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# Houthis block roads in Sana'a



■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—Houthi demonstrators halted traffic on Wednesday from 10 AM until 2 PM in four major streets in Sana'a. They thereby expressed their rejection of the initiatives announced on Tuesday by the presidential committee tasked to reach an agreement between the Houthis and the government.

The initiatives announced by the committee include the formation of a new government, the lowering of fuel prices, and the implementation of the NDC outcomes.

The latest protest comes after Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi on Sunday called for a "third escalation" and acts of "civil disobedience."

Houthi protesters started five separate marches from various Houthi camps located throughout Sana'a city, which all ended at the Kentucky Roundabout. Demonstrators halted traffic in Al-Adel, Al-Zubair, Al-Zira'a, Al-Qiada, Tunis, Tahrir, and Al-Saila streets, which are close to the cabinet headquarters.

Protesters also staged a sit-in on Tahrir Street in front of the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance Department.

As a consequence, Mohammed Al-Hammadi, a resident in Al-Tahrir Street, said that "the traffic stopped for four hours and people had to stop their cars and walk on foot."

Anti-riot police carrying batons and tear gas were deployed in the streets where the marches took place.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the protest's organizing committee announced that additional steps will be taken unless President Hadi meets the people's demands.

Ali Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, explained that Wednesday's protests are part of the Houthis' announced "third escalation," adding that the following steps will be "irritating."

"We know that the protests obstruct the traffic, but the government is to be blamed because it did not meet the protesters' demands," he added.

Abdu Hussein Al-Tarib, the Interior Minister, on Monday ordered all security institutions in Sana'a to be on alert and ready to prevent any potential attempts to create chaos.

Colonel Mohammad Al-Qaidi, manager of public relations at the Ministry of Interior, told the Yemen Times on Wednesday evening that people are allowed to protest provided their demonstrations are peaceful.

However, he added that the Ministry of Interior will not allow protesters to block the streets as they did today. "What happened today was a misperception of peaceful protests," Al-Qaidi said.

"The minister of interior sent soldiers to military and government facilities in Sana'a to protect them from potential attacks," he added.



# Finance Ministry postpones annual bonuses to public employees

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

**SANA'A, Sept. 2**—The Finance Ministry on Monday reneged on its plans to pay annual bonuses to civil servants, and military and security

personnel. The bonuses, due for the past two years, were announced on August 26 to become effective on August 29.

The Finance Ministry announced the delay in payment is due to ex-

isting financial difficulties. A new date for payments has not been announced.

According to an anonymous source at the Finance Ministry, cited by the state-run Saba News Agency, "the Finance Ministry decided to delay providing the annual bonuses for the past two years because of the deficit in the public budget. The bonuses will be provided when the situation gets better."

The government's announcement follows an agreement between Prime Minister Mohammad Basindwa and the cabinet, who sanctioned the bonus payments on August 26 to ease the burden of slashed fuel subsidies put on public employees.

Mohammed Jubran, an economics professor at Sana'a University, told the Yemen Times that bonuses for each year are supposed to be paid automatically in January but this hasn't been the case.

"The government on July 30 promised to implement economic reforms to ease the economic impact of lifting the fuel subsidies on people but nothing has happened. This shows that the government isn't serious," added Jubran.

Several public employees complained that they received their

monthly salary for August without any bonuses, despite earlier promises from the government.

"We were optimistic about the government's announcement regarding the bonuses for 2012 and 2013. But we were surprised to get only the salary without the bonus," Sultan Hamood, a 35-year-old soldier, said. "This angered many soldiers because they have been waiting for a long time to get these bonuses."

Hamood continued, "the government and Finance Ministry should have provided bonuses to soldiers to encourage them to maintain security and stability in the country, especially in this current tense situation."

The decision to hold off the payment of annual bonuses is not the first time that the Finance Ministry has failed to provide funds as ordered by President Hadi. In September 2013, President Hadi issued a decree ordering the government to compensate the victims of the 2011 uprising through the 2011 Revolutionary Victims Fund.

The government on July 2014 announced that it would pay the compensation the same month, but since then the Finance Ministry did not provide any payments.

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# Houthis reject government proposal to end the crisis

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—On Tuesday the Houthis rejected the proposal spelt out the same day by the presidential committee tasked to reach an agreement between them and the government.

The proposal includes replacing the current government with a new one in which the Houthis, alongside members of the Southern Movement, will participate, and lowering the price of fuel.

The rejection by the Houthis follows a speech by President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi at the Republican Palace in Sana'a with ministers, parliamentarians, members of the Shura Council, and representatives of the political parties.

The terms were announced after Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, leader of the Houthis, proclaimed late Sunday the start of the "third escalation" to demand the toppling of the government and the re-establishment of fuel subsidies.

When contacted, the Houthis' official spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam referred the Yemen Times to his Facebook page, where he stated, "we do not approve of what was circulated in the media about the government's

proposal."

The statement added, "what the committee released represents their position and not ours. We disapprove of the committee's proposal. Our position is still on the side of the Yemeni people, who took to the streets in a peaceful uprising to make legitimate and fair claims. We consider these attempts by the government as an attempt to dilute and evade the people's demands."

Ali Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, confirmed on Wednesday that the Houthis refused the proposal put forth by the committee, saying "it's not enough to decrease fuel prices by YR500 (\$2.30) because the prices of food items and transportation fees have increased."

Another influential voice against the proposal was raised by the businessman and prominent Islah Party figure Hameed Al-Ahmar. On Tuesday, he announced on his Facebook account his opposition to other parties joining the government, and considered the current situation as a coup against a legitimate government approved by all political powers.

President Hadi, attempting to put an end to the growing tensions

## Important actions included in the proposal:

1. President Hadi to assign a new prime minister to form the new government, within a week, after consulting with political actors.
2. Ministers to be appointed based on specialization, efficiency and integrity. President Hadi will set a deadline for various political actors to nominate two people for each post. The president, in consultation with the new prime minister, will then choose one of the two nominees.
3. President Hadi to include all political actors in the process of nominating ministerial posts, including the Houthis, the Southern Movement, women, and youth.
4. President Hadi to issue a decree to decrease the price of gas and diesel.
5. While decreasing fuel prices in the short-term, the new government will have to find alternative ways of ensuring that fuel is supplied at market prices in the long-run.
6. Improving the methods of collecting taxes and customs fees and eliminating all forms of corruption and financial manipulation.
7. Implementing the NDC outcomes and drafting the new constitution to be proposed for a nationwide referendum.
8. President Hadi to choose ministers for the ministries of defense, interior, foreign affairs, and finance.

in the capital, said in his speech on Tuesday, "I assert that I'm determined to avoid fighting and stick to peace but at the same time I will not allow anybody to threaten the public peace and stability."

The Houthis started the "first

escalation" on August 18 and set camps at the entrances of Sana'a. The "second escalation" began a week later when Houthis extended their presence by pitching tents close to key ministries along the Airport Road.

## US provides \$40 million to fight hunger in Yemen

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—The US government on Tuesday provided a \$40 million grant to the World Food Programme (WFP) to provide food assistance to impoverished Yemenis over the next few months.

In a press release on Tuesday, the WFP said that the US contribution will be used to provide food assistance to an estimated 2.8 million of Yemen's poorest people.

"The grant includes \$15 million in cash for the innovative e-voucher project [where vouchers are delivered to mobile phones by text message], which WFP provides when food is available in the market but is out of reach for the poor. The vouchers also help to stimulate the local economy. The remaining \$25 million will be used to purchase up to 27,000 metric tons of food, mainly wheat, yellow split peas, and vegetable oil for general food distribution," the press release read.

The press release quoted Herbie Smith, the USAID mission director in Yemen, as saying "Yemen is the seventh most food insecure country in the world and a staggering 10.6 million people go to bed hungry every day."

The Yemen Times contacted the communications officer for WFP in Yemen to get further information on how the grant will be used. The Yemen Times was promised a response by the afternoon but as of



WFP said the US contribution will be used to provide food assistance to an estimated 2.8 million of Yemen's poorest people.

press time did not receive a reply.

The Yemen Times was also unable to get the contact information of any Yemen families who are currently receiving aid from the WFP.

Ahmed Saeed Shamakh, a Sana'a-based economist, attributed the lack of food security in Yemen to the wars in the past and current conflicts in the country.

"Yemen witnessed several wars, including six rounds of war against the Houthis in Sa'ada, and the war against terrorism. The 2011 uprising has also affected the economy, which in return brought about food insecurity," he explained.

Shamakh believes that the assis-

tance provided by some countries, such as the US and the United Arab Emirates, will be of no use unless the government creates sustainable livelihoods for the poor.

"Hundreds of billions were provided to Yemen but food insecurity and poverty rates are increasing. The poor need sustainable sources of income," Shamakh said.

In a report released by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) on August 24, the WFP said that in July they began to provide cash transfers to 57,000 households in Ibb and Taiz governorates.

"Designed to help people supplement their food consumption,

cash transfers are part of the WFP's \$250 million emergency operation," the report read.

According to the report, some of the criteria WFP uses to determine which form of assistance is most suitable in different geographical areas are "food prices in local markets, security, and availability of financial services."

"Through the program, each targeted family receives the equivalent of \$27.50 per month. While families are free to spend the cash as they want, surveys have shown that most of the money is spent on food with the remainder being used for other essentials such as health care or schooling."

## 144 suicides in Yemen in six months

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—The Ministry of Interior published a report on its website on Tuesday, listing 144 suicide cases in Yemen between January and June. Of the total cases listed, 35 are women.

The report issued by the Ministry of Interior said that the governorate with the highest number of suicides is Taiz, with 19 cases. The remaining cases are spread over other governorates, except for the governorate of Raima, where the suicide cases are nil.

Psychology and sociology experts

cite the debilitating economic and security conditions in Yemen as some of the key reasons that drive people to such drastic measures.

According to sociology expert Dr. Saddam Mutee Al-Awadhi, the founder of Al-Awadhi Center for Psychological Consultations, Dhamar governorate, other reasons for suicide include: Lack of religious beliefs, drugs and alcohol addiction, and a need to emulate foreign cultures by leading a lifestyle that ends with suicide.

He added, "the numbers confirm that this phenomena has not changed in the past few years. When

we compare other years to this year's numbers, the same problems prevail: Challenging life conditions, economic crisis plaguing the country, and volatile security."

Official statistics from the ministry for last year showed a total of 251 suicides in Yemen.

In one case, a female university student in Taiz committed suicide in early July because her family made her husband divorce her due to his infertility, according to one of her neighbors.

"Many of these suicides are due to social reasons, mainly divorce, marriage, or problems within the family

itself that lead to suicide," said Mohammed Hizam, deputy manager at the Public Relations Department in the Ministry of Interior.

He added, "some families tell the authorities the suicide was not intentional but an accident, however, during the investigation it becomes clear that the victims killed themselves due to either personal problems or their financial situation."

Families and individuals often refuse to talk about the circumstances surrounding suicides by their relatives or friends since suicide is considered a social taboo and vilifies the family's image.



### Yemen to receive IMF loan

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—After months of negotiations the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced in a press statement on Tuesday, it's approval of a three-year extended loan worth \$552.9 million.

According to the IMF the loan is "to maintain macroeconomic stability and promote inclusive growth" in Yemen. About \$73.8 million of the loan is ready for immediate disbursement, while "the remaining amount will be phased in semi-annual disbursement, subject to six reviews."

Former Minister of Finance Sakhr Al-Wajeeh told Reuters in May, after meeting with IMF officials in Jordan, that as a condition for receiving the loan Yemen must first remove fuel subsidies.

The government slashed fuel subsidies on July 30. The decision sparked widespread protests but they were quickly quelled by security forces.

The Houthis, an armed rebel group based in the northern governorate of Sa'ada, began a nationwide popular protest on August 18 which includes reversing the subsidy removal as one of its main demands.

"The Yemeni authorities have made commendable efforts to support macroeconomic stability and growth. Nonetheless, political and security challenges have continued to weigh on the policy environment and economic outcomes," Naoyuki Shinohara, the IMF deputy managing director and acting chair, is quoted in the IMF press release.

The announcement of the IMF loan on Tuesday came on the same day President Hadi stated he will change the government and decrease the fuel price by 25 percent in an effort to end the Houthis' protests.

### US helicopter crashes in the Gulf of Aden

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—A US Marine helicopter crashed at sea on Monday in the Gulf of Aden. According to the US Navy, all of the 25-member crew are safe.

"A US Marine Corps CH-53E Super Stallion helicopter assigned to the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) crashed at 2 PM (GMT), today, at sea in the Gulf of Aden

as it attempted to land aboard USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19)," the US Navy reported on Monday.

According to the Navy, all 25 people aboard the helicopter, 17 Marines and eight Navy Sailors, were safe and the personnel who sustained minor injuries were treated aboard the USS Mesa Verde.

"The crash was not a result of hostile activity. The aircraft was transferring the Marines and Sailors back to USS Mesa Verde from training ashore in nearby Djibouti. The Navy and Marine Corps will investigate the cause of the crash," added the US Navy.

### Islamic State beheads American journalist

**SANA'A, Sept. 3**—The Islamic State late Tuesday released a video showing the beheading of 31-year-old journalist Steve Sotloff, who had been held hostage in Syria by the group since August 2013.

On Wednesday, Sotloff's mother addressed the group's leader, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, on video saying her son Steven was "an innocent journalist" who had no control over US policy in the Middle East.

The execution of Sotloff comes after more than a week after the Islamic State released a video showing the murder of another American journalist, James Foley. In the video the group threatened to kill Sotloff unless the US stopped bombing its territory in Iraq.

Iona Craig, a journalist in Yemen since 2010, said on her Twitter page that Sotloff began his journalism career as a freelancer in Yemen.

"Steve Sotloff was part of our group of young freelancers who got their start in #Yemen. We all mourn him," she said.



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# Video shows kidnapped oil worker pleading for release



■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Sept. 3—Al-Arabiya channel aired a 45-second video on Sunday showing British oil worker Paul Sampil held hostage in Yemen since February. The captive is seen calling for the help of both the British and the Yemeni governments to secure his release. The video shows Paul Sampil blindfolded with a checked scarf against a dimly lit background, revealing few details of his location or captors. With the camera zoomed on his face, he says “my name is Paul Sampil. I am a British subject working in Yemen for a petroleum services company which is Intracs Middle East Ltd., please Britain or Yemen, help me so I could go back to my family, I have been kidnapped for the last seven months.” His speech appears controlled and after a long pause, he adds “I think these kidnappers will kill me soon, please try to have me released.” As the video progresses, the word “Alziadi” appears on the

screen, which is the name of a tribe in Marib and Al-Jawf. Several Yemeni and Arab media outlets aired the video on Sunday. Colonel Mohammed Hezam, deputy director of public relations in the Ministry of Interior, said, “the investigation is ongoing to locate the kidnapped British national. The kidnappers hide their victims in desert areas and places with a low population density such as Al-Jawf and Marib areas.” He adds that Marib governorate is chosen by kidnappers to hold their hostages, since “all the tribes there are armed. The ministry avoids military confrontations with those tribes, and resorts to tribal mediation.” Sampil was kidnapped on February 3 by unknown armed men in front of a grocery shop in the center of Sana'a, Hadda area. Until now, little is known on the efforts of the British and Yemeni governments to release him. Sheikh Abshal Al-Futaini, one of the leaders of Murad tribe in Marib, said that tribes in Yemen usually undertake kidnappings

to meet their demands, which include releasing prisoners, getting jobs or getting ransoms. “Mostly these hostages are peacefully released after indirect negotiations between the government and the kidnappers through tribal mediators,” said Abdullah Al-Shulaif, the head of Raqeeb Foundation for Rights and Freedoms. British teacher Mike Harvey, who was held for six months in captivity in Sana'a, was released on July 26. A total of YR50,000,000 (\$232,500) was paid as a ransom, according to a source in the mediation committee that was set up to release Harvey, who asked not to be named. So far several kidnapped foreigners have been held in Marib governorate. A German citizen who was kidnapped in Sana'a in February was moved to and held there. In April the Uzbek doctor Saliv Momn Jon was abducted and held in Marib. In June a Saudi national and ten Yemenis were kidnapped and held in Marib governorate.

# Al-Qatan residents want the Special Security Forces camp out

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Sept. 3—Residents of Al-Qatan city in Hadramout governorate are demanding from the government removal of the Special Security Forces camp from the city. These demands follow recurring clashes between the army and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) that have spilled over to neighboring residential areas. Tribal leaders in Al-Qatan held a meeting on Tuesday, August 28, that ended with the signing of a statement demanding the removal of the camp from the city in order to keep the nearby residents safe. According to Radhi Subaih, a Hadramout-based journalist, the statement was also signed by residents, who cited the physical and psychological damages which they endured due to the clashes between the army and AQAP. “Al-Qatan residents demanded the camp to be moved outside the city after noticing an increase in displaced people from the area around the Special Security Forces camp,” said Subaih. The Special Security Forces are run directly by the Ministry of Interior. Gunfire and mortar shells have hit houses and sometimes the bat-

tles between government forces and militants move into the residential neighborhoods. Mohammad Al-Sharafi, another Hadramout-based journalist, told the Yemen Times last week that “many homes near the camp have been damaged due to the clashes and bombings” and that “citizens near the camp have begun to worry, waiting for the next attack, or have moved elsewhere.” Thursday was not the first time residents have called for the camp to be moved. The demand was also made by the Hadramout Tribes Alliance, an anti-government tribal alliance which was formed after a tribal leader was killed on Dec. 20, 2013 when refusing to stop at a security checkpoint for a routine check. President Hadi did approve the alliance's demand at the time but to date all military camps have not been removed from within city limits in Hadramout. Abu Hammam, a member of the Hadramout Tribes Alliance, said that the alliance is maintaining its position on removing the camps from the cities, including the Special Security Forces camp in Al-Qatan. Jamal Al-Geiz, the head of the Security Department in the Ministry of Defense, said “the current situation in the country does not allow

for camps to be moved out of cities, especially in dangerous places such as Hadramout,” adding that AQAP militants are monitoring all the army's movements, which adds to the difficulty of changing the camps locations. Ahmed Obaid, a retired security expert from the Ministry of Defense, thinks otherwise, “The camps should be located outside cities to protect them. What is needed inside the cities is police stations,” he said. “Having camps inside cities does not only harm citizens but also the army forces, because the camp will not be able to protect the city properly,” he added. “It is easy to attack camps when they are located in heavily populated areas inside cities, because the forces will not be able to monitor the area around it.” The most recent attack on the Special Security Forces camp in Al-Qatan was on August 30, resulting in the death of one soldier and five armed men suspected of belonging to AQAP. Several other attacks occurred in Al-Qatan throughout August, many of which AQAP claimed responsibility for. The majority of these attacks targeted the Special Security Forces camp, which is located in the middle of the city.



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An interview with Abdulazeez Jubari, the general secretary of the Justice and Building Party

# “We are ready to join the government if it’s serious to create change”

The Justice and Building Party was one of the very few independent political parties that were established in the aftermath of Yemen’s 2011 uprising. The Yemen Times spoke with Abdulazeez Jubari, the general secretary of the Justice and Building Party, to gain insight into the party’s origins, ideals, and the difficulties it faces as a new political party.

■ Dares Al-Badani

## Tell me more about the Justice and Building Party.

We are a party that was born out of the popular youth uprising in Yemen. We consider joining a government, such as the current one, a great risk for ruining our party and its reputation.

The Justice and Building Party was established in 2012 after the popular youth uprising. Its most prominent figures were part of the then ruling GPC party, such as Mohammed Ali Abuluhom, the head of the party, and Yahya Al-Shami, a prominent leader in the party. Mohammed Ali Abuluhom was one of GPC’s prominent members and Yahya Al-Shami was the head of the inspection and supervision committee in the party. Many of the Justice and Building Party members are former GPC members.

## What made you leave the GPC and start a new party?

When the popular youth uprising occurred, we found ourselves forced to participate with the people and so we decided to side with the youth’s legitimate demands and leave the GPC, which sadly veered from its course. We wanted to become a party that will cater to the needs of all the

people, not just the politically elite. All this led to the formation of the Justice and Development Party.

## What are the challenges that you faced since the establishment of the party?

To be honest, despite the many challenges that accompanied the establishment of our party, we have managed to overcome them and we were able to participate effectively in the NDC [National Dialogue Conference]. So far, everyone has testified to the greatness of what we have done, even the NDC’s outcomes testify to that.

## What are these challenges?

For example, since establishing the party we have not been receiving any of the financial support from the Ministry of Finance which we have a legal right to. This in itself has been a major difficulty that has been constraining. According to the Law of Parties we are entitled, like any other party authorized by the Committee of Party’s Affairs, to receive huge sums of money from the Ministry of Finance to manage the party’s affairs.

## Have you claimed these rights

## which you call legitimate?

Of course we demanded them from the former minister of finance, Sakher Al-Wajeeh, but he refused to grant us those rights even though our party has fulfilled all the requirements and has an official and a wide and popular support base—bigger than some parties who receive financial grants from the Ministry of Finance.

## What is the ministry’s excuse for not granting you your rights?

Sakher Al-Wajeeh was using the pretext that the party must have had an electoral term and won seats in the parliament, and this could be partially true, but we are in a different situation where elections did not take place on time, keeping in mind that we have a parliamentary block and also another block in the Shura Council and we are entitled to our legitimate legal rights.

## Are there any other challenges you faced other than the financial ones?

Our party has been confused with other parties, especially because of our party’s name: “Justice and Building” is the name of other parties in the international arena, especially in Turkey where there is the Justice and Development Party, but its ideology is not like ours. It is an Islamic party, while we are a moderate party without any disagreements with other parties.

## But many confuse the two...

There are also parties who have appeared in Yemen, after our party was established, that have a name similar to ours so people could confuse the



Abdulazeez Jubari, general secretary of the Justice and Building Party. The party was established in 2012 and some of its most prominent members were part of the then ruling GPC party, including Mohammed Ali Abuluhom, the head of the party, and Yahya Al-Shami, a prominent leader in the party.

two, but we have been recognized through our principles and we have been able to overcome this difficulty.

## Your party, along with the Al-Rashad Salafi party, are the only two new parties who have participated in the NDC. There are many parties which were established around the same time as your party, so how were you able to achieve this?

You are aware that the Justice and Building Party, even if it is a novice one, was able to gain a wide popular support base, which was not taken for granted. As I have mentioned to you before we have representatives in the Shura Council, as well as in the parliament. The figures who run the party have strong influence and many connections with different entities. While most of these figures were part of the government some of them were ministers and deputies—these reasons are strong enough reasons for the party to have a remarkable presence in all the relevant events including the NDC.

You cannot compare us to small and submerged parties, with all due respect to them. Some of them were established for purely political reasons.

We were supposed to be represented by 14 seats in the NDC but half of these seats were shared with the Al-Rashad Salafi party.

## Why were these seats divided the way you mentioned?

Because our brothers in the Al-Rashad Party protested the number of seats that were allocated to our party, which is a justified protest in my view, because the Al-Rashad Party has a decent support base and is allowed to participate.

## What about other parties?

With all due respect, although most of the parties have no political influence so far, some of them were established by larger parties to support them in case of a future coalition. So they cannot be compared at all with a party such as the Justice and Building Party or even with the Al-Rashad Party.

## What is the difference between your party and the Al-Rashad Salafi party?

There are several differences between the two of us, most importantly, the Al-Rashad Party is an ideological religious party and stems from a religious group of people, while ours is a political party and we have no disagreements with anyone due to a [religious] doctrine or anything else. We believe in being moderate and we are keen to build Yemen and make it prosper.

I believe that the decision-maker [President Hadi] also wants to in-

clude Salafis in the government and in the GPC, which is a good thing in my view.

## What was the vision of your party in the National Dialogue Conference?

Our vision was explicit and most of it was included in the NDC outcomes, particularly in terms of the state building because we suggested a presidential regime and not a parliamentary one [the current regime in Yemen is semi-presidential], since most of the parliamentary regimes are unstable. We also suggested the party-list proportional representation for elections to expand political participation to all parties.

## You proposed using Islamic law (Sharia) as the main and not only source of legislation. Was this accepted?

Yes, we raised this option and several NDC members opposed us. The Yemeni people are predominantly Muslims and nobody can deny this. However, we figured that relying on Sharia as a main and not the only source [of legislation] is better to keep up with the current time. But some accused us of blasphemy. But, this is our vision and we must defend it.

## What is the criticism against your party?

Some criticize the name of our party and some criticize the head of the party because he has wide international relations. They say that the party was established by the US but this isn’t true.

## Are you criticized for being affiliated with the General People’s Congress (GPC)?

We participated in the revolution and this indicates that we aren’t affiliated with the GPC. Actually we were accused of affiliation with the Islah Party, too. But I think this proves that we are a flexible and moderate party.

The Justice and Building Party has its own decisions and its own agenda.

## Do you have new things to convince people to join you or are you just a similar form of the GPC?

It is true that most of us were members of the GPC, but we make independent decisions. I believe that the GPC has great vision and principles as well as an amazing national charter but the problem lies in its leadership that often uses its power to achieve personal gains. Seeing our goal, you will notice the similarity between our party and the GPC in terms of vision and principles.

## You said that your party isn’t

## funded by the government, so who funds you?

Our party is based on personal funding from the people and the subscriptions our members pay.

## But was this funding enough to enable you to establish your own TV channel?

For sure it wasn’t enough but the situation will be better once we receive our legal rights. We would also have more followers because we can attract people to join us only if we have headquarters like other parties. Regarding the TV channel you mentioned, it was established at the expense of some rich members of the party but the broadcast stopped because we are short of funding.

## Do you receive funds from other parties?

Can you explain further, please.

## The GPC for example...

I will answer this question only because I believe that some parties are established to serve other parties. However, it’s not true that we receive funds from the GPC because the GPC accuses us of betrayal and defection.

## Are there other sources of funding?

Our party will never accept local or foreign funding other than the funding it has the right to receive from the government. We will stop working if the government does not provide us with our rights and will not take any funding except that from the government. Frankly, we are funded by President Hadi only.

## Does he support you personally?

You can say so and it’s not wrong because he is the president of all Yemenis.

## How do you introduce your party to the people?

We had a TV channel but it was stopped due to financial problems. We have a plan to establish a monthly newspaper and then move to produce weekly issues. We will also establish two websites.

## In case a new government is established, will you join it?

We don’t participate for the sake of participation but we aim to create a change. We are ready to join the government if it’s serious to create change. However, we will never participate in the current government because it’s not able to change anything.

## How do you evaluate your experience since you established the party?

There are some shortcomings but the party will be better in the future.





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**Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf,**  
(1951 - 1999)  
Founder of Yemen Times



## OUR OPINION

# It's show time

**T**he presidential body responsible for negotiating with the Houthis has come up with a good plan. It includes a lot of compromise on behalf of the state. However, if implemented effectively it could very well save us from an impending security and economic nightmare.

Until now, responses from the Houthis have not been positive. They must realize that now is the time to be serious and not let ego or pride get in the way of rational decision-making.

The proposal from the presidential authority is the last attempt at a peaceful political solution. Otherwise, President Hadi will be forced to use his authority as president to endorse the position of the state. This may mean armed conflict and we know that both sides have been preparing for this option for weeks.

At the same time, Hadi needs to prove his seriousness regarding the new government he is to announce in one week. The new government must be made up of qualified and acceptable people fairly representing all political and social groups that were present in the National Dialogue Conference.

It also means that we need an honest, strong prime minister who will have to make up for the lost time and bad mistakes of the previous governments.

The most important aspect of the president's new proposal is that it talks about the people's suffering. Hadi admitted that Yemenis have been patient for long and suffering for longer. He said he will ensure an increase in the minimum wage, support farmers and increase the number of people covered by the Social Welfare Fund. The new government needs to mean business when tackling corruption which it has to start from within.

The risks are too high—if the new government includes questionable names or proves to be useless, people's trust in Hadi will diminish and this will have dire consequences on the constitutional referendum and the entire political transition.

The Houthis need to think wisely before dooming themselves and the country if they choose to act violently; Hadi needs to take the creation of the new government seriously and choose qualified candidates without being pressured by political parties; and the new government has to win back the trust of the people, who have already lost trust in anything official.

There are many factors which need to align for this proposal to work, but it is our only hope for now and this is truly show time.

**Nadia Al-Sakkaf**

# Can Nigerian youth destroy Boko Haram's caliphate?

**Daniel E. Agbiboa**

aljazeera.com

First published Aug. 31

**S**eptember 2014 marks five months since Boko Haram, a militant armed group in northern Nigeria, abducted over two hundred schoolgirls from Chibok, in Borno State. The Chibok girls, kidnapped on April 14, have not been rescued yet. This is despite efforts by the US, the UK, France, China, and Israel to support Nigeria's efforts to turn the tide of the insurgency and rescue the Chibok girls being held hostage in the forest of Sambisa.

Meanwhile Boko Haram has intensified its violent campaign to the point of threatening the territorial sovereignty and integrity of the Nigerian state. National security forces seem to lack the equipment, training, and motivation to prevail over the sect.

In the latest development, Boko Haram declared a caliphate in Gwoza, Borno State. The sect decimated the whole community, carrying out summary executions in the process, before hoisting their black and white flags at different locations. In a recent video, Abubakar Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, said “thanks to Allah who gave victory to our brothers in Gwoza, which is now part of the Islamic Caliphate.” Shekau declared that Gwoza now has “nothing to do with Nigeria.”

The United Nations humanitarian office confirmed reports that Gwoza was under control of the militants and that the group had seized control of Damboa, which was earlier retaken by the Nigerian military. Boko Haram has also conquered other areas near Gwoza in Southern Borno, as well as large swathes of territory in northern Borno and portions of Buni Yadi

in neighbouring Yobe State.

In declaring a caliphate, Boko Haram becomes the first Islamist organization in Africa to emulate the Islamic State group, which controls vast areas of eastern Syria and northern Iraq.

*“Boko Haram declared a caliphate in Gwoza, Borno State. The sect decimated the whole community, carrying out summary executions in the process before hoisting their black and white flags at different locations.”*

The relentless attacks of Boko Haram have twice compelled a declaration of a state of emergency by fifteen local governments across four states in northern Nigeria. But such measures have failed woefully to stamp out Boko Haram; instead, they have strengthened the group's

resolve against the Nigerian state, its citizens, and Western missions.

## Community mobilization

An underreported but important aspect of the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency is the ways in which frustrated youths, armed with machetes and sticks, are mobilizing against elements of the group in their communities, complementing the efforts of state security forces (including combat support and intelligence gathering) to contain Boko Haram.

This pattern is evident across states in northern Nigeria, but particularly in Maiduguri, the largest city of Borno state, where angry vigilante youth groups (comprising some 500 youths)—known as the “Civilian Joint Task Force” (CJTF) or “Yan Gora”—are tracking down Boko Haram members in their communities, whom they turn in to the state security forces or kill themselves. In Borno State, most CJTF members now receive \$113 per month from the government.

The relationship between the CJTF and state security forces have not always been cordial, with reported cases of police brutality against some youth vigilantes. In a recent protest, many angry youths took to the streets chanting anti-military slogans in Hausa: “sojoji ne Boko Haram, Soja oga-Boko Haram” (translation: Soldiers are the real Boko Haram; soldiers are masters of Boko Haram). They were angry at soldiers who tried to shield five men who the vigilante group had arrested. The protest resulted in the death of at least two youths, as well as some injuries.

Notably, the CJTF has recorded some measure of success against Boko Haram. In March 2014, members of the CJTF killed at least 207 Boko Haram militants who stormed a military barracks and a neighborhood of Maiduguri. However,

the CJTF has itself become a major target of Boko Haram's attacks. Boko Haram killed at least 100 CJTF youths in 2013.

While the state political leadership and local residents have commended the efforts of CJTF, with the Nigerian president referring to them as “new heroes of the nation,” there are growing concerns that these vigilante groups are “brewing trouble” which could transform into new militias if their activities are not regulated by the state. Some also fear that the actions of the CJTF are inciting Boko Haram to target civilians even more.

To neutralize the current threat of Boko Haram, it is necessary to improve intelligence gathering among security agencies in Nigeria; national forces have to be proactive in nipping planned attacks in the bud before they are executed. Furthermore, this war cannot be won by the use of force alone. Urgent issues of unemployment and a sense of hopelessness among youth need to be addressed to prevent them from becoming easily manipulated by political and religious bigots.

Moreover, besides military operations, there has not been any concrete ideological intervention to counter Boko Haram. As Ahmed Salkida argues, Boko Haram is a problem of doctrine that must be tackled through a “coherent, profound counter doctrine.”

At the moment, there is a widespread feeling of insecurity among Nigerians, made worse by the recent outbreak of Ebola. These are certainly not good times to be a Nigerian.

Daniel Egiegba Agbiboa is a Cambridge and Oxford trained scholar in the field of International Development. He works as a Consultant for the African Union Commission (AUC) and Transparency International Defense and Security Programme, UK.

# The irony of Saudi Arabia's latest UN contribution

**Anna Newby**

muftah.org

First published Sept. 1

**O**n August 13, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia donated \$100 million to the fledgling United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), an entity that King Abdullah first proposed in 2005 and formally inaugurated in 2011 with a \$10 million contribution.

In a ceremony at the UN, Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel Al-Jubeir called terrorism “an evil that must be eradicated from the world through international efforts.” His point was a valid one, particularly in light of the grave transnational threats posed by groups like the Islamic State, Palestinian terrorist groups like the Islamic Jihad, and splinter Al-Qaeda affiliates like the Al-Nusra Front moving in and out of Syria. But Saudi Arabia's pledge to help the international community combat terrorism represents the latest in a host of ironies in the Middle East today.

Let us not forget that Saudi Arabia has contributed to the “evil” more than, perhaps, any other country in the world. With a long history of officially sanctioning terrorist activity while tacitly supporting terrorist groups, and maintaining a counter-productive slew of domestic and foreign policies that exacerbate terror threats around the world, it is going to take substantial effort for Saudi Arabia to make a positive net contribution to the fight against terrorism.

## UN Counter-Terrorism Center

Although a 2006 UN General Assembly resolution formally recognized the need for a global counter-terrorism strategy

and encouraged member states to support its implementation, no actual entity existed until 2011, when Saudi Arabia donated the funds to launch the UNCCT.

The organization is tasked with fostering international cooperation on counterterrorism efforts, as well as bolstering expertise within the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force at the UN. The UNCCT is essentially an advisory body that seeks to provide training and information sharing to member states. Among the center's possible future work may be coordinating with donor countries—including the United States—to provide bilateral or regional assistance to countries in need of counter-terrorism help. President Obama, for one, has stated that assistance through regional partnerships is core to US counter-terrorism

strategy.

The UNCCT and its efforts are no doubt laudable, but some perspective is also necessary. The United States alone spends over \$16 billion annually on counter-terrorism efforts. Despite the Saudis' generous donation last week, the UNCCT remains a relatively small player and is unlikely to be a game-changer in the international fight against terrorism.

## It's ironic

The irony in all of this, of course, lies in Saudi Arabia's far larger monetary contribution—which has a far more substantial impact — to a host of organizations and policies that actually exacerbate terrorism around the world. Through direct support of terrorist groups, a combination of practices that tacitly enable terrorist activities, and a wealth of far-reaching policies that breed terrorism domestically and internationally, Saudi Arabia is more to blame for contemporary terror threats than many other states.

Saudi Arabia has historically been one of the world's largest supporters of Salafi jihadist terrorist militant groups like Al-Qaeda, the Taliban (both the Afghani and the Pakistani branches), and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, now known simply as Islamic State).

Today, no high-level agents of any international terrorist group are believed to be operating inside Saudi Arabia, though about 1,600 people are serving sentences in Saudi prisons for terrorism-related charges. Under considerable pressure from the US government, the Saudi government detained and questioned more than 11,000 people after 2003, hinting at the scale of terrorism-linked activity that had been tacitly tolerated prior. The most commonly cited data point, of course, is that 15 of the 19 hijackers who

perpetrated the 9/11 attacks were Saudis, a fact that highlighted the Saudis' then-longtime policy of looking the other way.

Although the crackdown on terror cells within Saudi Arabia has been sweeping—and the physical harboring of high-level terrorists a thing of the past—the legacies of Saudi Arabia's tacit support for local terrorist cells continues to plague the global security environment. Many Saudi nationals have merely relocated to Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan or Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) cells in Yemen.

Saudi funding is the real problem, of course, and as a leaked 2009 white paper signed by then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton read: “Donors in Saudi Arabia constitute the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide.” The New York Times recently reported that Saudi Arabia is “increasingly worried about the spread of Islamist militant extremism [namely the Islamic State, in Iraq] reaching its own doorstep.” That is a curious remark, since militants have been long known to slip into Saudi Arabian territory—disguised as religious pilgrims—to solicit funds from government-sanctioned charities, as well as to establish front companies for money laundering purposes.

Although Saudi counterterrorism officials have done much to root out and rupture those financing avenues, it is known that wealthy Saudis (among others) continue to finance the Islamic State, the single most prominent terrorist group operating in the Middle East today.

The real problem, however, is that Saudi Arabia maintains entrenched, macro-level policies—domestically and internationally—that exacerbate terrorism problems at their root.

*Continued on the back page*

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# Libyan health care on life support

**IRIN**  
First published Sept. 2

The political chaos and unrest in Libya is taking a serious toll on health services, with the departure of medical staff and humanitarian agencies increasing the strain on health workers seeking to treat those injured in the clashes taking place since June. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) situation report, thousands of people have fled their homes in Tripoli and Benghazi and “large hospitals in Tripoli and Benghazi are overwhelmed with patients requiring emergency and trauma care.” Several aid and UN agencies have suspended work on the ground, including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). On August 28 five newly equipped ambulances were hijacked and stolen.

## Foreign medical staff begin to leave

The Ministry of Health fears a “total collapse” of its health care if foreign medical staff leave Libya in large numbers, according to a spokesman. Sixty percent of hospital staff are from the Philippines and 20 percent from India.

“The departure of foreign medical staff and shortages in medical supplies has rendered the plight of civilians more critical,” Tarek Mitri, the UN special representative of the secretary-general in Libya, told the UN Security Council on August 27.

More than 3,500 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) out of an estimated 13,000 OFWs have been pulled out of Libya, according to a statement from the Labor Secretary of the Philippines, released on August 28. It is not clear how many of the 3,000 OFWs working as medical staff are among the departed.

Sheralyn Cenaza, a Filipino nurse at the Tripoli Central Hospital (TCH), left Libya by boat on August 12: “I’ve been in Libya for two years. The insecurity level has never been so high. We have been hearing bomb blasts every day in Tripoli.”

She said the community was particularly worried after a Filipino

nurse was raped in Tripoli at the end of July.

Another Filipino nurse, Princess Famorean, has decided to stay on in Libya but takes extra care because of the insecurity. “I spend my day inside the hospital or in the residence where I live which is just across the street. I never go out.”

The main motive for the foreigners to stay is money; a Filipino nurse often earns twice or three times more, about LYD920 (\$751) a month, than they could in their country.

TCH is under the protection of national police units but staff say they do not feel so comfortable. “When bad guys are coming inside the hospital with guns, the policemen often leave,” Ahmed\*, a Libyan medical staff member, told IRIN. An unexploded rocket, which fell in the hospital grounds but did not explode, has been cordoned off by tape but not removed since it fell two weeks ago.

Some health centers are inaccessible. The Al-Jala Hospital in Benghazi, the main center for trauma care, is closed, and another major hospital, Al-Hawwary, is inaccessible because it is in an area where fighting is taking place. The situation is similar in Tripoli. “The emergency rooms in Tripoli Medical Center, Central Hospital, and Abusleem Hospitals are barely functioning,” according to WHO.

Abduljalil Graibi, director of TCH, has moved his office to the surgery department to provide support to staff in the current crisis. He estimates that around 15 percent of his foreign medical staff have left, something he says is having a big impact. “When the foreigners are on duty, I know that I can rely on them, whereas the Libyans can walk away from the hospital at any time.” He says working rules are harder to enforce since the revolution.

The departure of foreign medical staff happened mainly during Ramadan when the number of patients is normally low. The lack of fuel and the heavy fighting in Tripoli suburbs have also made people less able to come into hospital. To cope, hospitals have instituted longer working hours.

“Libya should salute the foreign medical staff, even those who decided to leave,” Fawzi Azowai, head



Health care services in Libya are under severe strain because of the recent fighting between militia groups, the worst since the revolution.

of international relations for the Libyan Red Crescent and a trauma orthopedic surgeon at Mitiga Hospital in Tripoli, told IRIN. The hospital is near an Islamist brigade base. The fighters have agreed to help the hospital: They provide fuel for the generator and secure the buildings.

“We remain neutral in the fighting. Fighters from any groups can come to be treated,” said Azowai.

## Supply issues

If the lack of staff is a challenge, the shortage of medical supplies is a bigger concern. The only organ transplantation programme in Libya has closed its 25-bed hospitalization unit in order to send nurses to more urgent services.

Transplants are not possible for the moment because of a lack of medicine.

Four patients have already rejected their kidney transplant. “Our drug storage is empty. For example,

we need monthly 15,000 caps of Neoral-100mg which is used to prevent organ rejection in people who have received a transplant,” said Mohamed Harisha, an anesthetist from the organ transplant center.

Abdul Haffed Ali Ashibani, the general coordinator of the programme, wrote a letter to the Libyan Red Crescent to ask for immunosuppressive drugs on August 28, in which he insisted that “without any action by the relevant authorities (Ministry of Health) despite our emphasis, the failure to supply patients with medicines at the scheduled times would put their lives at risk.”

Most of the medication warehouses in Tripoli are along the airport road or in the Ben Gashir area, south of the city. This has been the location of the heaviest fighting between armed groups fighting for control of the capital. After the victory of Misrata and Islamist brigades over Zintan-linked brigades,

the clashes are more sporadic but state drugs warehouses in Tripoli and Benghazi have been heavily looted.

The closure of Libyan air space and the difficulties of reaching Tripoli by road from Tunisia make getting fresh supplies extremely difficult.

“For basic equipment or drugs, we have stock for months but for specific needs, it is less,” said Khalifa Gaddur, director of Mitiga Hospital in Tripoli. “We treated around 400 injured patients during Ramadan, most of them fighters. Last year, there were only 50 patients,” he said. Adulkarim Fallah, head of the laboratory unit, knows he will wait for weeks for the spares he ordered (due to arrive by ship) from the Middle-East.

## “No Ministry of Health”

“We have to work like there is no Ministry of Health,” Azowai told IRIN. The government resigned on

August 28. Two rival legislative assemblies are currently claiming the right to appoint the executive.

Misrata and Islamist brigades, which gained control of Tripoli after five weeks of clashes, support the General National Congress (GNC) elected in July 2012. The Zintan brigades and the armed group run by the former general, Khalifa Haftar, which is fighting Islamist groups in Benghazi, back the house of representatives, elected in June to replace the GNC and currently located in Tobruk, in the east.

The political feud could again delay the 2014 budget. Some medical staff have not been paid for six months. “Medicine is a humanitarian job but we need a new strong health system to work properly,” said Azowai.

*\*Not a real name*

*Republished with permission from IRIN.*

# Why has the US got cold feet in the Middle East?

**Mustafa Salama**  
middleeasteye.net  
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Analysts and politicians have been criticizing the Obama administration regarding its foreign policy towards Syria, Iraq, and the Middle East as a whole. One wonders why the US is so reluctant to take decisive action in the Middle East, especially against the Islamic State (IS)?

This group is even more notorious than Al-Qaeda and is confined to a specific territory, unlike Al-Qaeda which is not defined by territory.

Middle East observers tend to be focused on the complexities and intricate details of this chaotic bloody region; the world is actually a bigger place and not necessarily any less complex or conflict-ridden. One needs to focus out of the Middle East to understand US reluctance.

While constant headlines and live feeds are made about IS as it conquers new land, pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine are still on the run causing havoc. The Crimea is still occupied by Russia and Putin is still resilient in his nostalgic ambitions. The Russian occupation of the Crimea took the world by surprise, though some observers have been warning of Ukraine’s jeopardy years in advance.

The fact that NATO has been steadily expanding was now, more than ever, worrisome to Russia. Prior to the crises, Ukraine had been closely cooperating with NATO for years, much more so than other countries. This, no doubt, raised eyebrows in Moscow. Russia would have found it unacceptable that

NATO would be sitting directly on its border.

The Obama administration can threaten Russia with sanctions, but it can only go as far as its European allies are willing to go.

Tensions between Russia and the EU are harmful for both, perhaps more so for the EU which depends on its energy from Russia. It is no surprise that German Chancellor Angela Merkel is saying that Ukraine is free to go to Russia’s “Eurasian Union.” Moreover, the Hungarian prime minister is seeking an alliance within EU member states in order to stop sanctions against Russia.

Whether it was NATO’s “true strategic and modernized partnership” that the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) aimed towards in 2010’s Lisbon conference, or Zbigniew Brzezinski’s (former US national security adviser and professor of international relations) 2013 “strategic vision,” which envisioned the west as more vibrant and enlarged with the inclusion of Russia; the perception of future Western-Russian relations were, at times, optimistic.

Russia’s political posture is confrontational and any compromise made towards Russia may not be seen by Moscow as wise, but more as backing down. Marking the threat as real, US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, NATO’s supreme allied commander in Europe, has said to German newspaper Die Welt that NATO countries should not exclude the possibility of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

## Pivot to Asia

Not any less important; or perhaps more important, is China, the most

populated country in the world, an economic powerhouse, which is making huge technological advances. China’s power today is no mere speculation as it was years and decades ago. China is clearly flexing its muscles in its region, and is more assertive in its territorial conflicts in the South China Sea. The conflicts over islands and maritime is raising tensions with neighboring countries, especially with the Philippines and Vietnam.

In May this year, Chinese vessels and Vietnamese navy ships collided in the South China Sea, as Chinese vessels were trying to set up an oil rig in an area claimed by both countries. Tensions rose to alarming levels and sparked anti-China riots in central and southern Vietnam. Months later, in August, General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US joint chief of staff, visited Vietnam, making him the highest ranking US military officer to visit since 1971. He commented on the possibility of lifting the 30-year ban on sales of lethal weapons to Vietnam that some US policymakers have been recommending (including Senator John McCain). In a press conference he noted, “I think the maritime domain is the place of our greatest common interest right now, common security interest. My recommendation, if the ban is lifted, will be that we start with that.”

The US foreign policy in south-east Asia is marked by the “pivot to Asia,” which is supposed to shift focus to that region and away from the Middle East. Despite verbal reassurance by the US, China sees it as an attempt to be contained. Perhaps as a response to Dempsey’s visit, days later a Chinese jet fighter

harassed a US surveillance plane flying near Hanian Island, getting extremely close to it while tilted upside down flying above it.

If the US wants to keep its global position, it will have to protect its allies from potential conflicts, and the US already has military agreements with countries in the region aided by plenty of bases and tens of thousands of troops based there.

Should the US fail to protect its allies, this gives the signal to other countries in the world, including the signal of an inability to rely on the US and the need to seek other ways/alliances for security. As China keeps growing and becomes more powerful, the US will have to be very careful not to raise tensions but be readily available to deter China as much as possible.

## Drained and challenged

The US has been drained in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and spent trillions of dollars on them. The US has been left considerably weaker after those wars, especially the Iraq war. Moreover, US public opinion has no appetite for war and questions the purpose of heavy expenditure and sending troops abroad, especially when there are plenty of US domestic economic concerns.

The world now is very different than it was even a decade ago. Today people are more politically conscious than ever. Advances in information technology has made the global stage crowded with those who challenge states. Whether it is a venue for whistleblowers or social media that mobilizes people for various causes—human rights or militant—information technology has dispersed power and given rise

to new challenges that states including the US never had before. People power is having major effects on the global stage, keeping the policy-makers up at night—especially so in the Middle East.

As Russia revives itself from the collapse of the Soviet Union and China grows (or perhaps recovers from the previous century), the US has actually become weaker, and has to extend its still unmatched power in a more conservative way. If the US pushes its hard military power in one area it will be more vulnerable in another and, with a more daring Russia and emboldened China, this would be a very risky venture. Moreover, with regards to the Middle East, exerting power in this turbulent chaotic hard-to-predict region is expenditure with no returns guaranteed. It will simply be money and effort wasted. Furthermore, as the US is becoming less energy dependent, with the shale gas and oil revolution, there will be less need for the Middle East’s resources.

## New policy and options

Obama’s speech at West Point this May perhaps marks a new era or doctrine of US foreign policy—one that sees its limits and challenges. Despite the debate the speech stirred up for good or for worse, for the Middle East its message was simple: “Invading every country that harbors terrorist networks is naive and unsustainable,” Obama said in the speech. His solution was “today, as part of this effort, I am calling on congress to support a new Counter-terrorism Partnerships Fund of up to \$5 billion, which will allow us to train, build capacity, and facilitate partner countries on the

front lines.” This sets the pace; the US will cooperate with other governments for its security policy in the Middle East. However this can be tricky when the US has not much to coordinate or directly cooperate with in the region and there are potentially problematic groups to the US or rival regimes. This is a major source of reluctance for involvement in Iraq and Syria.

So far the Peshmerga Kurdish forces in Iraq have been the safe choice. However, if Syria and Iraq are to stabilize or push off the IS, supporting these forces won’t be enough. The US can either arm the Free Syrian Army or even push for lifting the ban on arming this group, despite its connections with other groups the US has reservations about. Alternatively, it can cooperate with Bashar Al-Assad, which will also make Moscow more empowered aside from moral implications. Either way, the US will have to find new allies in the region if it wants to continue its influence. Trying to choose partners in complex conflicts will be a source of reluctance. More so when traditional governments in the Middle East that were the first port of call for global cooperation are having their legitimacy and competence called into question.

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# The Houthis: From a local group to a national power

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

Starting their movement in Marran district of Sa'ada governorate, the Houthis are now in control of two entire governorates: Sa'ada and Amran. Trying to expand their dominance in the entire north of Yemen, the Houthis are currently launching massive demonstrations in the capital Sana'a calling for the toppling of the government.

This report highlights the most significant events to date that have taken place since the establishment of the Houthi movement.

## The Youth Believers

In 1979, Dar Al-Hadith Center was established in Dammaj village in Sa'ada governorate by Sheikh Muqbil Al-Wadei to teach Salafi religious doctrines. The center was created with the support of the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, the former commander of the 1st Armored Division. They lent their support in order to try and prevent any attempts by the Zaydi Shias to revolt against the regime and bring back the Imamate which ruled the north from 1918 until 1962.

During the civil war which followed, Sa'ada was a main opposition stronghold. Ever since, the region has been largely ignored and marginalized by the government.

In 1990, the Al-Haq Party was established by Hussein Bader Al-Deen Al-Houthi in an attempt to address a number of social, political, and economic grievances in Sa'ada.

The Youth Believers (Al-Shabab Al-Momen) was established by Hussein Al-Houthi in 1991 in Marran district of Sa'ada as a forum for Zaydi cultural events, with the aim of gathering the Zaydi clerics in Sa'ada and other governorates to support the Al-Haq Party, which represented the Zaydi ideology politically.

The Youth Believers movement focused on reviving cultural, social, and religious events in the area. Members of the group established religious centers in Sa'ada, Al-Jawf, and Sana'a and republished the books Hussein Al-Houthi wrote in response to Al-Wadei's Salafi writings.

## Hussein Al-Houthi

The term "Houthis" comes from the name of Hussein Bader Al-Deen Al-Houthi, who founded the Al-Haq Party and the Youth Believers. Hussein Al-Houthi was born in 1957 in Al-Ruwais city, Bani Baher area, Sa'ada. He belongs to the Hashmite family, which traces its lineage back to Al-Hussein Bin Ali Bin Aby Talib, the Prophet Mohammed's grandson.

Al-Houthi was educated in scientific institutes from elementary until secondary levels and was taught about Zaydi doctrine by his father and other scholars. He later studied in Sudan.

He was a member of parliament representing Marran district in Sa'ada between 1993 and 1997. In 1997, Al-Houthi was unsuccessful in parliamentary elections. He then spent his time spreading his ideology and beliefs through lessons, lectures, and preaching. He focused on leading the Youth Believers, setting up several branches of the organiza-

tion and building several mosques.

On January 17, 2002, Al-Houthi is said by his followers today to have climbed to the top of Marran Mountain—over a decade after he first started the movement in the same place—and it was there that he first shouted what is known as the scream: "Allah is Great, death to America, death to Israel, cursed be the Jews, victory for Islam."

In June 2004, the Youth Believers, or what then became known as the Houthis, began an armed campaign.

## THE HOUTHI WARS

### A long war, 2004-2010

After the events of Sept. 11, 2001, then-President Saleh thought that Wahhabism was growing, specifically with Salafis in Sa'ada, and supported Hussein Al-Houthi in order to counter this trend.

However, after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Hussein Al-Houthi began to publicly criticize Saleh, calling him an agent for the US and Israel. When Saleh headed to perform Friday prayers in one of Sa'ada's mosques people shouted the Houthis' slogan, leading Saleh to have 600 of them arrested on the spot and sent to jail.

President Saleh then resumed his support for the Salafis, appointing them in Sa'ada's mosques instead of Zaydi Imams. Also, he jailed a large number of Hussein Al-Houthi's followers and supporters. The government also stopped paying the salaries of teachers participating in Al-Houthi's activities.

In June 2004, the Yemeni authorities arrested 640 of Hussein Al-Houthi's students while they were protesting in front of the US em-

and 12,000 injured during the six rounds of fighting.

In the first round of war, which lasted from June 18 to Sept. 10, 2004, the founder of the Houthi movement Hussein Bader Al-Deen Al-Houthi was killed, on September 10.

Abdulmalik Bin Bader Al-Deen Al-Houthi, the current leader of the Houthis, was born in 1982. He took over leadership from his brother, Hussein Al-Houthi, following his death in 2004. Abdulmalik Al-Houthi is both a military man and a Zaydi scholar.

### The war with Saudi Arabia

The sixth round of fighting in the war against the government witnessed a new development: The intervention of Saudi Arabia, which accused the Houthis of infiltrating and shooting Saudi boarder guards. In turn, the Houthis accused Saudi Arabia of allowing the Yemeni army to position itself in Al-Dokhan Mountain in Jizan, Saudi Arabia, to attack the Houthis from two sides. After talks with the Saudi government fell through on Nov. 2, 2009, the Houthis raided the area and controlled the mountain.

On November 8, the Saudi authorities declared they had regained control over Al-Dokhan Mountain. They announced that 82 soldiers were killed and 26 missing, also saying that they believed 12 Houthis were killed and 470 others were wounded.

### The war with the Salafis: The Siege of Dammaj

In 2011, the Houthis closed the entrances leading to Dammaj village, where Dar Al-Hadith is located and a large population of Salafis



A model created by the Youth Cultural Forum of the cave in Marran Mountain, Sa'ada, where Hussein Al-Houthi took refuge at the beginning of the war in 2004. It was here that on Sept. 10, 2004, government forces launched an assault, capturing and subsequently executing Hussein Al-Houthi.

Large numbers of Salafis—estimated at around 15,000—fled the governorate, moving to other locations in Yemen, mainly Sana'a.

In Mabar district in Dhamar governorate a war broke out between the Houthis and Salafis at the end of last year, but an agreement was reached on January 26.

### The war with Islah

After the six rounds of fighting with

once in a while until houses owned by Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar, leader of the Hashed tribe, were blown up, and the family was kicked out of the governorate.

The Houthis also took control of Harf Sufian district, Raidah city, and Al-Ahnoom district, all in Amran, subsequently taking control of the entire governorate. In the Houthi takeover of Amran city on July 8, Islah-loyalist Brigadier

his son and increase his son's control over the country's military. He therefore gave weapons to the Houthis for them to decrease Mohsen's power.

President Hadi accused Saleh last week, on August 26, of having supported the Houthis with weapons during the six rounds of fighting from 2004 until 2010.

The low salaries soldiers received and difficult economic conditions also motivated soldiers to sell their weapons. Additionally, the Houthis have stolen significant weaponry from the state in Amran and Sa'ada and Al-Jawf.

Houthis' final source of support is allegedly Iran. On many occasions the Yemeni government accused Iran of supporting the Houthis financially and militarily. Former President Saleh accused Iran on more than one occasion of supporting the group, while President Hadi made the same accusation on August 26 this year.

### Post-2011 uprising

The Houthis participated in the 2011 uprising which toppled then-President Saleh. After the crisis the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) was launched. The Houthis' participation in NDC resulted in their re-branding as "Ansar Allah," or "Supporters of God," in March 2013. Holding 35 seats, the Houthis were the only group who represented Sa'ada governorate in the NDC.

As part of reconciliation efforts in 2012, President Hadi made the decision to hand over Hussein Al-Houthi's corpse, after it was held in secret since 2004. On June 5, Hussein Al-Houthi was buried in Marran, Sa'ada, in front of thousands of his supporters. A shrine was built for him, which is now frequented by Zaydi Shias.

A number of politicians who were closely associated with the Houthis were assassinated, including parliament member Abdulkareem Jadbani, on Nov. 22, 2013, in Sana'a, and Ahmad Sharaf Al-Deen, who was assassinated on January 25 of this year, the day the NDC finished.

Today, the Houthis control the governorates of Sa'ada and Amran. They are located in many areas in Sana'a, such as Arhab and Hamdan, while they have a heavy presence in the governorates of Dhamar in the districts of Anss, Maghrib Anss, and Maber. They also maintain a large presence in Hajjah governorate, and in Al-Jawf in the districts of Al-Safra and Al-Ghail and a number of other areas.

The Houthis' increasing power is reflected in the number of media outlets they control: Al-Masira TV channel, Sam Radio channel, Al-Haweya newspaper, Al-Masira newspaper, and several news websites.



The Houthis' slogan: Allah is great, death to America, death to Israel, curse the Jews, victory for Islam.



The shrine of Hussein Al-Houthi in Marran, Sa'ada. He was buried on June 5, 2013, after his corpse was finally handed over by the government.



Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, who took over when his brother died in 2004.

resides. The Houthis besieged Dar Al-Hadith for two months. Denying having been involved in any siege, the Houthis say they were merely checking for weapons and foreigners inside Dar Al-Hadith.

The clashes continued between the Salafis and the Houthis until October, when a war started between the two parties and resulted in the deaths of 830 Salafis who were killed between October 2011 and January 2014. This led President Hadi to issue a decree requiring non-Yemeni Salafis to leave Dammaj. Later, the government brokered an agreement between the Houthis and the Salafis, which required Yemeni Salafis to leave Dammaj.

the army, during which the Houthis consistently accused Islah Party members of fighting alongside the army, the Houthis engaged in sporadic clashes with members of the Islah Party in a number of governorates. In Al-Radhma district of Ibb governorate Houthis set up checkpoints and began searching citizens, often resulting in small-scale clashes.

Throughout 2014 in Amran, wars and violent clashes broke out between the Houthis and tribes loyal to the Islah Party in Al-Osaimat area, after which the Houthis gained control over Al-Osaimat and Al-Qafah areas. The fighting calmed for a while but restarted again every

Hameed Al-Qushaibi, former commander of the 310th Armored Brigade, was killed.

In Hajjah governorate, seven rounds of fighting have occurred since the beginning of 2013 between the Houthis on one side and the Islah Party and other tribes on the other. The fighting has taken place in the areas of Aahem, Mazara'a, Sawdeen, Wadi Qhams, Al-Mandalah, Mustaba, and Shaha.

In Al-Jawf, conflicts have ignited in various parts of the governorate since the beginning of 2013. Fighting continues until this day.

In Sana'a governorate in the district of Arhab, fierce clashes broke out between the Houthis and tribesmen widely suspected of being Islah affiliates in July, resulting in dozens of deaths. Many locals are anticipating fighting to begin anew in Sana'a governorate.

### Houthis' support

The Houthis have many ways to get their weapons, some of which are provided by gun traders who are spread all over Marib, Al-Jawf, and Sa'ada governorates, and by tribal allies.

During the six rounds of fighting in Sa'ada, soldiers from the Yemeni army used to sell guns to the Houthis as well. Saleh's followers used to sell their weapons just to spite Ali Mohsen. Saleh himself wanted to give the presidency to



Houthi founder Hussein Al-Houthi, who was killed in 2004.



The Dar Al-Hadith Center (center left), which teaches Salafi ideas and concepts, in Dammaj village, Sa'ada.



The wreckage of the Islah Party's headquarters in Amran, bombed in 2014 by the Houthis.



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## راديو يمن تايمز

### رؤيتنا

للإعلام دور كبير ومهم في الدعوة للتغيير السلمي فهو ركيزة من ركائز التغيير نحو الأفضل، ولكن الصراعات السياسية اعتادت أن تفرض أجنداتها على المؤسسات الإعلامية مما يخلق أثراً سلبياً واضحاً على طابع استقلال الإعلام وأثر بشكل مباشر على معايير أساسية مثل الحيادية والموضوعية.

وهنا تسعى "إذاعة يمن تايمز" لتعزز من دور مؤسساتها الإعلامية المستقلة لتصل إلى كل من لا تصل إليه عبر صحيفتها لتكون من الإذاعات الرائدة في اليمن التي جعلت من الحياء والإستقلال سياسة خاصة لها مواصلة بذلك سمعتها الحسنة التي استطاعت أن تفرضها من خلال سياسة الصحيفة على الرغم من عدم وجود قوانين منظمة لعمل الإذاعات الخاصة في اليمن.

### أهدافنا

يعمل "راديو يمن تايمز" على طرح وجهات نظر جديدة وموضوعات هامة للجمهور اليمني ويعايش قضايا المواطنين الذين يجيدون اللغة الانجليزية والعربية والأميين بشكل مباشر. ويسعى أيضاً لإيجاد فضاءات جديدة لحرية الرأي والتعبير في اليمن عامة وفي العاصمة صنعاء خاصة ليكون راديو يمن تايمز «صوت من لا صوت لهم» وليعزز مفاهيم الديمقراطية وحرية الرأي والتعبير من خلال دوراته البرمجية المتنوعة التي تعالج قضايا المرأة والطفل وحقوق الإنسان وتدافع عن الحريات بواسطة إعلامها الهادف وبرامجها المتعددة والتي تخاطب بشفافية وموضوعية كل مستمعيها وتتسم بروح شبابية وإيجابية واضحة لكل من يتابعها سواء سكان صنعاء أو اليمن.

### التأسيس

"راديو يمن تايمز" هو أول إذاعة مجتمعية في صنعاء، حيث بدأ العمل في هذا المشروع في بداية 2012، والذي كان تأسيسه من أهم رؤى مؤسس يمن تايمز الراحل، البروفسور عبد العزيز السقاف. ولذلك سعت الأستاذة / نادية السقاف رئيس تحرير صحيفة يمن تايمز إلى تحقيق فكرة المؤسس الراحل، من خلال تأسيس راديو يمن تايمز بمشاركة الكثير من المتطوعين والداعمين ومن آمن بأهمية الإعلام المستقل ودور الإذاعات المجتمعية. وتعد إذاعة يمن تايمز جزء من مشروع أصواتنا، و هو برنامج دولي يدعم تأسيس الإذاعات المجتمعية في دول الربيع العربي. حيث يتمحور هذا البرنامج حول العرب الذين سعوا لأن تكون أصواتهم المستقلة مسموعة، بعيداً عن الاحتكارات الحكومية، أو التجارية، بحيث تكون نقطة انطلاق جديدة لكل من يريد الخوض في تجربة الإذاعات المجتمعية المستقلة.

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# Short movies and new media cultivate Yemen's film industry

Story and photos by  
**Mohammad Al-Khayat**

Ingmar Bergman once said, "film as dream, film as music. No art passes our conscience in the way film does, and goes directly to our feelings, deep down into the dark rooms of our souls."

Over the past 20 years, the pleasure of watching a good movie in Yemen has largely moved from the public to the private domain, with cinemas long constituting a rarity in the country.

Having first been introduced by the British in Aden in the 1950s, cinemas were soon after to be opened throughout Yemen's major cities, including Taiz and Sana'a.

Until today, some Sana'anis remember the two cinemas in Hadda street, which were shut down in the 1990s and remain closed until today.

Ahmed Al-Mammary, a film and theater actor who works with the Ministry of Culture, blames the ministry for a Yemen devoid of cinemas today. After the ministry stopped funding public cinemas in 1995, "there has been no real management to build up cinemas and re-open the cinemas that were closed," he complains.

While Al-Mammary insists that cinemas should be re-introduced to Yemen, he admits that "the ministry does have some legitimate excuses [for keeping cinemas shut down], some of which are the lack of budget and the people's rejection of having cinemas in Yemen."

Indeed, violent attacks on movie goers and the opposition to cinemas by more conservative factions of society constitute a common explanation among Yemenis today as to why the cinemas closed. Religion is cited among the key reasons put forth by cinema-lovers, with references to the "Wahhabi influence" being widespread.

Even today, residents like Abdulmalik Ahmed from Sana'a perceive cinemas in Yemen as immoral and suspicious for their screening of "indecent movies" in the past. There was no control over the selection of movies, he complained, or separate sections for men and women inside cinemas.

Given that movie theaters continue to be widely perceived as a "foreign intrusion" incompatible with local customs and values, challenges are inevitable for Yemeni filmmakers who want to make their voices



Abandoned cinemas like the one in Hadda (left) and in Tahrir Square (right) constitute notable parts of Sana'a's contemporary cityscape. Without money to produce long and costly films or locations to screen their work, many have turned to the production of short movies which are published online.



heard.

Without the money to produce films or the locations to screen their work, many have turned to the production of short movies which are

Rawabit Media company, pioneered a group of media amateurs and film-enthusiasts interested in acting, directing, and producing when starting up his business in 2012.



"Political Game" is a short film portraying the 2011 uprising with the help of animated toys that move across a chess board.

published online, thereby creating a cultural and cinematic movement in Yemen.

"We produce films that require more effort than cash because we can provide the effort but no cash," said short movie director Amer Gaadel, who is also the founder and director of Zoom Media, a team of amateur photographers, actors, and directors producing short films.

**Yemeni filmmakers embrace new media**  
Abdulrahman Al-Jamili, director of

Within a short period of time, the company became renowned for its short films and videos which saw a significant hike in views on YouTube. One of the videos, titled "Eish Feekom (What's wrong with you)," got about 86,000 views.

Al-Jamili is convinced that without new media he could not have established the Rawabit Media company. "Without social media, we could not do a proper job and maintain our work. Our short movies simply could not spread the same way," he explains.

Rawabit Media's short movies vary from light comedy to more serious human rights issues and political criticism.

"Our main focus in short-films is the message we want to convey. The methods of delivery differ, it could be comical, tragic or any other style," said Al-Jamili.

The motive underlying most short movie productions, according to Al-Jamili, is the goal to "contribute to a renaissance in our society." He explains, "the short film industry is booming among high-class citizens who know of short movies' importance in spreading awareness about issues like the empowerment of women, early marriage, sexual abuse of children, or tribal revenge cases."

According to Al-Jamili, the low revenues of short movie productions pose a significant threat to keep the production running. A medium-sized short film, lasting five minutes costs an average of \$1,500, including the actors pay, according to Al-Jamili.

Given the dire economic situation that Yemen's short film industry faces, companies like Rawabit Media or Zoom Media need to occasionally resort to producing advertisement.

Not too long ago, Rawabit Media produced a movie for the local NGO Righteousness and Chastity, which works to facilitate marriages between young Yemenis.

The film tells the story of a young man wanting to get married, yet imagining unrelenting obstacles such as high dowry payments. By ending the video on a happy note, with the couple being able to marry, the Righteousness and Chastity Organization promoted its mass marriage project for 550 couples.

Amer Gaadel finds himself in a similarly difficult financial situation as Al-Jamili, unsatisfied that most of the short films Zoom Media produces are promotional in nature. "Most short films made by us are sponsored by associations and organizations which ask us to produce a short film about their activities or about a topic they are dealing with, in which case the content is provided to us."

For Fuad Al-Jaadi, assistant director at the Magic Touch Production company, it is clear that a lack of financial resources explains why "some of the short film ideas remain just ideas."

While the producers of short movies are in need of encouragement from relevant authorities, they face a significant lack of support. "Awards and recognition are limited to the Yemen Film Festival which gives five awards for the top films," Gaadel opines.

The Yemen Film Festival is a competition developed specifically to recognize amateur filmmaker talent. As such, production companies or large

media houses are forbidden from entering. Submissions are restricted to individuals where the prize is a monetary sum of YR600,000 (\$2,800), a high definition camera, and the film award itself.

## Onwards and upwards for short film industry

Al-Jaadi points out that despite significant challenges, the film "Ehsan" made by Yemeni director Musaab Al-Hutami won third place in Mukhtar Short Islamic Film Festival in France for the category "Best short film in the Arabian region." This achievement has been considered a quantum leap in Yemen's short film industry.

"Ehsan" is not the only film that has won an international competition. The Yemeni film "A New Day in Old Sana'a" won the Best Arab Film Award in Cairo's International Film Festival in 2005, also being the first Yemeni film to enter Cannes International Film Festival, according to Abdullah Yahya Ibrahim, an actor and director.

One of the Yemeni short movies which enjoys particular popularity on social media and won fourth place in the Yemen Film Festival in 2013, is "Political Game." The five-minute-long video clip, which is available on YouTube, portrays the 2011 uprising with the help of animated toys that move across a chess board.

Just like short movie producers, the government is well aware of the political and social power of films. In an attempt to warn people about the

dangers of terrorism and the joining terrorist groups, the Ministry of Interior produced "The Losing Bet" in 2008. The stereotypical plot tells the story of a Yemeni man who returned from a longer stay abroad influenced by dangerous, extremist ideas. Upon his return he recruits neighbors and friends, focusing on the unemployed, eventually launching a terrorist attack which kills a number of tourists. The picture seems so complete that details of his wife, a painter who is made to abandon her profession after suffering excessive violence by her art-hating husband, seem redundant.

While short movies are limited to social media, government produced movies are aired on the state-run Al-Yemen channel.

In spite of such obvious disadvantages, the producers of short movies stay motivated to continue their work.

"There is no way to measure our success in raising awareness and changing society, but the positive responses we get on Facebook, YouTube or WhatsApp motivate us to continue what we do," said Al-Jamili.

For Fuad Al-Jaadi "short film production is a new medium of art for the people of Yemen. We have been creative in this field for some time now and there are many big and important ideas. If the ideas were implemented they would be an amazing window into Yemeni culture for audiences of short films around the world."

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# Politics of Qat: The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen

## By Peer Gatter

Book review and extracts  
**Nadia Al-Sakkaf**

The cover page shows an old man with an apprehensive look in his eyes, half-smiling as he hands you a bunch of qat leaves. In the background there is a wild-eyed teenage boy, cheeks swollen from the qat that fills them, peering into the camera.

This 862 page hard-cover book published by Reichert Publications is a weapon

in all senses of the word. Besides documenting the ever growing role qat plays in Yemen and in the life of Yemenis, the book also analyses Yemen's qat policy, the tribal qat economy, and the qat connections of our decision makers.

I had this huge publication lying by my bedside for months before I summoned the courage to pick it up and start reading. This was not only due to its intimidating size, but probably even more so due to its

topic. Qat, and the political and economic schemes around it, were to me as a Yemeni always a well-known problem. I just was too afraid to read for myself and acknowledge how I as a citizen am part of a society that enables this culture of qat.

I don't chew Qat and personally I am ardently opposed to it. But I live in a society where Qat prevails. After years of research, Peer Gatter, the author of this book, published it in 2012, offering to the

world an insight into this drug and what it has done to my country. Gatter was working for many years for the World Bank and UNDP in Yemen and is now heading the Integrated Expert Program for Afghanistan of the German Development Cooperation (GIZ-CIM).

To read more about the book go to [www.qat-yemen.com](http://www.qat-yemen.com)



PART 13

## Qat and the political uprising

Qat is at the very root of civil society culture in Yemen, even though the subject of qat itself does not figure on the agendas of most civil society organizations.

The societal opposition to qat remains poorly coordinated today and the absence of networking activities between the NGOs is remarkable. The numerous anti-qat associations that emerged after Yemen's unification in 1990 hardly see each other as fighters for a common cause, but rather as competitors over scarce donor funding.

In the past years, the internet has gained in importance for activists in fighting qat, in creating awareness on the ills of this drug, and in networking with like-minded people from around the globe through Twitter or Facebook. Through this medium, new societal groups are targeted and connected, and campaigns are announced and even launched with greater ease and at a much lower cost than organizing street campaigns—an important factor for Yemen's notoriously underfunded NGOs.

It could be said that, at least since the 1990s, qat has deserved recognition as Yemen's de facto national plant. For many Yemenis qat was the true unifier of Yemen's north and south. Government consultations between the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) and the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) that led to the unification of these two anti-theoretical systems in May 1990 were held primarily during qat chews. The same is true for the mediation meetings after the failed secession attempt of the southern governorates in 1994.

Besides creating synergies, qat has also been perceived as an agent inhibiting change in Yemen—or rather—as a very Yemeni response to societal and political change experienced after the country's revolution and its opening up to the outside world.

This may also be a reason why the qat-abolitionist movement of the early 1970s had so little success. Government directives were understood as hostile efforts of a small westernized elite to eradicate and marginalize traditional Yemeni culture. This brought qat to the very center of attention among groups rejecting change. They felt that the government's move against qat was not merely directed against a plant with harmful impacts on the economy and on health, but was seen as an attempt to impose foreign ways of life. As a consequence, qat chewing became a way to express opposition to modernization and for affirming both the value of heritage and the own sense of self worth at a time when national identity was not yet clearly defined.

Understanding the rebellion against the usurpation by the West and by globalization, one will also understand why one rarely sees Yemenis chewing in trousers. Even smart looking business men or technocrats who wear western-style suits during the morning hours will—when heading to a qat chew—quickly exchange these for their jallabiyya. This is not only a question of comfort, but one of tradition, identity, pride, and not least tact as even educated Yemenis consider western clothes at qat chews inde-



cent or slanderous.

When in mid January 2011 a popular uprising forced the Tunisian dictator Zayn Al-Abidin Bin Ali into exile, hundreds of Yemenis also took to the streets, protesting against unemployment, corruption, and proposals by the government for constitutional amendments that would allow President Saleh to run for office yet another time.

Yemen's "Day of Rage" on February 2, 2011, brought some 20,000 to Sana'a's streets, but protests failed, at least initially, to develop the same dynamics as in Egypt where sit-ins

on Cairo's Liberation Square, the Maydan Al-Tahrir, turned into over-night public festivals. Yemen's uprising ended punctually at noon when the qat markets opened. Newspapers around the world did not fail to note, that Yemen's uprising may have a different fate than those in northern Africa, and that qat was to blame.

To recompense Saleh's supporters for their dedication, the regime served a free lunch of rice and chicken in the tents and provided bottled water and a bag of Hamdani qat for each. In addition, a daily subsidy of YR2,000 (\$9.3) was handed out. On February 14, 2011, the fourth day of consecutive anti-Saleh agitations, this allowance was raised to YR3,000 (\$14)—four times the average salary of a day laborer.

At Sana'a University, where the phalanx of the anti-Saleh opposition had been demonstrating, after days of unsuccessful protests, self-critical undertones were also heard. The tenor of these voices was summed up—not without sarcasm—by Rashad Abd Al-Ghani, a student speaker of the Faculty of Medicine:

"As long as qat is more important to us than politics there cannot be any true revolution in Yemen. We are being instru-

mentalized far too easily by free gifts of qat. But you shall see, when the day has come that qat will disappear from our markets, a fierce revolution will break out all over the country! But I fear that its aim will not be democracy. It will rather be a distribution battle, a bloody war over the last bundles of qat. And you shall also see, the new president will not be he who brings freedom and development to Yemen, but he who succeeds to bring back qat into our cheeks."



chase Saleh out of office."

The violent riots that had befallen Yemen after raising fuel prices in 2005 had taught the government that de-escalation had to start in qat markets. During the days of violent anti-government protests in February 2011, outside many of the capital's bigger qat markets military vehicles with heavy machine guns mounted on the truck beds had taken position. Qat markets such as that of the Hadda and Al-Hasaba neighborhoods with their large gatherings of qat sellers and clients had in 2005 been the germ cell of anti-government agitation. From here protest marches and violence had spread throughout Sana'a. Thus when fighting between the government and tribes escalated in late May 2011 in Sana'a, a number of qat markets in locations considered to be of strategic importance were closed down.

In Yemen's south, an area having called during the past years ever more violently for secession, the government manipulated qat prices and qat supply in the hope

this could help to keep people busy chewing and thus quiet. During February 2011, qat prices dropped to an unprecedented low in Aden and Hadramout despite the winter season when qat is usually scarce and expensive. Aden chewers reported that they had never seen qat so plentiful in the markets, as in the days following the euphoria of overthrowing the Egyptian Mubarak regime.

### Chewing for a new era

Qat, which analysts had held in the initial phase of the protests responsible for stemming change, was soon to become the very motor for forming the new society that emerged in the discussions and minds of protesters. While in early February 2011 protests had still ended at noon as activists retreated to buy and chew qat, by late February more and more people would remain camping at the protests sites and consume their qat rations in the emerging tent city.

As an anonymous observer commented, people also adjusted their chewing habits and were now "willing to go on 3-4 hour marches starting at 4 PM, with qat in their mouths instead of being nailed to their seats."

New qat markets burgeoned around Sana'a University, as demand for the leaves increased at this epicenter of the protests. Qat had been relatively costly until mid-February due to the rising demand and the cold weather persisting in the preceding months that made irrigation in many highland areas risky due to frost. With rising temperatures and with many farmers wanting to capitalize on the protests, qat prices collapsed in late February. By intensive irrigation of their qat farms in the dry plateau and basin areas of Nihm, Khawlan, Arhab, Bani Hushaysh and Hamdan, farmers had inundated the Sana'a market with qat, rapidly leading to an oversupply and bringing prices for a bag of medium quality qat down from YR2,000 (\$9.30) in February to around YR800 in March (\$3.70).

Qat chews also helped to forge new alliances in the anti-Saleh camp as the agitation and communal chewing sessions soon brought together people from all walks of life and all areas of Yemen. By the end of February, the protesters, who until then had represented for the

most part the young urban population, received reinforcements from the countryside, when several of Yemen's major tribes joined the uprising.

The protest camp at Sana'a University before long developed into a city within the city. An agglomeration of tents, extending for over six kilometers from the old university near Zubairi Street along Sana'a's several lane Ring Road and into countless side streets past the new university as well as onto Cairo Street, from where it wound further west, reaching the 60 Meter Road. Reportedly, the tent city had a permanent population of around 100,000 that rose to 300,000 on weekends.

It was in qat sessions that tens of thousands of hopeful men and women—mostly in gender separated tents—developed a vision of a new republic. It was here that demands were formulated and that in hours-long debates a consensus for a Yemen after Saleh was built with qat as a bargaining tool.

### Revolting against qat and other "little dictators"

In late 2011, the revolution went into a second phase. After having initially been directed against Saleh and his 33-year rule, it now also targeted the "little dictators"—his wider entourage and his clients in what was dubbed the "parallel revolution."

In early January 2012, Yemeni activists decided that qat should be ranked among the "little dictators" and called for a "revolution on one's self." Qat, they declared, was "as great a menace to Yemen's progress as decades of government corruption and misrule, and even harder to topple than Saleh."

On January 12, 2012, thousands

of people followed the boycott campaign entitled "A Day Without Qat." The event was kicked off a week earlier by Hind Al-Iryani through Twitter and Facebook.

Anti-qat activists were quite realistic about options of change, saying that it would be impossible to ban qat. But they expressed the hope that consumption could be reduced citing as a good example the PDRY's qat law that had limited chewing to weekends.

Shortly after the boycott day the Yemeni qat protester community set another ambitious target for action—April 12 was declared as a day to rally "Towards Government Offices Without Qat." Yemen's new government endorsed the campaign. The government-run daily Al-Thawra reported intensively on the campaign and its aims. In several articles it cited recent scientific studies on qat and interviewed physicians, agronomists and economists on the hazards of qat.

The campaign entitled "The Beginning of Change—Public Facilities Without Qat" centered on Yemen's larger cities Sana'a, Ibb, Taiz, Hodeida, and Aden, where activists of youth organizations and anti-qat NGOs distributed fliers, posters and brochures in government facilities to thousands of civil servants. In Sana'a, employees of the ministries of information, education, electricity, health and agriculture were targeted as well as servicemen and employees in police stations, army barracks, post offices, public schools and hospitals. Awareness was also raised in qat markets of Sana'a and Taiz and qat merchants willingly put up anti-qat posters in their shops, not in the least concerned for their trade and not believing that the campaign could have a lasting effect.





[illegible]



## The irony of Saudi Arabia's latest UN contribution

Domestically, the state has a crystal clear no-tolerance policy for dissent of any form. In May 2014, a Saudi court sentenced a well-known Saudi activist and blogger, Raif Badawi, to ten years in prison and 1,000 lashes for creating the Free Saudi

Liberals website for political and social debates. In June, three Saudi lawyers were collectively given fines of more than one million Saudi riyals (\$266,666) and a total media ban for posting critical tweets about the kingdom's Ministry of Justice.

In July, prominent human rights activist Waleed Abu Al-Khair was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges stemming from his peaceful activism. The Saudi security forces' longtime onslaught on the Shia-majority region of Qatif has only raised anti-government sentiment further. With almost no peaceful outlets for dissent, there is a real risk that sympathy for extremist tactics of self-expression will grow.

On an international level, both the Saudi government and its nationals supply militant groups of varying stripes weapons and other forms of support. The government is the main backer of the Syrian rebels, including combatants who fight alongside Al-Qaeda loyalists. In May 2013, a senior rebel military commander declared "Saudi Arabia is now formally in charge of the Syria issue." It is a conflict which US officials have repeatedly warned breeds terrorism. In Iraq, too, the Saudis have been key backers for militant groups that only perpetuate an already-abysmal security situation.

The Saudi government has adopted a bizarre and self-defeating cocktail of policies that simultaneously crack down on and enable terrorism. Despite its often-impressive offensives against guilty individuals and domestic terror financing operations, its more entrenched—and

far-reaching—policies on dissent and troubling regional alliances do much to sustain terrorists around the region and the world.

### Playing catch up

Officials from the US and Saudi Arabia boast about closely co-operating at high levels on counter-terrorism efforts. American authorities say they discuss terrorism issues with their Saudi counterparts in private—a strategy that, while sometimes objectionable, has its merits. In these conversations, it is important that Americans be explicit about the connections between Saudi Arabia's ongoing policies to repress peaceful dissent—as well as to carelessly funnel weapons around the region—and terrorism. Such policies are self-defeating to Saudi security, and increase threats to the region, the United States, and the world.

For all they have done wrong on the terrorism front, the Saudi government deserves credit for some more recent steps, including extensive co-operation with the United States to restrict terrorists' funding channels, hunt down wanted persons, and share information. Its donation to the UNCCT is part of this broader (and hopefully long-lasting) effort to turn over a new leaf, which

is almost certainly taking place under considerable pressure from their counterparts in Washington.

But Saudis have a lot of catching up to do. The variety of ways in which the government has fostered

the growth of terrorist activity remains an unforgettable stain on its record.

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**BIOKUBE** Wastewater Purification

**FMC Technologies** Chikson / WECO / Dynetor products

**FMC Technologies** Smith Meters / LACT Units / ULTRASONIC Meters

**Solar Turbines** 4 Service Company

**Petrofac** Mechanical Svcs.

**Manpower Supply**

**Calibration & Maintenance of Flowmeters**

**DRESSER Masoneilan** Control Valves

**FMC Technologies** Marine & Truck Loading Arms & Systems

**Rockwell Automation** Allen-Bradley

**3** Damage, abrasion, electrical or & mechanical under pressure, Energy risk rating

**MURPHY** Frank W Murphy

**FMC Technologies** Fluid Control Fittings/Pumps/ Invalco / Manifolds

**Honeywell Enraf** Tank gauging & Inventory system

**SEVERN Trent** Power, Desalination & Central Sewerage Electrification

**Construction & Facility Maintenance**

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