just the opposite. In fact they are highly sensitive to their environment—more so than at any other time in their life cycle." Aber is involved in research on how HIV/AIDs and poverty impacts children in South Africa.

Policy implications

The new research has profound and practical implications for policy, he believes. "Our knowledge about



A Child at an out-patients therapeutic feeding centre for severely malnourished children in Katsina, Nigeria, June 2012

what is happening inside a child's brain must direct our attention outside—to the environment—and to reducing poverty and violence." Later exposure in life to these negatives can also impact a child's development but early exposure seems to be the most scarring. "The earlier the twig is bent the more likely it is to grow in the direction you bend it. The earliest years are the most vulnerable years," he adds.

But what is the prognosis for the countless babies who have already been exposed to toxic stress? The science seems to suggest that early damage is irreversible. This is not so, say the scientists, however. "It is not just a story of doom and gloom, or a case of once bent always broken," says Aber. "One must remember that human beings—including very young and vulnerable ones—have enormous capacity for resilience, or what developmental scientists call plasticity. Children can bounce back. We can help them recover from the toxic stress they experience in infancy and toddlerhood."

Morgan also sites research on Romanian babies in institutions that shows the importance of timing to counteract the effects of stress. The cognitive and social outcomes for severely emotionally deprived babies adopted before 20 months of age were as good as those of their Canadian and British peers who had not been deprived. However, for those adopted after 20 months of age, the prognosis was less rosy. There is also the "dandelions" and "orchids" hypothesis, which suggests that some children (dandelions) are less genetically predisposed to being influenced—positively or negatively—by their environment than others who are more sensitive (orchids).

While there is growing awareness of the need for investment in children long before they enter school, Aber believes that not everyone is ready to act. "The logic is irrefutable but we haven't made the policy investments yet," he says, adding however that governments in developing countries "are starting to realize that if they don't affect change in the first years of a child's life there will be a glass ceiling on what can be achieved in the education system and ultimately, on national productivity."

For children living in poverty in South Africa, where domestic violence rates are high, toxic stress "is a newly recognized pandemic that must be addressed," Morgan argues.

Invest in children

But what kind of interventions can be made? Aber cites the benefits of the "conditional cash transfer" system on poverty alleviation efforts in Latin America and increasingly, Africa and South Asia.

"These cash payments to very poor families are conditional on the family's investment in the child's development," he says. These

schemes encourage mothers to attend antenatal classes, get their babies immunized and their children to attend school, for example. They can be adopted to help minimize the effects of poverty and violence too.

Visits from health workers to new mothers have been shown to improve parental practices in Khayelitsha, South Africa, for example. Programs that help parents

understand the dangers of exposing their young children to toxic stress, and help them find ways to shield them from it, can help too.

But what is called for, says Aber, is far more than small-scale programmatic intervention. "The entire system needs to address this on a broad population level."

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Syria: What does Obama really want?

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atlanticcouncil.org
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President Barack Obama's West Point commencement address seemed to signal, albeit ambiguously, a new direction in U.S. policy toward Syria: one in which "the president will seek the support of Congress in arming, training, and equipping Syrian rebels." But not so fast. In a subsequent background briefing an unnamed senior administration official said that what the president really has in mind is a "discussion with Congress about the potential for there to be a role for the U.S. military" in providing assistance to the armed opposition. The president, said the senior official, wants "to consider whether an approach that involves the U.S. military could add" to the ability of the United States to "increase support to the

opposition, but that "wherever we land in terms of those discussions," it should fit into a broader strategy involving partners and allies.

Members of the press found it hard to suppress incredulity. "Has the administration made up its mind what it wants to propose yet?" "So what do you say to them [critics] [who say] that this whole notion of coordinating and dialogue is just delaying?" "Is there a sense of urgency here?"

Clearly, there is no sense of urgency. According to the official, discussion and dialogue with Congress "will be an ongoing focus for us as we head into the summer." There is, according to the official, a "separate question of simply what additional authorities might be necessary for the U.S. military to participate in our efforts. And that's the question we'll be pursuing in the coming weeks."

Can it possibly be true that, well over two years into the thorough

"Governing effectively...starts with knowing what one wants and building the support it takes to implement a carefully thought-through plan; it centers on the doing of actual things, not the speaking of words."

militarization of the Syrian crisis, the Obama administration lacks the requisite knowledge about pertinent legal authorities that would govern a Department of Defense role in arming, training, and equipping selected elements of the Syrian opposition? Is it possible that it has no firm view, at this late date, of whether such a role could add horsepower to U.S. assistance efforts?

In his post-speech interview with National Public Radio, the president sought to clarify matters a bit:

"The issue has always been in Syria how do we most effectively support a moderate opposition, recognizing that there are going to be limits to how rapidly we can ramp up the capacity of that opposition. And what we don't want to do is set folks up for failure. What we don't want to do is make promises that we cannot keep."

Yet given what has "always been" the issue, how is it that the President of the United States does not have, by May 2014, a firm view he can set forth in plain language? Why, more than three years into the Syrian conflict, is the potential role of the Department of Defense in supporting the Syrian opposition being characterized as a question someone just dropped in the president's inbox?

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"Yet given what has 'always been' the issue, how is it that the President of the United States does not have, by May 2014, a firm view he can set forth in plain language?"

One hypothesis making the rounds in Washington was that President Obama was indeed prepared to say, very explicitly, that he would ask Congress for authority to employ the Defense Department in an arm-train-equip program, but that media leaks in advance of the West Point speech infuriated the president and his aides and inspired them to change the text. One hopes this was not the case. Governing effectively does include trying to master the message and maintain internal discipline—but it is so much more than that. It starts with knowing what one wants and building the support it takes to implement a carefully thought-through plan; it

centers on the doing of actual things, not the speaking of words.

Arguments can be marshaled pro and con on the matter of whether Syrian nationalists should receive significantly enhanced U.S. lethal assistance, and who is best equipped to do it. What is not acceptable—given the horrendous situation in Syria—is that the executive branch of the United States Government should approach this issue now as a summertime leisure activity.

Referring to the "moderate opposition," President Obama told NPR, "but creating a capacity for them to hold ground, to be able to rebuff vicious attacks, for them to be able to also organize themselves in ways that are cohesive—all that takes, unfortunately, more time than I think many people would like."

Leave aside the fact that an unconscionable amount of time has slipped away with basic questions on U.S. interests, objectives, and strategic options still unanswered by the administration. Set to the side the disparity between thinking about helping someone "hold ground" while adversaries aim and act to help a criminally brutal regime obtain military victory. Ignore the repeated building up and tearing down of straw men: "I did not think then and I still do not believe that American military actions can resolve what is increasingly a sectarian civil war." Set all of that aside. Is it really too much to ask of the administration that it place before the American people and Congress a specific, clearly articulated, action-oriented, operationally literate plan to build—in conjunction with allies and friends—a military force capable of defending Syrians and ultimately prevailing? If this is what President Obama really wants for Syria, then it is not too much—even at this late date—to ask.

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Sana'a Capital Secretariat honors Turkish ambassador



Mayor of Sana'a Abdulqadir Helal held a festive event on Saturday May 31, 2014 at Al-Bustan Hotel in the honor of Fazli Corman, Turkish ambassador to Yemen. Mayor Helal presented ambassador Corman with the Capital Secretariat Shield and a portrait of the ambassador against the background of the Old City of Sana'a.

The honoring came in response to Corman's efforts to strengthen relations between Turkey and Yemen and encourage Turkish investors and development agencies to support Yemen's economy and development.

Thanking the mayor for this gesture, the Turkish ambassador expressed his appreciation for the awarding ceremony and to the warmth he received from Yemenis in general. He said that this gesture has made him more determined to do his utmost for the sake of Yemen and to further improve relations between the two countries.

The award ceremony was followed by lunch, which was attended by a number of high level government officials and social figures.



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