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Prime minister appointment delayed

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Sept. 28—Six days have elapsed since a new prime minister was due to be appointed following the signing of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement by political parties in the capital on Sept. 21.

Article 2 of the agreement stated a new prime minister should be appointed within three days.

Fares Al-Saqqaf, advisor to President Hadi for strategic affairs, told Al-Arabie Al-Jadeed newspaper on Sunday that the delay in appointing the new prime minister in Yemen is a result of disagreement between the

political parties and also because such an announcement is associated with the seats allocated to political parties in the government.

Al-Saqqaf expected that the new prime minister will be announced within two days.

Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Council, claimed that the agreement allowed one month for the prime minister to be chosen. "Those who drafted the agreement might not have stated this clearly."

When asked if the delay was due to the lack of qualified, non-partisan candidates, Al-Bukhaiti

said that there are several qualified people in the country, but there are disagreements between political parties.

Under the same article of the peace agreement, it was stated that the prime minister should be neutral, non-partisan and efficient—a person of integrity who enjoys broad political support from all parties.

Zaid Al-Shami, head of the Islah Party in parliament, told the Yemen Times that he did not know what the exact reason was behind the delay in appointing a new prime minister.

"We wonder about this delay, the prime minister was supposed

to be appointed within three days after signing the agreement. The delay allows the Houthi militias to spread in the capital," he said.

Yaseen Al-Tamimi, an independent political analyst in Sana'a, told the Yemen Times in a veiled reference to the Houthis, that "certain powers on the ground," are trying to obstruct the implementation of the agreement and to prevent their political rivals from accessing the government.

The agreement was signed on Sept. 21 by the majority of the political parties in Yemen, including the Houthis, the Islah Party, the General People's Congress and the Socialist Party.

Houthis sign security annex

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Sept. 29—The Houthis signed the annex of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement on Friday. The annex pertained to the security and military conditions in Amran, Al-Jawf, Marib, and Sana'a governorates, as well as other governorates witnessing violence.

All political parties signed the security annex on Sept. 21, barring the Nasserist Unionist People's Organization, who signed the annex on Saturday, a day after the Houthis. The Nasserist Party previously refused to sign the agreement because of the Houthis refusal to sign the annex the same day they signed the agreement.

The signing of the annex took place in the presence of the director of the Presidential Office, Dr. Ahmed Awadh Bin Mubarak, and United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar.

In a statement to the state-run Saba News Agency, Dr. Ahmed Awadh Bin Mubarak, director of the presidential office, said "the signing of the security annex without any modifications was done to remove any confusion and end any suspicions... It is an essential part of the agreement."

However, independent analyst Yasin Al-Tamimi suspects that modifications were made to the annex. "The Houthis modified the annex before signing it, if there were no modifications they would have signed the annex earlier when they signed the agreement," he said.

Ali Al-Qahoom, spokesperson for the Houthis, confirmed to the Yemen Times that all the terms in the annex will be implemented because they are in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC)

outcomes. The Houthis made the implementation of the NDC outcomes one of their key demands in the protest movement that began on August 18.

Giving his view on why the Houthis delayed signing the annex, Al-Qahoom said, "the annex was a new addition to the agreement and included terms related to the ceasefire agreement in Amran and Al-Jawf governorates which ended a month ago. We had reservations about this, and when we offered our own suggestions, they were refused by the authorities, and hence we refused to sign."

"After that the authorities understood our propositions and agreed," he said. Despite the delay in signing by the Houthis, Al-Qahoom affirmed that the security annex was signed as it is.

However, Al-Qahoom did add that private talks which have not been put into writing took place between the government and the Houthis from September 21 to 27. According to him, they discussed Amran and Al-Jawf governorates, with particular focus placed on the 115th Infantry Brigade located in Al-Jawf, which is headed by Hassan Al-Abkar, an Islah Party member.

The Yemen Times contacted the Presidential Office and Ministry of Interior, but there was no response.

After the signing of the annex, Benomar issued a media statement saying, "signing the annex clearly shows the agreement and the annex as one part that cannot be divided, this agreement is a road map to overcome the current crisis and help the political process. All parties must adhere to the terms in this agreement and its annex immediately, the UN is ready to condemn and disclose any breach of this agreement."

AQAP claims responsibility for rocket launched at US embassy

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Sept. 29—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) issued a statement on Saturday claiming responsibility for the launch of a rocket at the US embassy just hours earlier.

Following the event, the US embassy said in a tweet that it did not believe it was the target of an attack. However, one of the guards surrounding a compound near the embassy told the Yemen Times that he believed the com-

pound was the target. The rocket landed near an armored vehicle guarding the compound.

The compound is about 1,000 meters from the embassy, according to estimates by the Yemen Times, which were confirmed by the guards surrounding the compound. Other news outlets reported that the rocket landed about 200 yards (about 183 meters) away from the embassy.

The US embassy detained a Yemen Times journalist covering

the story for about an hour for taking photos of the area where the rocket had landed. An official in the embassy threatened to hold on to a Yemen Times camera, finally releasing the journalist with his camera, but warning him not to publish any photos.

AQAP said in its statement that the rocket was in response to a drone strike in Al-Jawf which left two alleged AQAP members dead, but which also injured three children. AQAP also claimed that the "attack" left

a number of casualties. The US embassy denied that anyone was killed or injured during the incident, as did the guards guarding the compound 1,000 meters away.

However, Mohammed Hizam, the deputy director of public relations at the Interior Ministry, told the Yemen Times that he was initially informed that there had been one casualty in the incident. He was later informed that no one was killed or injured, he said.

Foreign prisoners released days after National Security Bureau head attacked

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Sept. 29—Three Houthis were killed on Saturday during clashes in Hadda area of the capital at the home of the head of the National Security Bureau, Hassan Al-Ahmadi.

The Yemen Times was unable to confirm how many of Al-Ahmadi's security guards were killed or injured in the clashes.

The Yemen Times contacted officials at the National Security Bureau who declined to comment. A National Security Bureau official told the state-run Saba News Agency on condition of anonymity that the Houthis attacked and tried to break into Al-Ahmadi's home.

"They engaged [Al-Ahmadi's] security guards for two-and-a-half hours, during which a number of guards were killed and injured," the official told Saba.

Houthis deny that they attacked Al-Ahmadi's home.

Houthi spokesperson Ali Al-Qahoom told the Yemen Times that Al-Ahmadi's security guards intercepted a Houthi patrol car that was driving around the Hadda area, and that clashes were a response to this interception.

The fighting "led to the killing of three Houthis and an unknown number of the house's security guards," Al-Qahoom added.

According to the National Security Bureau official cited by Saba, the attack on Al-Ahmadi's house follows the Houthis' siege of the National Security Bureau headquarters in Sana'a's Old City.

Starting on September 23, the siege ended three days later, on September 26.

According to the bureau's Operations Department, Houthis did not gain control over the headquarters.

When asked about the Houthis' recent break-in of houses belonging to Islah officials, such as Mohammad Al-Qahtan or Ali Mohsen,

Al-Qahoom said that the Houthis "have information indicating that there are a large number of weapons and explosives in those places."

The National Security Bureau is an intelligence security apparatus under the jurisdiction of the president. It is located in Sana'a's Old City. Established in 2002, its task is to protect the country from any internal or external security threats. Its current head is Hassan Al-Ahmadi.

Release of prisoners

On September 24, Yemeni authorities released two Lebanese nationals who are alleged to be members of Hezbollah, a source in the Defense Ministry told the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity.

One day later, on September 25, at least two Iranians, suspected of being members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, were also released, the source added.

Eight Yemenis were also released on September 25, according to the Defense Ministry source. They were initially arrested in a joint operation by the US Navy and the Yemeni coast guard in January 2013.

All eight prisoners had been charged with smuggling Iranian weapons into Yemen and were sentenced in November 2013 to one to ten years of imprisonment. The Ministry of Interior previously disclosed that the arms shipment contained 40 tons of explosives and projectiles.

Local and international media outlets circulated news claiming that the Houthi siege of the National Security Bureau was an attempt to try and release Iranian prisoners in Yemen.

The Houthi spokesperson, Al-Qahoom, denied the accusation. "These matters concern the Yemeni authorities, we do not intervene. This is a matter of international relations that I know nothing about."

Houthis and AQAP clash in Al-Baida

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Sept. 29—Five armed Houthis were killed Sunday when their vehicle was ambushed by suspected Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) members in Rada'a district, Al-Baida governorate, according to security officials in the district.

Rada'a Security Chief Jamal Aburrejal told the Yemen Times that the situation in Rada'a between the Houthis and AQAP has grown increasingly violent.

The attackers used a vehicle during the ambush owned by Houthis, not drawing suspicion from the other vehicle until it was too late, security sources said.

In another incident that took place the same evening, but before the ambush, Saad Mabkhut, a police commander in the 26th Mechanized Brigade, was kidnapped on his way to the brigade's headquarters in Rada'a. Security sources in the district have blamed AQAP for the kidnapping.

Aburrejal said that Rada'a has tightened security in the district since Sunday.

An AQAP member in Rada'a told the Yemen Times on the condition of anonymity that AQAP members have a heavy presence in the district in anticipation of attacks by the Houthis.

Ali Al-Qahoom, spokesperson for the Houthi Political Office, told the

Yemen Times that the situation is "too dangerous for the Houthis to do nothing."

"We have told the government that we are ready to cooperate with them to eradicate AQAP, and if the state does not perform its duties and protect its citizens, we will do it ourselves," Al-Qahoom said.

In what may be the first of its kind, AQAP and its supporters held a public demonstration on Sept. 26 in Rada'a after Friday prayers. Demonstrators could be seen chanting, marching, and carrying AQAP's signature black flags. The demonstrators, according to Rada'a resident Mohammad Al-Dhahab, chanted anti-Houthi slogans.

"The governorate is witnessing

major AQAP movements in many districts, however Rada'a is their main center, since it includes many tribes that support AQAP. We are also witnessing major Houthi arrivals who are pouring in from several districts," Al-Dhahab said.

The demonstration came after AQAP executed Brigadier Mohammed Taher Al-Shami, head of the Political Security Bureau in Damt district of Al-Dhale governorate. He was kidnapped last week along with four of his escorts and was executed in Rada'a district. AQAP claimed responsibility on Twitter and posted photos of the execution.

Al-Dhahab said that dozens of families from the district have fled in light of the latest wave of violence.



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Protesters call on Houthis to leave Sana'a

■ Ali Abulohoom

SANA'A, Sept. 28—Dozens of protesters rallied on Sunday in the capital, to put pressure on the government to evacuate Houthi militants from the city.

The protesters called for the president and the parties who signed the Peace and National Partnership Agreement on September 21, including representatives from the Houthis, to abide by the agreement's provisions.

"We are all concerned about the existence of the Houthi militants in Sana'a's streets. We call on President Hadi and the international community to step in to force the Houthis out of Sana'a," Samera Ahmed, one of the rally organizers, told the Yemen Times.

The agreement stipulates that "all hostilities being conducted by all sides inside the capital, Sana'a, and its surroundings shall cease;" that "unofficial checkpoints in and around Sana'a shall also be dismantled;" and that "state institutions still under Houthi control will be handed back to the government," among other terms.

Armed Houthis have been deployed in the streets, manning checkpoints and monitoring government buildings, since taking much of the capital.

The rally was organized by independent activists who gathered on Zubairi Street, in the middle of Sana'a, before setting off for Change Square, the birth place of the 2011 uprising.

The protesters held posters with slogans calling for the prompt re-establishment of state control over the capital.

The Houthis have been accused of storming the houses of many politicians and looting or destroying their property. The protesters



Protesters gather on Zubairi street in the middle of Sana'a before setting off to Change Square.

called for the Houthis to hand the houses over to their owners and provide compensation.

Rathia Al-Metwakel, a National Dialogue Conference (NDC) member, was among the protesters and told the Yemen Times that she attended the rally to express her dissatisfaction with the militants' presence in Sana'a.

"I hope security and safety will be restored in Sana'a and government institutions will be handed over to the government," she said.

Houthi spokesperson Mohammed Abdulsalam declared on Thursday that armed Houthis would be pulled back from Sana'a the next day. As of Monday the militants remain deployed in the streets.

The Houthis began setting up encampments in and around Sana'a in mid-August, following a speech by the group's leader, Abdulmalik

Al-Houthi, the previous day. The groups three main demands were the toppling of the coalition government, the reversal of fuel subsidy cuts, and the implementation of the NDC outcomes.

Houthi supporters remained peaceful in the capital for almost one month, before a week-long escalation of violence resulted in the group's takeover of the capital on September 21.

The Houthis signed the annex of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement on Saturday, after initially refusing to sign it on September 21. The annex does not explicitly stipulate the immediate withdrawal of all armed Houthis from the capital, but states that all parties should "enable the state to fulfill its functions" and dissolve tensions through dialogue and not violence.

Ali Al-Emad, a member of the

Houthis' Political Office, told the Yemen Times that the militants will be evacuated from Sana'a based on the schedule of the annex, but he refused to give any further information.

The Yemen Times witnessed a number of armed Houthis walking in the streets near the rally, one of whom said that as long as the movement is peaceful and does not use violence to disturb the peace, the Houthis will let them be.

"We are not afraid of the Houthi militants deployed in the streets because we are marching peacefully," said Sayid Al-Ibi, a 53-year-old retired officer and one of the participants.

Suicide bomber in Marib targets Houthis

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, Sept. 29—A suicide bombing allegedly carried out by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) targeted a Houthi location in Al-Majzr district of Marib governorate on Sunday, according to Saleh Muthana, the security manager of Marib.

Muthana told the Yemen Times the location targeted is a health center which Houthi militants recently took over, adopting it for combat purposes.

AQAP claimed responsibility for the attack on its twitter account. The group claimed that dozens of Houthis were left dead and injured on Sunday after one Al-Qaeda follower targeted the Houthis in Al-Magzar district of Marib governorate.

The number of casualties remains unclear. While local media reported that 15 Houthis were killed and 50 others injured in the suicide attack, Muthana said Houthi members have reported significantly fewer casualties.

"We sent a person in plain clothes to the location. The Houthis in the health center said only three were injured. They said they sent the injured to Sana'a," Muthana told the Yemen Times.

According to Muthana, the Houthis might be hiding the real number of casualties. A Houthi source on condition of anonymity has previously told the Yemen Times that the group prefer to not disclose the exact number of their

casualties so that they do not negatively affect the morale of their fighters.

At the same time, speaking about local media reports, Muthana said, "the car exploded outside [the building], not inside. As a result, the casualties could be less than what was reported," said Muthana.

Last week, AQAP attacked a house in Sa'ada owned by a prominent Houthi figure, claiming soon after on the same twitter account that dozens of the Houthis inside were killed and wounded. A Houthi source told the Yemen Times following the attack that only four were killed, in addition to six injured.

Saeed Al-Jamhi, the head of the Al-Jamhi Center for Strategic Studies, told the Yemen Times that attacks by AQAP on Houthi positions are to be expected.

"The Houthi group and Al-Qaeda have been enemies for a long time. It was expected that Al-Qaeda would launch attacks on the Houthis after the latter took over many areas in Sana'a, Al-Jawf, and Amran," said Al-Jamhi. "The root causes of the antagonism has been existing for long. However, the military expansion of the Houthi group has sparked such suicide attacks."

Al-Jamhi draws a parallel with Iraq, saying "the Houthi group should look into the situation in Iraq and learn a lesson on how the government got weaker. A weak government helps Al-Qaeda grow and recruit more followers."

US condemns violence against Yemeni government

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Sept. 29—The US State Department on their website condemned the continuous violent attacks against government institutions and politicians in Sana'a in a press statement on Sunday.

"The United States condemns ongoing hostile and aggressive actions against the Yemeni government and political targets and calls for all parties to implement all aspects of the Peace and National Partnership agreement, in particular the turning over of all medium and heavy weapons to the state," read the statement.

The press statement follows recent clashes between the Houthis and the 1st Armored Division in the capital, as well as attacks by the Houthis on state institutions and politicians' houses.

Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, told the Yemen Times that the Houthis cannot turn over their weapons while other parties in Yemen continue to own weapons.

"The outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference stated explicitly that all parties should hand over their weapons to the state. However, first we have to establish a civil state that protects the rights of all citizens and ensures that no violations will take place," Al-Bukhaiti said.

In the same statement, the State Department denounced elements seeking to exploit the current security situation to create chaos, "particularly members of the former Saleh regime and Houthi leadership who continue to use violence to further their own agendas at the expense of the Yemeni people."

However, Al-Bukhaiti asserted that the Houthis rely

on the people and are not afraid of foreign intervention. "We stand for people's demands to eliminate corruption in all state institutions and we aren't afraid of the US or any other country," he added.

"It's illogical to accuse Saleh's regime of political chaos when the US was the main supporter of his regime," said Al-Bukhaiti.

The State Department also said it is strongly considering sanctions against individuals in Yemen, though it did not name anyone

specifically.

"In light of increasing violence directed against the Yemeni government, the United States is stepping up efforts to work with the international community to pursue sanctions against individuals who are threatening Yemen's peace, stability, and security, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2140 and US Executive Order 13611, should they not cease such activities immediately," added the statement.

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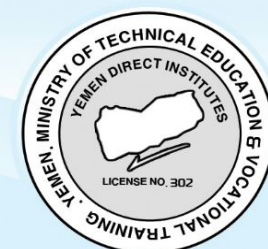
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Thousands of Iman University students, faculty displaced during clashes

■ Ali Saeed

About 6,000 Iman University students, faculty, and their families have been displaced from their homes on Iman University's campus following the Houthi takeover.

One week prior to the clashes at the university, about 380 families were evacuated.

The Houthis first surrounded the university on September 20, according to Abdulsalam Al-Mekhlafi, the manager of the university's mosque who studied at the university for ten years and obtained a PhD in Islamic Studies there. Earlier that day, he added, about 3,000 people left their accommodations at the university following orders from the military.

The commander of the Sixth Military Command—the brigade that was guarding the university—agreed to withdraw after an agreement with President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, who wanted to replace the command with members of the Presidential Guard.

However, before the presidential forces could consolidate control over the university, the Houthis took over.

The following day, the Houthis seized control over numerous government and military offices, including the headquarters of the Yemeni Military Command, the national radio station and the state-run TV channel, Yemen Today.

Many displaced families from Iman University are being hosted by relatives in Sana'a and throughout the country. Many have returned to their villages.

"I have been at this university for 15 years. I lived on campus with my wife and my two children and have nowhere to go in Sana'a," Al-Mekhlafi said. "I cannot afford the transportation to my village in Taiz."

As of Monday evening, the Houthis were still occupying the campus and



The Houthis took control of Iman University (circled) on Sept. 20, displacing around 6,000 people from the campus.

preventing students, staff, and their families from entering to retrieve their belongings.

A Houthi source told the Yemen Times that they are still in talks with university management to hand back the campus. They declined to specify any date or time-frame for the end of their occupation.

Abdulmad Hassan, a third-year student majoring in Islamic law at the university said that he was on vacation in his hometown of Mawhit when he received word of what had happened.

"I rushed to Sana'a, but arrived to find armed Houthis guarding the university and allowing no one to go in," Hassan said.

Hassan ran a bookshop inside the university and has been unable to remove his inventory from the campus. The bookstore was Hassan's main source of income. With his modest earnings, he was also able to support his mother in his village.

The Iman University is an international Islamic private university based in Sana'a where students come from far and wide to study both Islamic studies, including Islamic law, and humanities. It hosts Yemeni and non-Yemeni students alike.

The United States listed the founder of the university, Sheikh Abdulmajid Al-Zindani, a senior leader of the Islah Party, as a "terrorist" in February 2004. Since then, the US has accused the university of radicalizing students and demanded that it be shut down. The university denies these accusations and says it operates in accordance with the Yemeni law regulating private universities.

The university was licensed by the Yemeni Ministry of Education in 1993 and it is a member of several Arab and Islamic university unions.

Some Iman University students believe that the US conspired with Yemen's former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and the Houthis to attack the university in order to shut it down.

Al-Zindani and students of the university sided in 2011 with the popular uprising against Saleh's rule that ousted him from office.

"The shutting down of the university has been an American objective for a long time and it was the Houthis and Saleh who achieved this for the US," said Hassan.

According to Al-Mekhlafi, about 20 people, including students and armed tribesmen who opposed

the Houthis, were killed when the Houthis attacked the university. The Yemen Times was not able to independently verify this number. The Ministry of Health told the Yemen Times that 270 people were killed and 461 injured in clashes in and around the capital between September 16 and September 21.

It is unclear whether the university will be shut down or if it will be allowed to re-open.

"It is too early to speak about the fate of the university. This will be discussed later," said Ali Qasim, the deputy minister of higher education.

The university is north of Sixty Meter Street in the northern area of the capital.

The university provides education free of charge to all its students, as well as three meals per day.

Foreign students have to bring a letter of approval from their embassies in Sana'a to be accepted by the university.

Foreign students and Yemenis who did not reside in the capital are provided housing on the university's campus. Students who are from the capital are provided with transportation on Iman University busses.

The university is largely financed through donations, according to the university's management.

University property reportedly looted

On September 22, Asma'a Al-Zindani, daughter of the founder and head of the university, accused the Houthis of stealing university property and equipment.

According to Al-Zindani, the university lost 50 buses, furniture, and private belongings of the Al-Zindani family, who own homes on the campus. The Yemen Times was not able to independently verify any of these claims.

Ali Al-Qahoom, a spokesperson for the Houthis, denied these accusations, telling the Yemen Times

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that the group did not take anything from the university.

The Houthis were similarly accused of looting when they took control of Amran in July.

In July, both the government and the UN said that the Houthis in Amran looted government offices and relief organizations.

"I was particularly alarmed to find that the offices of several humanitarian organizations—including the common UN premises and those of at least one NGO—had been looted during the conflict," said the UN humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, Johannes Van Der Klaauw, at the

time, in a press statement posted on the website of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

"I have urged those responsible to return the looted assets immediately to enable humanitarian actors to resume their assistance activities," said Van Der Klaauw.

The Houthis began their military expansion in the north of Yemen after they took control of Sa'ada in March 2011 during the uprising against Saleh. In January of this year, 15,000 Salafi students and residents left Dammaj following Houthi shelling of the area.

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Yemen World Food Programme: Its mission, activities and future plans

With the recent clashes between the military and the Houthis in Sana'a, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased. Hundreds of families in Sa'ada, Amran, Marib, Hodeida and Al-Jawf governorates are need of humanitarian assistance. The country has an estimated 243,000 refugees and 307,000 IDPs, according to the EU.

Yemen continues to host a large scale humanitarian crisis, with more than half the population, or 14.7 million people, in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. According to a report by the UN, "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 spoke to Rukia Yacoub, the World Food Programme's (WFP) deputy country director, about WFP's new operations and activities in Yemen.



Photo by Bassem Al-Khamisi

One challenge facing the World Food Programme, according to its deputy country director, Rukia Yacoub, is maintaining a certain level of funding. Many funds are going to Iraq and Syria because the humanitarian needs there are some of the most extreme, Yacoub said.

What are the main areas of WFP's work?

We are the largest humanitarian agency globally fighting hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity. We support over 90 million people worldwide. The main focus of our work is represented in food insecurity and food support. We have clear strategies and interventions about the kind of food [distributed] and methodologies depending on the context. Our number one aim and key area is to save lives in crises and emergencies despite high costs. For us to be efficient, we should have efficient administrative and financial processes as well as logistics. In addition to food, we also provide life-saving interventions, including vaccines and medicine. However, after being displaced for one year, people need more than just life-saving interventions, so we also focus on what kind of support we can provide for them to restore their livelihoods when they return home or in the new areas they reside in.

There are vulnerable groups in each population group, including malnourished children under five and pregnant and lactating mothers who need [support] beyond the basic services. They need special support, so we have such [strategies to deal with these] vulnerable groups. There are different categories of people such as IDPs, refugees and migrants who pass through Yemen [in hopes of getting] to the Gulf countries and get stranded. We have a group of stranded migrants in Haradh area.

What does WFP provide for those migrants?

We mainly provide food for them.

What about cash payment?

No, we don't provide money for them because they are undocumented migrants. We provide food because they are stranded, extremely malnourished and lack cash to buy food.

How do you reach them?

We provide the food and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) manages the distribution process there.

What other international NGOs do you cooperate with?

There are several international NGOs such as Save the Children, Humanitarian Aid Commission, Humanitarian Aid and Development, Society for Humanitarian Solidarity, Field Medical Foundation and the Islamic Relief.

What about local NGOs?

There are a few civil society organizations [that we work with], such as the Charitable Society for Social Welfare.

Which areas does WFP cover in Yemen?

We cover multiple areas, including Sana'a, Haradh, Hodeida, Aden, Marib, Lahj, Hajja, Ibb, Hadramout and Socotra.

What about Al-Jawf governorate? Clashes between the Houthis and tribes have left many people displaced.

Regarding Al-Jawf, need assessments were conducted by several UN agencies. We don't provide assistance directly unless other agencies request our support. There are new displacements from Marib, Al-Jawf and the northern parts of Sana'a because this conflict took place in Al-Jawf and Marib and then shifted to the capital.

Are you planning to assist those new IDP's?

We are planning to do a quick assessment to see how many [IDP's] there are. We usually do it [in co-operation] with different humanitarian agencies and we see what the needs are and how they can be covered. It was difficult for us to access these areas because of security risks, but now we are discussing the formulation of a team to assess the needs.

[Security is] the major challenge because it limits our ability to have access to the people in need.

What challenges do you face?

Some of the challenges are obvious, such as security. It's the major challenge because it limits our ability to have access to the people in need. Another challenge is maintaining [a certain level] of funding because [many of the] funds go to other countries such as Iraq and Syria where the humanitarian needs are the most severe.

What is the percentage of food insecurity in Yemen?

As part of our assistance, we are working on an efficient assessment with UNICEF, FAO and Yemen's Ministry of Agriculture. We assess food insecurity on a regular basis, [every] one or two years, because new needs emerge and we should meet them. Based on this report, [at the moment] food insecurity in Yemen is at 41 percent, or roughly 10.6 million Yemenis.

What do you think are the reasons behind food insecurity in Yemen?

Conflict is a major cause, as well as high rates of poverty and illiteracy. Fifty percent of women and girls are illiterate in Yemen. Those people will be poor forever unless their capacities are built. These are fundamentals that have been there and need to be tackled seriously through long-term policy. People in Yemen aren't able to cover their daily needs because they don't produce their food locally. Ninety percent of the staples are imported and this keeps [Yemen] reliant on external sources

and vulnerable to any slight change of prices worldwide.

Which areas in Yemen have the highest rates of food insecurity?

Based on our last assessment of 2014, Sa'ada has the highest percentage of food insecurity with 67.3 percent [of residents being food insecure]. There are also other areas such as Shabwa, Al-Baida, Al-Dhale, Lahj and Hajja with high levels of food insecurity.

In February, WFP approved a two-year relief and recovery operation in Yemen that aims to help around six million Yemenis become food secure. Can you provide us with more details on this operation?

We have developed a new program for Yemen, the implementation of which started in July 2014 and [will continue until] July 2016. This is called a long-term life saving that looks beyond providing food assistance. The program will focus on helping [establish] safety nets and includes new components [as well].

What are these new components?

First we conduct an assessment to know who is vulnerable and who isn't and then we provide food or a combination of food and cash payments. So, we give the family the chance to choose the most suitable assistance. We also engage people in some productive work, such as constructing bridges or canals for the communities in return for food or cash payment. In this way, people are involved in whatever [it is] they feel [they] are able to do and get paid for it.

Where will you implement this program?

We are still discussing where to implement it and how many people we should involve.

According to UN statistics, there are 10 million people suffering from food insecurity in Yemen. How many of them are covered by WFP?

Five million of those people need urgent and immediate support on a daily basis and they are our priority. The other five million [suffer from] moderate [food insecurity] and need some support to improve their own income. We target six million in total.

Economists say that although hundreds of billions were provided to Yemen, food insecurity and poverty continue

to increase. What is your response?

It mainly depends on the policies in place and how these funds were channeled. However, saving lives requires a lot of money because you have to spend money to save people in conflict situations. We are gradually shifting [our policies] to help people [secure] their own source of income.

Did the recent unrest in Sana'a have an impact on your operations?

Yes, because at least 24-30 national employees live in the conflicted areas and we were concerned about their safety. They couldn't come to the office and the stress was very high on us. We also had to reduce the number of international staff in Sana'a. We sent them to other offices in Aden and Hodeida because they were unable to do any work in Sana'a.

What about the government's

decision to cut fuel subsidies? It didn't directly affect us but the transportation fees have increased accordingly and we had to sign new contracts with the service providers.

The US in September provided a \$40 million grant to you. How will this grant be used and where?

This grant will be used to implement an innovative way of delivering humanitarian assistance. Now we have a contract with Al-Amal Bank to deliver cash in-person to registered people. It will help us to move towards electronic assistance. It's a platform for delivering food and non-food items to beneficiaries. This is called the e-voucher project.

It is said that some of your beneficiaries spend the cash payment on qat instead of food and medicine.

I don't really know about this but I'm sure that a person who has a food insecure family and children will never waste this assistance on qat. It's difficult to avoid such a thing 100 percent, though.

How do you ensure that the aid goes to vulnerable people?

We have a system in place to verify whether vulnerable people get our assistance or not. We work with partners who distribute the aid we provide and then we conduct the post-distribution monitoring by sending teams that have not been involved in the distribution process. Now we are trying to move towards relying on outsources who are not associated with us, [to ensure] neutrality.

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The booming business of security companies in Yemen

■ Madiha Al-Junaid

“Yemen is rated a medium to high threat environment for crime. Even with improving political conditions, crime levels remained steady throughout 2013 due principally to tough economic conditions and weak law enforcement,” reads the Yemen 2014 Crime and Safety Report published by the Overseas Security Advisory Council.

Weak law enforcement partially explains why heightened insecurity in Yemen has given rise to a booming presence of national and international security companies.

An increasing number of private businesses have taken over what has long been considered to be a key responsibility of the state: The provision of security.

Working closely with embassies, oil companies, banks, and other institutions vulnerable to attacks, private security companies are in great demand and are benefiting from the unstable security situation throughout the country.

While some share the view that privatization is likely to be beneficial to governments, delivering cheap and flexible security services, others argue that privatization will be costly to states as it erodes their accountability and enhances the likelihood of conflict.

Either way, a booming private security sector, like in Yemen, redistributes power over the control of violence, leaving a public good—security—increasingly regulated by market mechanisms.

Currently, there are 35 local companies and several international ones that are registered with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, says Abdurrahman Al-Sharaby, who works at the ministry and is responsible for

maintaining a list of security companies.

However, an unknown number of unregistered security companies and facilities need to be added to this number.

“It can not be ignored that there exist security companies which are not registered with the government. Some work without any official authorization. They are only discovered when setting up a commercial registration record which they need for cheques for business transactions,” Al-Sharaby points out.

“The absence of security in Yemen brought into view the importance of [security companies], which international and local authorities dealt with instead of government security forces,” he explains, adding that “it is a profitable business and the field is expandable.”

Given the transnational character of the private security business, it is not surprising that foreign companies have extended their services to Yemen. They include Argus, Griffin, G4S, and many others.

Daula Al-Qubati, the chairwoman and local partner for Argus Security Projects Ltd (ASP) in Yemen explains that the company works “extensively in Libya and Yemen due to the security issues in both these countries.”

“The rising security matters require experienced actors to provide security services to international organizations and diplomatic authorities and their locations, and that is where our role lies,” she explains.

The economic dimension

The rapid expansion of Yemen’s private security sector points to its profitability.

According to Al-Sharaby, the private security business in Yemen started to blossom in the mid-90s and experienced a real boom during the past four to five years. As the security situation has worsened

significantly in the country, the business has become much more competitive.

Not only do international companies discover Yemen as a profitable business environment, local companies are also mushrooming.

In 2012, Safer Yemen was established, which provides security services for organizations and companies. In an attempt to find a niche in Yemen’s competitive security market, the company emphasizes its in-depth local knowledge and its individualized services, tailored to the activities and profile of clients.

Notwithstanding a great number of local customers, it is visible that foreigners and foreign institutions are courted by private security companies in Yemen. The websites of Universal Eagles for Security Services (UESS), a Yemeni company, as well as Safer Yemen are entirely in English.

Safer Yemen even goes as far as to provide a luxurious guesthouse to foreigners, which it advertises as “a low profile and secure alternative to hotels.”

“Safer Yemen’s guesthouse has been developed according to Safer Yemen’s low-profile security strategy and all guards are trained by Safer Yemen in counter-surveillance, security awareness, first aid and fire fighting,” the companies’ website reads. Guest rooms are connected to a 24-hour operations room and rapid response team and emergency numbers are available in all rooms.

Although no prices are listed on Safer Yemen’s website, secure and luxurious accommodation in Yemen is unlikely to be cheap.

In fact, foreigners who are traveling to Yemen on an official capacity are often required to pay for expensive security services. This includes foreign researchers, who have been obliged by their universities to use the services of pricey security escorts

whenever they leave their hotels. Considering that the provision of a car and a bodyguard costs around \$1000 a day, many are deterred from entering the country.

While it is difficult to find out the exact prices charged by security companies, Hani Al-Amrani, who works as a security escort with G4S, estimates that profit margins range between 25 and 75 percent.

Al-Amrani himself earns a monthly salary of YR70,000 (\$326), which stands in stark contrast to exorbitant prices that clients have to pay. Like Al-Amrani, Al-Qubati, the chairwoman of Argus Security, says “the lowest salary we pay for a security guard is not less than YR70,000 (\$326) per month.”

Training

In addition to becoming more competitive, the growth of security companies in Yemen has also resulted in attracting jobless young men with secondary school or college qualifications. Once hired by a security company, many undergo an initial training phase, depending on whether or not they are required to carry weapons.

The supervisor of the security guards at an oil company building in Sana’a confirmed that the guards, who are all carrying weapons, were trained by their employer, the Universal Eagles for Security Services.

Those who are not firing weapons do not need special training, he explained.

“Some companies provide their security guards with weapons, while others only hold sticks, and yet others hold nothing,” says Brigade Saeed Al-Khabri, general manager of the Judiciary Affairs at the Interior Ministry.

Al-Qubati at Argus Security confirms that guards are trained by their respective company. Argus Security, for example, “employs qualified in-



As the state prepares to further regulate private security companies, it remains to be seen whether it will consequently regain some responsibility and accountability over the country’s security situation.

ternational security trainers for its local employees [to ensure] best work performance.”

The company is not only providing training, language courses, and consultancy to its own employees but also to competing security companies, according to Al-Qubati.

While Al-Qubati’s statement suggests the existence of a highly qualified security sector in Yemen, Colonel Mohammed Hizam, deputy head of the Public Relations Department at the Interior Ministry, argues that not all security personnel in Yemen are well trained. “Some security guards are not well trained and have no clue about their work environment, uniform, firearms and so on,” he said. “That is why we emphasize the importance of issuing a law that will organize all these matters.”

Registration and authorization

The Ministry of Trade and Industry, where security companies need to register, revealed that it recently received a notice from the Ministry of Interior ordering it to put registrations on hold until a law was agreed upon that regulated the work of security companies.

According to Hizam, the interior minister has already submitted a draft law to the Judiciary Affairs Department which forwarded it to the house of representatives.

Hizam, who was involved in part of the drafting process, reported that the guards’ outfits, which need to be distinguishable from military

uniforms, constituted an important part of the law. So did weapons and their registration.

Indeed, one of the reasons for drafting the law was the need to monitor the possession of firearms.

“I dare any security company to say that they have authorization from the Interior Ministry to use firearms,” said Al-Khabri.

In the future, security companies will have to apply for the Interior Ministry’s authorization, he said, which will be made dependent on the proper training of the companies’ security personnel and will require firearms to have serial numbers and be registered.

The law should help to further regulate the work of private security companies and develop a more integrative relationship between the Yemeni government and security businesses.

Security companies cooperate with the state’s law enforcement. If security companies arrest a suspect or an attacker, for example, “they deliver him to the closest police center... after an initial interrogation,” said Al-Khabri. While it is a company’s right to obtain basic and essential information about a suspect, security companies are not allowed to imprison people in their facilities.

It remains to be seen if by further regulating private security companies, the Yemeni government is likely to gain back some responsibility and accountability over the country’s security.



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Libya: In search of neutrality

Karim Mezran
atlanticcouncil.org
First published Sept. 24

As Libya continues to fragment, diplomats have mobilized to confront the current crisis. Spain has hosted an international conference focused on the North African country's current situation; UN Special Representative Bernardino Leon testified before the Security Council about his recent visits to Libya; envoys from the West, particularly the United Kingdom, shuttle between the different Libyan stakeholders; caretaker Prime Minister Abdullah Al-Thinni has traveled abroad to seek support; officials from neighboring countries are meeting and pledging not to interfere; and the head of the Libyan house of representatives is expected in Washington in the coming days. Despite, or perhaps due in part to, all of these engagements, the situation in Libya is worsening. One possible explanation is that the efforts are misdirected, focusing on getting two very entrenched parties

to set down their arms rather than identifying and bolstering a neutral channel to establish a political roadmap out of the crisis.

In the tale of two Libyas playing out today, two competing governments face off. On one side: The house of representatives, elected in June 2014, albeit with only 20 percent of the population having cast a ballot. Despite boasting international recognition, this parliament barely exercises its powers beyond the far eastern city of Tobruk where it remains in self-imposed exile. Its opposition consists of the old General National Congress (GNC), reconstituted in the capital of Tripoli by the Misratan militias and their Islamist allies (dubbed Operation Libya Dawn) that have, through battle, become the new masters of western Libya. The mere existence of the GNC challenges the new parliament, undermines the house's authority, and further polarizes the political spectrum. The appointment of Omar Al-Hassi as the GNC's pick for prime minister and his formation of a cabinet in Tripoli, in direct competition with the gov-

ernment approved by the Tobruk-based house, represents a case in point. The GNC's cooperation with Operation Dawn forces gives it the ability to throw a wrench into the house's legitimacy and its functional capacity. The house, which the international community has hailed as the only legitimate Libyan institution, is paradoxically incapable of governing the vast majority of the country's territory, while the illegitimate body exercises enough pressure to undermine the political process.

Deepening mistrust now threatens to make the very political consensus and resolution even more difficult to reach. The international community has vehemently called on the house to adopt a policy of inclusion toward all political stakeholders and to commit to representing the interests of all Libyans. In words, the house has responded positively to these calls. In deeds, it has acted differently:

1. The house failed to appoint a neutral prime minister with a clear mandate to negotiate with other forces and establish a

unity caretaker government. Instead, they named Al-Thinni as caretaker prime minister, a figure that Misrata does not trust.

2. The parliament has retreated from the capital, meeting exclusively in Tobruk. Disconnected from the rest of the country and under protection of forces openly hostile to Misratan militias and Islamists, the body has effectively put up a barrier, rendering it difficult for parliamentarians representing particular areas to participate in the sessions.
3. House members have demonstrated their opposition; by passing a law to fight terrorism and defining the threat in such a way as to include certain components of the Islamist-leaning Operation Dawn, they have painted all Islamists as terrorists in one broad stroke, failing to differentiate between moderates and extremists and thereby galvanizing them against a common enemy.

Exacerbating the widening gap, the Constitutional Assembly announced that it would have a draft constitution prepared by the end of the year. With no transparency regarding the process and channels for public participation, it serves only to reaffirm fears among Misratans and Islamists that there is an

agenda to marginalize them politically, incentivizing them to continue their armed response.

Unfortunately, despite the very clear need for constructive dialogue among Libyans, the house has exerted much of its efforts to engage partners in neighboring countries, seeking support from Egypt and elsewhere. All of this has come at the expense of time and energy that ought to have been spent reaching out to the Libyan population to build their confidence in the parliament as an institution that seeks to serve all citizens.

The situation in Libya requires an approach with neutrality at its core. That is, the international community needs to pressure the House to convene in a neutral Libyan city accessible to all parliamentarians so that the sessions and subsequent decision-making will be inclusive. The parliament should then appoint a mutually-agreed upon caretaker government with a two-part roadmap: One, overseeing presidential elections and constitutional referendum; and two, simultaneously undertaking a select few projects to restore security, develop infrastructure, and provide social services for citizens. In the meantime, the house should appoint a single envoy whose responsibility would be to liaise with the international community to better coordinate and

communicate with the many foreign envoys seeking a negotiated resolution. These steps would oblige the house to demonstrate leadership, compelling it to govern rather than partake in a violent political struggle at the expense of its constituency. These guidelines could also provide a boost to the prospect of a political resolution for which so many of Libya's international partners are pushing. Three years after a civil war that toppled a dictatorship, a low-intensity civil war is brewing in Libya. While all of the diplomatic back and forth encouragingly suggests that no one wants to see the country collapse, the engagement ought to focus on creating a space for neutrality and inclusiveness. Having thrown its weight behind the house, the international community can leverage its assistance to help it become the mechanism to achieve those preconditions and pull Libya back from the brink.

Karim Mezran is a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, focusing on the politics and economics of North Africa.

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The limits of the "sectarian" framing in Yemen

Stacey Philbrick Yadav
washingtonpost.com
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It was 2005 when my Yemeni friends first started talking seriously about their fears that the Houthis would march on the capital Sana'a. The Houthis were never closer than the nearby province of Amran back then. There was a media blackout, and most of our information came from journalist friends who were in and around the city of Sa'ada, then the center of the conflict, distributing news via SMS. Information was not the only thing the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh sought (and failed) to control: Humanitarian agencies had no way to reach the civilians who were bearing the brunt of the conflict between government forces and Houthi militants. In a harbinger of things to come, a UNICEF employee told me that the only way he could get supplies to Sa'ada was by partnering with the Islah Charitable Society (ICS), a local aid agency tied to Yemen's largest Islamist party. He complained that ICS was padding the books and inflating the numbers of people who had been displaced to gain resources for its wider evangelical work, but he noted that it was the only non-governmental agency that he knew of that was granted a permit to work amid the stranded civilians. It was in ways like this that the Saleh regime manipulated the "sectarian" politics of northern Yemen, seeking to ensure that the two groups were too distracted by each other to turn their attention elsewhere.

That, of course, was not a wholly successful strategy. Over the past decade, there have been at least half a dozen military campaigns with the Houthis, a secessionist movement in the South, the relocation of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) from Saudi Arabia to Yemen, a popular uprising that lasted 11 months, a fracturing of the armed forces, an externally-brokered transitional agreement, a dramatic escalation in US drone attacks in different parts of the country, and a National Dialogue Conference theo-

retically designed to put all the pieces back together. So, why think of this as sectarian war? The Houthis' march on Sana'a in September cannot be easily glossed as "sectarian" just because they are Zaydi Shias, and most (though not all) Islamists are Sunnis. The existence of nominal difference is not by itself a compelling causal story.

The fact that the Houthis are Zaydis does not mean that their movement is aimed exclusively or even primarily at establishing a Zaydi political order, reinstating the kind of imamate that ruled northern Yemen for hundreds of years (though some critics will tell you so). Similarly, the fact that Islah's membership is predominantly Sunni doesn't mean it is working to re-establish the caliphate, or even that it is willing to cooperate with those transnational movements that would, though its detractors may allege this. Instead, the conflict that pits the Houthis against Islah is one several decades in the making, and rests as much in the structure of the Yemeni north, the hierarchies of power and privilege among Zaydis themselves, and a state apparatus that sought to manipulate them.

Charles Schmitz recently contributed an excellent overview of the development of the Houthi movement as a political force. Additionally, the work of anthropologists like Gabrielle von Bruck and Shelagh Weir on the cultural politics of Zaydi/Islahi tension in the north is useful. While their field research mainly predates the Houthi movement as such, it outlines the dislocating impact of republican ideology in the north from the 1970s, and two interrelated developments that form a subtext to the current conflict. In "Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen: Ruling Families in Transition," Von Bruck maps the ways in which Hashemites (descendants of the Prophet, from whom Zaydi leaders have historically been chosen) were maligned as "feudal" by new republican leaders and the ways in which Sana'ani Hashemite families consequently worked to refashion central Zaydi religious precepts as supportive of constitutional rule and accountable governance, fitting

religious concepts into the discourse of the developing state. Weir's book, "A Tribal Order: Politics and Law in the Mountains of Yemen," documents the efforts of Sunni evangelists (who would ultimately align with Islah) to make use of this republican critique of hierarchy to recruit or "convert" low-status Zaydis in the far north, biting in to the core Zaydi demographic base. As constitutional checks on presidential authority and more general political accountability were undermined by Saleh in Sana'a and his regime supported the expansion of Islah-oriented schools to advance Sunni recruitment in the north, these new Hashemite discourses of accountability became more evidently oppositional. The residue of this ideological refashioning is evident in the Houthi project.

So when I say that this conflict can't be glossed as sectarian, I don't mean to suggest that religious conviction is irrelevant to the Houthi movement or its relationship to Islah or to the Yemeni government. Instead, it is important to investigate the meaning of "sectarian" concepts of good governance and opposition to corruption, and question whether these are (or, more to the point, are not) consistent with existing institutions and governing practices by Yemen's transitional government.

It took a decade for the Houthis to march on Sana'a, but before they did so, they also sat in its square, participating in a broad-based social movement that called itself the "Change Revolution." Easily forgotten is that they did so alongside many members of Islah. Over the 11 months of Yemen's popular uprising, Houthis and Islamists managed to co-operate on a number of issues, particularly outside of top leadership circles. In the year that followed, Houthis and Islamists were co-participants in workshops for Yemeni youth, where they disagreed on principled grounds, but also carved out spaces of agreement on core issues. To be clear, this was not an easy relationship, but it was also not one characterized by implacable sectarian animus.

Continued on the back page

Republic of Yemen

Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE)
National Water Resources Authority (NWRA)
Water Sector Support Project (WSSP)
Environmental and Social Management plan (ESMP)
For the Construction Completion of Aden Building

Republic of Yemen received a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank for the National Water Resources Authority (NWRA) in the framework of Water Sector Support project (WSSP) integrated Water resources management component Which intends to use a portion of these funds to complete constructing of NWRA- Aden Branch building under the supervision of the National Water Resources Authority Aden province- Aden governorate.

WSSP was designated to contribute in the implementation of the national water sector strategy investment plan (NWSSIP) endorsed by the government of Yemen. The project Program Development Objective (PDO) is intended to support NWSSIP implementation in order to achieve its general objective in terms of sustainable, efficient, and economic use of scarce water resources in Yemen. This general objective will be achieved through five intermediate objectives: a) strengthen institutions for sustainable water resources management; improve community-based water resources management; c) increase access to water supply and sanitation service; d) increase returns to water use in agriculture; and e) stabilize and reduce groundwater abstraction for agriculture in the critical water basins.

For the compliance with the WB environmental and social policy and environmental protection law of Yemen, a technical team was formed to contact social and environmental study to identify mitigation procedures to be considered to avoid, decrease or mitigate potential environmental and social effects on natural resources as well as the livelihood of the adjacent population during the construction and operation of the project.

Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) has identified that this project is respondent with the WB environmental and social policies aspects through carrying out the environmental evaluation, identifying the possible impacts on the project's area and identify the available alternatives. The natural environment has been taken into consideration (air, water, land), human health and safety, social aspects and the project activities will include the arbitrary acquisition on lands so the WB policy related to the non-voluntary re-housing for the vulnerable people is not accounted for. Furthermore, there will not be negative impacts resulted from the execution of these works.

ESMP is available for public circulation in the NWRA-Sana'a branch at the following address:
General Director of National Water Resources Authority – Sana'a Branch
Project Management Unit
Mujahed street (behind Samsung Agency)

Sana'a – Republic of Yemen

Tel: 00 967 1 504377

Fax: 00 967 1 504021

E-mail: saldubby@gmail.com; or asas777046308@gmail.com

Everyone concerned in the ESMP is entitled to contact with the general director of the branch during working hours from 8:30 am – 2:30 pm from Sunday to Thursday.

All documents are available in both Arabic and English.

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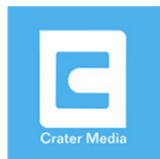
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When one person's trash becomes another's lifeline

Story and photo by
Mohammed Al-Khayat

Abdulbasit Abdaali is poor, but proud. "There is no shame in working. What I do is an alternative to begging and being dependent on others," he said.

Abdaali, whose beard and wrinkled skin make him look older than his 45 years, spends his entire day collecting plastic waste from the streets.

Yemen's most hardcore recyclers don't munch on granola and have probably never seen a pair of Birkenstocks.

Abdaali is one of many Yemenis making a living off what others throw out. The work not only contributes extra income to some of Yemen's poorest, but means Yemen has its own unofficial recycling brigade.

The work takes its toll on the body, however, requiring a lot of bending down and walking.

All day, every day, plastic collectors work hard in hopes of filling the large sacks they carry. Once that daily goal is reached, they sell their pickings—often for no more than YR300 (about \$1.40).

"This profession is very exhausting and tiring, especially for old people like me, who bend their backs to pick up plastic bottles everyday," he said. "I wish if we had a proper income at least, one that could offer us a decent life. I only eat two meals a day."

"I fill my empty flower sack with about a hundred plastic bottles each day and I sell them for about YR300 (\$1.40)." Because of his low-income, he cannot afford rent. Abdaali has no other choice but to sleep on the street.

"The amount of bottles that I col-

lect each day differs, but the bare minimum is 100 bottles, because the man who buys them from me does not buy less than that. Sometimes I collect 200 bottles. The best day was when I collected 300," says Abdaali.

With tears in his eyes he explains that his father died when he was 14 years old. "My father, who was very poor, died in Wesab Al-Aali village. When my mother re-married, I decided to leave for Sana'a."

Through a distant relative of his mother, he found a job at a bakery. While not wealthy, Abdaali was self-sufficient and on a path he was proud of. One incident would change the course of his life forever.

"I was the youngest worker at this bakery. I shared one room with all the other employees and one night I awoke to one of the workers touching me," he said.

"When [I realized] I was being molested, I grabbed the knife that I kept under my mattress and stabbed him. Unfortunately, I hit his neck. He bled heavily, and died within minutes."

Abdaali spent 30 years in prison. During that time, his mother and other relatives passed away. Once released, he found himself alone and without support.

Unable to read and write, he had difficulties finding a job, and ultimately found himself on the streets.

While Abaali's story is unique considering he spent three decades in prison, it is not unique in its tragedy.

Hajjah Sa'ood Qaid, who also collects plastic off the streets, explains that her husband and only son, who was 17 years old, died in a car accident two years ago, leaving behind her and her four daughters.

"Since that day we have been liv-

ing off the kindness of people who know about our situation," she said, adding that the support they received was not enough to cover her family's basic needs.

"I work all day from dawn until late in the afternoon. I sell the bottles I collect for only YR600 (\$2.80), which I use to buy food for my four daughters and me."

She hopes that her older daughter will be able to attend university and get a job to help support the family in the near future.

An unusual line of business

The discarded plastic that is collected by Yemenis like Qaid and Abdaali is sold to traders, often middlemen who resell the plastic.

"We buy these bottles and sell them to other traders who either export them or deliver them to factories here in Yemen in order to recycle them," explains Abdulwasa Saleh, who owns a small scrap shop.

"We buy these plastic items at a low price because we sell them for a very similar price, with a small profit margin. I wish I could pay garbage collectors a better price, because most of them are in serious need of money. But what can I do?"

Nowadays Saleh pays for the number of bottles collected, not by the total weight of the plastic. In the past he used to simply weigh the bags of plastic bottles he received, but stopped once he discovered that people sometimes filled them with stones and dirt to increase their weight.

Saleh sells 100 bottles for YR400 (\$1.86) to tradesmen, who only buy packages of at least 10,000 bottles.

Plastic bottles are recycled and turned into various plastic items, such as oil containers or water pipes, he says.

Hilal Al-Riashi, the deputy di-



For every 100 plastic bottles collected, recyclers claim YR300, about \$1.40.

rector general at the Monitoring Department of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says there are seven recycling factories Sana'a, ten in Taiz, ten in Aden, five in Hodeida, and ten in Mukalla. The market rate in Yemen for a ton of plastic is about \$500, Al-Riashi says.

Not all collected materials go to Yemeni recycling factories.

"People sell copper and aluminum to traders, who in turn sell it to us, and we sell it to the Chinese," says Ali Salam, adding that the price of a ton of copper and other metals is about \$1,500.

The recycling business in Yemen is fully privatized. No government institution is in charge of collecting, separating, and reusing trash.

Accordingly, Mohammad Al-Asbahi, the general manager of the EPA's Health Department in Sana'a, declares, "We encourage

and respect these people who dig through garbage because they are saving the country from a certain environmental disaster."

Unforeseen challenges

Mohammad Al-Mazroki, head of the Cleaning Workers Union, says that the work of garbage collectors doubles the workload of street cleaners. "They scramble garbage looking for plastic items," he complains.

"Street cleaners work for six hours a day, and they clean specific areas within those six hours, but the methods adopted by those who collect plastic items means cleaners must double their efforts. Eventually they end up cleaning fewer places than they should," said Al-Mazroki.

The Street Cleaners Union was established in 1991 and has about 6,000 members in Sana'a alone. While the union represents the in-

terests of streets cleaners, it does not count those that recycle plastic among its members.

Al-Mazroki wants plastic collectors to be made aware of the importance of keeping streets clean. "They should look for plastic items in an orderly fashion that does not affect street cleaners who also have difficult lives."

While people like Al-Mazroki have reason to criticize the work of garbage collectors, others emphasize their contribution to a cleaner environment.

"Having these plastic items in the soil is very harmful for the earth and for mankind. Burning it is also very harmful," says Dr. Abdullah Taha, a chemist.

"Having these bottles recycled is the best possible solution for the environment and for society. Everyone wins," he added.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

The limits of the "sectarian" framing in Yemen

It took a decade for the Houthis to march on Sana'a, but before they did so, they also sat in its square, participating in a broad-based social movement that called itself the "Change Revolution." Easily forgotten is that they did so alongside many members of Islah. Over the 11 months of Yemen's popular uprising, Houthis and Islahis managed to co-operate on a number of issues, particularly outside of top leadership circles. In the year that followed, Houthis and Islahis were co-participants in workshops for Yemeni youth, where they

disagreed on principled grounds, but also carved out spaces of agreement on core issues. To be clear, this was not an easy relationship, but it was also not one characterized by implacable sectarian animus.

The transitional agreement brokered by the Gulf Cooperation Council and endorsed by the United Nations as the blueprint for a new Yemen included provisions that overrepresented Islah and excluded the Houthis from the transitional "national unity" government. It did little to address key anti-corruption demands central

to Houthi and non-Houthi protesters alike. It also deferred essential transitional justice mechanisms that might have brought redress for the brutality of past military campaigns against the Houthis and civilians in the north. It moved instead to a direct (and uncontested) presidential election of someone close to ousted President Saleh and to a National Dialogue Conference that further overrepresented Islah, even while cementing the importance of the Houthi conflict as one of the key questions facing the country.

So when the Houthis marched on the capital—a march that was not entirely military, but also included large-scale, nonviolent mobilization of protesters in the weeks that preceded it—there was no reason to interpret this as a march on Sunnis, sectarian rhetoric notwithstanding. Instead, it appears to be a campaign to target Islahis as major contenders for institutional power, designed as a renegotiation of the transitional framework. Islahi media outlets like Suhail TV have been taken off the air (though it appears that the main Houthi website may have been hacked by Suhail viewers). The homes of prominent Islahis have been seized or destroyed, as has the home of General Ali Muhsin, who oversaw the bulk of the military campaigns against the Houthis over the past decade, and later defected to the opposition during the 2011 uprising. It appears that his troops bore the brunt of the conflict with the Houthis in September, while President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi ordered troops from other commands to stand down.

The ceasefire agreement, rich in detail and very quickly agreed, focuses primarily on renegotiating power sharing to increase the representa-

tion of Houthis (and the Southern Movement, also a thorn in Islah's side), and to outline concrete benchmarks for anti-corruption and economic reforms. It calls for the quick establishment of a technocratic committee of economic advisers whose recommendations will be binding on the new government. It is not focused on the kind of "culture war" issues that might characterize a sectarian conflict, but rather seeks to achieve several genuinely popular reforms sidelined by the transitional government. That it was accomplished at the point of a gun speaks as much to the failures of the transitional framework as to Houthi ideology. Widespread dissatisfaction with slow progress of the transitional process may help to explain why so many foreign actors have been quick to support its renegotiation by backing the ceasefire terms.

Worrisome for the medium term stability of Sana'a, however, is the question of Hadi's relationship to the Houthis. The earliest ceasefire benchmark for a new government has already passed, suggesting that all may not proceed smoothly. While the Houthis may have helped to conveniently clip the wings of Yemen's largest Islamist party in ways that help Hadi consolidate his own position, now that the deed is done, how long before he decides that the Houthis are more trouble than they are worth? After all, as vice president, Hadi was at former President Saleh's knee when

he first used Islah to hem in the Yemeni Socialist Party, and then turned on Islah itself in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Houthis will need to quickly cultivate allies from other corners of the political field if they are to avoid a repetition of that storied past. Their window for credibly doing so becomes narrower as each benchmark is delayed.

Stacey Philbrick Yadav is the author of "Islamists and the State: Legitimacy and Institutions in Yemen and Lebanon," and a member of the executive committee of the American Institute of Yemeni Studies. She is an associate professor of political science at Hobart & William Smith Colleges in Geneva, N.Y.

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