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# New prime minister appointed

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

**SANA'A, Oct. 13**—President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, during a meeting with his advisors on Monday, announced Khaled Bahah as Yemen's new prime minister, the state-run Saba News Agency reported.

Currently, Bahah serves as Yemen's envoy to the United Nations.

Bahah's appointment comes 22 days after the Peace and National Partnership Agreement was signed by the government and the Houthis on Sept. 21, the same day the Houthis took control of Sana'a.

The Houthis and the General People's Congress (GPC) declined Hadi's former appointment of

Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak on Tuesday Oct. 7, forcing him to turn down the nomination on the second day of his appointment.

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, told the Yemen Times that the Houthis accept Bahah's appointment and that the decision was made by Hadi after consultation with his advisors from the Houthis and the Southern Movement.

Other contenders for the prime minister position were Ahmed Logman, head of the Arab Labor Organization, Dr. Ahmed Dogher, deputy prime minister and minister of communications and information technology, and Ayoub Al-Hamadi, an economist residing in Germany.

"In line with the terms and conditions required for the post of the prime minister... all advisors recommended Khaled Bahah [for the position]," Saba reported.

From 2006 to 2008, Bahah was the minister of oil and minerals under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. He was appointed Yemen's ambassador to Canada in December 2008. From March 7 to June 11, 2014, Bahah was re-appointed as minister of oil and minerals by President Hadi. From June until present, he has been Yemen's envoy to the UN. Bahah holds a master's degree in business and bank administration from the University of Pune in India, which he received in 1992.

According to Sana'a-based political analyst Yaseen Al-Tamimi, "Bahah is an expert on oil, but he did not achieve any success when he was in charge of the Ministry of Oil [and Minerals] because all ministries were then vulnerable to influential powers under Saleh's rule. These powers exerted their influence on these ministries following Saleh's removal from office. Hence, he had no chance to develop the oil sector."

"Let's be optimistic, he will probably have the authority to take his own decision during this period, but the economic and security challenges will impede him unless all political forces support him," said Al-Tamimi.



Khaled Bahah, Yemen's envoy to the United Nations, was announced as the new prime minister on Monday.

## Islah Party condemns Houthi raids

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

**SANA'A, Oct. 12**—The Islah Party on Saturday released a press statement calling on the Houthis to stop raiding and searching the houses of party members and activists.

"The General Secretariat of the Islah Party seriously denounces the Houthi militias for further committing crimes and raiding, searching, and looting the houses of leading figures and followers of the Islah Party. This contradicts the simplest rules of human rights as well as social customs and values amid the absent role of state institutions," read the statement.

Ahmed Saif Al-Qubati, head of the General Secretariat's Youth and Student Department, told the Ye-

men Times that Houthis broke into his house on Friday, Oct. 10.

"During the Eid break, my sons left for their hometown in Ibb and I was on pilgrimage. Suddenly, my neighbors called me, saying that Houthi men wanted to search and break into my house," said Al-Qubati.

According to the Islah Party's statement, "dozens of Islah Party leading figures and activists were exposed to attacks and raids by Houthi militias. These raids and attacks have been systematic and clearly targeted Islah members under lame excuses. The last example occurred on Friday, when the house of Ahmed Saif Al-Qubati was raided."

So far, neither Al-Qubati nor his sons returned to the house. "Neighbors told me that Houthi men took books, computers, and even my photos," said Al-Qubati.

Although the Houthis deny responsibility for a number of recent break-ins, Al-Qubati said his neighbors defined those who raided his house as "Houthi militants."

"I hold them [the Houthis] accountable for this act. It is a major violation and an exposure of others' privacy," he said.

In its statement, the Islah Party called on "concerned state institutions to protect all citizens, the leading figures of the Islah Party, its associates and fol-

lowers, as part of its constitutional, national, and humanitarian duty." It also called on "the Houthi group to stop its crimes that threaten the public peace."

A source at the Interior Ministry spoke on condition of anonymity to the Yemen Times about the Islah Party's statement. "Which state are you talking about?" he sarcastically asked, adding that "after what happened in Sana'a and Amran, the state has lost its power."

Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, told the Yemen Times that political opponents of the Houthis are taking advantage of the current political situation, breaking into houses, and later blaming the Houthis for it.

"Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar's loyalists are breaking into houses to distort the reputation of the Houthi group," he said.

While Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti admitted mistakes on the part of the Houthis, he emphasized the group has apologized for them.

On September 21 Houthis broke into the house of Yemeni Nobel Peace Laureate Tawakkol Karman, a political activist and Islah member. The following day, Ali Al-Bukhaiti, another member of the Houthis' Political Office, posted on his Facebook account an apology to Karman, saying that Houthi men did not want to break into her house but only guard it. "I apologize to Tawakkol Karman for any misunderstanding," Al-Bukhaiti wrote.

Ali Al-Bukhaiti said he went to Karman's house himself to make sure nothing was taken and everything inside was still in order.



A photo on Tawakkol Karman's Facebook page allegedly showing Houthis who broke into her house.

## Aden commemorates 51st revolution anniversary

■ **Ali Abulohoom**

**SANA'A, Oct. 13**—Hundred of thousands of protesters have flocked to Aden from around the country to commemorate the 51st anniversary of the former South Yemen's 1963 revolution against British occupation on October 14.

The Southern Movement, which was established in 2007 and is demanding the south's independence from the north, issued a press statement on Oct. 13. It called on all southerners to gather in Aden and launch a "One Million March of Divisiveness" on Oct. 14, calling for secession from the north.

The commemoration's key political message, according to the press release, is to call on the international community to side with the southerners and support their quest for self-determination.

Mohammed Saleh, an employee in the Aden Security Department, confirmed that the number of people coming to Aden from different governorates has reached into the hundreds of thousands.

The organizers of the anniversary commemoration formed popular committees to protect public and private interests in the event of chaos, according to the press release.

According to Saleh, the security committee set up by the department for the march in Aden has taken tight procedures in anticipation of chaos that might arise due to the anniversary, including preventing weapons from entering Aden, securing governmental and private facilities, and spreading patrol police in the streets around the clock.

Khaled Bamadhaf, one of the

Southern Movement leaders, confirmed that recent developments in the north, including the Houthis' control over military and civic institutions in Sana'a, are making southerners press ahead with their demand for independence, as "they can no longer stand the situation in the north."

In a televised speech on Sunday, Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi called on the southern leaders who left Yemen after the civil war in 1994 to return and ensure the peaceful development of the southern issue.

Saleh Al-Edroos, one of the commemoration's organizers, said the southerners have experienced losses and grievances after northern troops "invaded the south" in the early 1990s, stealing the southerners' possessions and lands, in addition to laying-off southern employees in state institutions.

"The pending grievances, for

which Yemeni governments have failed to find solutions, led southerners to continue demanding separation," he explained.

"We as southerners do believe that whatever happens in the north will not contribute to the solution for the southern issue. The southerners themselves are the only ones who can solve their problems," Al-Edroos added.

Ali Salem Al-Baidh, the former president of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, or South Yemen, issued a public letter to the UN Secretary General on Oct. 9, five days before the commemoration. It included the demand for holding a referendum on independence under the auspices of the United Nations.

Marches are scheduled to take place on Oct. 14 in Aden, Hadramout, and Abyan governorates. The main commemoration, however, is taking place in Aden, according to Al-Edroos.

## AQAP releases kidnapped officer

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

**SANA'A Oct. 13**—Kidnapped Colonel Saad Mabkhut Ziad, the deputy commander of the 26th Mechanized Brigade in Al-Baida governorate, was released by AQAP members on Oct. 7.

Ziad was kidnapped on Sept. 28 along with five of his security escorts, including his son, in Al-Sawadia city in Al-Baida. AQAP claimed responsibility for the attack on its Twitter handle Akhbar Ansar Al-Sharia.

All six victims were released on Oct. 7, following a lengthy mediation process between AQAP and leaders of the victims' tribe of Maghrib Ans district in Dhamar governorate.

According to the colonel's brother, Mohammad Mabkhut Ziad, the negotiations began on Sept. 30. As a ransom, AQAP initially demanded YR20,000,000 (about \$93,000) and the release of two AQAP members from the National Security Bureau's prison.

Not being able to meet these demands, Mohammad turned to Sheikh Mohsen Al-Qadri, who lives

in Al-Hadda district in Dhamar.

Al-Qadri, a group of Maghrib Ans district sheikhs, and hundreds of armed men went from Dhamar governorate to Qaifa area in Rada'a district in Al-Baida governorate, where the kidnapped were held. According to Mohammad, they moved in a convoy of more than 15 cars loaded with armed men carrying rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), machine guns, and light weaponry.

"The meeting with the kidnappers took place on Tuesday, Oct. 7, in Wadi Faith of Qaifa area. My brother Saad was released without meeting any of the kidnappers' demands in return for the promise that we will not fight them," Mabkhut said.

Hilal Abdu Ahmed, a tribal leader in Maghrib Ans district who attended the release of the kidnapped, said "we reached Wadi Faith and the area was loaded with armed men. The meeting was held in a circle, with AQAP members surrounding us from every side."

Ahmed added that "an AQAP member came and talked to us about their demands, which they knew we would not meet, and an-

other one came, saying that they have tried officer Mabkhut and ruled him innocent of belonging to the Houthis and of aiding the government in its war against AQAP, because he was only appointed at the beginning of this year."

According to Ahmad, AQAP members demanded permission to move freely in Maghrib Ans district, which is close to Rada'a—a request that was rejected.

"We only promised that we would not fight them," Ahmad said.

An AQAP member, who is also one of the kidnappers, talked to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity, saying "we released the kidnapped officer because we are too busy with our war against the Houthis."

"We have to use the road which passes through Dhamar governorate and was cut off by Maghrib Ans district's armed men," he explained, adding that it is the only route that connects AQAP members in Rada'a to Sana'a and the northern governorates. "Another reason why we released him is that we could not find any evidence linking him with the government's war against

us or that he is cooperating with Houthis," the source said.

He continued, "America's drones did not scare us, let alone Maghrib Ans' armed men. Had we wanted to kill them we would have while they were in our territory. However, a war would have broken out between us and the neighboring tribes of Maghrib Ans district and Rada'a governorate."

Saad Mabkhut Ziad told the Yemen Times that upon his kidnapping, "masked men started interrogating and trying me. There were two trials. In the first one they asked for my name and whether I had any affiliations with the Houthis."

"In the second investigation," he continued, "they asked me the same questions, thinking I may answer incorrectly. But I gave them the right answers, they did not kill me."

The 26th Mechanized Brigade arrived in Al-Baida governorate early in 2011. It played a prominent role in securing public and private properties in the governorate and the supply lines to neighboring areas. The brigade fought several times with AQAP in the governorate.

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## Email declares pro-Islamic State group in Yemen

■ Ali Saeed

**SANA'A, Oct. 13**—Hundreds of journalists in Yemen received an email on Friday which included a statement announcing the formation of a new organization named "Supporters of the Islamic State in the Arabian Peninsula."

Fathi Bin Lazraq, editor-in-chief of the Aden Al-Ghad newspaper one of the journalists who received the email, said that the email came from an unknown sender and was addressed to 360 Yemeni journalists.

"It seems that this sender has sufficient knowledge on how to hide himself and is linked to the political conflict in Sana'a," he explained, adding that the statement "sends a message to the world that empowering the Houthis in Sana'a will lead to the emergence of militants in Yemen, similar to those in Iraq and Syria."

While Aden Al-Ghad refused to publish the statement, several other local

news websites and twitter users circulated it on their pages.

The copy of the statement shows the logo of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)

and the name of the new group. The statement is dated Thursday, October 9, the same day a suicide bomber blew himself up in the capital's Tahrir Square during a protest rally organized by the Houthis. The suicide attack left 53 people dead and 70 injured, according to the Ministry of Health.

The statement accuses President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi of having handed over the capital to the Houthis and threatens the Houthis with open and large-scale fighting in retaliation for their takeover of Sana'a on September 21.

The statement also vowed to support the Islamic State against the international coalition, which is currently launching airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

AQAP did not mention the statement on its Twitter account or its websites.



The statement circulated on news websites and Twitter accounts, claiming the establishment of "Supporters of the Islamic State in the Arabian Peninsula."

## Yemen to update its customs data system

■ Ali Saeed

**SANA'A, Oct. 12**—At Sana'a International Airport testing began this week of a new version of the Automated System for Customs Data, which is used for customs at ports around the country, officials at the Customs Authority told the Yemen Times.

The Automated System for Customs Data, or ASYCUDA, was designed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to improve countries' customs administration.

The current version operating at customs ports in Yemen is ASYCUDA++, and the testing is on the most recent version, ASYCUDA World. According to the Customs Authority, it is supposed to gradually replace the old version countrywide.

The new system is linked to one shared server, which will allow the customs authority to share customs data at all ports, speeding up customs clearance

and aiding in the detection of blacklisted traders, Abdulateef Al-Sanabani, general manager of the Automated Systems Department at the Customs Authority told the Yemen Times.

The existing system, ASYCUDA++, operates at each port independently, allowing importers who are blacklisted at one port, to bring in their goods through another entry point, where their name has not been added to the system.

Every year Yemen loses about \$4.7 billion in unpaid taxes and customs duties, Dr. Mohamed Jubran, who teaches accountancy at the University of Sana'a, told the Yemen Times earlier this year.

The new system enables customs officials to monitor and trace payments of duties and taxes, according to UNCTAD, and "facilitates and improves the calculation, collection, and accounting of customs duties and other charges related to customs operations."

## Attacks during Eid leave 95 dead

Story and photo by  
Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Oct. 12**—A number of attacks around Yemen last week left at least 95 Yemenis dead and 110 injured.

The attacks occurred in the governorates of Sana'a, Al-Baida, Hadramout, and Taiz.

A total of 37 soldiers were killed and 38 injured between Oct. 4 and 11. Fifty-eight citizens affiliated with the Houthis—ranging from armed rebels manning checkpoints to unarmed children and mere supporters of the group's goals—were killed and 70 injured.

On Oct. 11 three armed Houthis were killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion at Al-Azaraqain checkpoint on the Sana'a-Amran road, located on the border between the two governorates, according to Hassan Mu'awadi, a Houthi member who supervises the Sana'a-Amran checkpoint in Sana'a. Mu'awadi also said that an officer was killed the same day in Al-Shiher district of Hadramout and a pro-Houthi tribal sheikh was killed in Taiz governorate.

Two soldiers in Hadramout were also killed on Oct. 11 and three others were injured in an IED explosion. The attack targeted a military vehicle from the 135th Infantry Brigade in Shibam city, according to Ahmed Al-Shumi, an officer in the brigade.

This came two days after an attack that killed 20 soldiers and injured 17 others on Oct. 9, when an alleged AQAP militant attacked a military checkpoint manned by personnel from the 27th Mechanized Brigade in Al-Abr area of Brom Maifa district in Hadramout, according to the media center of the Ministry of Interior.

Also on Oct. 9, 53 civilians and Houthi rebels were killed in Sana'a by a suicide bomber and 70 others were injured, according to the Ministry of Public Health. The suicide bomber was wearing an explosive belt and detonated the bomb at a security



checkpoint in Tahrir Square in the middle of the capital during a Houthi organized protest.

The incident was widely condemned by Yemeni authorities and by Arab and foreign countries. Houthis have increased their presence in the streets on Sana'a and at entrance points to the city.

Houthi checkpoint supervisor Mu'awadi also said that on Thursday a Houthi armed man was shot dead by suspected AQAP militants in Sana'a.

One day earlier, on Oct. 8, 14 soldiers were killed and 18 others were wounded in Al-Baida in an attack carried out on military posts in the governorate by alleged AQAP members, according to the Interior Ministry.

**AQAP claim responsibility, promise further action**

For each of the attacks listed above AQAP claimed responsibility on its Twitter page Akhbar Ansar Al-Sharia, which translates to "news by the Supporters of Sharia," the name used by the group in Yemen.

The attacks follow AQAP's claim it will conduct one-hundred martyrdom operations, which it announced at a meeting between AQAP members and tribal leaders on Oct. 7 in Rada'a district of Al-Baida governorate. The meeting was held to release a Yemeni officer from Maghrib Ans district in

Dhamar governorate who was kidnapped in late September.

The one-hundred martyrdom operations are to target Houthis and Yemeni authorities around the country during the coming few days, according to a leader of a tribe in Maghrib Ans who attended the meeting and spoke to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity.

The Houthis accuse external powers of mobilizing AQAP to encourage instability in Yemen. Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthis' Political Office, said "there are foreign parties controlling AQAP, they are intelligence elements for foreign countries moving AQAP in whichever way they want in order to turn Yemen into another Iraq."

"We will not allow it; we will fight AQAP everywhere," Al-Qahoom added.

He continued, "these bombings and attacks targeted the military institutions before and after the fall of Sana'a. The Houthis are just an excuse for them to target all Yemenis."

Mohammad Hezam, the deputy director of the Public Relations Department in the Ministry of Interior, told the Yemen Times "the state has enhanced the security of all entrances and exits in all governorates as well as the security headquarters to foil [AQAP] attacks."

## Officer assassinated in Hadramout

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

**SANA'A, Oct. 13**—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) on Sunday claimed responsibility for the assassination of an officer in Al-Shiher district of Hadramout governorate, in the south of Yemen.

AQAP announced through its official Twitter handle Akhbar Ansar Al-Sharia that the attack was carried out on Saturday and that officer Abdu Khamis Abd Almolla was shot dead in Al-Majwara neighborhood in the

middle of Al-Shiher city.

Fahmi Mahroos, the former security manager of Hadramout, told the Yemen Times that alleged AQAP militants on a motorbike shot the officer dead and fled the scene.

"The security situation is currently lax which enables the militants to commit crimes and carry out assassinations," said Mahroos.

While AQAP said Almolla was an active officer in the Political Security Bureau in Hadramout, Mahroos said that Almolla had been retired for

about four years.

Hadramout-based journalist Hadba Al-Yazidi also told the Yemen Times that Almolla was assassinated on Saturday and that the officer was retired.

AQAP claimed on its Twitter account that military and security officers intentionally say they are retired for fear of being targeted by the group, especially after a rise in attacks in recent years. Attacks allegedly carried out by AQAP in Hadramout have been frequent in recent months.

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## On being a tour guide in Yemen:

# “It’s both the hardest and best job”

Ahmed Baider is a 21-year-old student at Sana’a University, where he studies business management. He is also a tour guide for his family’s tourism agency, in addition to working for Wings Travel Agency, in order to learn even more about the industry. With an Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula insurgency in the country, a government controlled by the Houthi rebels, and a number of foreigners still being held captive by kidnappers, Yemen is not a country many people would consider touring at the moment. Despite his young age, Baider has been involved in tourism for 11 years now. He sat down with the Yemen Times to discuss the current state of tourism and to also reminisce about the better days.



Viewing the past as a wonderful time for tourism in Yemen and the present as wrought with challenges, Baider remains hopeful the industry will recover.

### Tourism in Yemen: A hard job, or the hardest job?

It’s both the hardest job and the best job. These days are hard because of the security situation. I hope things will get better.

### When was the best period of tourism in Yemen?

I started working in tourism when I was ten years old. I used to go with my dad to our hotel, we owned a hotel in the old city and a tourist agency. We would invite the tourists to our home as well. Tourism in Yemen has gone through stages. My dad says 1998 was the golden year in Yemen for tourism. Things started to change in 2001, after the Sept. 11 attacks.

### How did things change?

Yemen is a Muslim and an Arab country and people were afraid. Some people associated all of us with terrorists, and were afraid of coming to the country.

### What about the Cole Bombing?

That year Yemen really developed a reputation for terrorism. In 2003, people started trusting Yemen. Then, in 2004, tourists really started returning. Europeans, lots of Asians, not really many Americans. Agencies started working again. And 2005 was even nicer; 2006 was also good. Things were improving.

Then, the summer of 2007, there was a bombing in Marib. Many Spaniards were killed. And then tourism plummeted again. They had been eating dinner at our hotel the evening before they left.

That group was so lovely, and they enjoyed that night. They were singing and happy, and said that they were very happy to be in Yemen and that they were sure they would come back.

Yemeni drivers, who we know, who we’ve worked with, who love tourism, and have families, were killed.

All reservations were cancelled. I would guess that tourism declined by 50 percent. Some people still come to Yemen, starting about a year later. Then in 2008, Belgians in Hadramout were killed. In 2011, we had a revolution that we had high hopes for, and which we still have high hopes for. But there have been problems.

It’s hard for me to imagine anyone not liking working in tourism. It is so much fun.

You mentioned earlier that one of the negative effects of the 2011 revolution is the economic consequences. Those effects are not limited to tour guides and agencies, but also restaurants and shops. Can you give us an idea of the extent of these effects on business owners and the people they employ who served tourists?

### ness owners and the people they employ who served tourists?

Well, I think everyone benefits from tourists in Yemen. A driver will bring tourists from the airport. The government makes money off visas. Agencies make money when trips are booked. Guides make money when they take tourists around. Silver shops, postcard shops, all make money. In the villages, school boys will sell little things to the tourists. It’s not just a matter of money though.

People love Yemen because Yemenis are so kind, and Yemenis love to have visitors in their country. I’ve been in tourism for 11 years. I have never met a tourist who did not come back again or, at the very least, send his family or friends.

### Not one?

I’m sure of this. There is one Australian woman who came to Yemen 25 times. Let me tell you about tourism season in Yemen. It’s not summer like everywhere else in the world. It’s winter. Yemen is still warm during the winter, so people come for their Christmas and winter holidays.

ter holidays.

### How did your father get started in tourism?

My father lived in Europe for a while, he studied there. When he lived in London, he would bring friends back to Yemen with him. My family house is in the Old City. At the time, the hotels are outside of the Old City. This was in the 80’s. The friends would stay in Sheba Hotel but would spend all day in the Old City. His friends wanted to stay in the Old City, so he opened a hotel. He opened the first hotel in the Old City. So that’s where the idea came from. We’ve since closed that hotel and our agency.

After tourism plummeted, they closed that hotel and opened another and also opened a tourist agency.

### Do you think people are not coming because of security mainly or because they have trouble getting visas?

Let’s say that there are still curious people in the world. It’s true that the security situation is bad, but I really believe there are safe areas

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for tourism in Yemen. Take Socotra for example. I think it’s the best destination in Yemen. It’s a piece of heaven and totally safe.

### What about the mainland? Where can you take tourists?

We are not allowed to take them anywhere except Sana’a, Aden, Taiz maybe, but it all has to be by flight. It’s not like before, where you could hire drivers and take tourists around the country, not just major cities. We used to have 21-day packages. It was fantastic. Once we had a group of Slovenians in 2009. We started in Sana’a, we then went

to Marib, we went to the desert in Hadramout. You can’t imagine how beautiful it was and how nice it was. An Arab would never head to the desert for a holiday, but Europeans like this sort of thing. So we took all our equipment and hired a bedouin guide to show us around. We camped, we sang, we told stories.

We then shot guns. We went to Mukalla, to Aden, Taiz, Ibb, Hodeida.

This sort of thing is not possible now.

Continued on the back page

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# A GRAFFITI CAMPAIGN TO STOP VIOLENCE

Photo essay by  
**Ali Abulohoom**

The 2011 uprising succeeded in weakening constraints on freedom of expression in Yemen.

The number of private media outlets in the country increased significantly, not only giving a voice to more people but, more importantly, diversifying the stories being told. One art form that was particularly prevalent during the peaceful protest movement of 2011 was graffiti.

Indeed, graffiti beautifies—or as some see it, litters—the walls of the capital and many other cities around the country. Friends Tamam Al-Shaibani and Mohammed Al-Sharie are

two of the young men who have added to the country's collection of street art.

Their work is inspired by Morad Sobai's "The walls remind them" campaign. In 2012, over a period of 19 weeks, Sobai drew portraits on 63 walls in Sana'a. They show the faces of Yemenis who were abducted by the government from the 1970's through to the 1990's and either executed or placed in secret prisons. As the campaign's name suggests, Sobai's goal was to remind people about those who disappeared and urge the government to investigate cases of forced disappearance.

Al-Shaibani, who is originally from Taiz governorate, and Al-Sharie, originally from Ibb governorate, are both students

at the Information Technology Faculty at Sana'a University. Having witnessed the violence that accompanied Yemen's political transition, they decided to advocate for peace and co-existence among Yemenis. Al-Shaibani and Al-Sharie began to portray famous intellectuals, authors, and poets on walls inside the capital, along with short quotes taken from their speeches and writings.

Following the 2011 uprising, clashes and violence spread in different parts of the country. Al-Shaibani is concerned that, as a consequence, Yemenis are becoming increasingly ruthless, viewing the use of weapons as an appropriate means to achieve their goals. Believing in the power of words, Al-Shaibani is impressed by char-

acters like Gandhi or Gamal Abdel Nasser, whose speeches impacted the history of entire countries. "I want to use their speech again in an attempt to change the peoples' beliefs and thoughts in Yemen. I am not 100 percent sure that my campaign will be successful, but this is what I can offer to my country at least for the time being," he said.

Their campaign is named "Open book," with different walls around Sana'a being referred to as "pages." The campaign started in August and, according to Al-Shaibani, will last until the walls of Sana'a and other governorates will be "decorated with patriotic and inspiring statements which prevent the people from engaging in any wrongdoings."



The campaign depends on people spreading the word through social media. The two-man team has managed to attract dozens of young participants, who have helped paint portraits, provide ideas, or donate materials.



Al-Sharie explained that the spread of violence in many governorates of Yemen was the main motive behind their "Open book" campaign.



Fatima Al-Aghbari, one of the campaign participants, said that it was the valuable message the campaign is trying to convey that led her to join. Just like Al-Shaibani and Al-Sharie, Fatima hopes the campaign will positively impact the way people think and behave.



Al-Shaibani said that the campaign is inexpensive. The painting of one wall, including about seven paintings on average, costs around YR5,000 (\$23). The activists come armed with only paper, brushes, and paint.



Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2014) was the leader of South Africa's ANC party until 1994 and the first black president of South Africa. Mandela was in prison from 1964 until 1990 for his opposition to the country's government and apartheid system. In 1993 he shared the Nobel Peace Prize with former President Frederik Willem de Klerk for their work to end apartheid.



Initially "the book" was planned to have six "pages," or six walls in the capital. Four pages have already been completed in Al-Zubairi, Al-Zera'a, Al-Siteen, and Hadda streets. Two other pages will soon be "written" in Hasaba and Shumaila streets. In the following months, Al-Shaibani plans to extend the campaign to other governorates.



Mahmoud Darwish (1941 – 2008) was a Palestinian poet dubbed the "resistance poet." He wrote dozens of poems against the occupation and in support of freedom and peace. He won numerous awards for his literature.



Mohammed Mahmoud Al-Zubari (1920 – 1965) was a Yemeni poet and revolutionary who opposed the Imamate. He took part in the revolution in 1962, bringing about Yemen's transition from a monarchy to a republic. The poems he wrote urged the people to overthrow tyrant leaders.



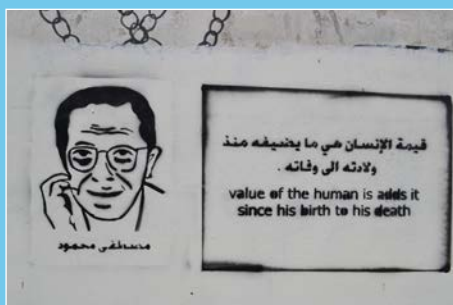
Noam Chomsky is an American intellectual who revolutionized the field of linguistics. Chomsky has written a number of books about politics, often criticizing the way the US uses its power both at home and abroad.



Che Guevara (1928 – October 9, 1967) was an Argentinean Marxist and physician, author, leader, diplomat, and military theorist.



Elia Abu Madi, (1889 or 1890 – 1957) was a Lebanese-American poet, who wrote about nature and peace.



Mustafa Mahmoud (1921 – 2009) was an Egyptian scientist and a prolific author.



Gibran Khalil Gibran, (1883 – 1931) was a Lebanese artist, poet, and writer.



Abbas Al-Aqaad (1889 – 1964) was an Egyptian writer, and member of the Arab Academy.



Martin Luther King (1929 – 1968) was an American pastor in the US who became the most important leader of the civil rights movement and worked hard to achieve social change and equality for black Americans.



Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948) was an Indian lawyer and politician who successfully led the peaceful fight for India's independence.



Victor Hugo (1802 – 1885) was a French poet, playwright, and novelist. Two of his most famous novels are The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Les Misérables.



Ahmed Matar (born 1954) is an Iraqi poet who had to flee Iraq because of his poems, which were critical of totalitarian regimes in the Arab world. He currently lives in Britain.



Abdullah Al-Baradoni (1920 – 1999) was a Yemeni poet and intellectual. He wrote poems in support of peace, justice, and freedom.





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# Kuwait: Canada's risky ally

**Erin Kilbride**

muftah.org

First published Oct. 11

Canada announced on Thursday, October 9, that its aerial base in the fight against the so-called "Islamic State" (ISIL) will be housed in the State of Kuwait. Canadian warplanes are set to begin missions to Iraq and Syria within a few weeks.

Canada is one of many Western nations utilizing amenable regional allies to house ISIL-striking warplanes: The Dutch and Belgians have set up bases in Jordan; the French are operating out of their base in the United Arab Emirates; Australia is moving forces to its base in the UAE; and the United States is operating out of several US military outposts in the Arab world, including Kuwait's Ali Al-Salem Air Base.

As it sought to shore up regional support for the fight against ISIL, the United States amped up its reliance on "allies" in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last month. But Western attempts to court Gulf monarchies is at once hypocritical (Saudi Arabia critiques beheadings now? Really?) and impractical (Bahrain Defense Force officers are defecting to join ISIL, and creating YouTube videos encouraging other Bahrainis to do the same. Is this really the ally Western militaries want?).

Admittedly, concerns about Western reliance on GCC support tend to zero in on Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar, leaving Kuwait largely absent from analyses of Gulf-ISIL-West dynamics. Kuwait is home to a number of US military bases, but is not referenced nearly as often as its neighbors. Hosting a new Canadian airbase in the opening scenes of The War on Terror Part Deux is likely to change this. The new partnership may have consequences for the people of Kuwait, as well.

The establishment of Western military bases in small Gulf monarchies does not typically bode well for human rights. The Kingdom of Bahrain, for example, is home to both the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, as well as a decades-long history of violent crackdowns on political dissent. Since 2011, when anti-government protesters took to the streets in the hundreds of thousands demanding democracy and an elected, accountable parliament, the US government has been markedly disinterested in Bahrain's violent response. Three and a half years later, thousands of political prisoners remain in jail, torture continues, and over 100 people have been killed. Meanwhile, the Fifth Fleet remains intact.

When prominent Bahraini human rights activist Maryam Al-Khawaja was arrested at the country's international airport this past August, the whole world seemed to remember Bahrain again. Twitter lit up, Khawaja's name flooded conversations in Geneva, and hundreds of op-eds appeared lamenting Bahrain's abysmal human rights record. That week, I remarked to a friend that Maryam was like a light, shining attention back on a long forgotten (or, as she calls it, "inconvenient") revolution.

If Maryam is a light, then Western military bases in small Gulf monarchies have historically acted as dimmers. The phrase "Fifth Fleet" opens nearly every major news article written about Bahrain, giving off the distinct impression that for the Western world, Bahrain is, first and foremost, the site of a key US military base. Though second, third, or

fourth on the list, Bahrain is also the site of rampant and well-documented human rights violations.

In light of Canada's recent decision to land its anti-ISIS planes in Kuwait, here are a few key points to keep in mind when discussing Canada's Gulf ally:

## 1. Kuwait is ruled by an Emir with the power to dissolve parliament at will.

Since 2006, Emir Sabah has dissolved the National Assembly five times, typically after reform attempts have been a little too successful. As Gabriella Nassif explained last year, "in 2011 the National Assembly issued a no confidence vote against the prime minister, the only time it had successfully issued such a decision, and Emir Sabah responded by ending the assembly's term." With the constant threat of dissolution looming, the parliament faces real risks in pushing for meaningful reforms.

## 2. Criticizing the government can mean injury, imprisonment, and torture.

While the Kuwaiti opposition movement predates the Arab Spring, protests have intensified over the past four years. Police routinely fire tear gas and stun grenades to curb the increasingly vocal opposition, with hundreds of protesters injured in the government's violent response to largely peaceful demonstrations. Citizens have been arrested and imprisoned for criticizing corruption and oppression in Kuwait, and numerous activists have been convicted of "insulting" or "undermining" the Emir on social media.

## 3. At least one-hundred-thousand people living in Kuwait are stateless.

The "bedoon" (literally translating to "without") population lives without citizenship. This marginalized minority cannot legally obtain identification cards or passports, nor do they receive officially recognized birth, death, marriage, or divorce certificates. The stateless people of Kuwait do not have access to public health care, housing, education, or employment. The Bedoon Rights network explains that "while they face some of the state's harshest discrimination policies, they have no recourse to the law and its courts. Simply stated, the Bedoon, who are equal to about 10 percent of the Kuwaiti population, do not exist."

## 4. Even if you are born with citizenship in Kuwait, it does not mean you will be able to keep it.

Like in neighboring Bahrain, Kuwait has a history of stripping citizenship from government critics. As recently as June 2014, Kuwaiti authorities revoked the citizenship of five nationals, including the owner of the independent Al-Yom television station and Al-Yom newspaper. Those made stateless this year currently fear their children will be stripped of their nationality as well. As reported by Human Rights Watch, Kuwait's nationality law states:

It is permissible by a decree upon the request of the interior minister—to revoke the Kuwaiti citizenship through the application of provisions from articles 4, 5, 6, or 8 of this law, and in the following cases: ...5—if evidence is available from competent authorities showing that he has promoted principles that will undermine the social or economic system of the country, or belongs to a foreign political party. In this case the court may also revoke the citizenship of

those who obtained it from him by dependency.

## 5. Kuwaiti women cannot pass their citizenship to their children.

Assuming they keep quiet about government abuses (see numbers 2 and 4), Kuwaiti men, but not women, can pass citizenship on to their children.

## 6. Migrant rights in Kuwait are abysmal.

In 2007, Kuwait ranked among the worst offenders of human trafficking in the world. In 2013, 90 percent of Kuwaiti households employed a domestic worker from a foreign country. According to Migrant-Rights, a fifth of migrant workers report being abused by their employers, but remain unable to leave because these employers have confiscated their passports. In the past two years,

Kuwait has deported thousands of migrant workers in "security campaigns," in which assaults, psychological intimidation, and rape have been used during random raids on migrants' homes and workplaces. Kuwait's foreign domestic workers are routinely portrayed as deviant threats to Kuwaiti society, despite constituting over a fifth of the country's labor force. The government recently announced plans to decrease the population of migrants from 2.1 million to 1 million over two years, which will likely require forcibly removing one-hundred-thousand migrants each year. In 2013, Kuwait and other GCC states also announced plans for stricter measures to "detect gays" attempting to enter the Gulf, enmeshing xenophobia with homophobia and further entrenching migrant stigmatization and sexualization.

The crimes ISIL commits are hor-

rific and inexcusable in any context, but propping up monarchies with poor human rights records is not a sustainable path forward in the fight against terrorism. The 2011 anti-government protests in Kuwait resulted in the resignation of Prime Minister Nasser Al-Sabah and the dissolution of parliament. If and when Kuwait's people—bedoon or otherwise—take to the streets in large numbers again, Canada may find itself in the same predicament the United States does whenever the Fifth Fleet is caught in the crossfires of Bahrain's anti-government protests.

In the words of now-imprisoned Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, Bahrain's harshly sectarian security forces have proved an "ideological incubator" for ISIL-like extremism. There are similar concerns in Kuwait. Craig Whitlock, who covers the Pentagon and na-

tional security for the Washington Post, reported in August:

...in Kuwait, even as Ali Al-Salem Air Base has taken on added importance for US military operations, other branches of the US government have expressed increasing concern about local support for extremist groups. On Aug. 6, the Treasury Department blacklisted three Kuwaitis for allegedly financing the Islamic State and Jabhat Al-Nusra, an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria.

Teaming up with oppressive monarchies is a risky (if not morally wrought) strategy for ridding the world of terrorism. Governments breeding oppression, sectarianism, and extremism are hardly the best allies for fighting an ideology that is nourished by those same forces.

*Republished with permission from Muftah.org.*

## What gives legitimacy to ISIL's rhetoric?

*Failure of top-down modernization and disintegration of post-colonial national borders have cost the region dearly.*

**Soumaya Ghannoushi**

aljazeera.com

First published Oct. 10

Since the map of the Middle East was drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement in the aftermath of World War I and the retreat of the Ottoman Turks in favor of the British and French, the lines demarcating the boundaries between states in the Arab region have never been successfully challenged, even in the heyday of pan-Arab nationalism.

Saddam Hussein's ill-conceived adventure in neighboring Kuwait ended in catastrophe, costing him his regime, and eventually, his life. But two decades later, a small obscure group has, ironically, managed to achieve what the once mighty Iraqi army had failed to do in 1990. Declaring its dominance over huge swaths of land in Iraq and Syria, ISIL has effectively erased the long established frontier between the two countries, thus mounting the first successful challenge to the Sykes-Picot arrangement.

History abounds with shadowy extremist organizations, centered on deviant ideas—not always of a religious nature—eccentric megalomaniacs, or purely criminal objectives. ISIL is neither unique nor without precedent in this respect. What distinguishes the group is in reality neither its fanaticism, nor brutal methods, but the suddenness of its rise and astonishing speed of its territorial expansion. In the space of a few months, this once marginal faction has come to occupy the center stage of international politics, threatening the existence of entire regional states and governments, redefining old political geographies, even managing to bring together sworn enemies around the shared goal of defeating it, from Iran and Qatar to the US and Gulf kingdoms.

### Unexpected ascendancy

Endlessly churned out epithets about ISIL's theological origins, exclusionary takfiri (apostate) tendencies, and religious legitimization of its brutal methods are useless in the quest to grasp the causes of its unexpected ascendancy and rapid proliferation.

It is the changing geopolitics of the region that holds the answers here. What gave and continues to grant ISIL—and other violent anarchic groups of its kind—momentum and room for diffusion is the strategic and political vacuum generated by the retreat of US influence in the Middle East, and Arab Orient more specifically.

The US is no longer able to monitor and

regulate the rhythm of events in that sensitive part of the world. The wave of exhibitionist pre-emptive strikes launched by the neo-cons ended in two consecutive military defeats and hasty retreats.

The limits of US military might were laid bare for all to see. Thanks to its superior firepower, it was able to topple regimes and dismantle existing structures, but was dismally impotent to rebuild them anew. And in the vacuum and trail of devastation it left behind, the US created a fertile soil for the growth of extremist violent groups, on the one hand, and of internecine ethnic and sectarian conflicts, on the other.

Another irony is that the Americans find themselves today compelled to return to the Middle East, having retreated from it in order to channel what remains of their might on the escalating threat posed by a rising China and respond to the challenges of the shift of wealth and influence eastwards. But Obama's US looks nothing like the one that had mobilized its fleets against Saddam Hussein a decade ago. Today, it reluctantly retraces its footsteps to the same battlefield, broken and bruised, full of caution and foreboding.

The geopolitical void that appeared with the decline of US power after Afghanistan and Iraq was further exposed with the Syrian revolution, as the US and its Gulf allies proved powerless to end the conflict conclusively in their favor, desperately jostling for control and influence with the Iranians and the Russians. And as in Iraq, radical jihadist groups swiftly moved in to fill the resulting political vacuum, finding an ideal social foster in long standing sectarian grievances.

### Complex demographics

Today, we are witnessing the explosion of the complex demographics of Arab society. In colonial times, local administrations had managed tensions between its myriad traditional social configurations, religious, sectarian, tribal, and ethnic, via a policy of containment, dilution, or repression. This role was subsequently taken up by the post-colonial state within a process of superimposed pseudo-modernization, and under the banner of a collective national identity that remained feeble and skin-deep.

Amidst the collapse of fragile post-colonial political structures in countries like Libya, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, traditional bonds and identities have reasserted themselves again, but in a more raucous bloody manner. Sunnis, Shia, Kurds, Arabs, Muslims, and Christians, all turned against each other in a chilling spec-

tacle of senseless self-mutilation.

This atmosphere of paranoid animosity, social disarray, and political crisis was a potent incubator for Islamic radicalism, with its ideological fervor, excommunicatory tendencies, and puritanical dreams. Political grievances mingled with ethnic and sectarian grudges to produce the hatred ridden grandiose discourse of Al-Qaeda, ISIL and their Jihadist likes.

### Price of failure

Today, the region is paying the price for the failure of top-down modernization and the disintegration of artificial post-colonial national borders and frail political edifices. And with the evaporation of the great hopes pinned on the Arab Spring of the possibility of change through peaceful means and popular protests, extremism and violence have reared their head once more. But as disillusionment and despair descend on the region and tighten their icy grip on its throat, this deformed ghoulish child of crisis looks uglier, deadlier and more vindictive than ever.

By renewing and bolstering old alliances with Gulf sheikhdoms and autocratic Arab regimes to thwart democratic political change; overseeing the return to military coups and cloaking them with legitimacy, the US and its European allies have sent Arabs a clear resounding message: "Ballot boxes are not for you! They are pointless as means of change. Their results are easily discarded and trampled upon. Violence and revenge are the way out of your bleak existence." Nothing could have rendered more credence and legitimacy to the rhetoric of ISIL and the jihadist cause.

Through its modern history, the Arab region has been an open index of the ascent and descent of global powers and a mirror of the great players' fluctuating fortunes. And in this strategically positioned part of the globe, power shifts have always come at a heavy price, paid in much blood and socio-political instability, be that from the Ottomans to the British in the wake of the World War I, or to their American heirs after World War II. The currently unfolding transformation is no exception. The wave of turmoil, chaos, and misery it carries will most likely continue to engulf the region for years to come.

*Soumaya Ghannoushi is a British Tunisian writer and specialist in Middle East politics. Her articles have been published in the Guardian, the Independent, Corriere della Serra and Alquds.*

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# From the mosque to the battlefield

## ■ Mohammed Al-Khayat

**A**round five years ago, in the Al-Sunna Mosque in Taiz, supporters of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) tried to recruit young men to wage jihad in the southern Yemeni governorate of Abyan.

Soon afterwards, they themselves left the school to fight there, according to Badr Al-Selwi, who has been the Imam of the mosque for the past three years. Al-Selwi strongly condemns their actions and ideology, emphasizing that nowadays no “extremists” are teaching at the school anymore.

While AQAP is no longer recruiting at the Al-Sunna Mosque, it's likely that similar recruiting practices are ongoing elsewhere. In an attempt to shed light on the mechanisms and arguments used in winning over young men, the Yemen Times talked to five former students at the mosque in Taiz, including one who attended an AQAP training camp in Abyan.

“I was 14 years old when I decided to get into the Quran school inside the mosque so I could learn about things that would benefit me in this life and the other,” Adulkader Bin Salem\* begins.

About eight years ago the 24-year-old attended Quran classes at the Al-Sunna Mosque in Taiz.

“After three years I was able to recite the Holy Quran by heart, in addition to 2,500 hadiths [teachings, deeds, and sayings of the Prophet],” Bin Salem proudly explains, adding that it was his talent that made his teachers and other sheikhs interested in him.

Bin Salem continues, “when I turned 17 years old, Al-Qaeda be-

gan to gather in Abyan. We had new teachers in the mosque who turned out to be ex-Jihadists from Afghanistan.” They handed out booklets titled “Stories of Heroes,” glorifying the lives and deeds of fighters in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya, Bin Salem remembers.

He says that some of the most notable fighters were Khattab, Shamil Basaif, Abdullah Azzam, and Osama Bin Laden.

“We used to be excited about these stories. Those men were fighting the enemies of Islam and people who used to attack Islamic lands, and we used to wish we could have an opportunity for jihad in those places,” Bin Salem asserts, explaining that it was “true jihad” he was talking about “approved by Islamic Sharia and all Human Rights charters; legitimate self-defense.”

Mohannad Abdullah, who used to be Bin Salem's colleague in the Quran school, says, “we used to be baffled by the morals of the teachers we had there. We only found out later that they were Al-Qaeda. They were so modest, compassionate, merciful, and pious, which made anyone who knew them love them instantly.”

“We used to take trips outside Taiz,” he continues. “We saw our teachers busy reciting the Holy Quran and discussing its verses, which made us love them and view them as role models, until they started talking about Abyan and the Jihadists pouring into Abyan and shouldering the burdens of Islam and Muslims.”

When asked about Abyan, Abdullah adds, teachers responded that Jihadists there “wanted to implement God's word and Islamic Sharia and purge Yemen of

hypocrisy.” They also explained that Yemen was full of foreign intelligence. “These foreigners are targeting Jihadists,” Abdullah was told, “and foreign tourists and journalists entering Yemen are merely international intelligence agents.”

Abdullah remembers that his former teachers frequently talked about US drones, which they said killed Muslims in Yemen with the full knowledge of the “infidel Yemeni government, which is working as an agent for the West.” There is a “vigorous war against the righteous,” as the teachers put it, “and the US is controlling the Yemeni and Saudi authorities and seeking to eradicate Jihadists.”

A few years ago around 12 of overall 50 students who attended the Quran school at the mosque ended up going to Abyan to join AQAP, according to Abdullah.

In their recruitment, teachers focused on three types of students, according to Amer Abdulkaki, who used to be another student at the mosque. “The ones who are smart but not educated, the ones who are physically strong, and the ones who are very brave. They used to shower them with gifts and invitations,” he says. Abdulkaki himself, a large and muscular man, fit into the second category.

Abdulkaki describes the way in which teachers approached him as “unnatural” and explains that most students' relationship to their teachers hit a dead end, once they were asked to go to Abyan to support everyone “killed without any guilt except for wanting Islamic Sharia to prevail.”

Many of those who refused to go to Abyan explained that they had to stay at home to support their families. References were made to a

hadith which describes a man's request to fight alongside the Prophet but was denied his wish on the grounds that he was his parents' only son.

## Joining and leaving an AQAP training camp

Jihad Al-Sharabi's story differs from those of other former students at the Al-Sunna Mosque, as he is one of those who went to Abyan and received a weapons training from AQAP.

“I don't want to remember those days, they are the worst I have had,” Al-Sharabi begins. “I did not have enough information about Al-Qaeda, and the little information I did have was all wrong.”

While Al-Sharabi is reluctant to discuss personal details, he says that “there are internal struggles inside the group [Al-Qaeda].” Its members share different views on whether or not Yemeni soldiers should be fought, he explains. Those who argue that Yemenis, as Muslims, shall be spared are described as “more logical” by Al-Sharabi.

Overall, Al-Sharabi remained unconvinced by AQAP's vision, however, and soon left Abyan and the group—“in an amicable way,” as he said. “Each side was praying for the other for divine guidance.”

Those who leave AQAP due to different interpretations of Islamic law are not considered traitors, according to Al-Sharabi. Instead, AQAP appears to follow a policy which allows anyone to leave, describing all members, as well as former members, as “brothers for life.”

Nasser Al-Bahre, the former bodyguard of Osama Bin Laden, who is best known as “Abu Jindal,”

confirmed in a previous interview with the Yemen Times Radio that Al-Qaeda has followed this policy since the days of Bin Laden.

## Revenge, martyrdom, and international politics

The reasons underlying young men's decision to join AQAP are numerous and manifold.

While Al-Sharabi views a lack of information about the group and its propaganda as major recruitment tools, he believes it is revenge—not religion—which drives many to fight alongside AQAP.

“Al-Qaeda has young fighters who support them. They do not really belong to Al-Qaeda, they just fight because their innocent relatives were killed by US drones. According to them, they are avenging their relatives,” he says.

Dr. Abdulkareem Nasser, former professor of Sociology, Taiz University, confirms that “the problem is not only young men who suffer from dysfunctional families. Poverty and the rife culture of revenge can also be major factors in encouraging youth to join Al-Qaeda. Some people join not because they believe in or love Al-Qaeda, but only to avenge their loved ones who were killed in US drone strikes.”

Nael Abdulfattah, a resident in the neighborhood in which the Quran school is located, explains that it is victory or martyrdom that motivates youth to join Al-Qaeda groups.

“I know four people under the age of 18 who went for jihad in Syria. Al-Qaeda's gimmick for recruiting young men was the argument that Syria was ruled by Shias, who were torturing Sunnis, who had to be supported. The result was good either way—victory or martyrdom,”

he says.

While Al-Qaeda's call for jihad in Abyan was rejected by many youth as “suspect,” their call for jihad in Syria was rather popular, says Abdulfattah.

He explains that young men and teenagers who went to Syria were dreaming of either defeating the Syrian regime and getting female slaves and other spoils of war, or of martyrdom and the promise of seventy-two “houris”—beautiful young virgins.

Khalid Obaid, another former student from the Al-Sunna Mosque in Taiz, confirms that teachers at the Quran school used to speak of heaven and “houris,” trying to tempt young men and lure them to join AQAP.

The “houri promise” is based on a hadith, saying that anyone who is killed in his fight for God shall be given seventy-two “houris” in heaven, and a verse in the holy Quran saying that a martyr never really dies but lives on in heaven.

According to Dr. Amal Abbas, professor of psychology in Taiz University, “one of the most prominent factors that leads Yemeni men down this road [of extremism] is sexual repression; we live in a very conservative society and marriage is very expensive.”

In her view, “committed youth are caught between two hardships: Not being able to pay for a wedding and not being able to release their sexual tension.”

“You see them dreaming of heaven and ‘houris’ or of glory in battles, especially those who went to fight in Syria,” Abbas explains.

\* The names of the five former students were changed to protect their identity.

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## Coffee Break



#### Sudoku

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

#### Easy

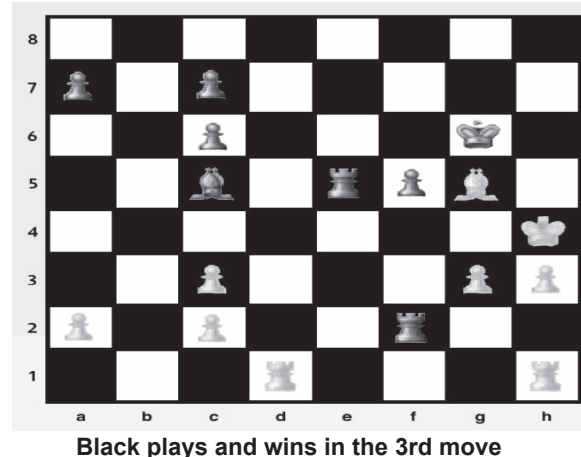
7			1		4		
		1		3	6	7	
3				6		1	
		4	8			6	
1			4				2
	7		2	5	8		
	5		1				9
	9	7	6		3		
	2		9				6

#### Intermediate

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

#### Difficult

#### Chess



Black plays and wins in the 3rd move

#### Solutions

4	6	9	L	E	8	1	5	Z
5	Z	L	P	1	9	6	E	8
1	E	8	6	Z	5	4	P	L
L	S	E	8	9	1	Z	6	P
9	1	P	Z	6	E	L	8	5
6	8	Z	5	L	P	9	1	E
8	P	6	1	S	Z	E	L	9
Z	9	1	E	8	L	S	P	6
E	L	S	9	P	6	8	Z	1
9	P	L	5	6	E	Z	1	8
1	S	E	Z	8	9	L	6	P
6	8	Z	5	L	1	E	5	9
P	E	8	1	S	Z	9	L	6
Z	6	S	L	9	P	8	E	1
L	9	1	6	E	8	P	Z	5
8	1	6	9	Z	L	S	P	E
S	L	9	E	P	6	1	8	Z
E	Z	P	8	1	S	6	9	L
5	6	Z	4	L	7	8	1	9

Sudoku



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## Alternatives to refugee camps

### Change needed in livelihoods support

Corliss of UNHCR acknowledged that "creating an enabling environment in terms of law and policy" would be essential to the new policy's success, but also pointed to the need for a "fundamental transformation in the way we do livelihoods programming." Whereas in the past, livelihoods support has been used "as a kind of occupa-

tional therapy, to keep people busy in camps," Corliss said UNHCR was moving towards "a much more hard-headed, market-oriented approach" that would help refugees acquire the appropriate skills to enter a host country's job market or to start a small business.

Corliss added that bringing refugees to the point where they can achieve sustainable livelihoods requires "comprehensive support

over a period of time."

In recent years, UNHCR and other aid agencies have been experimenting with various ways of delivering that support to refugees dispersed throughout urban areas. "Cash-based interventions will be very important," said Corliss, and have the added benefit of stimulating local economies. UNHCR is already making use of cash-based interventions in 94 operations around the world. In the longer term, however, there will be a need to work with development partners to strengthen local infrastructure such as public health systems.

"This is a policy that's extremely ambitious and is going to have to be progressively implemented," he told IRIN.

Guidance to help field staff operationalize the policy is still being developed and UNHCR will need buy-in from partners, including international NGOs, other UN agencies and donors, but most importantly host governments.

Kagan pointed out that outside camps, what refugees needed even more than aid was rights—"the right to work, the right to send your kids to school. These are the things refugees need in cities," said Kagan. "They have to have rights to be able to rebuild their lives in dignity. And that requires government buy-in."

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## On being a tour guide in Yemen:

### How much does a tour cost?

It depends on the sort of package you want. You can buy full or half package tours. On a full tour, your meals, hotels, transportation are paid for. You will not need to spend a dollar once you are here. Half packages require you to pay for your meals. Cost also depends on how many people book, if people will be sharing services.

If a car rate is \$100, you will pay that if you are alone. If you are four people, you will each pay \$25. Same with accommodation.

### What can the government do to improve tourism?

It should improve security.

The government recently announced that you tourists need armed escorts in many situations in order to travel outside the capital. Is this a good idea? It's a terrible idea. It draws more attention to the tourists.

### What is the biggest threat to tourists today? Is it Al-Qaeda? Kidnappings?

Both of these things. It's such a shame. Yemenis are so kind, but they get such a bad reputation.

Five years from now, ten years

### from now, what is in the future for tourism?

It depends on the political and security situation in the country. If the people in government work

very hard and work for the best interests in the country, I think they can come up with solutions. I have hope. Things take a while to change. Let's have hope and see.

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