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Southern Movement leader killed in Aden

■ Ali Aboluhom

SANA'A, Dec. 15— Khalid Al-Junaid, a prominent member of the Southern Movement, was killed on Monday after being captured earlier that morning.

Fuad Rashed, secretary of the Southern Movement, accuses the state's Special Security Forces in Aden of detaining Al-Junaid, 42, in Al-Arood square, before killing him. Al-Junaid was an often-cited source in the Yemen Times regarding the movement.

Majed Al-Shuaibi, a political activist from the Southern Movement, said witnesses told him that Al-Junaid was taken by soldiers in an armored vehicle before being killed.

Mohammed Mosaed, an officer from the security forces in Aden, confirmed that Al-Junaid was killed on Monday. He claims that his death came during a fire exchange in Khur Maksa neighborhood, not far from Al-Arood square, between security forces and an armed group affiliated with the Southern Movement.

"He was shot dead while our forces were trying to stop armed men from vandalizing property. They were intimidating shop owners and local residents," said Mosaed.

Rashed believes security forces are simply trying to justify their killing of the movement leader after the fact. "[They're] coming up with baseless allegations to rationalize their acts."

The killing of Al-Junaid, says Rashed, is the latest in a series of acts committed by "the northern occupying troops" in a bid to intimidate protesters and undermine the Southern Movement's efforts to secure greater autonomy for southern Yemen. Those efforts began in earnest with the establishment of a protest camp in Al-Arood square on Oct. 14.

Al-Junaid was last detained by security forces on Aug. 31. On that occasion he was taken from Arwa Street in Crater, Aden, and brought to a Special Forces Security office, known locally as the 20 June Base. He was held without charges and denied access to a lawyer. He was only released 25 days before his death.

AQAP claims responsibility for assassination of GPC leader in Marib

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Dec. 15—Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) claimed responsibility on Sunday for the assassination of leading GPC figure Salim Ghufaina that morning.

Ghufaina was chairman of the General People's Congress (GPC) branch in Marib governorate, and chairman of the Majzar district Local Administrative Council.

AQAP claimed on its Twitter account that a group of AQAP fighters planted an explosive device on Ghufaina's car, and detonated it at 10:30 a.m., when Ghufaina was driving with his son and bodyguard through the Al-Jawf roundabout in Marib city.

AQAP accused Ghufaina of helping to facilitate the expansion of the Houthi presence into the Jedaan tribal region in Marib governorate, but did not provide any further details.

On Nov. 10, Houthis took over the Al-Maas military base located in the Jedaan region, in what many claimed signaled an attempt by the Houthis to take over Marib governorate.

However, two weeks later on Nov. 25, Houthis and prominent leaders within the Obaidah, Jedaan and Murad tribes signed an official ceasefire, in which the former pledged not to expand further into the governorate if the latter promised not to aid or abet AQAP members.

The agreement contained 13 clauses, which tasked tribesmen with protecting the governorate's public facilities and roads, in addition to any Houthis or residents who lived in the area. Clause four states that, "The



Salim Ghufaina, chairman of the GPC branch in Marib governorate, was assassinated on Sunday morning. AQAP members claimed responsibility for the attack later that day.

second party must guarantee the safety of the governorate's roads, along with all areas of the governorate, to ensure that no Muslims are robbed or have their possessions taken from them."

Whether or not the assassination of Ghufaina signals a failure on the part of the tribesmen to successfully uphold the agreement remains unclear. Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, claims that this is not the case. "The assassination

was of a GPC member by AQAP fighters, while the ceasefire agreement applies only to Houthis and the tribes of Marib," he said. "Neither we nor the tribes can prevent all such things from happening. We do not consider this a failure on the behalf of tribes to implement security."

The Defense Ministry website confirmed the assassination of Ghufaina and his son, and added that investigations into his murder

are still ongoing. It announced that Ghufaina's body guard was injured in the explosion.

Abshal Al-Futaini, a GPC member and Murad tribal leader who signed the agreement, admitted that although Ghufaina was not a Houthi, he was known as a long time Houthi supporter. Al-Mutamam Net, media mouthpiece of the GPC, reported the assassination Monday morning and condemned the attack.

Houthis gain control over Arhab district

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Dec. 14—Ongoing clashes between Islah and Houthi supporters in Arhab district of Sana'a governorate ended on Sunday, with Houthis gaining control over the area.

Abduljalil Sinan, the leading sheikh of Arhab district, told the Yemen Times that the situation within the district remained calm as of Monday and that, "The Houthis have set up checkpoints in the district and control everything."

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi member and activist, confirmed, "The popular committees have established checkpoints everywhere and are cooperating with security forces in the district—exactly like the popular committees do in Sana'a city."

Fighting first broke out on Friday, involving local supporters of both the Islah party and the Houthi movement. "The clashes took place in villages under the control of Islah affiliated sheikhs and residents. Areas include: Al-Khamees, Hazam, Al-Rajw, Zandan, Jubar, Al-Arshan, Bait Maran and Bait Al-Haneq villages." Sinan said that all other areas remained safe and untouched by the fighting. Many "politically neutral" tribesmen refused to get involved," he said.

"Tribesmen are fed up with political disputes, and are aware of their consequences," he said. "We've seen hundreds of families become displaced due to clashes in Amran, Al-Jawf, and Al-Baida."

Mohammed Abdullah, a resident of Bait Maran village in Arhab,

agreed with Sinan's assessment, saying that most residents in the village were affiliated with the Islah party. He claims that no Houthi supporters live in Bait Maran. "On Sunday, Houthis blew up the Quran center in Bait Maran, which they assumed was an Islah center," he said. No fighting occurred in the village, according to Abdullah, with residents refusing to engage in open clashes with the Houthis.

Currently, Houthis, who are all originally from other areas, are cooperating with local police forces and have set up checkpoints throughout the streets in the village, according to Abdullah.

"We call on President Hadi and the government to intervene and send a presidential committee that can come up with a permanent solution to stop the clashes," Abdullah declared, saying that he feared that clashes may renew any moment.

Violation of February's agreement?

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, accuses local Islah supporters in Arhab of having violated an agreement signed between the two parties on Feb. 8.

The ceasefire agreement, which was signed in the presence of a presidential committee assigned to resolve the conflict, required both sides to end the fighting, and to remove unofficial checkpoints and barricades from the Sana'a-Sa'ada road.

Al-Bukhaiti blames members of the Islah Party and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) of

having violated the agreement after an attack was launched against Houthi supporters at the Bani Jaidat mosque in the Yahis area of Arhab district on Friday.

"RPGs were used to attack Houthis during Friday prayers. Several were killed, as a result," he said, claiming he did not know the exact number of Houthi casualties.

"Those Takfiris [Islah and AQAP members] also attacked Mohammed Nawfal [a prominent Houthi member in Arhab] on Friday in the area of Al-Sama Mountain, as well as members of

Houthi popular committees. The clashes came in response to these attacks," Al-Bukhaiti added.

Zaid Al-Shami, head of the Islah Party bloc in parliament, told the Yemen Times that he could not comment on which side was responsible for starting the fighting on Friday.

The alleged presence of AQAP in Arhab district made headlines in late May, when the Yemeni military carried out a raid in the district's Bani Hakm area, killing two "members of Al-Qaeda," and arresting members of "a terrorist cell," according to the Ministry of

Defense.

A self-identified AQAP supporter in Arhab, who spoke to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity, condemned the "pacifism" of local Islah supporters, saying that "The men of Rada'a are real men. They defend their villages and homes. Islah party members in Arhab simply surrendered."

"We [AQAP] were ready to back the Islah members in their fight against the Houthis in Arhab but they surrendered before we could," the source added.

Five AQAP members were killed on Saturday, "in an ambush set by

the Houthis in the Umara area near Al-Sama Mountain, in Arhab" the source said.

Al-Bukhaiti told the Yemen Times on Monday that all areas in Arhab were cleared of Islah and AQAP members and that the Houthis maintained control of everything. This rather ambiguous statement was contradicted by Abdullah, who reports that in his village, "Islah members and supporters remain in their homes." However, as Abdullah admits, "They promised not to fight the Houthis and withdrew from a number of strategic positions such as atop Bait Maran hill."

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Identity of alleged AQAP members in Haradh attack remains unknown

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 14—Security sources told the Yemen Times that investigations into a shoot-out that took place Saturday at the Haradh border crossing with Saudi Arabia in Hajja governorate are ongoing, but have not yet produced any tangible results.

On Saturday, Dec. 13, a private vehicle, carrying four alleged members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), was stopped and inspected at the Haradh border crossing in Hajja governorate.

A security source who witnessed events on Saturday reported that two of the four men were dressed in "Abayas," wide, black garments that are commonly worn by Yemeni women. When the four suspects were asked to leave the car and identify themselves, the responsible security officer was shot and wounded by the suspects. In response, the officer opened fire at the four men, killing three and injuring one, the driver.

"Such investigations require a great deal of discretion in order for us to discover as much information as possible," a security official work-

ing within the president's office told the Yemen Times Monday evening. The Ministry of Defense announced on Saturday night that investigations into the shooting are ongoing, and did not reveal whether or not the four men involved in the border attack belonged to AQAP.

According to the security source, who spoke to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity, the three corpses and the injured driver were all sent to the Military Hospital in Sana'a on Saturday. Based on the Yemeni identity cards found on the suspects, one is from Al-Dhale governorate, two are from Dhamar governorate, and one is from Hadramout governorate, he added.

The security officer in Haradh claimed, "Documents and books belonging to Al-Qaeda were found with these individuals."

Taha Al-Sharafi, commander of the Houthi popular committee at the Haradh border crossing, also claimed that the four suspects were members of AQAP. He claimed a large number of audio and video clips with them, showing prominent AQAP sheikhs in Yemen were found in the suspects' vehicle. These documents, in addition to phones, and

books, have been confiscated by the Houthis, Al-Sharafi said.

Houthi popular committees have permanently been stationed at the Haradh border crossing following the Houthis spread throughout Hajja governorate in early October. While Al-Sharafi refuses to reveal the exact number of Houthis at the border crossing, the security source spoken with welcomed the extra manpower, declaring that, "security forces and Houthis are working closely together."

According to both the security source and Al-Sharafi, the Houthis interrogated the one surviving suspect. In the process, "The injured man admitted that the group was on their way to Saudi Arabia, however would not say why," according to Al-Sharafi.

As of Monday evening, AQAP has not released a statement claiming the four men as its members. However, four anonymous sources, all self-identified AQAP fighters, told the Yemen Times that the suspects who were killed and injured at the Haradh border crossing belonged to AQAP.

Unidentified militants carried out a suicide attack on July 4 at Hadra-



Four men clad in Abayas were stopped at a border crossing in Hajja governorate. A shoot-out with security forces left three of the men dead and one injured.

mout's Al-Wadia border crossing linking Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

Maintaining security along the 1,800 kilometers long Yemeni-Saudi border has long presented a chal-

lenge for both countries. The most prominent security threats include human and drug trafficking. Since 2003, Saudi Arabia has been trying to complete a fence running along

its border with Yemen but has faced obstacles from farmers who oppose the project. They argue that it will prevent them from accessing pastures for their livestock.

Houthis blow up homes of alleged AQAP members

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 15—The Houthis allegedly blew-up four homes on Sunday belonging to individuals they claimed to be members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in the town of Hamat Bani Sarar in Rada'a. The Houthis declined to comment on the allegations.

Renewed clashes between Houthis and tribesmen with alleged links to AQAP broke out in the village of Hamat Bani Sarar Saturday evening and lasted until Sunday morning. The clashes started after Houthis submitted a list of 14 names Saturday morning to the village's tribal leadership. All men on the list were living in the area and wanted by the Houthis due to their alleged links to AQAP.

Three of those on the list turned themselves in to the Houthis, who have controlled the village since taking over Rada'a city and its surrounding areas on Oct. 20, according to Ahmed Al-Leqahi, a local resident. Beginning Sunday, the Houthis announced a three day deadline to announce the whereabouts of the 11 remaining individuals.

Dr. Amar Al-Tam, chairman of the Islah political party's official media center in Rada'a, claimed that by Saturday afternoon, the Houthis sent an emissary to the village's tribal leadership demanding to know the whereabouts of the 11 remaining men. The emissary was reportedly killed he said, by a tribal elder, who then fled the area. Abdullah Al-Serary, a local resident and neighbor of the tribal elder who was contacted by the Houthis, confirmed Al-Tam's account to the Yemen Times, saying that a Houthi had been killed during the course of negotiations.

Shortly afterwards, Houthi fighters stationed atop Al-Qalalah and Artel mountains overlooking the village were attacked by AQAP fighters and allied tribesmen, in clashes that lasted until Sunday morning, according to Leqahi. He said that ten Houthis and an unknown number of tribesmen and AQAP fighters were killed. The Yemen Times could not independently verify the number of casualties.

Abu Muqbel Al-Qaifi, a self-

identified AQAP fighter based in Rada'a, told the Yemen Times that AQAP fighters killed dozens of Houthis in Hamat Bani Sarar on Saturday, and controlled the village until Monday morning, at which point they withdrew for "tactical reasons."

Waleed Al-Dailemi, a local Houthi commander in Rada'a city and its surrounding areas, confirmed that the Houthis had sought to apprehend 14 tribesmen from the village on Saturday, and that clashes took place in the Hamat Bani Sarar village later that day. He claimed the Houthis had beaten back AQAP fighters and remained in control of the village, however would not comment on the number of casualties they sustained.

Following the clashes on Sunday morning, Leqahi claimed that Houthis blew up four of the homes of the remaining 11 men who had not been apprehended, damaging ten other homes in the process. Houthis have since threatened to blow up the homes of the remaining seven men, he claimed. Later that day, Leqahi said the Houthis made a public announcement giving the villagers three days to turn over the remaining 11 individuals, or else they would blow up the remaining seven homes.

Al-Dailemi, the local Houthi commander, confirmed these events, saying that a three day deadline had been given to the villagers to hand over the individuals and that the Houthis would blow up the homes of the individuals if they did not comply. He declined to comment on whether the Houthis had already blown up four homes early Sunday. "The 11 remaining individuals are AQAP members who have killed members of Ansar Allah's [the Houthis'] popular committees in previous battles," he said. "Locals have three days to hand them over," he said.

Several dozen families fled the village as a result of the fighting, according to Nasser Al-Hariri, a citizen living in Nowfan, a village located next to Hamat Bani Sarar. He claimed a number of families had fled and taken refuge in Rada'a city, Nowfan and the neighboring village of Zuweib. He added that the Houthis had established a firm perimeter around the village and

were not allowing anyone to enter or leave.

The clashes in Hamat Bani Sarar occurred a day after AQAP fighters attacked Houthi positions in Rada'a city on Friday. Nasser Al-Sane', chairman of Rada'a district's Information Office, claimed that AQAP fighters attacked the city from four directions, killing 30 Houthis in the process. The deadliest fighting took place in the northeast corner of the city, he said, where a number of houses were destroyed as a result of AQAP shelling. He claimed that Houthi fighters were taken by surprise when the attack was launched, and fled the areas they were stationed, returning later after AQAP fighters withdrew. Houthis have since reclaimed total control of the city, he said.

Al-Dailemi told the Yemen Times that Rada'a was firmly under the control of the Houthis following the clashes, but would not provide any details of what happened. AQAP claimed on its Twitter page on Friday that more than 70 Houthis had been killed in the attacks on Rada'a, and that AQAP members fired RPG missiles at the historic Rada'a Castle located in the center of the city during the course of the fighting. The castle was built during the era of the Himyarite kingdom that ruled Yemen from 110AD to 525AD, and is said to date back to 243 AD.

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, refuted AQAP's claims that dozens had been killed. "I was in Rada'a on Saturday, the situation was calm," he said. "We lost a few fighters, but not too many." He would not comment on the amount of Houthis killed in the fighting. He said he had no information on the clashes that took place in Hamat Bani Sarar.

Ahmed Al-Salahi, a special forces soldier stationed at the castle, said that it was not damaged as a result of the fighting. Special Security Forces have been in control of the castle he claimed since Houthis took over the city Oct. 20, as part of an agreement reached between the two groups. However he acknowledged that the rest of the city was firmly under the control of Houthi popular committees.

Civil disobedience campaign held in southern governorates

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 15—A number of employees working in government institutions in Yemen's southern governorates participated in a campaign of peaceful civil disobedience on Monday, lasting from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The campaign came in response to a statement issued by the Southern Movement's Supreme Supervisory Committee, calling for workers in all government facilities including those working in the education and transportation sectors, corporations, factories, and in all parts of the commercial sector, to take part in an eight-hour strike. It exempted those working in hospitals, pharmacies, electricity and water emergency crews, and all sea and airports as well as oil refineries.

According to Majid Al-Shuaibi, a member of the committee's media council, the Southern Movement had sent six delegates out to six separate governorates, including Shabwa, Abyan, Hadramout, Al-Dhalla, Lahj and Aden. Their task, he said, is to organize and mobilize southerners to take part in the campaign.

Abdu Fare, who is originally from Dhamar governorate and the director of the education office in Aden city, claimed that all government employees in the office had taken to the streets to take part in the civil disobedience campaign.

Abdu Al-Wisabi, secretary in a local institute teaching computer skills in Aden city, said he does not support southern calls for secession. He showed up to work on Monday, despite calls for civil disobedience, saying, however, that he was the only one in the office. "No one else showed up."

Salem Al-Abdali, a bill collector within the state-owned General Electricity

Institute's Aden branch, claimed that the institute's offices closed in solidarity with the civil disobedience campaign. "We participated in the campaign in response to calls made by the Southern Movement," he said. "After 2 p.m., however, work hours end for government employees, so we didn't return to work after that." He claims a number of other workers in government facilities also took part in the strike.

Mohammad Al-Shaibani, a complaints officer within the Ministry of Water's Office in Aden, said that his offices were closed until noon, after which only four employees returned. Al-Shaibani would not

say how many employees in total boycotted work that day.

A banker in a public bank in Aden, who asked to remain anonymous, said that the bank closed its offices in fear of possible attacks by Southern Movement members.

The Yemen Times contacted local residents and workers in Hadramout, Abyan, Lahj, Shabwa and Al-Dhale cities who all claimed that large numbers of government employees took part in the campaign. The Yemen Times could not independently verify how many government employees in these cities and governorates took part in protests.



Many store owners in Aden chose to close their shops on Monday, in support of the Southern Movement's call for a strike.

Clashes in Rada'a has left thousands internally displaced

Story by **Bassam Al-Khameri** and **Amal Al-Yarisi**
Photos by **Amal Al-Yarisi**

Since October, Rada'a city has been engulfed in a spiral of violence between Houthis, members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and allied tribesmen. The ongoing fighting has effected a number of neighboring towns and villages, leaving thousands displaced.

In early December, the Yemen Times visited Rada'a city and its surrounding areas in an attempt to get a better grasp of the situation—including the living conditions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who were forced to flee their homes as a result of the fighting.

Abdullah Mohammed Al-Rada'i, a father of seven, is one of many who fled Rada'a city with his family in early October when the clashes first began. He, along with his family, live in a makeshift home in a local school in Al-Khadra neighborhood in Rada'a city of Al-Baida's governorate, long known as an AQAP stronghold. "The situation was already tense the last few years, before these last rounds of clashes broke out," he said. "However now, things have gotten much worse."

Al-Rada'i and his family share a schoolhouse with dozens of other displaced families from Rada'a. They say they lack blankets, clothes, food, and medicine. "Winter's upon us and the weather has gotten very cold. However, my family and I only have two blankets. Locals provide us with food every now and then but it's never enough for all of us," Al-Rada'i said. The area surrounding Rada'a city is rural and mountainous with rugged topography, where residents subsist primarily on agriculture.

Abdullah Al-Auqbi, deputy chairman of the Charitable Society for Social Welfare in Rada'a—the social wing of the Islah party—told the Yemen Times that since October over 1,000 families have been displaced from Al-Manasah village and 250



Many of the displaced have resorted to living in caves in the surrounding mountains, in neighboring villages, or in school houses, mosques, or the homes of local residents.

from the near-by Khubza village, both located several kilometers north of Rada'a city. Of those who fled Al-Manasah, he said, about half have returned to their homes. However, due to ongoing clashes in Khubza, residents remain displaced.

"We've distributed 300 blankets and 200 food baskets, which include wheat, cooking oil and sugar, to 257 displaced families from various cities, towns and villages who have taken refuge in Al-Salil, Bani Ziyad and Al-Ajruf villages, in Al-Quraishia district near Khubza and Al-Manasah," he added.

Other than the Charitable Society, Al-Rada'i claims he has not received any humanitarian assistance from the government, NGOs, or international organizations operating in Yemen. "Two weeks ago Islah provided us with food and blankets," he said. "I haven't seen anyone else attempt to help us."

An inter-agency assessment on

the Al-Baida governorate published on Dec. 1 and compiled by Yemen's Red Crescent, puts the total figure of IDPs in Rada'a at 2,000 families totaling 14,000 people. Of those, 500 families remain displaced it says. The report was drafted in coordination with the United Nations Office of Coordination for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). The report further claims that 500 displaced families received one time emergency food assistance on Nov. 29, in addition to hygiene kits, water filters, and jerry cans.

Nasser Al-Sane, chairman of Rada'a district's Information Office, confirmed that beginning ten days ago, the Red Crescent successfully distributed aid contributed by UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP) and Doctors without Borders, that included health kits, flour and biscuits to 500 families. Further aid had been provided six weeks prior he said. "They gave blankets, mattresses and utensils to a number of families." He could not specify which villages or regions the aid had been distributed in.

According to Fahad Al-Taweel, a Rada'a based journalist, the first round of displacements began in October. "Clashes intensified in October when the Houthis began to make serious advances into Rada'a in the lead up to their takeover of the city and its surrounding areas on Oct. 20," he said.

He added that a second wave of IDPs emerged in November, particularly from Khubza, when an existing ceasefire between the Houthis and AQAP was broken on Nov. 9.

According to the ceasefire, Houthis would not enter the village if tribesmen pledged not to harbor members of AQAP. Conflicting stories exist regarding who is responsible for breaking the ceasefire. According to Al-Taweel, many of the displaced have resorted to living in caves in the surrounding mountains, in neighboring villages, or in school houses, mosques, or the homes of local residents.

Sheikh Al-Saleh Abu Suraima is a local tribal leader in Baqarat, a village located next to Khubza that still remains outside the sphere of Houthi control. He is also the head of the Coalition of Saba Region Tribesmen. Saba is one of six federal regions set to be established in accordance with the NDC outcomes, and includes the Yemeni governorates of Marib, Al-Jawf and Al-Baida.

Suraima claims to have fought against the Houthis during their recent incursions into Rada'a, but maintains that he and his tribesmen have no alliance with AQAP and have prevented them from entering Baqarat. Having witnessed the fighting firsthand, he claims that all 300 families living within Khubza village have fled, what he estimates to be about 2,000 people.

"Originally, residents fled to the caves," he said. "Often, shelling by both AQAP and the Houthis, who station themselves in the mountains where a number of caves are located, accidentally strike IDPs." As a result, he said that, "Many have left the caves and moved into the homes of people in surrounding villages that have not witnessed any fighting."

Hajj Mohammad Abdu Al-Khubzi is a father of 14. He and all his family members fled Khubza in November following the Houthi takeover of the

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Sheikh Al-Saleh Abu Suraima's children.

village, and have since taken refuge in the home of a relative living in the Dar Al-Najed village in Al-Quraishia district.

Al-Khubzi claims he did not want to leave his home but that he was forced to do so by the Houthis. "[The Houthis] kicked all the village's residents out of their homes and threatened those who refused with murder ... they destroyed our homes and ransacked our lands and properties," he said. Houthis surrounding Khubza were under strict order not to let anyone enter when the Yemen Times visited the area. However, Walid Dailemi, a local Houthi commander stationed in the area, who took part in fighting in Rada'a and Khubza, denied Al-Khubzi's allegations.

"We didn't kick anyone out of Khubza, the residents fled," he said. "Admittedly, they did so out of fear of the popular committees loyal to the Houthis." While local tribesmen claim the Houthis launched an attack on Khubza on the day the ceasefire was violated, Dailemi claimed that Houthis had been fired upon on the day in question by AQAP members who had taken refuge inside the village and were allied with the local population. "We invaded the village and took it over. Locals were afraid, so they fled, but we haven't destroyed any of their homes or farms," he said. Dailemi claims that the Houthis allowed local residents to return to the village last week.

Al-Khubzi could not confirm Dailemi's account of events, saying that throughout last week only a few Khubza residents have occasionally returned to the village. They are mostly men, according to Al-Khubzi, who return only during the day to tend to their family's qat farms. "At night, they go back to the caves," he said.

Lack of long term solutions

The Yemeni government released a statement in July saying that there were a total of 500,000 IDPs living in Yemen, and called on the international community to help provide them with assistance. That month, the European Union (EU) pledged to allocate \$8 million worth of food assistance, to be administered by WFP for IDPs in Yemen.

In its most recent statistics available on its website, UNHCR predicts that the total number of IDPs in Yemen would reach 365,000 by Jan. 2015, and that of those, 310,000 would be assisted by UNHCR. It is unclear whether or not IDPs fleeing fighting in the Rada'a district will be among those provided for. The Yemen Times contacted Fares Khoalid, a communications assistant with WFP, and Abdulilah Taqi, public communications officer with OCHA. Both said that as of now neither organization had plans to intervene permanently in Rada'a because of the security situation.

"There's only one hospital in Rada'a, which is understaffed and constantly overflowing with patients," according to Al-Taweel. "This makes it difficult for anyone—IDPs or civilians—to get proper care. The situation has been made worse and was compounded by the clashes."

Um Muhammad, 60, lost her husband and two sons during fighting that took place in Al-Manasah village. She had two daughters living in Khubza, the youngest of which, 8 years old, was killed, while the other lost her fiancé. She now lives in a tent on the outskirts of Harria village, Wild Rabia district, with a family of seven who fled similar fighting. "Those who suffer the most in war are always civilians," she said. "War costs us our lives, homes, farms and possessions."



Sheikh Al-Saleh Abu Suraima is a local tribal leader in Baqarat, a village located next to Khubza that remains outside of Houthi control.



Um Muhammad, 60, lost her husband and two sons during fighting that took place in Al-Manasah village. She had two daughters living in Khubza, the youngest of which, 8 years old, was killed, while the other lost her fiancé.



Hajj Mohammad Abdu Al-Khubzi is a father of 14. He and all his family members fled Khubza in November following the Houthi takeover of the village.

Laila Al-Hebshi to the Yemen Times: “Hardship could be an opportunity and a pathway that leads you down the road to success”

Laila Al-Hebshi, a TEDX Sana'a 2014 speaker, is an author, cancer survivor and a shining example of hope for many. She was not born successful, but rather, created success for herself. “The first step to achieving success is to determine your goals and aspirations,” she says. In this exclusive interview, Al-Hebshi talks about her past, present, and future, and gives advice as to how others can lift themselves up from hardship as well.



Interview by
Khalid Mohammed
Al-Karimi

Your last
statement
in TEDX

Sana'a was that “hardship could be a gift.” What led you to believe that?

You have become well known after your participation in TEDX Sana'a 2014, but how do you introduce yourself to those who do not know you?

I was born in Hadramout but have been living in Sana'a all my life. Before I took part in TEDX Sana'a, I was an author. I wrote six books that have been distributed in many libraries throughout Sana'a. I received my bachelor's degree in Islamic Studies from Sana'a University in 1992. Recently, I've been thinking about going back to school to get a master's degree, but haven't had time as I've been preoccupied with running my business. However, I was able to begin writing, which later became one of my passions.

What's your business?

“The Skills Building Center,” which I opened up in 2012. We teach people skills in various practical fields such as project management, sewing, coiffure, and other fields.

For much of my life, even as far back as my days in university, I remember feeling bored and depressed. Although I always loved my husband and children, I came to be fed up after getting married with my life as a housewife. All I did was cook and clean, I was always at home, and felt very unfulfilled. I was very sad and at some points even suicidal, however ironically, God responded to my grief when I was afflicted with breast cancer. For me, it was like a gift. I used to have no hope, but getting sick opened doors for me. After I contracted cancer, I realized how short life truly was and began to appreciate the positive things a lot more. I also learned how I could help others and learn from them as well. Indeed, living through cancer is what inspired me to become an author and a strong source of support for others in a similar position.

How did you recover from cancer?

cer?

First, I underwent an operation in Cairo to remove my stricken breast in 2008, after which I did chemotherapy in Sana'a for eight months. However, I also attribute much of my recovery to the support given to me by my family, and the effect this had on my mood and spirit. If one remains positive, this can help strengthen the immune system. I began to focus a lot on the future and on my goals, and what I would do if and when I recovered. I think all of this had a huge effect on my recovery, just as much, if not more, than my medical treatment.

In 2007, you contemplated suicide, however by 2014 you were a TEDX speaker and a shining example of a successful Yemeni woman. In your opinion, how could others overcome their life problems? Unfortunately, most people go through life without having clear

goals.

If one has no goal, how can they be successful? Once you determine your goals and aspirations, the next step is working towards trying to achieve it. Destiny and fate will help you realize what you want, however no one can be successful without first figuring out what their specific goal and mission in life is. They can be either short or long term, but the first step is determining what they are.

Could you tell us about your books, and do you plan to write more?

The topics of my books alternate between cooking and motivational content, my two favorite subjects. My first book was called, “Secrets of the Yemeni Kitchen.” The second was “Skills and Hobbies.” I also wrote other books, entitled “Yemeni Sweets and Pastries,” “Be a Businesswoman” and “Use Your Skills to Succeed.” The last book was a collection of success stories of people who recovered from cancer.

The first story was mine. I wanted to show people that cancer is treatable, and that many people have recovered from cancer and returned to their normal lives. Of course I plan on writing books later on, but at the moment I'm solely focused on running my center and making it the best it can be.

What references did you draw from in the course of writing your books?

For my first book I was the only source. I have a lot of experience cooking and was able to draw from recipes I developed myself or learned from my friends and family.

What was your best seller?

Secrets of the Yemeni Kitchen, which sold nearly 5,000 copies throughout Yemen.

What courses is the center offering?

It offers courses in sewing, making incense, cooking and coiffure. These courses help the youth, particularly the women, to become more economically empowered. One woman who studied under me recently opened her own bakery after taking a class at the center on project management. However, many women take the skills they learn and apply them at home, in sewing, coiffure, etc. Some of these women run their own businesses from home.

What challenges do you face in running your center?

Obviously, the security situation in Sana'a is the biggest obstacle to expanding the center. People do not feel safe these days, and fear moving and traveling around considering everything that's been going on. This has affected business.

Do you receive any government support?

I tried to get financial support from several government offices, but they told me that my project was private, and couldn't give me any money. I came up with the money to open the center by selling my jewelry, and with help from my husband, who

put forth a large sum of money.

Did you establish the center in pursuit of money or as an attempt to contribute towards improving society?

Both. My mission is to help improve society, but I can't afford to do that if I'm not making any money. I need to be able to pay the salaries of my employees, and the cost of rent and materials. Currently, we have ten teachers working as trainers at the center, teaching students skills in coiffure and sewing, as mentioned before, in addition to courses teaching students how to produce incense. We provide teachers with the materials they use to teach, including sewing machines, fabrics, make-up, and sewing needles.

What are your future plans?

I'm working to expand the center and increase enrollment. I'm hoping soon to add courses related to plumbing and carpentry. The center is currently licensed with the Ministry of Vocational Education and Technical Training, and so all graduates from the center receive certificates making them legally qualified to professionally practice the skills they have acquired here. Last month, we also started working with an American NGO known as the Women Empowerment Foundation, to help provide assistance and training for our students.

As an author and a cancer survivor, what is your final word?

People need to be more aware of their health, and go more often to see the doctor and get regular checkups, instead of just waiting until they get sick before they go to get treatment. The earlier one gets diagnosed the less danger they'll be in later on, regardless of what the disease is. To those currently suffering from sickness or disease, I'd say don't worry, try to stay happy and maintain a positive mood. I know lots of people who survived cancer, it's possible to do the same with other diseases. Again, hardship could be an opportunity and a pathway that leads you down the road to success.



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A story of entrepreneurship

From chemistry class to make-up manufacturer

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

Once a niche market, organic cosmetics are becoming increasingly popular worldwide as consumers learn about the oft-touted benefits of organic products. While there is a growing distrust of mainstream brands and the pseudo-scientific claims they make, popular alternatives are still left wanting, particularly in Yemen. Dina Al-Mashhari, a recent graduate based in Taiz city, has entered this burgeoning market with a new line of organic and locally sourced cosmetics. Her story has served as encouragement for young entrepreneurs throughout the country.

Al-Mashhari, 23, became aware of the harmful ingredients found in makeup while studying chemistry at the Taiz University for Applied Sciences. Analyzing their components and identifying a range of toxic elements, what she discovered became the basis of her graduation project. She created her own products made entirely from organic and non-toxic materials, for which she received a certificate of distinction from the university.

"When I carried out research on common cosmetic products, I

"She created her own products made entirely from organic and non-toxic materials, for which she received a certificate of distinction from the university."

found that they have negative effects on the skin and may even cause cancer, so I decided to try and create organic cosmetics, which consist only of natural ingredients," says Al-Mashhari. Ingredients of particular concern are nickel and lead, both of which have been linked with stomach cancer and are commonly found in lipsticks, she explained.

Following graduation in 2011, Al-Mashhari took what she had learned in her studies and began creating her own line of organic cosmetics. Al-Mashhari says she has two "weapons" at hand to help her achieve her goals: Science and perseverance. Keen to provide trusted products that can compete with their global competitors, her makeup is not traditional in any sense but relies on the technical and scientific knowhow she acquired at university.

Establishing her own business and purchasing the necessary equipment does not come cheaply. The production process involves heating, mixing and testing phases, and machin-

ery she uses in this process cost her approximately one million Yemeni Ryal (almost \$5000). In Sept. 2013, Al-Mashhari was awarded a grant of \$20,000 in recognition of her work, giving her the morale and financial boost she needed to kick-start her company, "Dina Foundation for Natural Cosmetics."

Al-Mashhari's grant came with the Youth Innovation and Creativity Award ("Afkar"), a new initiative launched in 2013 under the patronage of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and its partner ROWAD Foundation, amongst others. Last year, twelve successful applicants including Al-Mashhari, were awarded \$20,000 for a range of inventions and business ideas. Afkar 2.0 is scheduled for January 2015.

Al-Mashhari is intent on running the Dina Foundation herself, but this means she must do so from her own house. The products are created, tested and sold under one roof, and it will take time before they can compete on the markets of Taiz and beyond.

Running a small startup business from home creates added obstacles for Al-Mashhari. She has no employees to help run her foundation, and establishing a name for herself is difficult under the circumstances. Rather than going to a cosmetics shop, customers must come directly to her house for purchases, and she relies on word of mouth for marketing.

Many women are reluctant to try her products, in spite of the scientific research that has gone into them. One such woman, Salwa Ali, says that the big brands are found everywhere for a reason, and that "even if there are negative effects, it happens because they are not being used properly, not because the cosmetics are bad."

The owner of a cosmetics shop in Taiz city, Walid Fadhil, says there are locally produced cosmetics on the market but that many of them can have harmful side effects, which undermines public confidence. However, he says, "we've heard that Dina's products are good, because she has an educational background in [chemistry]."

Indeed, Al-Mashhari's research on cosmetics and diabetes treatment has been acknowledged abroad, receiving a gold medal at the Universal Exhibition of Inventors in South Korea in May 2014, and the grand prize from the General Federation of Inventors in Germany. These achievements may not be enough to sway local consumers, however, and the challenges still

facing Al-Mashhari indicate how difficult it can be for young entrepreneurs to establish themselves.

So far, Al-Mashhari has only managed to release three products under the Dina brandname, which include cuticle cream, lipstick and a face mask. The central ingredients, all of which are natural and locally sourced from markets in Taiz, include honey, castor oil, corn oil, and various other oils that she considers a trade secret.

Fadhil says he would like to purchase large quantities of Dina's cosmetics, but that she does not yet produce enough to compete in the market. "Dina is still starting out and most of the cosmetics shops do not know about her, she needs more time to gain recognition," he said.

Demand has been high, says Al-Mashhari, but her capacity for production is not sufficient for the level of output she wants to achieve. She is currently searching abroad for



Dina Al-Mashhari, only 23 years old, combined her love of make-up with her love of chemistry and hopes to make a career of it.

larger machines that will enable her to produce on a mass scale. She will also need a reliable source of local honey, which is the main ingredient in her cosmetics. "I'm going to coordinate with beekeepers to provide me with high quantities of honey," she says.

"She has no employees to help run her foundation, and establishing a name for herself is difficult under the circumstances. Rather than going to a cosmetics shop, customers must come directly to her house for purchases, and she relies on word of mouth for marketing."

Vacancies

Ministry of Education (MoE) Global Partnership for Education Unit (GPEU)

Global Partnership for Education Unit (GPEU) at the Ministry of Education (MoE) under the Global Partnership for Education Fund awarded to the Government of Yemen under the Supervision and Management of UNICEF. The grant supports the implementation of the Medium Term Result Framework (MTRF) through Global Partnership for Education.

GPEU seeks applicants for the following positions:-

1- Monitoring & Evaluation Assistant: Main tasks include the following:-

- Liaising closely with concerned staff, M&E officer, various sectors of Ministry of Education and various M&E staff working in various governorate and district offices involved in the program.
- Preparing regular reports (weekly, monthly, quarterly and biannually) as needed on M&E issues.
- Using regular reports received from all implementing MoE agencies at central and governorates levels to prepare both Arabic and English project progress reports.
- Undertaking site visits to cross check M&E reports coming from field and from sectors.
- Contributing in program review workshops.
- Being responsible to take any additional responsibilities assigned to him/her by the M & E officer & the GPE Unit Director.

Qualifications:

- A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Social Sciences, Development Studies or related field.
- A minimum of 2 years of professional experience in reporting, monitoring & evaluation.
- Excellent Arabic and English verbal and writing skills,
- Excellent computer knowledge and experience,
- Training in M&E is an added advantage,
- Good interpersonal and leadership skills,
- Good skills in presentation, documentation and information management,
- Good networking, facilitation and co-ordination skills

2- Accountant: Main tasks include the following:-

- Make the necessary vouchers and receipts for all deposits withdrawal the grant; and record them in the predefined chart of 2- accounts in the computerized accounting system.
- Prepare the Face Form applications, and related governmental letters.
- Record transactions in the computerized accounting system of the financial activities of the Project.
- Estimate the cost of activities to make the breakdown of budgets quarterly.
- Make a monthly replenishment of the Bank accounts and maintain the necessary control registers for all procured.
- Make a monthly reconciliation of the Bank accounts.
- Make a necessary adjustments and monthly closing entries.
- Make sure that all bank statements, Face Form applications, claims, correspondence properly filed and easily accessible once required.
- Maintain the petty cash & operation cost.
- Follow-up with related Ministries, Sectors, Governorates, UNICEF and other similar implementing agencies.
- Reviewing disbursement comparing Budget & Actual.
- Participate in Project field Visits to ensure Project's activates implementation.
- Undertake any other duties as assigned by the financial officer and unit director to assure the proper financial administration of the project.

Qualifications:

- A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Accounting or Business Administration with major in accounting and finance.
- Minimum of 5 years of professional experience in a financial management and accounting position preferably in Non-Governmental organizations.
- Familiarity with the government's and GPE financial management requirement is a plus.
- Computer literate and ability to use accounting programs and software effectively.
- Proficiency in both Arabic and English verbal and writing skills,

3- Secretary: Main tasks include the following:-

- Provide secretarial functions in the office of the GPE Unit.
- Manage the filing system and record management.
- Ensure quality of Outward correspondence and other related documents.
- Receive Outward correspondence, Control its Movement and Make sure its respond.
- Provide written translation of communication and correspondence;
- Prepare and distribute circulars and bulletins
- Timely response to all telephone inquiries/office visitors.

Qualifications:

- A minimum of a high school degree or diploma in secretary or in Social Sciences, with at least 3 years' experience in office logistic management.
- Excellent Arabic and English verbal and writing skills,
- Proficiency in computer knowledge and experience,
- Good networking, facilitation and co-ordination skills

All applications along with detailed resume and supporting document should be submitted by: December 25, 2014 to the following address:

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Egypt looks to roll back Islamist militias in Libya

Ayah Aman
al-monitor.com
First published Dec. 12

Egypt has been taking diplomatic steps to settle the armed conflict in Libya, but in the meantime, the Libyan national army has been fighting with political, military, and logistical support from Cairo to regain gradual control of Benghazi from Islamist militias.

An Egyptian diplomatic source involved in Libyan affairs told Al-Monitor, "We are working with local and foreign parties to put the Islamist militias and Muslim Brotherhood in Benghazi and Tripoli under siege."

The Egyptian government is trying to restore relative stability to Libya, a source of concern for Cairo because of the power and control of jihadi militias there. The administration of Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, which came to power after the toppling of President Mohammed Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013, feels threatened

by the jihadis' armed strength.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Al-Monitor, "The Egyptian actions have achieved relative success in Libya, where there are legitimate bodies that can be counted on, such as the elected Libyan parliament and the interim government, which gave its vote of confidence to the Libyan national army." The source, however, expressed concern over the rise of the groups controlling Tripoli, saying, "It won't be easy to take part in military confrontations now."

On the diplomatic front, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry has held several meetings since the launch of the initiative to stabilize Libya and the formation of the Libyan neighbors group. The aim is to urge international action on Libya, with Egyptian diplomacy framing Cairo's policy as part of the global war on terror.

The Egyptian initiative adopted Aug. 25 by countries bordering Libya included 15 points for addressing the crisis. It calls for the political parties to reject violence and foster a dialogue, and for all the mili-

tias and other armed groups to reject the military option in favor of a political agreement under regional states' auspices and with international support.

The nature of support from Egypt to militias affiliated with the Libyan army remains vague. Official Libyan and Egyptian statements claim that it is restricted to training, information technology services and technical assistance.

Another official source informed about the Libyan situation told Al-Monitor, "Cairo is providing security information that is greatly contributing to the general policies of the Libyan army's moves in the framework of Gen. Khalifa Hifter's Operation Dignity in his war on terrorism."

He also said, "We are working with the Libyan army and Arab groups from neighboring countries, especially Algeria, according to a strict military and political plan that is being implemented in Benghazi and soon will be implemented in Tripoli. Moreover, there are strong and reassuring indications that we can retake Benghazi from

the militias."

In the past two months, officials from the Egyptian president's office and the Foreign Ministry as well as security personnel have welcomed dozens of Libyan political officials and parliamentarians on official and other visits. The purpose of the visits was to discuss coordination between Cairo and the Libyan factions opposing the Islamist militias.

A number of factors pushed Egypt to get directly involved in Libya despite its own crises and concerns. To start, Cairo fears the presence of a strong political foe of the Sisi regime on Egypt's western border. What is more worrying is that this foe has the armed power and capacity to control a state with rich resources, given the complete frailty of the Libyan state and tensions since the fall of the Moammar Gadhafi regime. Moreover, Egypt has broad economic interests in Libya.

Egypt and Algeria appear to be united over the Libyan crisis, having divided roles to deal with the political and military arenas in Lib-

ya. During a visit to Cairo on Nov. 20, Algerian Prime Minister Abdel Malek Sellal announced the formation of a strategic bridge between Egypt and Algeria to fight and eradicate terrorism in the region, in particular in Libya.

Cairo has managed to roll back intervention by Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir's regime in Libya. The Egyptians suspect Sudan of supporting Islamist groups affiliated with Ansar Al-Sharia, Libya Dawn, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Tripoli and Benghazi. The Libyan situation constituted a top priority in discussions between the Egyptian and Sudanese presidents during the latter's visit to Cairo Oct. 18.

A Libyan parliamentarian in Tobruk, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Al-Monitor during his visit to Cairo, "We have overcome the crisis with Sudan thanks to the firm mediation of the Egyptian president. The parliament has agreed to open a new page with Sudan."

Analysts believe that Cairo is still facing counteractions by Turkey

and Qatar, which are supporting the Islamist militias controlling Tripoli.

Khaled Akasha, a strategic analyst and security expert told Al-Monitor, "Egypt's attempts to intervene to solve the Libyan crisis aim at putting the terrorist organizations under siege, rather than taking action to destroy them completely." He also said, "Egypt alone won't be able to confront them without cooperation from neighboring countries or face terrorism on its own territory."

Akasha believes that the Egyptian-Algerian alliance is especially important. "Algeria is supporting the reconciliation, as it has good relations with Libyan groups controlling Tripoli. Algeria might be able to convince these groups to participate in an unconditioned national dialogue, while Cairo supports the Libyan state institutions and empowers them to take over the state's main facilities."

Egypt continues to act on several levels, and its main concern is to clip the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood in Libya.

Illegal Military Occupation in North Africa:

Human Rights & Conflict Irresolution in the Western Sahara

Erica Vasquez
muftah.org
First published Dec. 8

Sitting in a large sitting room on the third floor of my host mother's house, seven female activists gathered around in a circle. The women passed around a bowl of dates, served each other milk, and waited for the tea to be prepared. My host mother, a member of the Committee for the Defense of the Right of Self-Determination of the Western Saharan People, had been imprisoned for nine years in three separate prisons located in Morocco and the Occupied Territories of the Western Sahara. The women she brought together in this room had been imprisoned with her for varying periods of time. "We were all in Kela'at Megouna [a prison located in the Western Sahara] most of us from 1980 to 1991. After the ceasefire we were released. We were beaten, tortured, and our families thought we were dead...for years," she said.

Each woman experienced a similar sequence of events: Torn from her home, taken into custody, imprisoned without trial, beaten, tortured, and moved to secret detention centers throughout Morocco, from Casablanca and Agadir, to the northern area of the Occupied Western Sahara. The women all met in Kela'at Megouna, where they served the majority of their imprisonment. Their experiences offer just one glimpse into the mass violation of human rights perpetrated by the Moroccan government against the Sahrawi population of Western Sahara over the last several decades. These crimes have taken place notwithstanding support from the United Nations and various Spanish NGOs for decolonization, self-determination, and human rights in the Western Sahara.

Unlike the Israel-Palestine conflict, which has historically garnered

more international attention than any other contemporary dispute in the Middle East and North Africa, the Western Sahara conflict has persisted relatively unnoticed in international media outlets and academic scholarship. Yet, like Israel-Palestine, the Western Sahara is essentially a dispute related to military occupation and political disenfranchisement.

Origins of the Conflict

The Western Sahara is located south of Morocco-proper and north of Mauritania. In 1884, Spain obtained a protectorate over the territory and assumed full military and administrative control. The French-Spanish treaty finalized on Nov. 27, 1912, officially granted Spain a lease on the Western Sahara, which continued until the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples in 1960.

"The Western Sahara remains a non-self-governing territory. It is... the last colony of Africa."

Following decolonization, Spain assumed responsibility for preparing a referendum for the Sahrawi people to vote on self-determination and independence. But, Morocco and Mauritania stalled the referendum process by submitting an appeal to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1975, asserting their rights to the territory based on so-called historical ownership.

The Moroccan state's claim is rooted in terra irredenta, or land that is under the political jurisdiction of one nation but related to another by

cultural, historical, or ethnic ties. In its case to the ICJ, Morocco claimed it had originally owned the Western Sahara, but lost control over the territory to European colonial interests centuries before. The ICJ concluded that Morocco and Mauritania had presented insufficient evidence to support their legal claims to the territory.

Despite this ruling, Spain proceeded to negotiate a settlement with Morocco and Mauritania known as the Madrid Accords. In October 1975, Morocco was granted two-thirds of the territory, under the terms of this Accord. In November 1975, King Hassan II announced the launch of the Green March. By early 1976, the Moroccan king had authorized approximately 350,000 Moroccan citizens to march across the southern border into the Western Sahara to occupy the territory and demonstrate popular support for Morocco's claim.

Human Rights, Self-Determination, & Geopolitics

For decades, people in the Middle East and North Africa struggled for the right of self-determination and other human rights. Many Arab-Muslim states fought tirelessly to include self-determination in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Arab Charter on Human Rights. The Arab Charter elaborates on the possible threats to this right: "All peoples have the right of self-determination... Racism, Zionism, occupation and foreign domination pose a challenge to human dignity and constitute a fundamental obstacle to the realization of the basic rights of peoples. There is a need to condemn and endeavor to eliminate all such practices."

Clearly, Morocco's forceful settlement of hundreds of thousands of Moroccans in the Western Sahara and forced displacement of thousands of Sahrawis through its occupation and domination of their lands is illegal under international law. There

is, however, a lack of international resolution or support for the Sahrawi struggle for self-determination.

This cannot be attributed to the Sahrawi population's unwillingness to resist. On the contrary, they have fought and continue to fight for independence. The Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Rio de Oro ("Polisario") is the internationally recognized Sahrawi representative body, and has led the territory's independence movement. The Secretary General of the Polisario and President of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Mohamed Abdelaziz, has written numerous letters about the conflict to the UN Secretary General and the Security Council, routinely emphasizing the importance of international declarations regarding the treatment of Sahrawi populations.

Polisario representatives, like Abdelaziz, have repeated time and again that the Western Sahara remains a non-self-governing territory. It is, they claim, the last colony of Africa. The Polisario and Sahrawis alike stress that the Western Sahara is still subject to the demands of decolonization and a referendum on self-determination, as called for by UN General Assembly Resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV).

Countering these advocacy efforts, the Moroccan government has used its influence to prevent a referendum on independence in the Western Sahara. Morocco enjoys close economic ties with the European Union and a historically strong diplomatic relationship with the United States. These international alliances have allowed the Moroccan government to fully institutionalize an illegal military occupation in the Western Sahara with minor public disapproval.

The Moroccan state continues to exploit and control the Western Sahara's natural resources and provide economic incentives to international actors to fund resource development initiatives in the region,

with virtually no political criticism. The European Union, its member states, and the United States directly benefit from resource exploitation facilitated by the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara.

"The outsized influence of one party (Morocco) and the economic interests of the international community trump human rights and self-determination."

In 2001, for example, the Moroccan government agency, Office National de Recherches et d'Exploitation Pétrolières (ONAREP), reportedly signed two exploration agreements with private companies Keer-MacGee from the United States, and TotalFinaElf from France. Earlier this year, Morocco brokered a new fishing agreement with the European Union regarding Sahrawi territorial waters in the occupied city of Dakhla. Most recently, U.S. oil company Kosmos Energy won a contract to begin drilling off the coast of the Western Sahara. Despite constant protest and opposition from Sahrawis and the Polisario, Morocco continues to execute new resource contracts and economic agreements with its international allies.

Broader Implications: the Missing Piece of the Arab Spring

In light of the Arab Spring's focus on human rights and dignity, it is surprising discussions have

not turned to the Western Sahara. In October 2010, a protest camp, known as Gdeim Izik, was set up in the Western Sahara and attracted tens of thousands of Sahrawis. Occurring only weeks before Tunisian fruit seller, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself alight, protesters stood up against a lack of job opportunities and discrimination against Sahrawis. Gdeim Izik ended tragically, with dozens of deaths, injuries, and arrests following a violent response from the Moroccan security services. Even more disturbingly, however, the movement failed to gain international media attention.

The relative obscurity of the Western Sahara conflict cannot simply be attributed to a lack of armed conflict between warring parties. Even in times of relative peace, Israel-Palestine still receives significant international attention. It seems, where the Western Sahara is concerned, the outsized influence of one party (Morocco) and the economic interests of the international community trump human rights and self-determination.

The author gathered the information used in this article during a field study in the Occupied Territories of the Western Sahara between May-July 2014. This research was made possible thanks to grants provided by the Georgetown Institute on Women, Peace, and Security and the Georgetown Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. Republished with permission from Muftah.org. This article originally appeared on Muftah.org [http://muftah.org/illegal-military-occupation-north-africa-human-rights-western-sahara/]. Follow Muftah on Twitter

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The Republic of Yemen has got a grant from the Transition Fund for Middle East and North Africa (TF-MENA) and implemented by the World Bank to finance the **Accountability Enhancement Project**, and intends to use part of the proceeds of this grant to cover the costs of consultancy providing advisory services in the field of A **“Hotline System”** will be established under SNACC to enable citizens to make corruption complaints. A Short Term Consultant (STC) is required to conduct the system requirement study and to design the new “Hotline System” within SNACC.

Key responsibilities of the STC will include, but not limited to, the following:

Conduct an assessment of present institutional arrangement and system for receiving and managing complaints within SNACC; Determine the most appropriate call center operational model, which suits the needs best and requires minimum customization, by evaluating state-of-the-art technologies and alternative operational models, including open-source solutions, based on past performance reviews, available capacity, and cost/benefit analyses; Conduct comparative analysis of similar implemented hotline systems; Estimate call volumes and call volume ramp up over initial months of operation in coordination with national institutions; Establish quality, performance measurement indicators, and customer-service standards for the hotline system; Determine System Requirement Specifications (SRS) for the new “Hotline System”. Identify required hardware and software technology, considering open source platforms as well. The SRS should not favour one brand/provider; Define the main commitments that the Service-Level Agreement (SLA) should include from the customer perspective; Model the preliminary organizational structure of the call center and map initial layout of the call center; design and plan the initial estimates on the facilities requirements (all of these aspects will be finalized after the selection of the supplier); Consider scalability aspects of the hotline system; plan and identify solutions for a business continuity plan (BCP); Prepare a detailed cost and time estimate for installing the service.

Qualifications:

- Graduate degree in ICT, Systems Engineering and System Management or similar relevant disciplines
- A minimum of seven years of directly relevant work experience
- Excellent knowledge of English. Knowledge of Arabic is a plus

Interested consultants should provide any certificate or documents that prove whatever stated in the CVs to be sent to the E-mail address or delivered to the address below no later than the Monday -29 December 2014.

Sana'a – Al Rebat St.

E-mail: debaaj80@yahoo.com, sumaia.albwsani@yahoo.com

(Expressions of Interest) (International Consultant)

The Republic of Yemen has received a grant from the Transition Fund for Middle East and North Africa (TF-MENA) and implemented by the World Bank to finance the **Accountability Enhancement Project** and intends to use part of the proceeds of this grant to cover the costs of International Consultancy providing consultancy services in the field of **Preparing the Strategic Plan**, for the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in Yemen. The international consultant will be hired for 50 working days to work collaboratively with local consultant. The two consultants are expected to achieve the ICO Strategic Plan including, but not limited to, the following components. **include, but not be limited to the following tasks:**

Provide necessary support in the process of designing the draft 5-year Strategic Plan for the ICO/Participate, together with the local consultant, in a series of working sessions to assess the current status and future requirements in regard to the institutional development of the ICO and the capacity building of its staff/Identify the principal partners/stakeholders for successful implementation of ICO's mandate and interview a select group of relevant stakeholders for input into ICO's strategic & operational planning/Assess risks associated with implementing proposed strategic plan and organizational structure and suggests actions to manage any negative impacts/ Designing competency-based job descriptions for the proposed staff positions of the ICO. With these components: Goal, vision, values and mission, Strategic outcomes/Modalities to achieve these objectives - action strategies/Roadmap for planned actions, including timeframe/Risks and opportunities/Budget estimates/Monitoring and evaluation - key performance indicators/Organizational structure /List of staff positions;

Qualifications Required:

- Graduate degree in strategic planning, business/public administration, HR management, organizational development, applied behavioural sciences, industrial psychology or related field.
- A minimum of 10 years of directly relevant work experience.
- Excellent knowledge of English. Knowledge of Arabic is a plus

PMU now invites eligible consultants to indicate their interests in providing the service and information indicating that they are qualified to perform the service, and interested to send CVs that meet the following conditions:

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Expressions of Interest (International Consultant)

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The broad scope of work of the consultant would be as follows:

- 1- Assessing options and designing the Strategy and Implementation Plan of the Research Unit
- 2- Accurately interpreting a wide range of information and proactively addressing clients' needs and task specifics.
- 3- Ensure that the responsibilities undertaken are completed on time and address the specific purpose and objectives of the project.

Qualification and skill requirements

- 1- Doctoral degree from a premier educational institute in social sciences, law, business/public administration, HR management, organizational development, and/or related field.
- 2- High quality work in the area of expertise (at least 10 years relevant experience) with special focus on strategic planning, organizational development to build capacity of public sector institutions.
- 3- Must be proficient in utilizing organizational design methods to assess organizational structures, roles, processes, human capital practices, culture metrics and measurable results.
- 4- Ability to effectively interact with culturally diverse staff and deliver results for clients.
- 5- Experience in the MENA region is a plus. Excellent knowledge of English. Knowledge of Arabic is a plus.

Interested consultants should provide any certificate or documents that prove whatever stated in the CVs to be sent to the E-mail address or delivered to the address below no later than the Monday -29 December 2014.

Sana'a – Al Rebat Street area

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Expressions of Interest (International Individual consultant)

The Republic of Yemen has got a grant from the Transition Fund for Middle East and North Africa (TF-MENA) and implemented by the World Bank to finance the **Accountability Enhancement Project**, and intends to use part of the proceeds of this grant to cover the costs of consultancy providing advisory services in the field of **Designing and Facilitate implementation of a Training Program**. In order to achieve that objective, a prestigious international training institute is required to devise and conduct a training program for approximately 1520- Judges of Anti-Corruption Courts in Yemen. The participants will be provided with knowledge and skills, as well as effective methods, tools and approaches for prosecution, jurisdiction, and enforcement of anticorruption regulations in Yemen. Examples from other countries should be incorporated in the training to illustrate potential issues that may arise in the ruling process.

Qualifications and Skill :

- 1- At least 7 years of expertise in the design and development of training and learning programmes.
- 2- Proven and extensive experience in the development of training curricula and materials on anti-corruption topics for judges. The service provider should be able to present a portfolio of previous trainings it organized, which are relevant for the current service.
- 3- Strong understanding of adult learning theory, organizational development, and training program design/Proven ability and experience in leading and facilitating quality training workshops on multidisciplinary and multicultural teams.
- 4- Previous expertise in devising quality training materials in the area of anti-corruption.
- 5- Good knowledge of socio-economical and geo-political drivers in Yemen is highly desirable, particularly of the challenges in the area of anticorruption.
- 6- Fluency in English (written and spoken). Ability to communicate in Arabic is highly desirable.
- 7- Excellent communication, data presentation and writing skills, necessary to produce and deliver quality training programs.
- 8- Good command of Windows, Power Point, Word and Excel or similar programs required.

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Afghanistan remains a desperately poor country despite over a decade of investment from international donors.

Embassy of India
Sana'a

As in previous year, Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR), Government of India, will be offering scholarships to Yemeni nationals who wish to pursue their studies in India for Bachelors, Masters and in Research. One of the criteria for selection will be Proficiency in English.

Persons desiring to avail of Indian scholarships will be required to provide TOEFL/Similar test scores indicating their proficiency in English. A written English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) may be conducted by the Embassy, the date of which will be informed soon, if required.

Afghanistan seeks anti-corruption support

IRIN

First Published Dec. 3

New Afghan President Ashraf Ghani is seeking a cash injection from donors to help him implement a ground-breaking anti-corruption campaign, but aid experts are skeptical he will get the desired funding.

At the ongoing London Confer-

ence on Afghanistan, Ghani is expected to use his keynote speech on Dec. 4 to unveil his reform program aimed, among other things, at tackling corruption.

A draft of the program, leaked to the Afghanistan Analysts Network, highlights a series of reforms including an "independent anti-corruption mission with time-bound prosecution powers," the "reform of the Supreme Audit Agency," and the formation of a "national

procurement board that will manage all large-value contracts".

In exchange Ghani is expected to ask for fresh financial support from international donors. Yet Mark Bowden, the UN secretary-general's deputy special representative for Afghanistan and the country's humanitarian coordinator, said he was not confident that Ghani would get the "front-loaded" funding he is seeking in exchange for his "front-loaded re-

form package."

"In return [for the reforms, he wants] a front-loaded element to future aid and also an increase in the levels of aid. That is where I think the challenge is going to be, as I don't think there is much new money around," he told IRIN. "From the traditional donor community, if there is any additional [money] it is only going to be about \$100 million."

Split power base

Ghani took power in September after a prolonged election struggle, with his challenger Abdullah Abdullah taking over the newly created role of chief executive. Both men had pledged to combat corruption and waste but Ghani's commitment has widely been seen as more sincere.

He inherited a country that has been the world's leading recipient of development assistance as a

percentage of its national income since 2007—with US\$6.2 billion in 2012 alone—but one that remains among the poorest globally. This is in large part due to what Bowden calls "systemic" corruption.

The latest annual corruption perception index by Berlin-based graft watchdog Transparency International ranks Afghanistan as the world's fourth most corrupt country.

Continued on the back page



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Afghanistan seeks anti-corruption support

Another survey found that after insecurity, corruption is the biggest problem for ordinary Afghans. 62 percent said corruption is a major problem in their daily life, up from 55 percent in 2013.

Among the issues are bribery within government ministries, a judiciary so corrupt that many prefer to use the Taliban courts and concerns over mining revenues being stolen or wasted.

Since taking over, Ghani has reopened a key case into the nearly US\$1 billion fraud at Kabul Bank, while the head of the tainted judiciary has been replaced.

In his personal style, too, he has shifted perceptions. It is reported that Ghani has taken to ringing officials at 6 a.m. and at midnight, even taking his own notes in meetings, while there are rumors of eccentric decisions, including a surprise visit to a police station. Upon finding the station's head away from his desk in working hours, he called to inquire of his whereabouts. When the police chief said he was in his office, Ghani replied: "really, so am I? Where exactly are you?"

Whether the story is correct is somewhat irrelevant. Javed Noorani, a senior researcher at Integrity Watch Afghanistan, said the "ripple effect" had already had a significant impact. "[His actions] are generating a lot of fear. People at a senior level in the Ministry of Interior have reacted to this. Earlier you could buy your rank, a star on your shoulder for \$20,000. That has already stopped," he said.

John F. Sopko, the special in-

spector-general for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which is tasked by the US government with monitoring the use of American money, said the new president's commitment on corruption was welcome and should be supported by the international community.

"Oversight must be made 'mission critical' to our reconstruction efforts," he told IRIN via email. "Efforts to combat corruption and narcotics must be made a strategic priority, given a comprehensive plan, and considered when designing and evaluating all reconstruction programs."

Pressing the flesh

Yet Noorani said that while Ghani's commitment to anti-corruption appeared sincere, he has so far done little to formally flesh out the mechanisms to achieve his goals. "He has taken some very bold steps but he doesn't have a clear strategy yet," he said.

Ghani is expected to outline such a strategy at the London Conference. In exchange, he is asking for increased support from the international community, as such mechanisms require funding that Afghanistan simply does not have. In 2013 the government's expenditures were \$5.4 billion, but revenues were around \$2 billion. The rest came from international donations and loans.

Yet donors are disengaging ahead of the planned withdrawal from combat roles of foreign troops at the end of 2014. One report found that in previous wars such as Iraq

and Kosovo aid levels fell as much as 65 percent after the withdrawal of international forces.

While such a big drop is not expected in Afghanistan, a recent campaign by a coalition of 128 NGOs warned that the world was "forgetting" the country.

Likewise since the 2012 Tokyo Conference donors have shifting to so-called direct assistance—channeling at least 50 percent of their funds through Afghan ministries directly. While Ghani is in favor of such moves, many ministries face chronic corruption issues.

A report by SIGAR found that millions of dollars of US money had been channeled into seven key ministries despite USAID's own risk reviews concluding they were unable to manage the funds properly.

Significant capacity-building mechanisms are needed to help the ministries avoid corruption. Bo Schack, UNHCR representative in Afghanistan, said that building confidence in direct assistance was "easy" in theory—"deal with good governance, deal with corruption, deal with land grabbing in an appropriate manner," he said. "The devil is in the details. We are talking about a country systemically corrupt, which is an issue that all of us in the agencies have felt as well."

Some aid workers even worry that if the ministries prove themselves incapable of handling the funds without corruption it could be used as an excuse for those donors seeking to disengage with Afghanistan to withdraw their funding. "The fear is that it is all a

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trick," said the head of one leading humanitarian body.

Beyond the conference

All sides admit that while financial support would boost Ghani, tougher battles lie ahead to push through anti-corruption policies at home. Long-time adversaries, Ghani and Abdullah have been unable to agree a government ahead of the talks, despite previous commitments that key positions would be filled. Both men also have within their political alliances powerful figures whose interests would be directly challenged by anti-corruption measures.

Stephen Carter, Afghanistan campaign leader at the London-based transparency NGO Global Witness said there were also "low-hanging fruit"—measures that could be implemented relatively cheaply that would increase confidence in Ghani's plans.

Among these, he said, were measures to count money for those leaving the country. In recent years Afghanistan has suffered from chronic capital flight, much of it illegal. Carter said money-counting machines had been procured in recent years to use at Afghan airports but had never been operated.

"The US government and other donors provided the equipment to stop the cash flow at the airport.

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The Afghan government never plugged them in," he said.

Noorani added that Ghani was in need of key victories on corruption to help build momentum. He said the president had perhaps "six months" to make a breakthrough and that international support was

crucial in that. "If he does things well... he will set a very good point for the rest of the four and a half years. If they do a poor job, people will lose faith."

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