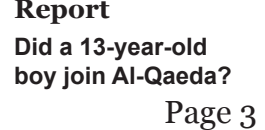




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<b>INSIDE</b>	<b>News</b> Students walk out of Sana'a War Academy Page 2	<b>Report</b> Did a 13-year-old boy join Al-Qaeda? Page 3	<b>Our Opinion</b> Goodbye Hadi, hello Houthis Page 4	<b>Interview</b> Arab Spring Party head to the Yemen Times: Page 5	<b>Report</b> Are popular committees all Houthi? Page 6
					

## Student protests defy violent Houthi opposition

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Jan. 28—Dozens of Sana'a University students staged anti-Houthi protests on Wednesday afternoon on Al-Siteen Street. The demonstrators were forced to change their location from Change Square in front of Sana'a University to avoid clashes with Houthis.

Walid Al-Ammari, a well-known youth activist in his mid-twenties who joined the anti-Houthi demonstrations on Wednesday, said protesters marched from Al-Siteen Street to Al-Ribat Street voicing their opposition to the Houthis' control over ministries and public institutions.

According to Mohammad Al-Yamani, a young activist participating in the protest, "Houthi gunmen were deployed in Al-Siteen Street before we arrived." They fired warning shots in the air and assaulted protesters in Al-Qadisiyah roundabout, Al-Yamani said.

Al-Ammari reported that Houthi gunmen attacked the protesters in Al-Ribat Street using batons.

"The Houthis also arrested some protesters, including the journalist Yusuf Ajlan, who works for Al-Masdar Online, and took them to an unknown place," he said.

According to Al-Ammari, "The students organized the protest at Al-Siteen and Al-Ribat Street because the Houthi gunmen are controlling Change Square and preventing people from gathering there."

Ghanem Al-Shaheri, who studies French at Sana'a University, agreed. "Houthi gunmen and soldiers of the Sana'a Security Department—who are affiliated with the Houthis—were deployed at the square's entrances. They checked students and others entering the square and Sana'a University," he said.

Al-Shaheri and Al-Ammari both pointed out that the Houthi prevented student gatherings at the



Anti-Houthi protestors were met with violence after changing location in an attempt to avoid further arrests and beatings.

square. "They even asked students who were walking to university in groups of four or five to separate," said Al-Ammari.

Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, denied that Houthis were responsible for monitoring Change Square and attacking protesters on Wednesday. "Those gunmen aren't Houthis. They are men who try to defame the reputation of Houthis," he said, adding, "The security apparatus is responsible for protecting the protesters."

Mohammad Hizam, deputy head of the Public Relations Department at the Ministry of Interior, told the Yemen Times, "The current situation of the country doesn't allow the interior ministry to intervene." He denied that the ministry was responsible for closing the entrances to Change Square and interfering in student protests.

On Saturday, Jan. 24, hundreds of Sana'a University students staged their first anti-Houthi protest following the resignations of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and members of Cabinet. On Sunday and

Monday, protestors reported violent assaults and arrests.

Al-Shaheri himself claims he was arrested on Sunday. "I was arrested along with other students on Sunday at 11:30 a.m. and was taken to the October 14 Police Station on Al-Siteen Street. Other students were taken to the Al-Jedairi Police Station. We were released at about 10:30 p.m.," he said.

"It's our right to protest and nobody can stop us. Why were protests allowed in 2011 and now it is prohibited. The Peace and National Partnership Agreement didn't permit the Houthis to arrest and imprison protesting students."

Abdullah Al-Hasmani, who studies engineering at Sana'a University and participated in demonstrations on Monday, said 12 students were arrested that day—none of whom were released as of Wednesday evening.

Abdulrahman Barman, a lawyer who works with the Organization for Defending Human Rights and Freedoms (HOOD), confirmed that some of the students are still arrested, but was unable to give the exact number.

## Bin Mubarak release unconditional, Houthis say

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Jan. 28—Tribal leaders and Houthis confirmed on Wednesday the release of Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak, the director of the president's office, the previous day. Mubarak was apparently released without condition following negotiations with tribal leaders from Al-Nasab district in Shabwa governorate.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, said mediations were headed by Sheikh Awadh Bin Wazir Al-Awlaqi. Following Mubarak's release, Al-Awlaqi told Al-Jazeera that he was reunited with his family and had been moved to Shabwa. "We call on the Houthis to end their siege on the president and his cabinet, we are in an unsafe and insecure situation," he said.

Abdulrahman Al-Shaibah, a resident of Shabwa's Nasab district who lives near Sheikh Al-Awlaqi, confirmed that Mubarak was staying at the house of the sheikh who negotiated his release, and that he was in good health. Bin Mubarak is originally from the same district in Shabwa.

Asked why Bin Mubarak was released to tribal leaders rather than government mediators, Al-Bukhaiti said the Houthis were acting on requests from tribal sheikhs and that, following the resignation of President Hadi and his Cabinet, there was no valid government to negotiate with.

Al-Bukhaiti denied reports on national news outlets that Mubarak was released on condition that he leave the country. He also denied claims that Mubarak had been moved to a location in

Sada'a governorate during his imprisonment. The reason for his long detention, he claimed, was President Hadi's refusal to meet the group's demands and his decision to resign from office.

Mubarak was detained in an attempt to pressure President Hadi into meeting Houthi demands, according to Al-Bukhaiti, and because he was withholding documents that only he had access to from his time as general secretary of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC).

It is not clear what information these documents might contain, but the Houthis' demands were laid out by the group's leader, Ab-



Tribal leaders from Mubarak's hometown in Shabwa's Al-Nasab district negotiated for his release.

dulmalik Al-Houthi, in a televised speech last Tuesday. They include reforming the National Authority for the Implementation of NDC Outcomes, amending the draft constitution, implementing the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), and seeking a resolution to the security situation in Marib governorate.

## New body seen as step toward unifying south

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, Jan. 27—Following its formation in Aden on Monday, prominent southerners have announced their support for the National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence. The body was created by 13 Southern Movement factions, including political parties, student organizations and unions, and aims to unify the many different factions within the pro-secession Southern Movement.

Ahmed Bamuaalem, the deputy head of the body, estimates there are a total of 30 to 35 factions or groups within the Southern Movement associated with a few different leaders. Included in the 13 factions that formed the National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence, are the Supreme Peaceful Southern Movement Council For Liberation and Independence, the Free Arabian Southern Union, Aden National Studies Center, and the Southern Writers Union.

"We have decided not to stay silent without taking action. So the southern revolutionary and political organizations decided to form the National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence," Bamuaalem told the Yemen Times. "We are meeting with southern factions in order to listen and consult with them. We are keeping in touch with all the southern leaders."

The 13 groups chose Abdulrahman Al-Jifri as the leader of the National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence. Al-Jifri was born in the southern governorate of Shabwa in the early 1940s. He was

a prominent opposition politician in the south and fled the country following the 1994 war. Al-Jifri returned to Yemen on Nov. 28, 2014, in time to attend mass demonstrations by southerners marking Independence Day on Nov. 30.

"The declaration of this body is a matter of continuing our efforts in order to establish a common ground and create unity among the southerners. Currently, we are planning to establish offices for this body, branches which would be part of the body in all the southern governorates," Bamuaalem said.

The body will hold meetings with different factions and southern leaders, which Bamuaalem said could last a week or a couple months, depending on how long it takes to reach agreement. "Then all southern political and revolutionary organizations will establish the Southern Comprehensive Conference in order to get the southern leaders together." The aim of the conference is to bring representatives from all southern factions together to decide on a leadership which will represent all southerners.

Arslan Al-Sakkaf, secretary general of the Southern Labor Union and a protestor at Al-Arood Square in Aden, told the Yemen Times that the formation of this body means the southern people are on their way to establishing a unified leadership.

"Southerners are happy about this move at this particular time. As the situation in Sana'a is confusing, and the Houthi group is trying to replace the state, southerners have



The National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence brings together 13 southern factions.

to seize this opportunity. We have to take advantage of such chaos in Sana'a and be united. The formation of this body is a real positive introduction to one united southern leadership," he said.

Al-Sakkaf said the Southern Labor Union supports the National Southern Body for Liberation and Independence, but is not one of the 13 founding groups because the union aims to represent everyone in the Southern Movement and does not want to be associated with a specific body within the movement.

Abdullah Rashid, one of the founders of the Southern Movement, agreed that the formation of the body is important to unite southern factions. "There is no government and there is no president. Now is the time for the southern people to realize what they want, namely independence. Unity with northern Yemen came to an end after the 1994 war," he told the Ye-

men Times. Rashid believes steps like the formation of the body on Monday will be successful in overcoming the south's divided leadership. "The southern people have reconciled and forgotten the past. Our differences will not hinder our unity, and we are determined to regain control of our former state," he said.

As of Wednesday afternoon no Southern Movement leader had issued a statement opposing the recently established body.

However, Ali Al-Naqi, a local resident and journalist in Aden, said not everyone in Aden sees it as a positive move. "What Al-Jifri proposes and says is not welcomed by everyone. This move could cause further rifts. Now he is another influential southern leader who could cause further political competition in the south and more differences. Thus, this will probably complicate the southern issue," he said.

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# Islah, Nasserist and Socialist parties refuse to resume negotiations

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Jan. 27**—As of Wednesday evening the Yemeni Socialist Party and the Islah and Nasserist parties continue to refuse talks over Yemen's political future, saying they will only begin negotiations once three conditions are met: An end to the house arrests of members of government, the withdrawal of Houthi gunmen from the Presidential Palace, and non-interference in peaceful anti-Houthi protests.

Mohammad Al-Sabri, a leading member of the Nasserist Party, told the Yemen Times on Tuesday that his party continues to oppose negotiations with the Houthis. "There were several attempts made by Jamal Benomar [the UN special envoy to Yemen] to talk us out of our decision, but we made our participation in negotiations conditional upon the ending of the ministers' house arrest, the end of violent interference in peaceful anti-Houthi protests, and the evacuation of armed Houthis from the Presidential Palace."

The three parties released separate

statements on Sunday, declaring their withdrawal from negotiations that started on Friday, Jan. 23, and involved all of Yemen's political parties as well as the Houthis.

Negotiations on Friday followed fierce fighting between Houthis and government forces in Sana'a on Jan. 19, the Houthis' takeover of the Presidential Palace on Jan. 20, and the resignation on Jan. 22 of the president and the Cabinet.

A Parliamentary vote on whether to accept President Hadi's resignation was postponed indefinitely. Under article 115 of the constitution the president must wait three months before submitting a second resignation, which Parliament can not reject. The three parties are still attending the meetings revolving around the president and Cabinet's resignation on request by the UN's Benomar, but are refusing to discuss political developments until their demands are met.

"The Houthis' desire for negotiations with the political parties does not stem from their love for the country," Al-Sabri claims. "They use

these negotiations as a cover for the crimes they committed in Sana'a. If we engage in dialogue with the Houthis, we condone the violence they enact against anyone opposing them. It would also mean that we condone the Houthis' takeover of Sana'a and their siege on Hadi's house and the Presidential Palace."

Adnan Al-Odaini, deputy head of the Islah Party's Media Department, said "our withdrawal from talks on Sunday came as a result of the suppression of the anti-Houthi protests in Sana'a."

On Sunday, protestors who had gathered throughout the city voicing their opposition against the Houthis reported violent assaults and arrests.

A leading member in the Yemeni Socialist Party, who refused to be named, explained that "the party's leadership is constantly calling on the Houthis to end their house arrest of the party's secretary-general, Dr. Mohammad Al-Mekhlafi, and other ministers." These house arrests, the source complains, are politically and legally unjustified and violate hu-



The three parties released separate statements on Sunday declaring their refusal to join negotiations that began Friday, Jan. 23, following fighting between Houthis and government forces days earlier.

man rights. "We do not accept the Houthis' method of reaching political settlements through force," the source said.

On Tuesday evening, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, the leader of the Houthi movement, used a televised speech to claim, "the political forces that

oppose dialogue and negotiations do not want to overcome the current crisis. They want to take advantage of the situation... But we may take measures against them if they continue their opposition."

Abdulmalik Al-Fuhaidi, head of the General People's Congress

mouth-piece Al-Motamar Net, said the parties that stopped negotiations are seeking to please Jamal Benomar and are not serving the best interest of the country, adding that their refusal to negotiate is an obstacle to the political process in Yemen.

# Students walk out of Sana'a War Academy

Story and Photo by Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Jan. 27**—Officers in training have not attended their courses at the War Academy in Sana'a since Tuesday, a day after Houthi personnel entered the compound and allegedly seized military equipment.

Visiting the academy on Tuesday morning, in the Bani Al-Harith district in the north of the capital, the Yemen Times found almost none of the institution's 2,300 students in attendance. Conflicting reasons were given for their absence.

According to a security officer present at the academy, who asked to remain anonymous, management imposed mandatory leave on Monday evening after around 650 students walked out in protest against "the Houthis' control over and continued presence in the academy, including their theft of armaments."

At both entrances to the academy the Yemen Times found checkpoints manned by personnel whose vehicles and weapons were marked with Houthi slogans. Six armed men were stationed at either entrance, and a heavier presence was seen in the vicinity of the academy.

An officer trainee, speaking to



Around 650 officers in training walked out in protest of the Houthis' presence at the academy. This photo, taken Tuesday, shows a Houthi member in traditional clothes manning security at the entrance.

the Yemen Times anonymously via phone, was able to confirm these events. "On Monday morning, almost 650 students violated military orders forbidding them from leaving," he said, adding that students

had met with Chief of Staff Hussein Naji Khairan beforehand. "Instead of doing his job and negotiating a settlement with the Houthis, or pressuring them to leave, he simply ordered the students to stay put."

According to another trainee, Chief of Staff Khairan informed the students that "the [Houthis'] popular committees are your brothers and are cooperating with you, there is no reason to fear them," while

reminding them of the need to "understand the nature of the current political situation."

Students responded by declaring they had registered in the academy with the belief they were serving the Ministry of Defense, and would not have done so had they known it would be a "Houthi militia academy," the trainee said. "Their interference in the academy is unacceptable—how can a civilian protect a soldier? This can only happen in Yemen."

The sources also allege that hundreds of officer trainees were recruited by the Houthis, who entered the academy aboard two vehicles on Monday morning, before re-fuelling and taking an inventory of the academy's weapons stockpile. Anyone who voiced their opposition was threatened with expulsion, they said, although it is not yet clear what the fate of those protesting will be.

However, speaking with two other sources at the academy, a different version of events was given. Ali Ahmad Al-Dahiri, who works as an assistant security manager, said the students had left for their regular one-week leave, which is given every six months.

Nonetheless, he added, "we are cooperating with the popular com-

mittees and our goal is to protect the academy, and in the current political situation cooperation is key."

Sadiq Al-Marani, a financial officer at the academy, also pledged his support for the Houthis' popular committees, which he said are working with the academy's staff to ensure security. He claimed all students were cooperating with popular committee members, and that any allegations that students had left in protest or that the academy had been ransacked were false.

Mahmoud Al-Junaid, a member of the Houthi Political Office, told the Yemen Times that the group's popular committees are located all over Sana'a, and their presence in the War Academy is for the same reason as all government headquarters and institutions: To "monitor its performance," by which he means prevent corruption.

Al-Junaid claimed the popular committees did not steal any weapons from the academy, but merely created an inventory for them in order to prevent them from being stolen by anyone else.

The War Academy, which was founded on May 1, 1963, provides officer training programs and is run under the auspices of the Ministry of Defense. The head of the academy is Mohammad Saleh Shaizer.

# Houthi leader calls for national dialogue on Friday

■ Ali Aboluhom

**SANA'A, Jan. 28**—In a televised speech delivered on Tuesday night, Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi called for a meeting to be convened on Friday to discuss the current government crisis.

Al-Houthi called on religious scholars, academics, politicians, tribal leaders and others citizens to take part in what he called "an exceptional meeting" to address the current deadlock, following the resignations of President Hadi and the Cabinet on Jan. 22.

Al-Houthi stressed his group's willingness to ensure a peaceful transition, and called on other factions to support efforts to find a peaceful resolution.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, confirmed that the meeting will take place in Sana'a on Friday, although the exact time and place is yet to be determined. He said priority will be given to implementing the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), signed Sept. 21, as well as finding solutions to the current political impasse.

"A new power will be forged after the meeting, as President Hadi's page was turned with his resignation," said Al-Bukhaiti. "Negotiations are ongoing to find an agreeable substitute for the president, someone able and willing to implement the demands already put forth by Abdulmalik Al-Houthi."

These demands, laid out by Al-

Houthi in last week's televised speech, included calls to reform the National Authority for the Implementation of NDC Outcomes, amend the draft constitution, implement the Peace and National Partnership Agreement (PNPA), and to seek a resolution to the security situation in Marib.

Unlike the leader's previous

speech on Jan. 20, which was aired on the Houthi-affiliated Al-Masira channel, Tuesday's speech was broadcast by the state-owned Yemen TV channel. According to Adnan Al-Raheji, a Yemeni political analyst and journalist at the Yemeni-based independent news website Khabar, it is an indication of "the full dominance of Houthis over media and decision-making."

Yemen TV's news director, Tawfik Al-Sharabi, resigned from his post last week Tuesday in response to Houthi interference with the channel's editorial policy and alleged censorship.

Keen to avoid full responsibility for the public backlash that has followed President Hadi's resignation, the Houthis' leadership is calling a meeting out of self-interest as much as national interest, Al-Raheji said.

"The Houthis will risk declaring a new presidential council with a new president on Friday. They want to involve as many political, social and religious factions as possible to avoid any fallout, and they don't have the support of the international community on their own," he said.



According to a Houthi source, the group is looking for a "substitute for the president" who is willing to implement Al-Houthi's demands.

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# Did a 13-year-old boy join Al-Qaeda?

Ahlam Mohsen and  
Amal Al-Yarisi

In the dusty plains of Marib governorate, a three-year-old child raises his fist to the sky and vows revenge for the death of his father and brother in a US drone strike.

"I'm going to fight them—I'm going to kill them. Just let me get bigger."

The Yemen Times visited the boy and his 25 siblings at the end of November 2014. On Monday, the child lost another brother to a US drone strike.

The drone was operated by the CIA, American officials told the New York Times. It hit a vehicle in Wadi Harib, Marib, on Monday—ending any doubts that the US would continue counterterrorism operations after the resignation of Yemen's pro-drone president, Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi.

The strike killed two Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) members, but also a child.

Mohammad Saleh Duaayman was 13 years old and in the sixth grade, according to his brother Mukdad. He was the third person in his family killed by a US drone. His father Saleh Duaayman and 17-year-old brother, Gallal, were killed in October 2012 while searching for a camel that had strayed from the family's farm. A second brother, age 14, survived to give details of that initial strike.

An AQAP source told the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity that all three individuals killed on Monday were members of AQAP. But what does it mean for a barely pubescent boy to be a member of Al-Qaeda?

Since the killing of their father—the family's only breadwinner—his daughter told the Yemen Times in December that Al-Qaeda has financially supported the family, buying them food and school clothes, even pens and notebooks so the children can continue schooling. When money was tight for AQAP, she said they would leave a weapon on the family's property that they could sell to buy food.

"Who takes care of us? Al-Qaeda takes care of us now. They know my father was killed because of them, so they take care of the household. Not only that, they ask about us, ask us what we need, how we are. The government killed our father and gave us nothing. Twenty-six children, and they've never even asked how we're doing," Saleh's daughter Noor\* said.

The October 2012 strike was intended for AQAP militants that



Journalist Adel Shamsan with Mohammad Saleh Duaayman on Nov. 29, 2014. On Monday, 13-year-old Mohammad was killed by a US drone strike in Wadi Harib, Marib governorate.

were on the mountains overlooking the valley where Saleh and his two teenage sons had laid their heads for the evening, after a tiring two days of searching for the camel.

"He herded the camel, but it was not ours," his daughter Noor said.

The surviving son of the October 2012 drone strike, Ezzadine, 14, had accompanied his father and brother on that search. The father jumped up when he saw a green light from the sky over his head, Noor said. He woke his sons up, and told them to run. Ezzadine hid under a number of large rocks, while his father and brother kept running. He remained hidden from 9 p.m. until sunrise the next morning, when he heard the voices of men who had come to collect the bodies.

Noor told the Yemen Times that her father had fought alongside Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan until returning to Yemen in 2001. When he returned, he cut a deal with the state, agreeing to forego any relations with Al-Qaeda, and received a monthly salary of YR100,000 (about \$500) from the state.

"He left his old life behind," Noor said.

He also took on a number of odd jobs to support his large family of 26 children—12 boys and 14 girls—including buying and selling used cars and herding sheep and camels.

Noor said the government cut the salary when Saleh died.

"At the very least, they should have left the salary, so we could eat off it. Imagine, we have only Al-Qaeda to give the children new clothes for the Eid holiday," Noor added.

An Al-Qaeda source told the Yemen Times that Saleh was not part of Al-Qaeda following his return from Afghanistan, but did cooperate with the group, which included hosting AQAP operatives from time to time.

## Was Mohammad Duaayman an AQAP member?

Mohammad's family emphatically deny that he was a member of Al-Qaeda. Their home is covered in Al-Qaeda flags, but his brother Mukdad and sister Noor distinguished between appreciation for the group that has kept them fed and being part of that group.

However, an Al-Qaeda source told the Yemen Times that Mohammad was a member of the group. When pushed, he distinguished between operational members of Al-Qaeda and people who support the group—who he still defined as part of Al-Qaeda.

Was Mohammed an Al-Qaeda operative?

"Be logical," the AQAP source said, "how can a 12-year-old [sic] be a member of Al-Qaeda? Our aim was to convince him to join us in the future, especially considering that his father was killed in a drone strike."

The source said that new recruits usually receive training before becoming operatives, but that Al-Qaeda has a minimum age for these trainings.

"It's true that we recruit children but we don't train them and they're not operatives until they are at least 15," the source said.

If Mohammed was not an Al-Qaeda operative, was he still an AQAP "member"? The answer lies in how

one defines membership.

Are you Al-Qaeda if you voice support for Al-Qaeda? Or does being an Al-Qaeda member necessitate some sort of material assistance to the group or willingness to plan or carry out attacks? Does receiving support from Al-Qaeda make you a part of the group? Can sixth graders be Al-Qaeda?

Both AQAP and the US government have an interest in accepting this first, broad definition of who is Al-Qaeda. In the past, the Obama administration has gone as far as pushing for the continued imprisonment of a Yemeni journalist on terror related charges for his reporting.

Abdulelah Haider Shaye—who had never claimed to support or be part of AQAP—was arrested on terror charges in August 2010 after revealing in December 2009 that a strike in Al-Majala, Abyan governorate, that left 21 children and 14 women dead was a US strike from a Tomahawk cruise missile. The



Mohammad is the third person in his family to be killed by a US drone, after a strike in October 2012 killed his father Saleh and brother Gallal.

Yemeni government had claimed that it was a Yemeni strike. He was also known for his interviews with high-level Al-Qaeda leaders that appeared in international press, including the Washington Post.

In fact, the Obama administration considers "all military-age males in a strike zone as combatants," several administration of-

ficials told the New York Times in June 2012. Every military-age male in Mohammad's village is considered a combatant, "unless there is explicit intelligence posthumously proving them innocent," according to the Times.

Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki contributed to this report.

## What 2015 holds for the Middle East

Nabeel Khoury

atlanticcouncil.org

First published Jan. 24

In "The Arab Cold War Revisited," published in Middle East Policy 2013, I suggested that Arab monarchies, authoritarian republics, and Islamist forces comprised the three main axes competing for power in the Middle East. I argued that the competition would likely continue until the more radical Islamists were defeated and the state systems went back to a more pragmatic approach in their relations. An easy prediction to make, given what was already obvious in intra-regional relations. What I failed to predict was the ferocity of the competition and the revival with a vengeance of the seventh century war over the Caliphate.

The Arab uprising of 2011 knocked over four of the rotting regimes in the Arab world and seriously shook a fifth (Syria). The failure of revolutionary forces to capitalize on their initial success allowed others to fill the vacuum: Tribal and Islamist forces in Yemen and Libya, the old regime cum mili-

tary in Egypt, and violent extremism of all shades in Syria, which opened the gates to the brutish forces of the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL). Only in Tunisia did pragmatism prevail among secular and Islamist forces, allowing a new democratic republic to emerge with the handover of power between outgoing and incoming presidents—striking, remarkable, and utterly unique in modern Arab history.

The intrigue, fanaticism, and brutishness of the struggle we have seen in 2014 is not likely to diminish in 2015. The verse, "Eidun bi ayati halen udta ya eidu," of the great Arab poet Al-Mutanabi, which laments that the celebration of a momentous occasion often brings nothing new at all, and the French adage "Plus ca change" strike me as apt as we start off on the year 2015 in the Middle East. The basic clash of forces will remain the same; the fanaticism and brutishness of Islamist extremism will continue unabated and the impotence of the international community (read: US foreign policy) will persist. That said, nuanced political improvements may indeed take place in Iraq, some economic successes will

allow the military leadership there to gloat and plead with the international community for more time to show its effectiveness, and the Tunisian experiment—thank goodness—will continue to make steady, if slow progress on all fronts.

## Iraq

First, the good news: The Abadi government is a clear improvement over Maliki's. Abadi has completed an Iraqi-Kurdish oil agreement, improved atmospherics (if nothing else) with the Sunni community, and offered the promise of better relations with Saudi Arabia and other GCC counties in the region. Allied bombing and the training of Iraqi Special Forces (ISF)—especially in Jordan—has resulted in battle front successes and an actual pushback of ISIL forces from previously held ground in the northwest of the country. Kurdish, Shia, and ISF collaboration, will allow Iraq's anti-ISIL forces to systematically regain lost territory, with perhaps a return of Sunni tribal forces to playing an effective role in this alliance.

Continued on the back page

بِقَلُوبِ مُؤْمِنِهِ بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْرِهِ

نَتَقَدَّمُ بِأَحْرَ التَّعَاذِي وَأُصْدَقِ الْمَوَاسِيَةِ

إِلَى الْقَلْبِيَّةِ إِلَى

الأخ/ جلال محمد سعيد الشرعبي

لوفاة المغفور له بإذن الله تعالى

والده

ونحن إذ نشاطره أحزانه نسال الله العلي

القدير أن يتغمد الفقيد بواسع رحمته

ويسكنه فسيح جناته وأن يلهم أهله وذويه

الصبر والسلوان...

{ إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون }

الأسيفون

مؤسسة يمن تايمز للطباعة والنشر

شركة البنيان للإعلان



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

# The hagiography of King Abdullah

**Andrew Hammond**  
middleeasteye.net  
First published Jan. 26

**T**he hagiographies of the deceased Saudi King Abdullah have piled up at a surprising rate, reflecting the desire—the desperate hope—among Western policy-makers that Saudi Arabia is on a path to “reform” that justifies their continued investment in a regime whose political repression, economic plunder, improvised regional interventions and cradling of religious obscurantism and zealotry (beheading for sorcery) is of a scale arguably unique in modern times. In an astounding move, the UK government even ordered flags to be put at half-mast.

Yet the legacy of Abdullah as a “reformer” had already long dissipated before his death. Abdullah rose to prominence in the late 1990s at the beginning of his predecessor Fahd’s long incapacitation at a time of collapsing oil prices and high government spending. In 1998 the then crown prince told Saudis, both the population and the ruling family, that they would have to tighten their belts.

The catastrophe of 9/11 created a further imperative for domestic reform and an array of political activists spanning reformist clerics, Jeddah liberals, Islamists, leftists, Arab nationalists, Eastern Province Shia and women, who still require a category of their own, came together to formulate those demands in a series of petitions; liberals in particular felt that their time

had come. The cult of Abdullah was born.

But both the security and the religious establishment were not happy. Prince Nayef, father of current interior minister and now deputy crown prince Mohammed Bin Nayef, jailed dozens of journalists, many left the country, and all talk of ditching the religious police, or Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, was checked. Nayef maintained particularly close ties with senior clerics, both those on the state-backed Council of Senior Religious Scholars and independents, who were often beneficiaries of state largesse in any case too.

It was Nayef who had the authority to gather hundreds of the ulama (religious scholars) in 2007 and request them to stop sending Saudis to blow themselves up in Iraq. That same year Nayef’s security forces arrested a group of activists including Saud Mukhtar Al-Hashemi, a prominent Islamist figure in Jeddah; they were accused of ties to Al-Qaeda in Iraq, but were really arrested because they planned to establish a political party. Incapable of pushing forward with social reforms that would reduce Wahhabi restrictions, the former king was left only to push ahead with the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology project and economic cities as “liberal enclaves” where the rules of gender segregation and all that flows from that (women driving, cinemas, public transport) could be put in abeyance for a putative liberal modernity to unfurl itself unhindered.

The Arab uprisings tore the narrative

apart. Abdullah came back from convalescence in Al-Saud’s favorite holiday spot in Agadir, Morocco, to order King Hamad of Bahrain, waiting obediently on the tarmac, to crush the street mobilization that took off after Mubarak’s removal in Egypt, while both the interior ministry and the senior clerics warned Saudis not to dare get on the streets too (protests and petitions are haram, the senior ulama declared). When they did not, Abdullah came forward with a series of funding gifts for religious and security institutions in thanks.

A campaign of repression was unleashed which saw long prison sentences for rights activists, bloggers, social media users and dissidents, usually tried in improvised state security courts officially established for handling militants who were lavished with money for wives and homes in return for their repentance. With the ruling family circling the wagons in fear for their future, the Arab Spring security paradigm has set the tone for the foreseeable future, and it’s easy to imagine that those municipal elections held back in 2005 (remember then...?) will again be postponed this year.

The discourse on reforming Wahhabism, in effect an attempt to smooth its rougher edges, also ran into the ground. In challenging Iran, Hezbollah, post-invasion Iraq and the Assad regime, Salafi Jihadism proved as useful as it had always been; in challenging the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and political Islam, the state’s quietist brand of Salafi Islam proved equally useful.

International conferences on “interfaith

dialogue” went down well in the West, and created a buzz among his team that Abdullah could perhaps get the Nobel Prize for peace, but were never taken seriously back home. The reform of the judiciary and legal system, perhaps the boldest of Abdullah’s reform projects in its similarity to the Ottoman Tanzimat, also ran into problems. Codification of Sharia, going beyond Hanbali jurisprudence, and training judges in non-Islamic law were all deeply problematic and progress was slow: If there is to be a long-term result, this would perhaps be Abdullah’s true legacy. But as it stands, that for now should be regarded as rehabilitating Saudi Arabia’s tattered reputation after 2001, bringing Saudi Arabia in line with global economic standards via entry into the World Trade Organization, and allowing an air of openness to waft through an extremely tense society.

The flags are at half-mast and the obituaries are hailing his policies because the West needs to believe that Saudi Arabia’s problems are solvable without violent upheaval.

*Andrew Hammond is a senior policy fellow for the European Council on Foreign Relations’ Middle East & North Africa programme. He spent ten years working as a correspondent for Reuters, including a stint as Reuters bureau chief in Riyadh from 2006 to 2009. He has covered the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, and Morocco and reported from Iraq before and after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.*

## OUR OPINION

### Goodbye Hadi, hello Houthis

**I**f recent behavior is any indication of what Yemen is in for, the Houthis will not be tolerating any dissent against their rule.

It’s only been a week since the government resigned and in that week the Houthis have dispersed anti-Houthi rallies and beaten dozens of protesters with batons, threatening hundreds more with automatic rifles and knives. Their attacks on journalists in just the past few days would make even former President Ali Abdullah Saleh blush.

Ashraf Al-Tifi, the secretary of the Rights and Freedom Committee within the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate (YSJ), told the Yemen Times Wednesday evening that there have been 30 attacks against journalists by the Houthis since Saturday alone.

This does not include the movement’s attacks on the profession itself since their takeover of the capital on Sept. 21. The Houthis have stormed and taken control of a number of state media organizations, including Al-Thawra newspaper, forcing the government to order its suspension. The Houthis brought in their own team and together with staff from the paper who chose to stay despite the takeover, they have continued printing and distribution.

The YSJ said in a press release earlier this month that Al-Thawra’s editor, Faisal Makram, stepped down when the Houthis entered his home and forced him to resign at gunpoint.

My friends at state radio stations tell me about the Houthi guards sent to “protect” the station who censor their news to make it more Houthi-friendly.

The whereabouts of journalist Yahya Al-Siwari, who was taken by the Houthis on Monday, remain unknown.

Historically, the government has been behind most of the attacks on journalists in the country. The transition saw a decrease in government violence against journalists, but an overall increase in attacks on those in the profession. With different actors competing for power, journalists could anticipate attacks from various parties and groups.

The Houthis say they’ve come to town to save us from a failing political transition and to achieve the goals of the 2011 uprising. Who’s going to save us from them?

**Ahlam Mohsen**

## After Qaboos, who will be Oman’s next sultan?

**Bruce Riedel**  
muffah.org  
First published Jan. 25

**T**he death of King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia turns the focus of succession speculation in Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman. Sultan Qaboos, the longest-serving ruler in the Middle East, has been in Germany for unspecified health reasons since last summer. While the Saudi succession was transparent, Oman’s is opaque.

Qaboos was born on Nov. 18, 1940, in Salalah, the capital of Oman’s western province of Dhofar, which borders Yemen. He is the 14th-generation descendant of the founder of the Al-Bu Sa’idi dynasty that created the sultanate in the 1600s after expelling the Portuguese from Muscat. He was educated in India and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, then spent a year with the British Army of the Rhine in Germany. When he returned home to Salalah, his father kept him isolated and under virtual house arrest in the palace. The father was notoriously averse to any modernization of the country.

Qaboos came to power in July 1970 in a coup orchestrated by British intelligence using army officers seconded to the Omani army. British officers took control of the palace, lightly wounded the sultan in a short gunfight and then Qaboos’ father was flown out of the country on a Royal Air Force jet, never to return. London was convinced regime change was essential because the country was in a civil war with a communist insurgency backed by the Soviets and their then proxy, the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen. The country had only ten kilometers (six miles) of modern roads, virtually no education or health infrastructure and seemed about to become the next Arab monarchy to collapse.

With British encouragement, Qaboos

asked the Shah of Iran and King Hussein of Jordan for help. The Iranians sent a regiment of troops and the Jordanians sent advisers. The communist insurgency in Dhofar was defeated and many of its leaders defected to the new government. Qaboos modernized the country, established a parliament and created one of the most stable and well-governed countries in the Middle East. Oman had a miniature version of the Arab Spring in 2011, during which the Sultan ordered further reforms to answer calls for change, and demonstrations petered out. The majority of Oman’s four million residents have never known any ruler except Qaboos.

While maintaining special ties to the United Kingdom, Qaboos has also been a close ally of the United States. Oman was the staging base for the ill-fated American hostage rescue mission in 1980 to get the American diplomats home from Iran. Oman participated in Operation Desert Storm to liberate Kuwait. Later Oman became a useful intermediary for sending messages from Washington to Tehran. Most recently, Oman has hosted secret talks between the US and Iran on Iran’s nuclear program.

In July, the Sultan traveled to his residence in Munich for medical tests. He has not left since, and last year he missed the Omani National Day (his birthday) celebration for the first time since his coup. He also failed to travel to Saudi Arabia for Abdullah’s funeral, a notable omission for a fellow Gulf monarch. He is widely reported to be suffering from terminal cancer. He has barely spoken to the nation since he traveled to Germany, giving only a brief address on National Day.

The sultan has no sons and has not publicly designated an heir. The royal family is supposed to choose a successor within three days of the sultan’s death. If the family cannot agree, it is to open a sealed letter that Qaboos has written that contains the name of his choice. The three men be-



Oman’s Sultan Qaboos Bin Said (R) walks with Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani upon Rouhani’s arrival in Muscat, March 12, 2014. (photo by REUTERS/Sultan Al Hasani)

lieved to be the most likely candidates are the sons of Qaboos’ late uncle, Tariq Bin Taimur, who served as the sultan’s first prime minister. (Qaboos now holds the position himself.) None appear to have been groomed for power: Assad Bin Tariq is a Sandhurst-educated businessman; Haitham Bin Tariq is Oman’s culture minister; and Shihab Bin Tariq led the navy for 14 years, but retired from the post a decade ago. No successor will have the legitimacy Qaboos has earned.

The royal family has every incentive to make the succession smooth. The country faces two dangers. Like the other GCC states, Oman depends on oil for most of its income, but it has relatively small reserves. The decline in oil prices is a much bigger challenge for Oman than for its richer neighbors because it has far smaller financial reserves.

The more immediate danger is the chaos in Yemen. The collapse of the central government and the resignation of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi’s govern-

ment means Oman faces near-anarchy on its sensitive western border. Qaboos and his successor will face a long-term problem of keeping the Yemeni civil war and its violence from damaging Omani interests.

The succession in Saudi Arabia was scripted well in advance and went off like clockwork. King Salman was quick to put in place the long-term succession arrangements for the kingdom by appointing Crown Prince Muqrin Bin Abd Al-Aziz and Second Deputy Prime Minister Prince Mohammad Bin Nayef to the No. 2 and No. 3 positions. Oman’s succession appears far less orderly from an outside, public point of view. Since Oman sits at the opening of the Straits of Hormuz, the whole world has an interest in a smooth and stable transition.

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### Offices

**Taiz Bureau:**  
Imad Ahmed Al-Saqqaf  
Tel: +967 (4) 217-156,  
Telefax: +967 (4) 217157  
P.O. Box: 5086, Taiz  
Email: yttaz@y.net.ye

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Arab Spring Party head to the Yemen Times:

# “Women are absent from the political scene”



**I**n the wake of the 2011 uprising against former President Ali Abdullah Saleh a number of small political parties were formed. One such party, the Arab Spring Party, is unique in that it is the first officially recognized party in Yemen to be led by a woman. Passionate about getting Yemeni women more involved in the country's politics, and encouraged by the notable involvement of women during the 2011 uprising, party President Amal Al-Thawr established the Arab Spring Party that year. According to her, the party aims to be fully inclusive and to bring together a mix of youth and people from different social backgrounds.

Born in Sana'a, Al-Thawr is the daughter of a Shura Council member and former minister. Though she did not continue schooling after graduating high school, Al-Thawr says politics is in her blood. She spoke to the Yemen Times about the marginalization of women from politics, the difficulties she has faced as a woman, as well as her hopes for the future. On Jan. 22, hours before the government announced its resignation, Al-Thawr said, “I do not think the government will be able to make it in such inappropriate conditions,” and questioned how the government could exercise its authority in the absence of the state. After the government's resignation, she talked to the Yemen Times about what the government's resignation means for small parties.

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

**After the 2011 uprising many new political parties surfaced, including the Arab Spring Party. Can you introduce your party, and what you have achieved so far?**

The Arab Spring Party is a party that resulted from the 2011 peaceful youth uprising. What makes this party different is that it is the first party at the national level to be headed and established by a woman. We have done a lot since our establishment. We have established the Coordinating Committee for New and Nascent Parties. We were part of the 2011 Preparatory Committee [which co-ordinated activities during the uprising]. This party aims to provide a helping hand for the nation and people in all areas.

**What is the party's take on the latest political developments in the capital city?**

It really hurts us that Yemen has reached such a low, particularly in Sana'a. Being the capital, it has a different status from other areas in the country. It is really worrying for citizens and politicians to see Sana'a turned upside down.

**The president and the Cabinet have resigned. What is the role of new political parties at this critical time in Yemen's history?**

We have been contacting all political parties in order to get them together and help rescue the country from collapse. We will present our initiative and be part of the solution. These difficult times call for the efforts of all political parties.

**How do you read the mounting terrorist acts in the capital city?**

What is happening is that foreign agendas are being implemented by internal individuals. The engineers are non-Yemeni and the executors are Yemenis. Such acts largely affect Yemen at the level of society, security and stability. The country has been placed in a very bad situation. Poverty is increasing, education is deteriorating, and the state of health care is bad—life has become tough. Nowadays, citizens are finding difficulty in getting basic necessities such as gas and petrol. It's misery.



**Although political elites have signed agreements to end disputes and work towards reconciliation, the situation has not improved. What, in your opinion, are the reasons behind this failure?**

The internal powers agree on certain issues and have reached agreement, which pleases Yemenis. However, these agreements do not last long due to outside pressure or interference. Therefore, these internal powers break agreements and procrastinate. Thus, I think the outside pressure [by the US, Saudi Arabia, and Iran] plays a big role in directing the political process in Yemen. We can not get rid of this situation unless the political powers establish national reconciliation. Then the foreign powers can not interfere.

**Are you satisfied with the situation of Yemeni woman and their role in the decision-making process in Yemen?**

No, I am not satisfied. Women have not realized a genuine status in Yemen. Except for a very small number, women remain absent from the political scene. The reason for this is the patriarchal society we are living in and man's domination over women. This makes women stuck. I think the situation of Yemeni women will be good if the 30 percent quota for woman is fixed in the constitution, we need to work towards that.

**What about the role of women in the Arab Spring Party?**

The party has not confined women to any particular office. Instead, women are seen as political partners in the political process more broadly. Women have a role in all offices of the party. Women occupy the roles, for example, of secretary general and media officer, in addition to other titles.

**What about the founding members of the party?**

Any party that seeks recognition should give the Parties' Affairs Committee documents of about 75 founding members, at minimum. The Arab Spring Party had 145 founding members. Also, the party should have 2,500 members from different governorates to get the official permit. We had about 3,000 members. The Arab Spring Party is composed of youth and other people who have nothing to do with other political parties. This is a unique characteristic of our party.

**Do you think the growth of political parties could contribute to creating further political competition and hence more conflict?**

The growth of political parties are a good phenomenon. The parties have a constructive role, and they should compete with one another for the sake of development and for the sake of the nation. They should not contend to destroy the nation. The parties that have foresight are

the ones that will persist, while those incapable of forward-thinking may survive for some time but will eventually perish.

**Why did the Arab Spring Party have no representatives in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC)?**

The new parties had no representation in the NDC because they were marginalized. There was no justification for that exclusion. If the new parties participated in the NDC, they would have presented better national visions.

**What challenges are you currently facing?**

Personally, and as a woman, I am facing lots of problems. I am in a patriarchal society that does not believe strongly in women. A woman in Yemen has never become president or prime minister. This conveys the challenge. Challenges facing the party also include financial issues. The government does not provide us with support. We call on the state to support this party, considering it is the only one led by a woman. I depend solely on my personal support. Now I am focusing on expanding the party's popularity base.

**Making Yemen a federal state is a contentious issue. Do you support federalism?**

I believe in Yemen's unity, the people and the land. In all the statements I made before and after the NDC, I have always asserted the unity of Yemen. Splitting Yemen into regions makes it weak. Instead of federalism, we should activate the role of the local councils within the framework of the Republic of Yemen. We are facing a serious danger considering the peoples' lack of awareness about the federal system. Every governorate will declare itself an independent state. I call on the president and the law makers to think about the interests of Yemen. Dividing Yemen serves foreign interests, but it is not for the good of the country.

**Where is Yemen heading now?**  
Yemen is heading for collapse as long as the political powers do not end their conflicts. If these powers prove themselves capable of placing Yemen's interests first, we will survive. I remain optimistic we will

**“...foreign agendas are being implemented by internal individuals. The engineers are non-Yemeni and the executors are Yemenis.”**

overcome this difficult situation.

**How do you describe the events of September 21?**

The September 21 revolution was an extension of the February 2011 revolution. I condemn Monday's attacks on students who were protesting near Sana'a University. There should be co-existence, and the leadership of the September 21 revolution should absorb all the political parties and social factions. Exclusion is unacceptable.

**How do you see Yemen's future?**

In spite of the troubles we are undergoing, I can see it is promising. I trust the wisdom of the Yemeni people.

**A final word?**

I call on the political parties to place Yemen first. I call on them to set aside any foreign agendas. I ask them to be patriotic. We are in one ship - if it drowns, we will all face the same fate. Yemen is above individuals.

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# Are popular committees all Houthi?

Story by **Khalid Al-Karimi**  
Photo by **Brett Scott**

Popular committees existed in Yemen long before the Houthis' rise to power. However, since the group took over Sana'a on Sept. 21, the term "popular committee" has been commonly used as an equivalent to "the Houthis" in areas under the group's control.

While Houthi popular committees have clearly mushroomed in recent months, it is often unclear what happened to regular neighborhood watch groups that formed during and after the 2011 uprising in Yemen.

Akram Al-Sharjabi, a popular committee leader in Sana'a's Al-Sabaen neighborhood, said that his men have stopped their work entirely since Houthis arrived and erected checkpoints throughout the capital.

"We used to protect our neighborhood back in 2011 because of the volatile security situation, but we stopped in 2012 when the situation improved," Al-Sharjabi said, reflecting on the committee's early beginnings.

Al-Sabaen's popular committee consisted of men who live in the neighborhood and volunteered as guards during the night. Most of them were unarmed and busy controlling the neighborhood's entrances, checking IDs, and making sure no suspicious strangers could enter.

In early September 2014, the violence that erupted in Sana'a between soldiers and the Houthis caused a temporary comeback of popular committees—at least in Al-Sabaen.

This revival was short lived, however, with the Houthi taking over control of the neighborhood a few weeks after. In light of the wide-

spread presence of armed Houthis in the area, Al-Sharjabi considered it pointless to continue the work of his watch brigades.

No Houthi member approached Al-Sharjabi or one of his committee members, he said, to discuss the potential of cooperation. Yet, according to Abas Abdusamad, who works with one of the Houthi popular committees in Al-Sabaen, some of the local residents who had previously volunteered guarding the neighborhood decided to join the Houthi guards.

While members of neighborhood watch groups claimed to be solely bound by their common goal of protecting residents—a goal they said transcended political and religious divisions between them—Al-Sharjabi criticizes that the same does not apply to Houthis. In fact, he claims, it is their partisanship that explains why their spread in the neighborhood does not lead to increased security. "Our neighborhood became a target because the Houthis and Houthi checkpoints are at risk of being attacked by Al-Qaeda."

Al-Sharjabi also accuses Houthi popular committees of dividing rather than uniting the neighborhood, saying that, "The Houthi popular committees accuse us of belonging to particular parties and groups."

While Al-Sharjabi is worried about the spread of Houthi popular committees, Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi figure, does not seem to distinguish between popular committees that are led and organized by neighbors and those that are run by the Houthis. "I don't see a difference between them. They are both eager to serve the people and try to make sure they can live in peace."

In spite of his concerns, Al-Sharjabi admits, "The neighborhood committees offered help to



At this entrance to Sana'a's Old City the Houthis have a clear presence, with their slogan widely visible. However, the men sitting at the entrance said they do not consider themselves Houthis. Rather, they are locals who are co-operating with the group for the sake of security.

maintain security, and in a way the Houthi committees are doing the same. But contrary to them, we never wanted to replace the government forces."

Houthi popular committees tend to be hierarchically organized, with supervisors being assigned to watch over committee members in designated neighborhoods. These supervisors, in turn, work under the Houthi Revolutionary Council that is monitored by the Houthi Political Office—at least in theory. Committees usually consist of a mix of locals and Houthi supporters from outside, all viewing the provision of security as their ultimate goal.

Ali Abdulrahman, an 18-year-old

high school student living in Al-Sabaen, shares Al-Sharjabi's skepticism, saying that Houthi popular committees—contrary to neighborhood watch groups—try to impose themselves on the state.

Likewise, Mohammad Sultan, a 32-year-old taxi driver in Al-Sabaen, figures that, "Not everyone welcomes the spread of the Houthi popular committees." Sultan for his part preferred neighborhood committees that did not cause any trouble for the state's security forces.

Sultan's preference for neighborhood watch groups is not shared by everyone. Several residents, such as Ahmed Al-Mudaei, a 19-year-old high-school graduate, welcome

Houthi popular committees. "The 2011 popular committees were necessary to keep an eye on the neighborhood, they did not have to carry weapons," Al-Mudaei said. Given the current instability and violence in Sana'a, however, Al-Mudaei is convinced that armed Houthis are better equipped to ensure security.

Ali Al-Milhani, a 24-year-old resident in Al-Sabaen, agrees. "In my neighborhood, the popular committees which were set up in 2011 were not using weapons. But the Houthi popular committees are. This is an important difference," he argues.

Houthi member Abdusamad echoes these sentiments, declaring, "We are different from the 2011

neighborhood committees because we bear weapons. We need weapons for the protection of neighborhoods."

As the example of Al-Sabaen illustrates, neighborhood watch brigades are of a very fluid character, springing up wherever and whenever necessary. It remains to be seen, and is surely dependent on further political developments, whether Yemenis will witness the reappearance of popular committees unaffiliated with the Houthis in neighborhoods anytime soon. In the meantime, the term and much of the concept of popular committees has been appropriated by the Houthis.

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### إعلان مناقصات

#### تعلم منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة عن إنزال المناقصات التالية:

م	رقم المناقصة	اسم المناقصة	آخر موعد لتسليم العطاءات
١	٢٠١٥/YEM/٠٥	شراء عليقات مركزة للاغنام	٥ فبراير ٢٠١٥
٢	٢٠١٥/YEM/٠٦	شراء محاليل مخبرية لمختبر فحص جودة الاسماك في عدن	١٢ فبراير ٢٠١٥
٣	٢٠١٥/YEM/٠٧	شراء ادوات مخبرية لمختبر فحص جودة الاسماك في عدن	١٢ فبراير ٢٠١٥

فعلى الشركات الراغبة للتقديم في هذه المناقصات تسليم عروضهم خلال أوقات الدوام الرسمي إلى:-

منظمة الأغذية والزراعة للأمم المتحدة - فج عطان - مقابل منزل السيد / علوي السلامي، منزل السيد / محمد ثامر، ت رقم: ٤٣٢٦٨١

يتم تسليم العطاءات لكل مناقصة على حده في مظلوفين منفصلين ومختومين بالشمع الأحمر (عرض مالي وعرض فني) إلى عنوان المنظمة المحدد أعلاه ومكتوب عليه اسم الشركة، والمشروع ورقم المناقصة واسم مقدم العطاء وفي طيه الوثائق التالية :-

- ١- صورة من السجل التجاري ساري المفعول.
- ٢- صورة من البطاقة الضريبية سارية المفعول.
- ٣- صورة من البطاقة التأمينية سارية المفعول.

تستثنى الشركات الأجنبية من تقديم الوثائق والشهادات المشار إليها آنفاً ويكتفى بتقديم الوثائق القانونية المؤهلة الصادرة من البلدان التي تنتمي إليها تلك الشركات.

آخر موعد لإستلام العطاءات هو الساعة الثانية عشر ظهراً في التواريخ المذكور أعلاه، - المنظمة غير ملزمة بقبول أقل سعر ولها الحق في اختيار العرض المناسب (مالياً وفنياً).



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

## What 2015 holds for the Middle East

The bad news in Iraq is that the necessary but modest progress on national cohesion will not likely take root and lead to sufficient consensus on building a truly democratic and unified nation. The success of Kurdish, Shia, and Sunni militias will ultimately undermine the cohesion needed to sustain political progress. As in the past, Shia militias once unleashed will resist efforts to corral them back into a non-military posture. Iran will offer no help as it still needs militia help in neighboring Syria, where fierce battles continue to rage. Enjoying the foothold gained via its direct military presence inside Iraq, Iran will find it hard to pack up and leave—exacerbating Sunni-Shia tensions—and may find it tempting to infiltrate Kurdish areas for intelligence purposes.

Lastly, even with its expansion in check, ISIL forces will continue to pose a threat to internal security in Iraq, whether in a conventional or insurgent capacity. Iraq has become too valuable in the Iranian-Saudi cold war and as a staging ground for the conflict in Syria for the overall balance of power to change significantly anytime soon.

### Syria

The valiant efforts of the Kurds in the city of Kobani, aided by Iraqi Peshmerga and allied bombing, has indeed halted the sweep of ISIL into the Kurdish northeast of Syria, proving once again the limits of ISIL forces when it comes to penetrating non-Sunni zones. However, ISIL—in conjunction with Al-Nusra forces—now controls 30-40 percent of Syria (depending on who is counting and

how much of the fine print they can see on Google maps). Assad regime forces control an equal percentage of the country, extending from the Kurdish borders in the north to the Jordanian borders in the south and covering the all-important Damascus and Alawite mountains with access to the Mediterranean. Battles will continue to rage in and around the major urban centers of Aleppo and Homs, the Qalamoun mountains, and that critical corner encompassing the Jordanian borders and the Golan Heights. Those battles, however, leave little for secular opposition forces, particularly the now near-fictional forces of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

The US choice of Saudi Arabia as a training ground for the FSA suggests minimal US resolve to affect the basic balance of power in Syria. The measly \$500 million dedicated to that effort and the stipulation that training is meant to fight ISIL and not the Assad regime throws into question the ultimate goal for the Obama administration.

### Yemen

The Houthi sweep in Yemen—at least in scope and breadth if not in timing—was almost as surprising as that of ISIL in the Levant, despite the ignored signals that it was coming. The United States grew too complacent by the seeming success of its drone campaign against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to care if and how the internal balance of power in Yemen might change. The Houthis, with Iran and Hezbollah's help, now control roughly two-thirds of Yemen. Its military success, how-

ever, will not likely affect any lasting stability in the country. Armed with Iranian financial support and Lebanese Hezbollah training and tactics, the Houthis effectively filled the power vacuum in Sana'a, left by a meaningless National Dialogue Conference agreement and a powerless President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi. In his victory speech, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi even mimicked Hassan Nassrallah, down to the raising of his forefinger in stressing his points. The Houthis, nonetheless, lack discipline and pragmatism. Their overzealous push south after capturing Sana'a will prove their undoing, at least in creating a new stable order in the Yemeni capital. Iran—not Saudi Arabia and certainly not the United States—is the most influential foreign power in the country to which one must now turn with any proposal to calm the situation and attempt to forge a new national agreement.

### North Africa

Finally, the North African scene is now connected to the Levant's killing fields, thanks to ISIL's spreading influence throughout the Islamic world and the failure of the military regime in Egypt to co-opt moderate Islamists and the secular liberal forces in the country. The terrorism and extremism provoked by the military coup—albeit a “popularly supported one”—will unlikely disappear anytime soon. The security challenge in North Africa is to stop ISIL from greater coordination with regional affiliates, from their current position of strength in Libya. One can only wish Tunisia the best of

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luck in staying beyond the reach of such radicalism and viciousness as 2015 unfolds.

It is ironic that Al-Mutanabi, quoted at the beginning of this article, composed his famous verse while feeling trapped, sick, and frustrated while visiting Egypt—a country which, while not at the center of this regional vortex, is nonetheless critical to what happens in the decade ahead. Secular and liberal forces, in the form of civil society NGOs and new political parties need to be nurtured and encouraged region-wide if religious extremism is to be ultimately beaten back. Egypt, often described as the center of the Arab world, is not currently setting a good example for the rest of the region.

Dr. Nabeel Khoury is a Nonresident Fellow with the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East.

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### ADVERTORIAL

## Qatar Airways voted Business Airline of The Year for second year in a row

Qatar Airways was last week awarded 'Business Airline of the Year' for the second consecutive year at the prestigious UK Business Travel Awards 2015 held in London at the Grosvenor House Hotel.

The 20th annual Business Travel Awards, hosted by Buying Business Travel, celebrated the achievements of travel industry leaders. Over 70 companies, teams and individuals were shortlisted across 21 categories.

In May 2014, Qatar Airways became the first carrier to fly an all-Business Class service from London Heathrow. The daily Airbus A319 service to Doha is configured with a single aisle, 2-2 seating configuration offering 40 seats. The service departs from Terminal 4 at 21:55, arriving into Doha at 6.40am the following day. The A319 Business Class seat has one of the highest specifications for business class travel of any airline with wide seats that recline into fully flat beds.

Also in May, Qatar Airways moved to its new home and hub, Hamad International Airport, the aviation industry's latest green-field airport showcasing marked



features, including the acclaimed 10,000 square metres Al Mourjan Business Class lounge.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "It has been an incredible year for Qatar Airways, with not only a number of new routes but the expansion of our fleet to include the A350 and A380, both of which represent the latest in aviation engineering and technology. This award reiterates the quality of our renowned 5-star service and it is an honor to have been recognised in this category again."

The airline celebrated a dramatic increase to its fleet in 2014, taking delivery of three new aircraft types: the A319 all-Business Class; the Airbus A380, and was the Global Launch Customer of the A350.

With the receipt of these new aircraft, Qatar Airways is the only airline in the world to operate every family of Airbus' modern airline

portfolio. In addition to the 80 A350s it has on order, the airline has a current Airbus fleet comprising of the A320, A330 Freighter, A319LR, A321, A330, A340 and A380 families.

With a modern fleet of 146 aircraft, Qatar Airways connects businesses and travellers to more than 146 destinations across Europe, Middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific and The Americas. In the past 12 months Qatar Airways has welcomed its first A380 to its fleet, followed by its first A350 as the global launch customer and began services between Heathrow and Doha on an all-Business Class A319 aircraft.

In 2014, Qatar Airways also launched services to Sharjah International Airport, UAE, Al Maktoum International Airport, Dubai World Central; Philadelphia, USA; Larnaca, Cyprus; Sabiha Gokcen, Istanbul; Edinburgh, UK; Miami International Airport and Dallas Fort Worth, USA.

From May 2015, Qatar Airways will operate 63 direct services a week from the UK to Doha, with 42 from Heathrow, seven from Edinburgh and a further 14 departing from Manchester.

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