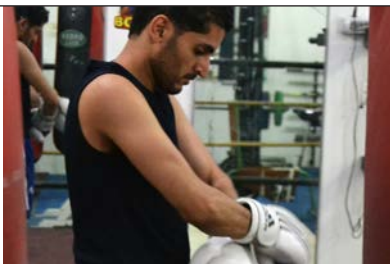


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Presidential Guards continue siege of Saleh Mosque

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANA'A, June 16—Presidential Guards are continuing to encircling the Saleh Mosque in Al-Sabaeen area, near the presidential palace. The siege began Saturday afternoon when the guards, backed by armored vehicles, surrounded the mosque, trapping armed supporters of former President Ali Abdulla Saleh inside.

The siege has caused severe traffic congestion as troops have shut down a major thoroughfare adjacent to the mosque.

One of the mosque guards, who did not want to be named, told the Yemen Times, "the Presidential Guards encircled the mosque ordering us to leave the place but we are waiting for Saleh to give us the orders to leave the mosque."

He added that the Presidential Guards informed those inside that the mosque is to be brought under the authority of the Endowment Ministry. "We do not want to clash with the forces, given this is a presidential decree," he said.

According to Mahmoud Al-Mukhtar, a manager at the Endowment Ministry, "the Saleh Mosque is not under the supervision of the Endowment Ministry. It is under the control of the former president. Changing the mosque to be under the auspices of the ministry would be great as we have been demanding it for years."

Regional media has reported rumors of a potential coup by pro-Saleh factions and a weapons cache stored at the mosque. Anba, a news agency with links to Saleh, quoted a source from the Saleh Mosque ad-

ministration denying the rumors. The mosque was used by Saleh during the 2011 uprising, when he appeared in front of the building to address a crowd of his supporters.

Saleh Mosque is one of the largest mosques in Yemen. It was officially opened in 2008 and was named after the former president.

The siege of the mosque came days after riots broke out in Sana'a as dozens of angry citizens took to the streets in protest against the fuel shortage and repetitive power cuts. The protesters burned tires in streets and closed several main streets. On Wednesday, in a move that drew strong condemnation from rights groups, troops closed the Yemen Today TV channel, which is said to have strong links with Saleh.

"This official violation is a major setback to media freedom in Yemen and reflects a dangerous trend by the authorities to suppress freedom of the press, at a time when the country desperately needs more freedom," said the Freedom Foundation in a statement released on Thursday.

Samia Al-Hujari, an employee at the Yemen Today Channel, said "the Presidential Guard stormed the channel's building and pointed their guns at the employees. They have taken the transmission devices and all equipment and personal laptops of the employees."

The state-run Saba News Agency on Saturday cited a source associated with President Hadi as saying that the move was "a requirement of the political settlement and the rules and principles of partnership."



Yemeni soldiers stand guard outside the Saleh Mosque on Aug. 5, 2012.

Suspected drone attack kills five in Shabwa

■ **Nasser Al-Sakkaf**

SANA'A, June 16—A drone strike has reportedly killed five militants belonging to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), among them a leading figure of the group, according to Abdulrazaq Al-Jamal, a journalist who has conducted exclusive interviews with Al-Qaeda figures.

"The drone strike killed five in Al-Saeed district including MUSAED Al-Habshi Al-Barasi Al-Awlaqi, a resident [and leading AQAP figure] from Shabwa," added Al-Jamal.

Sheikh Nasser Al-Malish, the deputy governor of Shabwa, said the suspected drone strike targeted alleged AQAP militants and it caused no civilian casualties because the strike happened in an unpopulated mountainous area.

Due to the remote location and the area being controlled by the gunmen, the Yemen Times was unable to contact local sources to verify the identities of the deceased and whether the extrajudicial killing of five people was carried out by an American drone.

However, the drone attack was

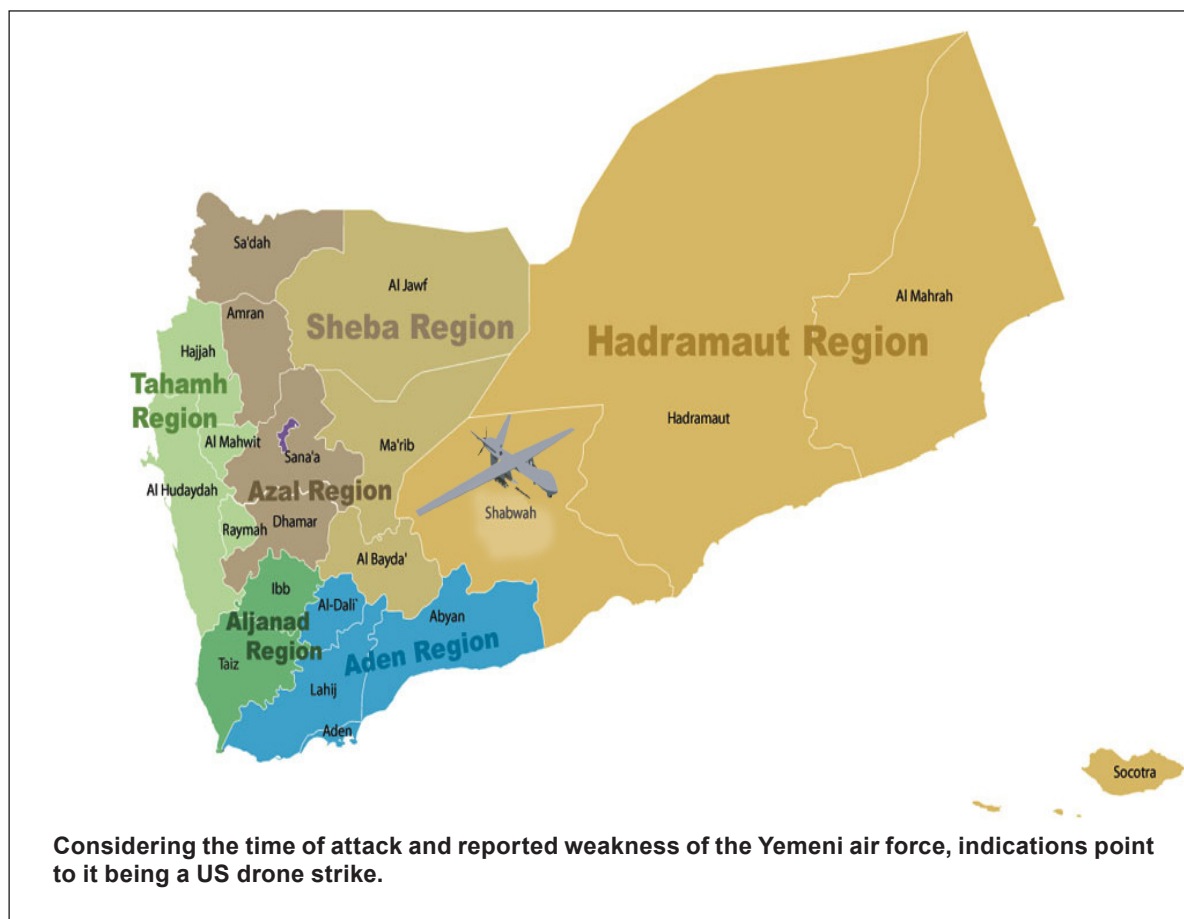
conducted at night and according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, President Hadi has stated that the air force does not possess the capability to carry out precision strikes in the dark. The Bureau also reported in 2012 and 2013 that the Yemeni air force is "barely functional."

Military forces, in cooperation with Popular Committees, launched an offensive in Abyan and Shabwa in late April to purge the area of alleged AQAP operatives.

The Defense Ministry two weeks ago reported on its website that Haban district was cleared of gunmen. However, gunmen are still positioned in at least some mountainous areas of Shabwa.

Both Al-Malish and Zabeen Atia, a journalist based in Shabwa who has visited Haban district, said that the gunmen are still positioned between Haban and Al-Saeed districts and the security forces cannot reach them easily because it is a mountainous area.

"The government forces have only controlled the main road that connects Abyan and Shabwa but don't control the mountains," Atia said.



Considering the time of attack and reported weakness of the Yemeni air force, indications point to it being a US drone strike.

One soldier killed, nine wounded in Abyan

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANA'A, June 15—At least one soldier was killed and nine others wounded late Friday when a car exploded at a military checkpoint in Al-Mahfad district of Abyan governorate in an attack allegedly carried out by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), according to local

military and security sources.

Several local media outlets reported that four soldiers were killed in the attack, but these reports were unconfirmed. Brigadier Mohammed Danba, security chief of Abyan, and Mohammed Al-Kori, a soldier of the 15th Infantry Brigade in Zinjibar district of Abyan, confirmed to the Yemen Times that one soldier was

killed and nine others injured.

Shaker Al-Ghadeer, a soldier from the 111th Mechanized Brigade in Ahwar district who participated in the latest military offensive against alleged Al-Qaeda affiliates in Abyan, said soldiers at the checkpoint, which is located in eastern Al-Mahfad district, received information about the bomb-laden car and were anticipat-

ing it, but the car's description was inaccurate.

The attack comes amid a reported withdrawal of some militants from Abyan to the surrounding mountains.

"There were gunmen in Al-Mahfad district and other areas but they withdrew a few days ago to Wadi Malha area, between Al-Mahfad and

Ahwar districts. They have weapons but we don't know who is providing them," Al-Ghadeer said.

The military, along with Popular Committees—groups of armed residents formed in 2012 to help the military fight AQAP—has been engaged in sporadic confrontations with alleged AQAP militants in Abyan and Shabwa districts since late April.

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Alleged AQAP militants kill six military hospital staff in Aden

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, June 15—Gunmen allegedly associated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) killed six staff from a military medical facility and wounded about a dozen others Sunday morning in Sheikh Othman district of Aden, Colonel Mohammed Musaed told the Yemen Times.

Musaed, who works for the Aden Security Department, said the gunmen attacked the employees as they were traveling by bus to work at a military hospital in Aden. Some news agencies reported eight deaths, but both the security office in Aden and Musaed reported six dead. The security office reported 14 injured, although Musaed puts the figure at nine.

"Masked gunmen intercepted the bus and opened fire when the bus was on its way to their work," Musaed told the Yemen Times.

The victims belong to the 4th Military Command stationed in Aden.

"The security forces cordoned off the area and formed a committee to investigate the act. In a few days, we will reveal the identity of these criminals," Musaed added.

AQAP has allegedly engaged in a number of retaliatory attacks against government forces since the government offensive began late April in Abyan and Shabwa governorates.

Majed Al-Shuaibi, a local journalist in Aden, told the Yemen Times that the gunmen opened fire on the bus which was carrying the staff to Basuhaib Military Hospital.

According to Al-Shuaibi, the car the gunmen fled in was a Toyota Corolla. "This is not the first time Al-Qaeda militants assaulted secu-



Soldiers were also killed in early April after a suicide car bomb exploded at the 4th Military Command in Aden.

urity and military personnel. Previously, they targeted the headquarters of the 4th Military Command in Aden," said Al-Shuaibi.

In early April six soldiers were killed when a suicide car bomb hit the headquarters of the 4th Military Command in Aden. At the time, se-

curity sources told the media that six soldiers were killed in addition to ten militants.

AQAP released an 11-minute video at the beginning of May, claiming responsibility for the attack.

Abulrazaq Al-Jamal, a journalist with in-depth knowledge of Al-Qae-

da, did not exclude the possibility that AQAP was behind the assault on the bus. "The war between the government forces and the Al-Qaeda is open. The militants are taking advantage of the lax security situation the country is in," Al-Jamal said.

Mass wedding for cleaning sector employees



175 staff celebrated their wedding at the Officers Club followed by a celebratory lunch at Al-Sabaen park.

■ Madiha Al-Junaid

SANA'A, June 16—A mass wedding was held on Saturday in the General Civil Aviation Authority's hall for 175 public cleaning sector staff and their brides.

The state-run Al-Thawra news website said on Saturday that the Capital Secretariat, in co-operation with the General Syndicate of Municipalities and Housing, organized the mass wedding to "arrive at a stable life for those workers in the cleaning sector."

The wedding was sponsored by the Capital Secretariat, a mobile phone company, and the cleaning sector's employees themselves, according to Mohammed Abdulwase'e, the assistant deputy of the cleaning sector in the capital. The grooms contributed one day's pay to the wedding.

The wedding included 175 grooms holding various job positions, ranging from managerial positions to park ground staff and cleaners, according to Jamal Be'ais, the general manager of the city's Cleaning Department.

"The majority were marginalized Muhamasheen cleaners," said Be'ais.

Be'ais said the wedding started with a celebration in the Officers Club (recreational grounds at the city's police compound) in the morning, and was followed by a luncheon at Al-Sabaen park in the Hadda area of the capital.

"After that, the wedding reception (Zaffah) took place in the General Civil Aviation Authority's hall where every groom left the hall with his wife," said Be'ais.

According to Be'ais, the number of attendees exceeded expectations. Abdulwase'e said 700 people were in attendance—"five hundred were seated and two hundred stood in the pathways because there were not enough seats for everybody."

Be'ais said that the number of applications exceeded 300, while the initial plan was to accept only 150.

"Due to the large number of applications, which were reviewed by a special committee, we then decided to expand the number to 175 grooms," said Be'ais.

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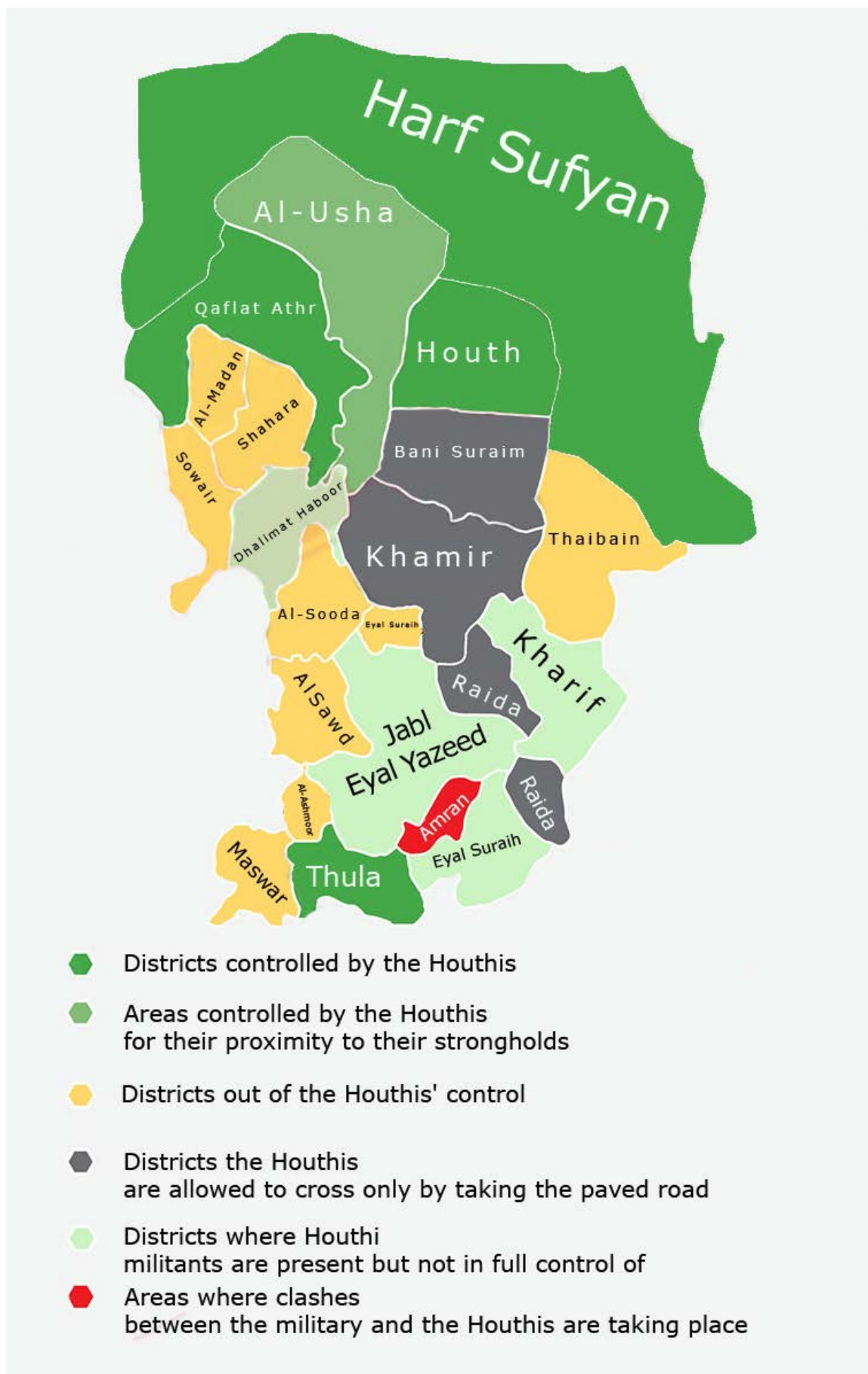
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Amran ceasefire agreement breaks down



■ Ali Saeed
SANA'A, June 16—Houthi rebels and military forces reportedly clashed in Amran on Saturday, breaking a ceasefire agreement in effect since June 4, according to local sources.
 An independent source in Al-Janat city of Amran, who requested not to be named due to security concerns, said Houthis who are in control of some areas of Al-Mehshash mountain "started the firing" against military forces of the 310th Armored Brigade positioned on the mountain.
 Faysal Al-Shulaif, a former member of the presidential committee tasked with establishing peace in Amran, said local sources in Amran told him that Houthi forces set up artillery on the mountain and shelled army positions.
 The Yemen Times attempted to

contact the security chief of Amran, Brigadier General Mohammed Turaiq, but received no response. The government has not released any official info about Saturday's alleged breach of contract.
 The ceasefire was mediated by the Ministry of Defense on June 4, following sporadic fighting since mid-May between the 310th Armored Brigade and the Houthis.
 Khaled Zabara, acting manager of Amran Hospital, said the hospital received no casualties during the latest gunfights in Amran.
 People in Amran continue to flee their homes in fear of renewed fighting, Zabara said.
 The Political Council of the Houthis issued a press statement on their news website, ansarullah.com, accusing "militias of the Islah party of breaching the ceasefire agreement by setting up armed checkpoints along the Sana'a-Am-

ran road and bringing in new militants."
 The independent source contacted by the Yemen Times said Islah does not control any checkpoints and only those run by the Houthis remain in place. The source said that checkpoints of the 310th Armored Brigade were replaced by Military Police checkpoints—a requirement of the ceasefire deal.
 The Houthis, a heavily armed insurgent group based in Sa'ada, have engaged in six rounds of fighting with the army between 2004 and 2010. In March 2011, they seized Sa'ada and expelled its governor.
 The Houthis since then have expanded their military capabilities outside Sa'ada, particularly in the neighboring governorates of Amran, Hajja, and Al-Jawf, but have faced opposition from tribesmen in these areas.

Mine Action Center employee assassinated in Mukalla

■ Madiha Al-Junaid
SANA'A, June 16—Hassan Ali Saif, the general manager of the Mine Action Center in Mukalla city, Hadramout governorate, was shot dead Saturday night by unknown gunmen.
 The general manager of the criminal investigations department, Ali Al-Mahwari, said that

investigations are still ongoing. No suspects have yet been apprehended and the details of the case remain murky.
 According to Hadba'a Al-Yazidi, a journalist in Mukalla, the incident occurred at around 9pm when "locals heard the gunfire and [shortly afterwards] found Saif lying dead in his car." The victim was shot several times, reportedly

with a 9mm pistol, and died on his way to hospital.
 Mohammed Al-Awash, a friend of Saif and an employee at the Mine Action Center, said that initial investigations suggest that two people on a motorbike were responsible for the murder.
 Saif was on his way home from a visit with a friend when he was killed, according to Al-Mahwari.

Troubled times ahead for the riyal



Last Wednesday Sakhr Al-Wajih was replaced as finance minister by Mohammed Zimmam.

■ Ali Saeed
SANA'A, June 14—Difficult times lie in wait for the Yemeni riyal (YR) because oil exports, the main source of income for the government, are on the decline due to the ongoing sabotage of the country's major oil pipeline in Marib.
 The oil pipeline has been vulnerable to repeated attacks by local tribesmen in disputes with the central government in Sana'a. This has resulted in declining oil export revenues, which normally make up 70 percent of total revenue.
 The current exchange rate is YR215 to the dollar but the value of the riyal is expected to drop in light of the limited options the government has in covering its spending bill.
 "The government has only two choices—to borrow from local banks or to print new notes and both will devalue the currency sooner or later," said Mohamed

Jubran, professor of economics and accountancy at the University of Sana'a.
 The government owes YR 1.4 billion (\$6.6 million) to local banks for the period of January to April of this year, according to a report released by the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY).
 Last Wednesday, President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi replaced Sakhr Al-Wajih, the minister of finance, with Mohamed Zimmam in a cabinet reshuffle, which came amid protests in Sana'a against fuel and electricity shortages.
 Zimmam will have a hard task keeping the value of the Yemeni riyal stable amid a shortage of cash to meet the government's spending needs.
 Larger amounts of money are required to pay for fuel imports as local production is curtailed due to political instability and sabotage of oil infrastructure.
 The CBY said that the govern-

ment paid \$229 million in April for fuel imports. This amount is only \$19.9 million less than what the government earned from the oil exports, according to the CBY report.
 The total cost of fuel imports between January and April reached \$974.9 million, whereas oil export revenue for the same period did not exceed \$597.24 million, according to the bank. This means that the deficit was \$377.66 million.
 March was the hardest for the government's revenues, with only \$44.17 million generated from oil exports. The fuel import bill for the same month was \$249 million.
 Two weeks ago, engineering teams were able to repair the dam aged pipeline after it ceased operating for over 20 days due to sabotage by a local tribe on May 9, according to Mohamed Al-Ahmar, administrator for the Oil Ministry's office in Marib.

The Youth Leadership Development Foundation (YLDF) conducts Youth Political Leadership Program - II

projects budget is allocated to the small and medium projects, as well as improving legislations of the micro-finance institutions, development and social welfare funds, and banks supporting micro-finance activities to create work opportunities."

Article 24, page 188 of the Comprehensive, Integrated and Sustainable Development report said, "the investment capital of expatriates entitle them to additional privileges and priority in improving investment and industrial areas and cities supervised by the government."

3. Education:
 Article 62, page 221 in the Comprehensive, Integrated and Sustainable Development report says, "every citizen has the right to free quality education for all phases in all the government institutional institutions. Primary Education is obligatory, and the government takes all the procedures to expand this obligation to other educational phases. The government supervises education in all institutions. The government encourages and cares for the technical and vocational education. All the public and private educational institutions are committed to the government's educational goals and plans to ensure that education meets the social and development needs."

4. Transitional justice:
 In order to overcome the transitional period in a way that fulfills transitional justice and in a way that overlooks the past disputes, the youth suggest that the new constitution should include one special chapter for transitional justice.
 Jamal Sultan, the program coordinator, said the Youth Political Leaders Program contributed to enabling the youth to have a political role, and the outcomes of this program do not limit the youths' role in following the political process. Instead, the outcomes of the program intend to make the youth a prime part of the political scene, according to Sultan.
 He also said the program came up with a document that includes youth political visions about the new constitution. This document received support in many governorates, and a copy of the document was handed over to the National Dialogue Conference, according to him.
 Samia Al-Antri, a participant from Hodeida, said prior to his participation in the program he used to ignore many things about politics, but then he realized his role in the field of politics and rights could serve his society. When he took part in political awareness campaigns he called it a great step through which he felt he accomplished something for the sake of the country.

Objectives:

- To train 30 male and female youth from Aden, Taiz, and Hodeida in political development, strategic planning and leadership skills, as well as strengthening their expertise and efficiency to be decision makers.
- To empower the trainees in political engagement by implementing activities in the governorates.
- To organize a workshop for the male and female participants targeted in the Youth Political Leaders' Program (1+2).

Main outcomes of the program:

- Six awareness campaigns are implemented in the political field by the trainees in their governorates that targeted 3000 males and females.
- The youth political leaders (1+2) developed a document about their political views and demands in the new constitution. The document has four main points as follows:

1. Youthpolitical empowerment:
 The Youth Supreme Council, an outcome of the National Dialogue Conference, was explicitly mentioned in the Yemeni constitution. The youth believe that the council should be established and granted independence to perform its monitoring and supervisory role through participation in drafting the general policies and supervise their implementation in order to protect the youth from social and health hazards and violence, as well as paying attention to development programs, skills strengthening, supporting the intellectual creativity and cultural existence and establishing explicit policies and mechanisms to involve the youth through this authority in decision making.

2. Youtheconomic empowerment:

- Article 42, page 239 of the Comprehensive, Integrated and Sustainable Development report said, "20 percent of the public

Polio vaccine campaigns face difficulty amid spying revelations



Photo courtesy: WHO

In April the Health Ministry in co-operation with the WHO launched a nationwide polio prevention campaign involving thousands of healthcare workers in mobile teams.

■ Ali Abulohoom

Despite efforts by the World Health Organization (WHO) to eradicate polio worldwide, ten countries, including Pakistan, Nigeria, and Syria, are on red alert as new cases have been detected and fears grow of the virus spreading to neighboring countries.

Yemen is not on the list, but fear over the polio virus has increased amid a regional breakout and concerns that Syrian refugees fleeing to Yemen could reintroduce the virus.

Yemen's Health Ministry on April 3 launched a comprehensive national campaign to vaccinate children against polio in cooperation with the WHO. The move was to act against fears of polio spreading in Yemen.

The health minister previously announced that the three-day campaign targeted all Yemeni children under the age of five, which is estimated at about 5 million.

The vaccination teams were reported to have been warmly welcomed by locals in all governorates and were often considered "guardian angels," according to Mohammed Hameed Al-Rawthi, 22, a volunteer vaccination worker who was among those working in Hamdan district, west of Sana'a.

But some other locals have been more wary of vaccination campaigns, which have at times been shrouded in controversy. In 2012, Taliban militants accused health workers of acting as spies for the US and several vaccination workers were reportedly shot dead in Pakistan. In response, the UN temporarily suspended their polio vaccination effort there.

International media reports revealed that the CIA used vac-

ination campaigns as a cover for spying operations, similar to the one used to gather information on Osama Bin Laden prior to the US raid that resulted in his death.

Obama's counter-terrorism advisor pledged on May 15 that the CIA would no longer use such ruses for intelligence purposes after the practice came under fire from public health academics for endangering workers. Obama's advisor was quoted as saying, "CIA policy applies worldwide and to US and non-US persons alike."

Opposition to vaccination campaigns is by no means limited to rural parts of the developing world, but hostility to such campaigns is often pronounced in these areas. A large part of the reason for this has to do with paternalistic, top-down approaches to vaccination during colonial times, when there was very little effort to involve locals and raise awareness. People's skepticism towards vaccination campaigns did not begin with the CIA's plot to gather information about Bin Laden.

In fact, the root cause of this opposition goes back over half a century. Shortly after the first vaccine for polio was discovered, a second vaccine was tested between 1957 and 1960 on around 1 million Africans under Belgian rule. It was suggested that this oral polio vaccine (OPV) was the cause of the AIDS pandemic, although no scientific evidence for this was found and the theory was thoroughly refuted shortly after it emerged. However, the idea that Western countries are using vaccines with the aim of decreasing the population of repressed groups—an idea especially prevalent among African Muslim populations—persists to this day.

There have been no known cases of vaccination campaigns being

used as cover for CIA operations in Yemen. However, the ban on such operations applies to Yemen as well. Some people in the country have become skeptical about the credibility of vaccination initiatives being launched, even those by the Yemeni government.

Osama Mare, WHO deputy representative in Yemen, said all vaccinations in Yemen are launched by the Ministry of Health and in cooperation with the WHO, thus the purpose of vaccinations is to eradicate endemic diseases and save the lives of people. "We have nothing to do with the CIA and its orders to stop fake vaccinations for spy purposes. We are a humanitarian organization working in Yemen since the 1940s. We receive vaccines from UNICEF and work in partnership with the Yemeni minister of health," said Mare.

However, Mohammed Al-Radie, 48, a local from Bait Baws village, south of Sana'a, considers the vaccination campaigns to be cover for intelligence gathering by Western governments. "The youth who work as volunteers in vaccination campaigns are victims because they do not know they have been used as agents," Al-Radie said. He explained that he declined to bring his two sons, both under five, to vaccination workers out of fear that their genetic material would be used for covert purposes. "My two sons are already fine and in no need of vaccination," he said.

Khada Al-Haboob, the director of Yemen's National Expanded Program on Immunization at the Ministry of Health, said the vaccinations are only ever launched by the Ministry of Health with technical support from the WHO. "The credibility of the vaccination campaign will not be affected by the fake CIA vaccination campaigns

because Yemeni people realize that the government will never bring any harm to them through these vaccinations," she said.

Al-Haboob confirmed that the ministry has a policy of involving local volunteers in vaccination campaigns as a means of gaining people's trust. She added that any campaign should be followed by media coverage to raise awareness among people about the importance of the vaccination initiative being launched. "Yemeni people feel confident as they saw media coverage before the launch of any campaign, thus the skepticism is far-fetched," said Al-Haboob.

Sameer Al-Hawri, 29, says "when I saw the news of the fake CIA vaccinations, I got shocked and wondered how dare they use health and humanitarian campaigns for spying operations?" Al-Hawri said Yemeni people should boycott any campaigns called on by international organizations. "All international organizations work for the sake of CIA and the USA national security, so I do not rule out that the polio campaigns are used to achieve covert goals," said Al-Hawri. "If I have children, I prefer not to vaccinate them by vaccination workers but instead through a direct visit to any health clinic," she added.

Ahmed Al-Bana'a, deputy director of the Media and Politics Center in Sana'a, acknowledged that the CIA used vaccination efforts for determining the location of people seen as a threat to US national security, adding that because of America's global power its policies are seldom questioned.

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He said that the Yemeni people will be affected by revelations of the CIA's spy operations. "The Ministry of Health should raise awareness about the importance of such vaccinations so that they are used for their benefits and not for other [CIA] purposes," he said.

Sharyan Al-Samei, a 25-year-old vaccination worker who worked in Taiz governorate during the latest polio campaigns, said he saw no objection or resentment from

the locals in Taiz when he surveyed some of its villages.

Om Ramzi Al-Mekhlafi, 34, a housewife in Sana'a, said once she heard about a recent vaccination campaign through media outlets, she got ready and waited for the health workers to knock on her door. "I never hesitate even for a moment to bring my child to a vaccination worker to vaccinate him against polio. I appreciate the efforts of those who give us drops of wellness for free."

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Hopes and fears: summit to end sexual violence in conflict

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini
 opendemocracy.com
 First published June 9

On June 10 the UK's Foreign Secretary, William Hague, will preside over the opening of the first global summit on preventing sexual violence in conflict. Mr. Hague became committed to this agenda after seeing Angelina Jolie's film *The Land of Blood and Honey* about the horrors of sexual violence that militias and armies perpetrated during the Bosnian conflict of the 1990s. Mr. Hague and Ms. Jolie joined forces to launch the Prevention of Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) in 2012, with a UN Declaration of Commitment to Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Over 151 countries have signed up to the commitment. This week, thousands of activists, government officials and others, mostly women, are streaming into London to contribute to this effort. Mr. Hague hopes they will suggest practical actions to improve investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes in wartime, ensure better care for victims, and ultimately end sexual violence in war.

Those of us in the international civil society movements who are directly supporting women's participation in peace and security, and wom-

en's rights and protection, recognize the value of a senior statesman and a movie star fronting this agenda. We are nonetheless concerned that the focus is exclusively on war-related sexual crimes, and we have often said that the prevention and cessation of war itself is the best means of preventing sexual and other forms of violence. We know (and research shows) that having a civil society that is committed to peace at the 'peace table' is one of the most effective means of ending wars. So let us see this being put into practice in places where peace processes exist.

We know these issues are complex, and that it takes collective action to bring real change, that's why we continue to support the effort. But there are limits. The engagement by certain countries with bad track records on addressing violence against women puts the very credibility of this campaign at risk.

Mr. Hague lauded the government of Nigeria for joining his campaign. Yet the Nigerian government and army have dragged their feet in rescuing the 247 girls kidnapped by the militant group Boko Haram. While the girls remain missing, media reports are linking some members of the Nigerian military to Boko Haram.

Pakistan has also joined the campaign. Yet, a young pregnant woman

was stoned to death recently outside a courthouse in Lahore. Her husband, it now appears, had strangled his first wife with impunity, because he wanted to marry the second wife. In another case, the police in Lahore gang raped a young woman who appeared at their police station to lodge a complaint about being gang raped.

The US is also enthusiastically joining in, even though there were 5,061 reported cases of sexual assault within its own military just last year. Even in the UK, the police are being questioned for referring fewer cases to the courts, despite increases in rape reports.

If we really want to prevent sexual violence in conflict, governments need to prove themselves by starting in their own backyards, with their own police and security forces, judiciaries and in the communities. It is an insult to the women and girls of these countries to see their political leaders applauded in London for promising to take action in the future in their capacities as international peacekeepers, while today the reality on the ground is often one of impunity and inaction. This is all the more disturbing given that it is the military, police forces and private security companies of many Western countries that train the police and military of conflict affected

countries.

For years, states have made pledges, drafted protocols, and assumed that words on paper will translate into action on the ground for the protection of women and girls. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was written more than 60 years ago, yet its promise remains unfulfilled. The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was drafted in 1979. Although 187 countries have ratified it, discrimination, including violence against women, is rampant. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security was adopted unanimously in 2000 as the first Security Council resolution to address women's rights, participation, and protection in conflict. Since then, the Council has passed six subsequent resolutions on the topic, and acknowledged that sexual violence is a threat to peace and security. But those words have not helped the women or men of the Central African Republic, or Syria, or any other conflict affected country.

Impunity and apathy, rather than action, remains the reality around the world. If Mr Hague wants to make a difference he needs to take a different tack. First, there should be standards of practice and criteria that countries must meet before they are included in this campaign.

The starting point may include fewer countries, but the states that make the grade would truly deserve recognition.

Second, civil society in all countries should be a critical partner in the venture. One step would be for civil society organizations with a track record and commitment to the prevention of violence and defense of rights to agree on protocols with the security forces and the judiciary, which unfortunately are often playing a role in perpetuating the impunity problem. These protocols could lay out how these entities would prevent sexual violence, protect and assist victims, and enforce standards and accountability within their own ranks. Local organizations can play an important watchdog role to ensure that these commitments are fulfilled. They can also help determine which existing practices are effective or need improvement. From Asia to Africa and beyond, women-led civil society organizations are already doing this work. The Summit should provide a space where ministers listen and take their advice. At the very least the outcomes and protocols should be deliberated on collectively by government and civil society.

Whatever happens in London this week, I hope that we won't be subjected to yet another back slapping summit finale where government

bureaucrats proudly claim to protect and empower women, while the women who are fighting this fight on the frontlines—often at huge personal risk—remain excluded and marginalized from the protocol being drafted and decisions made on their behalf. I also hope Mr Hague has the courage of his convictions to challenge the governments of Pakistan, Nigeria and other countries that have joined the campaign, yet have done little or nothing to address the issues at hand. There is a particular callousness among those who claim to care, yet do nothing and stifle dissent.

The women who are most at risk and already working at the frontlines should have a prominent role in determining the credibility of states' commitments and actions, and the success of this initiative. If not, Mr Hague's summit will be little more than an extravagant PR exercise. Worse than that, he may inadvertently be harming those who are courageously working for peace, and combating violence on the ground, and slighting the very people he wants to help.

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini is the co-founder of the International Civil Society Action Network and is a senior fellow at MIT Center for International Relations.

On anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe

Sara R Farris
 aljazeera.com
 First published June 5

In 1844, Karl Marx published a short but dense text entitled "On the Jewish Question." It was a critical review of two essays by the then famous philosopher Bruno Bauer, who had argued against equal rights for Jews if granted on religious grounds. If Jews wanted to be considered full citizens—Bauer maintained echoing the widespread opinion of the time—Jews would have to abandon their religion and embrace Enlightenment. According to this logic, there was no room for religious demands in a secular society.

As Bauer's position suggests, anti-Jewish racism in Germany and elsewhere in Europe in the first half of the 19th century, was justified mainly on cultural and religious grounds. Jews were discriminated and regarded with suspicion because they were considered an alien "nation within the nation." In fact, it was not until the second half of the 19th century and the rise of "social Darwinism" that "racial anti-Semitism," framed in biological terms, appeared on the political scene and Jews were openly discriminated against on the basis of their alleged genetic inferiority.

The question we might want to ask ourselves today is whether contemporary Europe is confronting a Muslim question similar to the Jewish question 170 years ago. Is European antipathy towards Muslims comparable to that first stage of hatred towards Jews, a hatred that culminated in one of the darkest pages of human history?

In spite of the obvious differences between the two contexts, the success of the far right during the recent elections in several European countries seems to suggest that the answer is a resounding yes. The vic-

tory of these parties attests to the incredible gains made by Islamophobic propaganda in the last ten years. In France, the president of the National Front, Marine Le Pen—who obtained one quarter of all votes—has asked school canteens to stop offering Muslim children alternatives to pork. In Britain, the UK Independence Party campaigned against the construction of mosques and became the biggest winner in the elections, with an astonishing 27.5 percent of the vote.

Many of these parties, as well as those who voted for them, do not consider themselves racists. After all, the problem with Muslims—according to the likes of Le Pen—is their alleged backwardness, fanaticism and unwillingness to integrate.

In short, it is the Muslims' fault. Just like the Jewish question of the 19th century, the contemporary Muslim question is premised upon cultural differences and thus presented as legitimate and politically correct.

Though immigrants in general are singled out as a social and economic threat to European societies and workers, it is Muslims in particular who have come to epitomize the "bad other." This has been achieved not only through the xenophobic propaganda of the far right. Actually, conservatives and even liberal and left-wing parties have contributed to the fanfare.

On the one hand, conservative leaders such as current UK Prime Minister David Cameron, France's former President Nicolas Sarkozy and Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi have repeatedly invoked the Christian roots of European countries, while, on the other, a much broader gamut of political forces, including liberals and leftists, have participated in decrying the headscarf as a symbol of backwardness and oppression. The voices nourishing anti-Muslim sentiment

across Europe come from all sides of the political map.

Muslims have thus become, at least in many ways, the new Jews. They have become the scapegoats onto whom Europeans are projecting their anxieties about the future. Conservative and far-right politicians constantly intensify and exploit these anxieties in order to enhance neoliberal and nationalist agendas,

while most liberal and left-wing parties have imitated the racist right, perhaps hoping it will bring them more votes.

Marx understood this process all too well. He criticized Bauer for claiming that the lack of political emancipation for the Jews was the result of their culture and religion. Marx maintained that religion had nothing to do with the continued dis-

crimination of the Jews. The prejudice against the Jews and their lack of rights, Marx argued, is to be understood in the broader context of the state's structural inequalities.

The transmutation of the Muslims into the Jews of the 19th century does not mean that a new genocide is imminent, or that the tragedy of the Jewish people in 20th century Europe will be replicated as the tragedy

of the Muslim people in the 21st. History does not repeat itself in this way. But history can rhyme. It will only be the redoubled work of anti-racist militants and organizations that can potentially prevent that rhyme.

Dr. Sara R. Farris is an Assistant Professor in Sociology in the Sociology Department at Goldsmiths, University of London.



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World CUP 2014: The view from the streets



MOHAMMED AL-QADASI, student

The current World Cup is better than the previous one because we have several cafes to watch the matches in, but the fragile security situation worries us.



AMAL DAWOOD, housewife

I'm not motivated to watch the 2014 World Cup because of the unstable security situation and electricity outages. We are also unable to use generators due to the fuel shortage.



MUKHTAR AL-HASHEMI AND MUSA AL-RAFEI, waiters

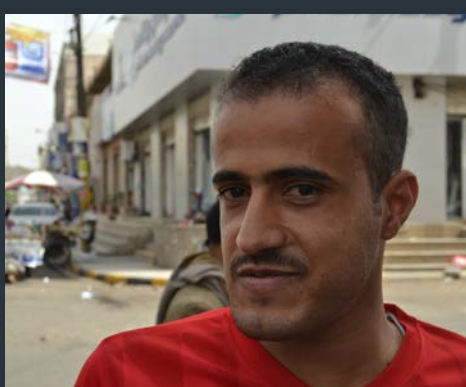
The number of people watching the matches in the cafe has decreased by about 60 percent in comparison to 2010.

**Ezzaddin Al-Zain
Mohammed Al-Qalisi**

The 2014 World Cup kicked off in Brazil this month amid the usual global fanfare.

In Sana'a a large screen, generators, and a marquee have been set up in Al-Tahrir Square for the benefit of soccer fans. However, this year's event has been met with mixed feelings, coming at a time of fuel shortages, electricity outages and political and economic instability.

The Yemen Times asked ordinary citizens in Sana'a what they thought of the games and how this year's event compares to the 2010 World Cup.



AMEEN AL-SHARABI, public sector employee

I think the last World Cup was better than this one. The security situation was better at the time. Now we are afraid of explosions and nothing encourages us to watch the World Cup matches.



KHALID SHARAF AL-DEEN, private sector employee

I enjoy watching the matches nowadays and the championship is competitive. Hopefully there will be no power cuts.



SHARAF ABDULRAHMAN, director of a training center

Subscribing to channels that air the World Cup costs more now than it did in 2010. The situation with the electricity outages and fuel shortages puts us off watching the matches. I enjoyed watching the World Cup 2010 and hope security will be restored in my country.



SHIFA AL-SHUAIBI, student

The situation isn't good and there is no need to watch the World Cup matches. We should focus on other important issues. The situation was better in 2010.



SIMA AL-QUBATI, student

The current World Cup is better because the country is experiencing a new phase towards a new and more civil Yemen.

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The challenge of boxing in Yemen begins outside the ring

■ Ezzaddin Al-Zain

Ahmed Zuhra, born in 1988, is a well known Yemeni boxer and a graduate of law. In an interview with the Yemen Times, Zuhra spoke of the potential importance of boxing for motivating the youth. In a typical week, Zuhra undergoes 2 hour training sessions five days a week. His current weight is 56kg, which puts him in the featherweight division.

Zuhra is the eldest of three sisters and one brother. His brother, 14, also boxes and has won two medals in youth championships in Sana'a.

Boxing was first brought to Yemen through Aden. During the British occupation local boxers used to play in the Shamsan Sports Club with foreign boxers. However, the popularity of the sport is waning and is given little official attention in Yemen. According to Zuhra, the government does not take the sport seriously.



Zuhra began boxing in June 2010 with his coach Faisal Al-Husaini, who himself had been trained under a Cuban coach. Zuhra won his first national championship in March 2011. In December 2012 he participated in an Arab championship in Qatar, where he won the Bronze medal.



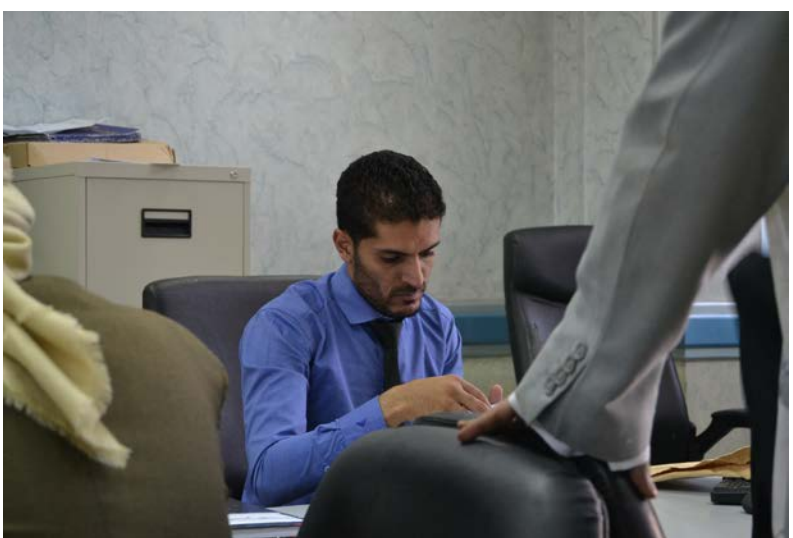
Regular training sessions for boxers are limited and local boxing championships are less and less frequent. This year not a single match has been organized. The last time Zuhra participated in a boxing championship was 17 months ago.



Zuhra suffered from a hernia as a direct result of his boxing. He tried seeking medical assistance from the Ministry of Youth and Sport, however, he had little success. He says he had to pay YR80,000 (\$372) for treatment.



Zuhra accuses officials in charge of the Boxing Union of having little interest in boxing and of not making enough effort at promoting the sport.



Zuhra says he has been boxing for over four years and does not receive pay from the Boxing Union. He has a day job working at the CAC Bank where he says he receives a decent income.



"Mike Tyson is my role model because he is a strong boxer and was the heavy-weight world champion when he was 19," says Zuhra. He also admires champion boxer Naseem Hameed, who has Yemeni origins.



Zuhra expressed his disappointment with only receiving a \$100 reward for his Jordan victory during his participation in the Arab championship—a pitiful reward, as he sees it, reflecting the state of sport in Yemen.

For ISIS, Iraq's spoils could tip balance in eastern Syria

Karen Leigh
atlanticcouncil.org
First published June 12

Photos depicting militants more dangerous than Al-Qaeda by many Western officials, is run by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, a merchant's son regarded as the ideological heir to late Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. They are well funded and better organized than the Islamic Front, Nusra, and other extremist groups.

Effectively the final step in fusing the two offensives into one, the financial and strategic spoils of ISIS's capture of Mosul and Tikrit will provide a crucial boost to the group's Syria-based fighters, who—even after multiple offenses and increasingly violent ruling tactics—have been unable to establish control of the country's east.

Watching the group march swiftly and decisively with almost no interference from Mosul to Tikrit has been a surprise for those of us who have watched it struggle to find its footing in Syria since it first emerged as a power there early last year.

ISIS took the city of Raqqa from a fragmented and disorganized Free Syrian Army in the spring of 2013, establishing it as a de facto home base from which to launch both a military campaign for control of eastern Syria and an extremely conservative interpretation of sharia.

The group was surprised by the resistance it met, first by citizens who sided with archrival Jabhat Al-Nusra, then from other opposition groups themselves, who engaged in a bloody battle earlier this year to drive ISIS out of northern provinces, largely containing them to Raqqa.

Weapons—including helicopters, tanks and Humvees—taken from Iraqi Army positions in Mosul and Tikrit will likely be sent back to Syria, along with money looted from banks and other sources. The first order of business will likely be the group's ongoing operation in Deir Ezzor, which has intensified in recent weeks as it struggles to unseat Nusra, which is largely, through its control of local Sharia Councils, in charge of the province's oil fields.

The second priority will be to push fighters further into the northern part of country, namely Aleppo and Idlib provinces, where they once operated but from which they were expelled by other rebel factions during a rash of infighting earlier this year.

Since late March, Deir Ezzor has seen relentless fighting between ISIS and their main rivals for supremacy in eastern Syria, the al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra. Control of the sprawling oil fields in the resource-rich province is a top priority for both groups; in April, the Carnegie Endowment estimated that Syrian oil sales, much of them from the province, are still hitting up to \$50 million per month. Some of the oil from Deir Ezzor is smuggled to markets in Aleppo, implying that it transits through ISIS-controlled territory in Raqqa.

Since its emergence in Syria in 2012, ISIS has been moving fighters, weapons and goods across the Iraq-Syria border. Between Hasakeh province, on the Syrian side, and Nineveh in Iraq, it has effectively dominated land routes since last summer.

North of Deir Ezzor, the border has been porous for some time, and analysts say that ISIS fighters have used it with impunity, traveling between group bases in Iraq and Syria. Should ISIS use the spoils from Mosul to finally hold Deir Ezzor, they will have opened up a veritable highway for which to transport goods, weapons, and manpower without any trouble.

For ISIS, the fusing of controlled

territory from Deir Ezzor to Mosul is a major step towards its stated goal of creating a unified Sunni caliphate in the region.

The organization, now considered more dangerous than Al-Qaeda by many Western officials, is run by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, a merchant's son regarded as the ideological heir to late Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden. They are well funded and better organized than the Islamic Front, Nusra, and other extremist groups.

But in Syria, ISIS has struggled in recent campaigns to expand the area it controls.

It faltered its bid to wrest control of terrain from Jabhat Al-Nusra and other rebel groups, and its attempts to implement an ultra-conservative form of religious law has been met with resistance from Syrian civilians.

Women are now forced to wear head-to-toe Islamic dress when out in public, while cigarettes and Western products like Coca-Cola have largely been banned. Earlier this year, civilians in Raqqa began to protest after the reported hangings of Syrian journalists and activists, accused of criticizing ISIS rule.

There is also the question of conflicting ideology. While the main goal of Nusra and the Islamic Front is still to unseat Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, ISIS's motive is to create its own separate caliphate. Along with increasingly violent tactics both on and off the battlefield, this has made them increasingly unpopular with other rebels.

In January, ISIS emerged victorious from clashes against opposition forces led by Nusra and the Islamic Front, keeping control of Raqqa city. But the infighting forced it out of northern provinces and slowed its advance into Deir Ezzor.

The group has performed well in Syria before, controlling swaths of Idlib and Aleppo before facing backlash from rebel forces and being forced to retreat. Some Syria watchers caution that though general destabilization has swung momentum in ISIS's favor, it does not mean the drive will stick.

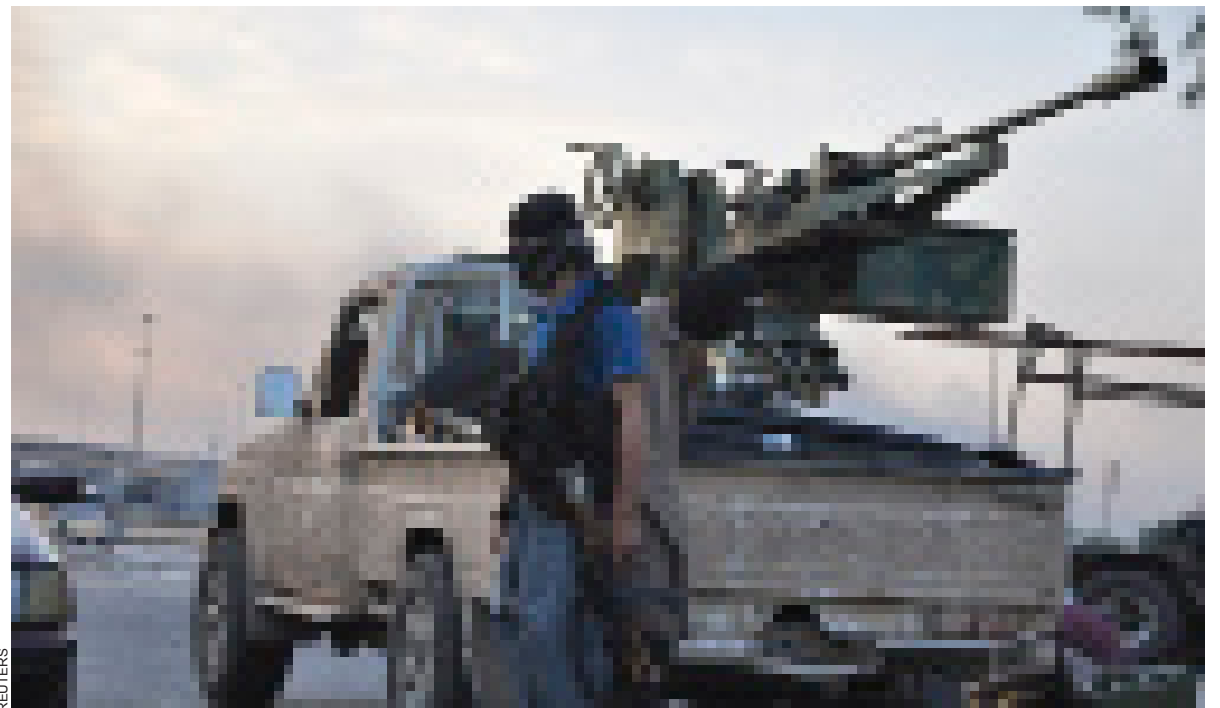
For now, the group is claiming that it is already reaping the rewards of this week's Iraq advance. Their Twitter accounts show what they claim are US tanks and helicopters from Iraq being brought to Deir Ezzor for inspection by their Syrian leaders.

Gains like these could push the Syrian army into action

against ISIS. Iran, Assad's most important regional ally, is insisting that he take action. Iran, a Shiite power, and ISIS, a Sunni insurgency, have rival goals in the power battle of Syria's war. Already, there are signs the regime is beginning to take on ISIS, attacking the group's strongholds in Raqqa and Hassakah earlier this week.

Karen Leigh is the managing editor of News Deeply. A version of this post first appeared on SyriaDeeply.org

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Fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) stand guard at a checkpoint in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, June 11, 2014. Since Tuesday, black clad ISIS fighters have seized Iraq's second biggest city Mosul, and Tikrit, home town of former dictator Saddam Hussein, as well as other towns and cities north of Baghdad. They continued their lightning advance on Thursday, moving into towns just an hour's drive from the capital. Picture taken June 11, 2014.



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The challenge of delivering aid in Yemen

IRIN

First published June 9

Humanitarian needs in Yemen are huge, but it is also recognized as one of the most difficult places in the world for aid workers to operate in. What to do?

Yemen is the poorest country in the Middle East. It produces only 20 percent of its own food, is running out of water and has one of the highest rates of chronic child malnutrition in the world. Half the population is estimated to require humanitarian assistance. At the same time, tribal fighting in the north and a secessionist rebellion in the south have closed off large parts of the territory and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes; and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is active, threatening the safety of foreign staff.

Local custom can also be a challenge. Yemeni men routinely carry guns, and hostage-taking is a business, adding to the level of risk that limits humanitarian access. "In Yemen a Qita—a tribal roadblock, during which the tribesmen hold a car of people hostage in exchange for a variety of demands—is often seen as non-violent and commonplace. Being threatened at gunpoint is viewed as less serious than a slap in the face," Micheal Neuman wrote in a recent study by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

The aid community cannot simply walk away, especially since its donors are keen to support Yemen's political transition to a more democratic form of government; a chaotic process kicked off by the Arab Spring and the eventual overthrow of the corrupt 33-year rule of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

The Humanitarian Practice Net-

work—based in London's Overseas Development Institute—has offered some pointers on the way ahead in a special Yemen issue of its journal, 'Humanitarian Exchange.'

At a meeting in London to launch the publication, Trond Jenson, head of the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Yemen, stressed that the political process, despite all the difficulties, was still worth supporting.

"I think the political process and the transition in Yemen has made remarkable progress," he said. "For the first time, Yemeni youth and women have had a platform to express their vision. But that being said, the key challenge is that unless there are tangible improvements in Yemenis' daily lives, it is unlikely that they will retain confidence in the political transition process."

Political risk

At the same time, getting too involved in the transition, begun when Saleh stepped down in 2012, also holds dangers. "One of the issues that we see now is a lot of development NGOs and multi-mandate NGOs who have been overtly, consciously and strategically involved in the transition process, organizing public consultations and working with community-based organizations to feed into the process. So the question becomes, 'how is this understood by people in Yemen?'," asked lead author of the HPN report, Steve Zyck.

"And how will it affect aid access, as some of the same agencies who are trying to provide principled, impartial humanitarian assistance have become associated with a political process that many factions find slow, unfair or otherwise objectionable?"

There is a distinct sense of the aid community in Yemen walking on

eggshells, trying not to offend any group with the power to exclude them from areas of need. This has meant keeping a distance not just from Yemeni factions, but also from their own donors, a policy defended by Jenson at the London meeting.

"We have a very complex and highly politicized environment," he said, "and I think it's very important that we as humanitarians don't take sides. One of the things that we have done is that there are no donors who are part of the Humanitarian Country Team, the body which sets the policies and strategies for Yemen ... to make sure that in an environment where there is a great deal of suspicion against foreign actors, we make it absolutely clear where we are coming from—that all assistance is based on need."

Britain's Department for International Development (DFID's) Humanitarian Advisor in Yemen, Helen McElhinney, told IRIN they had accepted this exclusion after some discussion, taking a broad position that they would do whatever was best in the current context. But she added, "I do rather wonder how many Yemenis in Abyan know what the UN-HCT is, let alone whether DFID does or doesn't sit on it."

New thinking

But more pro-actively, some organizations are exploring new ways to deliver, despite the constraints. DFID itself has taken the decision to move away from single year program to multi-year humanitarian financing. Working year by year made a certain sort of sense in an uncertain and rapidly changing situation, but where finding partners and negotiating access takes time, there is a risk of the money running out just as a program gets going. And a longer view helps both agencies and recipient communities to plan, and hope-



A frame taken from *A life on Hold* film. In this film, IRIN gains rare access to Houthi-controlled areas of northwestern Yemen, where 300,000 people remain displaced by conflict

fully to build the resilience which might make them less dependent on emergency aid.

Where international agencies find their access blocked, the obvious solution is to work through local partners. But that is not so easy in Yemen, where few organizations have the capacity to deliver help on the scale needed, and fewer still can be seen as impartial. A study in the HPN journal describes how the International Organization for Migration (IOM)—denied access to the displaced in the northern Al-Jawf governorate—effectively created its own local partner. It worked with tribal leaders in the area to set up a charitable organization, helping it get registered and establish an office in the capital and training its staff.

Meanwhile, MSF has continued working in conflict areas, supporting government health facilities in Huth and Khamer in the north. Research by Neuman on the threats and risks to their staff and ways of managing them brings to life the reality of

working in Yemen. A wounded man arrives, accompanied by an armed and agitated companion who holds a gun to the doctor's head as his friend is treated. Relatives bring in a girl with severe burns, and proceed to threaten and assault medical staff who they think are not treating her quickly enough. MSF staff are held to ransom by a family demanding compensation for the costs of taking a member to Egypt after local treatment failed.

Mistrust

As Neuman points out, these incidents—hugely stressful for the staff concerned—are not the result of Yemen's political turmoil; rather they grow out of suspicion and mistrust of medical staff and unrealistic expectations of the level of treatment which facilities in Yemen can provide. Closing clinics after incidents like these is understandable, but doesn't really help. It is seen as a collective punishment, creating further resentment.

Equally unhelpful is the informal solution adopted by stressed doctors, which is to turn away patients whose relatives they suspect might cause trouble, or refer them rapidly to hospitals elsewhere.

Neuman says that MSF has to provide more support to its staff, whose concerns for their own safety are very real. And it also has to communicate better with the surrounding community, so that people don't have unreal expectations of care, which cannot be met.

Ironically, says Neuman, the upsurge in conflict this year has been accompanied by a fall in the number of violent incidents in MSF facilities. "Perhaps," he said, "it's because the care we provide is much more needed than it was last year, and people have less time to express any discontent, but it's interesting to see that the more violent the political situation, the safer our teams are!"

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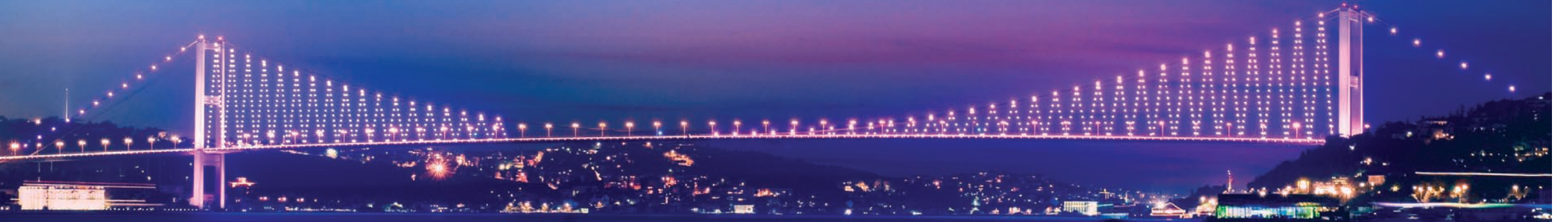
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Iraq and the 9/11 echo

Paul Rogers
opendemocracy.net
First published June 12

The pace of events in the war-torn "greater middle east" is accelerating. A single week began with bitter controversy in the United States over the exchange of American soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five leading members of the Taliban, held since soon after 9/11 at the Guantanamo prison-camp. This was rapidly overshadowed by the deaths of five US special-forces personnel

in a friendly-fire incident in Afghanistan. But the rapid advance of the ISIS paramilitaries across northern Iraq, and their takeover of Mosul and other cities, is a development with far more profound implications for the region.

Even if these events are of a different order, though, they are connected by an important shift in US military strategy under the Barack Obama administration. For just as the US president was accused by Republicans over his decision to let the "Taliban five" go free, his secretary of state John Kerry stated that if any of them

rejoined the conflict—in Afghanistan, Pakistan or elsewhere—they would be targeted and killed, most likely by armed-drones.

This political moment, and the reminder of the presence of US special forces in Afghanistan, is confirmation of the strategic transition that has taken place: from an approach based on having tens of thousands of "boots on the ground" (in Afghanistan and then Iraq) to one based on maintaining the security of western interests by "remote control." The latter policy seeks—via a combination of armed-drones, special forces, and privatized

military companies (as well as other means)—to deliver safety to Americans while putting few of their lives at risk in the field. In theory it should work—but practice is a very different matter.

The Iraqi descent

The seismic events in Iraq may appear startling, though the current drama is part of a wider escalation of conflict that has been chronicled in several columns in this series. It is also being tracked even more immediately, near to the events themselves, by exceptionally well-informed journalists such as Patrick Cockburn.

Anyone following such sources would have had advance warning of the possibility of the collapse of the Iraqi army that has occurred, initially in Mosul and then in Baiji and Tikrit. This was foreshadowed by its failure in May 2014 to retake Fallujah after it fell to ISIS paramilitaries; as Cockburn reported, 40,000 government troops had approached the city, leading up to 30,000 civilians to flee in anticipation of a hugely destructive assault.

In the event, the Iraqi forces opted to lay siege to Fallujah—primarily because the army was so demoralized. 6,000 of its troops were killed and twice that number deserted in the last year alone; the former number is far bigger than that of the United States troops who fell in eight years of occupation and war in Iraq.

In face of this situation, what do the United States—and its allies such as the UK—actually do? Their situation is tough: a radical and brutal Islamist insurgency now controls large tracts of territory in northwest Iraq and northeast Syria. Worse, Iraq itself is moving towards civil war, with the Iraqi government increasingly relying on a quick mobilization of Shi'a militias to replace an army that evidently cannot cope.

There is now very little domestic support in the United States for new, large-scale American troop deployment in Iraq... Thus it is far more likely that the "remote-control" model will be implemented in the coming months.

The fact that Islamist control of substantial territory gives ISIS and related movement huge room for independent maneuver is hugely worrying for western politicians and military strategists. The focus at present may be on Iraq and Syria, and the process underway of forming a small-scale, symbolic Islamist caliphate. But soon, it will expand to a worldwide level: for current events in Iraq raise echoes of 9/11 itself and its at least partial intention of provoking the United States into large-scale military operations on Al-Qaeda's "home turf."

The impossible choice

There is now very little domestic support in the United States for new, large-scale American troop deployments in Iraq (or anywhere else overseas). Thus it is far more likely that the "remote-control" model will be implemented in the coming months. This will certainly involve the further supply of many weapons and other material to Nouri al-Maliki's regime

in Baghdad, in the hope that it will make the Iraqi armed forces more effective.

In response to those (the majority of observers) who say this approach is inadequate, the US leadership will say that "something must be done" to prevent the dangerous outcome of the Islamists' acquiring "safe space" in the region. This "something" most likely will be to arm the Iraqi regime and support it with the use of drones, special forces and the rest—all the while avoiding a major and obvious US military presence.

The dilemma for Obama and other western leaders is that—echoes of 9/11, again—this is almost certainly what ISIS actually wants them to do. It might be best for the movement to "invite" even a shadow foreign military intervention in Iraq, which would arouse all the old fears across the Muslim world of a "crusader" takeover. Such a scenario would become a new focus for many of the thousands of young men already traveling to Iraq and Syria to join the two wars.

In short, western leaders have a choice: they can either leave ISIS to develop its capacity to control territory and then move beyond the immediate region, or they can take action to try and effect its demise. The trap in the latter option, though, is that its impact will be to encourage determined young jihadists to fight even harder against the west, and in particular the "far enemy."

The sudden emergence of this problem could make June 2014 a historic month—even more than is realized at present. In the early stages of the Iraq war, on 4 April 2003, a column in this series was titled "A thirty-year war." That prospect still looks all too probable.

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5			7	3	4			
3	9	8	2	5				
2	4		5			6		
5			9	6		4		
8		2			9	7		
	5	6	3	7	8			
6	3	5					2	
2			7				5	

Easy

7			5	4				
1		3		2	8			
4			2	5				
7	3	6	1					
1	5			6				
2		4		3				
	8	9			5			
9	6		5			4		
5	7						6	

Intermediate

9				1			5	
	2			8				6
4				7	3			
				2		7		
				6	4		9	
		1	6					8
8			5				4	
	7		9					1

Difficult

Chess

White plays and wins in the 2nd move

Solutions

Chess: Qb8+

Sudoku

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FROM THE ARCHIVES
6 February 1995

Our Djambiyas Are Driving Rhinos to Extinction

■ Yemen Times

In 1970, the world population of rhinos stood at around 65,000. Today there is merely 2,000 left. Yemen has played a great part in the unfolding of this tragedy.

Yemeni demand for rhino horn was a major driving force for poachers to kill the animal and dehorn it. Today, even with the existence of adequate alternatives to rhino horn in the djambiya industry, Yemen continues to import some 80 kilograms of rhino horns ev-

ery year. That is an average of forty new rhinos killed.

The Republic of Yemen has been urged by many regional and international organizations to join the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) and work to take measures to stop rhino horn imports. If it doesn't, it risks facing sanctions reaching the level of total blockade under the US Pelley Amendment.

Stare into the face of a rhino and you discover 60 million years of evolution. This prehistoric-looking creature which wallows in the swamps of parts of South and Southeast Asia and the savannah marshes of Africa, is one of the planet's most tenacious survivors. Black rhinos have even adapted to the encroaching desert.

Yet, this creature now faces the real possibility of extinction due to the on-

slaught of poachers. Demand for the horn of the rhino is the major driving force for poaching.

Yemen's demand for the horn to make into dagger handle is the problem.

"We are not here to stand the way of the Yemeni tradition. But there are alternatives to the rhino horn. There is the water buffalo horn, there are plastic and similar handles and now there are even stone handles, which are as good as the rhino horn," explained Dr Esmond Martin, who has been shuttling back and forth to Yemen eleven times.

Yemen can win in more than one way if it helps in stopping the onslaught on the rhino. It would be doing the right thing, it will avoid sanctions and it will even be able to obtain substantial financing for environmental purposes.

"I am surprised there isn't one protected area in the whole country. Yemen needs to establish sanctuaries," Dr Martin indicated.



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