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## Negotiations ongoing for release of kidnapped women



Yemeni national Shereen Makawi (left) and French national Isabelle Prime (right), both employees of a consulting corporation in Sana'a, were kidnapped in Sana'a on Tuesday.

### ■ Ali Aboluhom

**SANA'A, Feb. 25**—Negotiations began Wednesday evening for the release of two women kidnapped in central Sana'a on Tuesday.

French national Isabelle Prime and Yemeni Shereen Makawi were abducted from their taxi on 45th Street in central Sana'a. Witnesses reported seeing armed men in two vehicles, who left the driver behind and took both women with them.

A friend of Makawi, Khalid Al-Saighi, told the Yemen Times on Wednesday evening that contact had been made with the kidnapers and that negotiations for their release were ongoing. According to him, Johannes Van Der Klaauw, UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, is mediating the negotiations.

Al-Saighi also said that eyewitnesses reported the abductors driving in the direction of Khawlan district, although sources in Khawlan have not been able to confirm those suspicions.

Prime and Makawi, both employees of Ayala Consulting Corporation, are contracted by Yemen's Social Fund for Development (SFD), a state-run enterprise established in 1997 to promote development and social welfare projects in Yemen.

Al-Saighi speculated that the kidnapping may involve tribal groups the SFD had worked with, who are seeking to apply pressure on the organization to resume pending development projects or release funds allocated for schemes in their area.

He said Makawi's mobile phone remained on until Wednesday morning, but that calls were not answered and it has since been switched off.

Speaking with France 2 TV on

Wednesday, the corporation's president, Francisco Ayala, said his employees had been kidnapped by five or six gunmen dressed in police uniforms.

Mohammad Hezam, deputy manager of public relations at the Ministry of Interior, said the Security Office of the Capital Secretariat is in charge of the case, but no one from the office could be contacted.

Local news outlets have suggested Houthi involvement in the kidnapping, an allegation strenuously denied by Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the group's Political Office in Sana'a. Members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have not claimed responsibility either.

Speaking at a news conference on Wednesday, French President Francois Hollande said the women had been taken in front of a ministry building. Speaking of French national Prime, he said, "we ask for her to be released as soon as possible, we are trying to locate her and will do all we can for her to be freed."

Security concerns in the capital have risen since the Houthis dissolved Parliament on Feb. 6. Following the closures of the American and British embassies in Sana'a, French consular staff were evacuated from the capital on Feb. 13 and advised all nationals to leave the country.

Kidnappings of foreigners in Yemen are relatively common. Between 2010 and 2014, more than 76 foreign nationals were held by kidnapers, according to a study conducted by Safer Yemen, a security organization in the country. Europeans make up about one-third of all kidnappings, and nearly 40 percent of all kidnappings during that period were in Sana'a.

## Mass casualties reported as Houthis take SSF camp

### ■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Feb. 25**—Houthi militants took control of the Special Security Forces (SSF) camp in Subaha area, west of the capital Sana'a, early Wednesday morning after heavy fighting.

According to sources from both sides, as well as eyewitnesses, anywhere from "tens" to "hundreds" were killed.

The clashes started at around 10:00 p.m. on Tuesday and lasted several hours. Ali Al-Imad, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, said the Houthi took full control of the SSF camp at 2 a.m. on Wednesday.

Abdulrahman Ahmad Ali Abdu Al-Haisi, one of the soldiers who participated in the fight, confirmed to the Yemen Times that Houthis had taken control of the camp. However, he said the camp's armory is still under the control of its soldiers, who remained in the camp after the Houthis took it over.

The fighting ended following mediation from members of the Ministry of Defence, according to a source from the military camp's own Department of Finance.

It was agreed between the two parties that the Houthis would remain in the camp and in their barricades outside, but that "they would not enter the armories."

A source from the Ministry of Defence, speaking to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity, confirmed the Houthi took over Al-Subaha camp and that mediators were sent from the ministry. However, he said the camp's command had already surrendered by the time mediators had arrived.

As of Wednesday afternoon the Houthis had not entered the armories, the source said.

The Yemen Times visited the SSF camp Wednesday afternoon. Although denied entry into the compound, Houthi checkpoints around the camp were visible, as were Houthi gunmen at the camp's gates and guard posts.

### High death toll

According to soldier Al-Haisal, nearly 150 Houthis—and only one soldier—were killed in the battle. The Department of Finance source also estimated around 150 Houthis were killed, along with one soldier.

Fadhl Abu Talib, a member of the Houthi Political Office, told

the Yemen Times the number was much less, but did say that "tens" of Houthis were killed in the battle. He said he had no information regarding soldier fatalities.

Jamal Al-Qeiz, head of the Security Department within the Ministry of Defense, pegged the figure at "dozens from both sides."

Mohammad Jarallah, a soldier the Yemen Times talked to at the SSF camp on Wednesday, said his cousin was the only soldier to be killed. He claimed casualties suffered by the Houthis were in the "hundreds."

According to Jarallah, tanks and mortars were used in the battle. The Houthis had been amassing their fighters since Tuesday morning around the camp, he said.

Eyewitness Ali Hassan Al-Raidi, a civilian who lives near the camp's western gate where much of the fighting took place, said the Houthis took control after several hours of violent clashes, during which he heard the Houthis screaming their "Death to America" slogan.

"The number of Houthi deaths is in the hundreds, we saw a large number of bodies being taken out of the camp at dawn," he said.

None of the sources were able to say where the bodies were taken. The Houthis usually take away their dead immediately and do not confirm numbers with the government, hospitals, or the media.

None of the numbers provided could be independently verified.

### Tensions heightened

According to Al-Haisi, the reason there were so many Houthi casualties is because, "the four gates of the camp are several meters above street level, and the Houthis came by the dozens trying to break into the camp but the soldiers used their positions and fired at any one who came close to the gates."

However, there were also armed men inside the camp loyal to the Houthis, Al-Haisi said, who helped the Houthis outside break in. According to him, around 100 Houthis were recruited in 2014 by the camp's commander, Ahmad Dahan Al-Shiani, to be trained with the special forces.

The source from the camp's Finance Department confirmed that commander Al-Shiani recruited 100 Houthis to replace

soldiers who had stopped showing up to work. This happened following the signing of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement on Sept. 21.

What led the fighting to break out Tuesday night was a disagreement days earlier, according to the source.

"Last Friday there was a disagreement between an officer in the camp, named Fadhl Al-Shrafi, and a group of Houthis who had been training at the camp for the past five months," he said. "One of [the Houthis] killed officer Al-Shrafi and then clashes broke out." The commander resolved the situation, and no further casualties were reported, he added.

The officer's murder led to heightened tensions within the camp, as soldiers wanted to avenge their colleagues' death, the source explained. The Houthis contacted their own colleagues, who amassed in the hundreds outside the camp Tuesday morning and barricaded

themselves across from the camp. That evening, verbal altercations between Houthis and soldiers escalated into clashes, first inside the camp and then outside.

The SSF camp, located west of the capital, includes the special operations, special forces, and counterterrorism brigades, which all fall under the SSF. The SSF itself is under the jurisdiction of the Strategic Reserve Forces, which was founded in 2012 by republican decree from then President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi as part of efforts to restructure the army.

Before being restructured, the SSF was called the Republican Guards and was headed by Brigadier Ahmad Ali Abdullah Saleh, son of the former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Strategic Reserve Forces are currently headed by Brigadier Ali Al-Jaifi, under the command of the Ministry of Defense. However, despite the restructuring, many soldiers are thought to remain loyal to Ahmed Ali Saleh.

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## Houthis prevent politicians from meeting Hadi

### ■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

**SANA'A, Feb. 24**—The Houthis have detained several Cabinet members and other prominent politicians to prevent them from meeting Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi in Aden.

Mohammad Qahtan, a member in the Islah Party's Supreme Committee, was kidnapped on Tuesday evening. Fahmi Al-Alimi, deputy head of the party's parliamentary bloc, said Qahtan was taken in the Al-Suhol area of Ibb governorate, which fell under Houthi control in October, while travelling to Aden to meet with Hadi.

Several members of Cabinet have also been placed under house arrest in recent days, including two other Islah Party members: Abdulrazaq Al-Ashwal, minister of technical education and vocational training, and Mohammad Al-Sa'di, minister of industry and trade.

Al-Sa'di was stopped at Sana'a

International Airport on Monday afternoon and prevented from boarding a flight to Aden. He then attempted to travel by road, but was stopped at a Houthi checkpoint near Dhamar city, according to Al-Alimi.

Al-Ezzi Sharim, a member of the General People's Congress (GPC) and minister of water and environment, was also detained in Hodeida city while travelling to Aden, and has since been returned to Sana'a and placed under house arrest.

Al-Alimi says some ministers, such as Al-Ashwal, are also being targeted for their refusal to take part in a caretaker government, as demanded by the Houthis on Monday.

While the Houthis appear to be targeting Islah party members, Al-Alimi believes "they will arrest anyone who leaves Sana'a or refuses to return as acting ministers in the caretaker government, no matter what party they are from."

The Houthi Supreme Revolutionary Committee issued a statement on Tuesday threatening to hold anyone meeting with Hadi or recognizing him as head of state legally accountable.

Saleh Al-Eraqi, a popular committee member in Sana'a, said he and fellow members have instructions from the Revolutionary Committee to arrest any member of government or political figure attempting to leave the capital.

On Monday, the Houthis threatened to arrest and try with treason Cabinet members and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah—who has remained under house since resigning on Jan. 22—if they refused to form a caretaker government.

GPC member Mohammad Said Al-Sharjabi, who works in the Revolutionary Committee's legal authority, said the Houthis' response was "positive" and necessary "to prevent Yemen from splitting in two."

He said Prime Minister Bahah's Cabinet was legally bound to form a caretaker government as Hadi had never accepted their resignations, "even if the Houthis' [constitutional declaration of Feb. 6] has been described as a coup."

According to a source close to the Prime Minister, who preferred to remain anonymous, Bahah refuses to return to his position because the Houthis have staged a coup. Such an act "violates all laws" and renders parliamentary procedures—including the need for presidential approval—irrelevant.

"Only if we resigned while the country is safe and secure, without an armed coup against the president, would we be turned into a caretaker government," the source quoted the prime minister as saying. "It would only make sense to charge Cabinet members with treason if they had taken part in the coup, not for resisting it," he added.

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## President or fugitive? Houthis reject Hadi's letter to Parliament

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Feb. 24—The Houthis have rejected the retraction of Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi's resignation as president and promised reprisals, while members of Parliament remain divided over its legality.

The Houthis have said Hadi's claim to the presidency is illegitimate and have promised a "harsh" response following his escape from house arrest on Saturday.

Muhammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, said on Tuesday that the group will respond with "strong measures in the coming few days," although he would not elaborate due to the "sensitivity of the current situation."

The Houthi Supreme Revolutionary Committee, the group's 15-member governing body, issued a statement via the state-run Saba News Agency on Tuesday morning, declaring Hadi a fugitive "who lost any legitimacy as president after his reckless actions undermined the security, stability and economy of the country."

The group added that anyone dealing with Hadi as head of state and responding to his orders would be legally accountable, and asked foreign governments "to respect the choice of Yemen's people and not to deal with Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi as president."

Legal authorities disagree with the official position taken by Houthi authorities, however.

Mohammad Al-Sharjabi, a GPC member working in the legal authority of the Houthi Revolutionary Committee, said if a month passes without a parliamentary vote "it is expected that the president will resume his duties as head of state."

Abdulrahman Barman, a lawyer with the National Organization for



Opinion remains divided as to whether Hadi is the legitimate president of Yemen. The Houthi Revolutionary Committee called him a fugitive and illegitimate, but many politicians and lawyers argue otherwise.

Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) based in Sana'a, believes so long as Parliament has not convened to decide on the matter, Hadi has the right to withdraw his resignation at any time.

Speaking with the Yemen Times, he said the law stipulates that a resignation must be accepted or rejected with a parliamentary vote before it can be validated, and that the time elapsed since the resignation was tendered is irrelevant.

Barman said the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative transferred parliamentary jurisdiction to the president, and that under the ongoing political crisis Hadi was using the power granted to him to make decisions normally within Parliament's remit or requiring its sanction. Hence, he said, most decisions taken since 2011 were executive orders taken by Hadi alone.

"Legally speaking, the resignation does not exist and therefore the Parliament does not need to hold a session to decide on the

matter," he said. "The president has the right to withdraw his resignation [without consultation], and the timeframe normally granted for Parliament to accept or dismiss it has already passed."

Sultan Al-Autwani, a Nasserist member of Parliament and advisor to the president, agrees with Barman's interpretation. "Hadi's letter retracting his resignation was valid as soon as it reached Parliament, there is no reason for Parliament to hold a session to discuss it," he said. "Parliament has no say in accepting or rejecting the resignation because we never met to discuss it."

He added that Hadi was not even obliged to contact members of Parliament regarding the matter and had only done so "out of respect" for the government. His resignation "was invalidated the moment he [escaped house arrest and] left Sana'a on Saturday," he said.

However, Abdu Al-Janadi, a spokesperson for the General People's Congress (GPC), said his

party does not accept Hadi's return to the presidency and argues any decision must come from Parliament.

With 220 of 301 seats, he pointed out that the GPC holds a majority in Parliament and "so it is up to the us, the GPC, whether to accept or withdraw Hadi's resignation."

Hadi addressed a letter to members of Parliament retracting his resignation on Monday evening. He was withdrawing his resignation, he wrote, due to "the conspiracy against national unity, security and sovereignty... and a disregard for the political process."

The Houthis, he added, "hampered the political process on Sept. 21 of 2014 when they took Sana'a at gunpoint, while the government was being peaceful and did not resort to aggression, which it remains committed to today."

Hadi resigned as president on Jan. 21, three days after his residence and the Presidential Palace were attacked by Houthis. After a month under house arrest, he es-

## Popular committees reclaim house of former southern president



Taken by a rival decades ago, popular committee members say they took back Ali Salem Al-Beidh's house in a show of support for his return.

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Feb. 24—Southern popular committees reclaimed the house of former South Yemen President Ali Salem Al-Beidh on Tuesday, twenty-one years after it was taken by his rival, northern politician and tribal leader Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar.

Brief clashes took place outside the property, located in Aden city's Sirah district, between popular committee members and armed guards before it was captured on Tuesday morning.

The popular committee did not take control of the property for its own use, according to its members.

"The residence is being secured until Al-Beidh or a member of his family returns to Aden, at which point we will hand it over," said Nasser Al-Hawshabi, a prominent popular committee member from Abyan who arrived in Aden on Tuesday but was not involved in the assault.

Clashes were brief and resulted in no casualties on either side, according to Al-Hawshabi, who said there were only ten guards protecting the property who surrendered within a half hour.

He said the popular committees are not necessarily allied with Al-Beidh but are "trying to reclaim what belongs to the [southern] people, and Al-Beidh is one of them."

The seizure of Al-Beidh's property is seen as part of the north's "invasion" of the south, according to Southern Movement leader Mohammed Al-Muslimi, who says members of his group are supportive of the move.

"The Southern Movement supports the return of Al-Beidh to Aden because he is a southern citi-

zen and he has the right to come back," he said.

Security forces have not opposed the move, either. Mohammed Mosaed, the security chief of Aden governorate, said his forces are working "shoulder to shoulder" with the popular committees.

"All of Aden's citizens know the house belongs to Al-Beidh and we support what the popular committees are doing," he said.

The house had been under the control of Al-Ahmar's son, Sheikh Sadeq, who heads the northern Hashid tribal federation, one of the most powerful in Yemen.

In an interview with Al-Saeeda Channel in September 2012, Sadeq said he had no intention of handing over the house because he had paid for it, although he did not reveal who he had purchased it from.

"If Ali Salem Al-Beidh wants the house he should resort to the judicial system," he said at the time.

Following a brief civil war in 1986, sparked by conflict between southern Yemeni Socialist Party leaders Abdulfatah Ismael and Ali Nasser Mohammed, Ali Salem Al-Beidh took power and remained president until national unification in 1990.

Serving as vice-president until 1993, he led a southern-secessionist movement and declared independence on May 21, 1994, leading to the renewal of civil war between North and South Yemen. Following defeat, Al-Beidh fled to Oman on July 7, 1994.

Defeat for the south saw several of its leaders escape abroad, after which northern forces took control of the governorate and seized much of its property, the most well-known of which was the former president's house in Sirah district.

## Assassinations spike in Al-Hawta city, Lahj

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Feb. 25—Two gunmen assassinated Colonel Saif Hassan Zaid Manaa, office director of Lahj's security chief, in Al-Hawta city of Lahj governorate on Tuesday. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have claimed responsibility.

A security source from the Operations Unit of the governorate's Security Department said the gunmen shot Manaa dead in front of Bin Khaldoon Hospital in Al-Hawta.

"The two gunmen were on a motorbike and fled the scene easily without being caught because they used a gun with a silencer," said the source, speaking to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity out of concern for his safety.

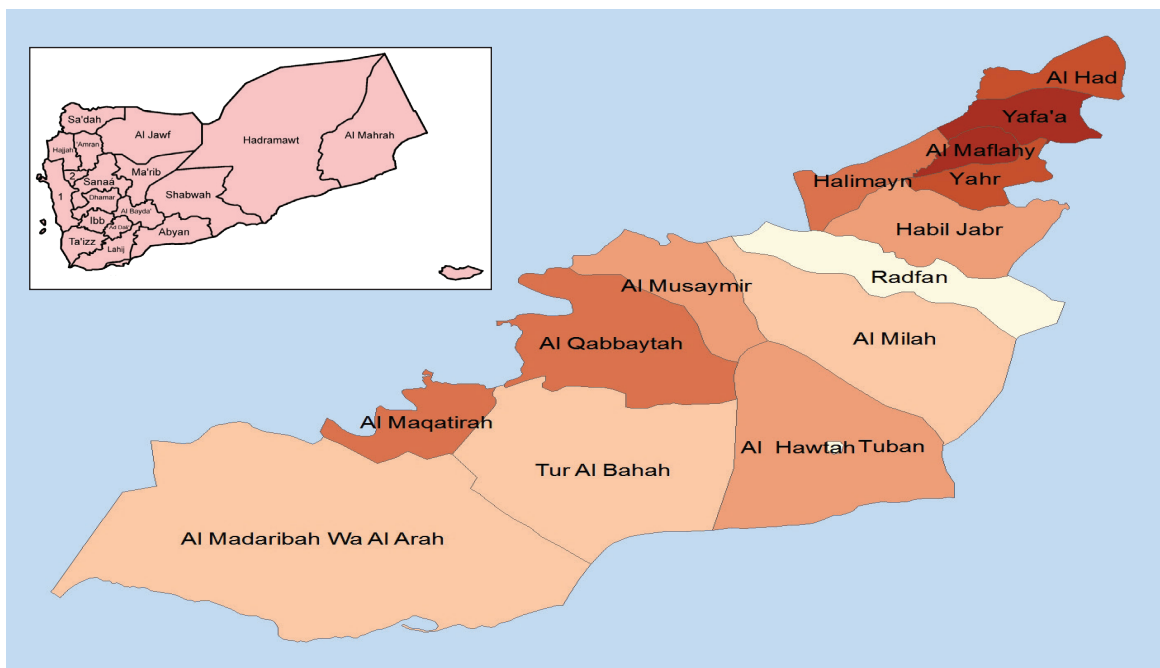
According to him, as of noon Wednesday nobody had been arrested but investigations are ongoing.

In a statement on its Twitter page, AQAP said that two of its members shot Manaa dead at 8:55 a.m. on Tuesday in Al-Hawta city. No motive has been provided for the killing.

Tuesday's murder is the latest in a series of assassinations targeting security and military personnel that have rocked Al-Hawta city in recent months.

Only three days prior, on Feb. 21, two soldiers of the Special Security Forces were shot dead by gunmen in Al-Hawta.

Basim Al-Zuraiqi, spokesperson for the Ministry of Information's office in Lahj, said the two soldiers were killed by anonymous gunmen



Tuesday's killing of Colonel Manaa is the latest in a string of assassinations in Lahj's Al-Hawta city since the beginning of the year. AQAP has claimed responsibility for many of the attacks.

near a qat market in Al-Hawta. AQAP claimed responsibility later that day.

Two more soldiers were assassinated by unidentified gunmen in Al-Hawta on Feb. 16, and on Feb. 13 Colonel Mahmood Saeed Al-Naqeb was assassinated by two unidentified men who were seen on a motorbike. AQAP claimed responsibility for both assassinations.

According to the security source, the number of assassinations in Al-Hawta has clearly spiked since the beginning of 2015. In his view, the "unstable security situation has enabled AQAP members to spread widely in the governorate and tar-

get security officials."

Al-Zuraiqi also attributes the rise in assassinations to an increase of AQAP militants in the city, stating, "there are many members of Al-Qaeda in Al-Hawta, and in Lahj in general."

Accompanying the rise in assassinations, residents of Al-Hawta are growing increasingly concerned for their own safety.

"Not only are security and military officials being assassinated, but also civilians," Ahmed Hisham, a 30-year-old Al-Hawta local, told the Yemen Times.

He continued, "Some people take advantage of the security vacuum and kill people who they are

in disagreement with. For example, two anonymous gunmen on a motorbike on Feb. 9 assassinated local resident Alawi Mohammad Abu Baker."

AQAP later claimed responsibility for the killing.

Hisham also complained about the lack of response by local authorities, saying little to nothing has been done to prevent the growing number of assassinations.

Both Al-Zuraiqi and the security source from the governorate's Security Department told the Yemen Times on Wednesday that no steps have been taken by the government to address the deteriorating security situation.

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# Houthi Revolutionary Committee changes 11 street names

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

The Houthis have had a great deal on their hands since seizing control of the capital in September but, while most Sana'anis may not have noticed, the occupying forces also have an eye for detail and symbolic value, as evidenced in a recent campaign to change the names of well-known streets in the city.

The Houthi Revolutionary Committee announced plans on Jan. 2 to change the names of eleven of the capital's main streets, saying the changes would be made official through the local authority of the Capital Secretariat.

While old street signs remain in place, placards bearing the names of selected national icons and a symbol marking the Revolutionary Committee's authority have appeared alongside them since the end of January. Major streets stretching the length of the city, such as Al-Dairi Street, have been divided up and given multiple names.

As of yet, the new street names have not been licensed or approved by the Capital Secretariat, according to a member of the local council, Yahya Al Makhadhi.

"[If] Ansar Allah [the Houthis] want to change the names of streets, they should apply to the local council, which is headed by Mayor Abdulqader Hilal, and then the council will decide, but they haven't done this," he said, adding that there is little that can be done to stop them.

Officially, the names of the streets have not been changed in municipal records, and utility bills continue to bear the original names.

Now	Before
Ibrahim Al-Hamdi Street	Southern 60 Meter Street
Ahmed Al-Noaman Street	Western 60 Meter Street
The Martyr Faisal Abdulateef Street	Western 60 Meter Street
The Poet Abdullah Al-Baradoni Street	Western Al-Dairi Street
Omar Al-Jawi Street	Northern Al-Dairi Street
The Martyr Gar Allah Omar Street	Southern Al-Dairi Street
Yosef Al-Shihari Street	20 Meter Street
The Prophet Street	50 Meter Street
The Martyr Hasan Al-Horaibi Street	Zero Street
The Martyr Issa Mohammed Saif Street	16 Meter Street
The Martyr Mojahed Abu Shwareb Street	From Al-Kumaim roundabout to Mujahed roundabout, which is part of Mujahed street.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, says changing the names of streets is the prerogative of the Revolutionary Committee, whose members also decided on the new names.

"The Revolutionary Committee tried contacting the local council, but the procedures are hard to follow, so they went ahead and changed the names and they will coordinate later with the local council," he said.

Al-Makhadhi insists street names will remain the same, regardless of any placards, unless changes are

made through the municipal authorities. "We will not change the names of the streets until we agree with the Revolutionary Committee about the new names," he said.

Most of the capital's residents remain unaware of the new street names, except for bus drivers or those living near the street signs.

Hussam Al-Dhobhani, a bus driver who works the route connecting Al-Dairi Street and Al-Safia Street, says he knows the new names for Al-Dairi Street because he passes the placards bearing their names so often, but that passengers only refer to their original names.



The Poet Abdullah Al-Baradoni Street (left) and The Martyr Gar Allah Omar Street (right). At the bottom of both signs it reads "Revolutionary Committee," and no government markings can be found.

Al-Dhobhani was not able to name other streets that have been renamed, however. "The names of the streets are customary and it's difficult to convince the people to use different names for streets, even if they are changed officially," he said.

While most residents are unaware of the new names, when told what they are many agree with the Houthis' choice of national heroes—even those who do not support the Houthis.

According to local Sana'ani Ahmed Abdulbari, "The new names

are valuable because they remind us of our national heroes. I'm not a Houthi supporter, but this is the fact, because they did not chose names from only one faction."

He said it is difficult to memorize the names of the new streets, and is aware that it will be difficult to change it in the minds of the people, but he is happy with the effort being made by the Houthis.

Mazen Adel, another resident, said, "For me it's no different, because the people still use the old names, and I do not care to know the names, especially because the

banners have the name of the Revolutionary Committee, and it is not governmental."

This is not the first time changes to street names have been ignored. The names of several streets in Sana'a were changed in the 1990s following unification. They bear the names of regional capitals, such as Riyadh Street (Hail Street), Abu Dhabi (Western Dairi), Khar-toum (Mujahed), and Nouakchott (Sakhr). As is the case now, most residents remain unaware of those changes and continue referring to streets by their original names.

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## OUR OPINION

### Slogans vs. deeds

The current political instability facing Yemen is being clearly reflected on the economy. It seems that nations don't learn except from their own experiences. This lesson is neither easy nor cheap, as we shall pay an expensive price to get it. However, the more painful the lesson, the greater the results we will get.

Politicians think they are clever and can achieve different results by committing the same old mistakes, not acknowledging that times have changed and the tools are different. Betting on people's low level of education and using demagogic slogans is not that effective against open social media and modern means of communication.

It is no longer acceptable to marginalize other areas in Yemen. Everybody has the same right to manage their own affairs and to benefit from the country's resources. Going back to the past, where control of all power and natural resources was concentrated in the hands of a small demographic, must not happen.

Partnership and consensus is not a game to be played only when it's in your favor. The slogans shouted by different parties must match their deeds—otherwise we will come no closer to achieving political and economic stability.

There is always a big difference between theory and practice. Sometimes slogans are purposefully exaggerated, while other times they are made with great hopes and expectations that simply can not be implemented in reality. In both cases, failure is destined unless there is a clear vision for the future.

It is always wise to retreat at the right time and it is not a shame to revise decisions which were wrong or unsuccessful. It's better than going through a disaster that will suffer from.

**Farouq A. Ibrahim**  
General Manager of the Yemen Times

# What's behind Yemen's recent political turmoil

**Stephen W. Day**  
washingtonpost.com  
First published Feb. 23

The resignation of Yemen's government in late January 2015, and President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and Prime Minister Khaled Bahah (both from the south), as well as Cabinet members, house arrest by northern Houthi rebel forces, has led the United States and several other countries to close their embassies in the capital Sana'a. On Feb. 15, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution demanding that Houthi forces "immediately and unconditionally" relinquish control of government institutions and release the president and other government officials. Nearly a week later, on Feb. 21, Hadi and his family managed to flee Sana'a to the southern port city of Aden, where he reclaimed his post as president and denounced the "Houthi coup."

These developments in Yemen pose a serious threat to hopes for political stability inside the country and in the wider region, but not for the reasons popularly assumed. The recent turmoil should not be understood as an Iranian-backed coup or part of the Islamic State's spread in the region. These are broader narratives in the Middle East that have little to do with Yemeni realities. The Houthi movement's actions follow a familiar dynamic in Yemeni politics, which closely matches those described in my 2012 book, "Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen."

Yemen is a poor, internally divided country, where influential leaders from different regions of the country (mainly, but not entirely, tribal) have long competed for control of scarce valuable resources like oil and gas, seaports and state revenue drawn from other sources. Local power brokers have long contested control over resources within a nominally unified state. Following the formal unification of Yemen in 1990, multiple regional divisions undermined its national unity. Thus the crises today reflect problems that predate contemporary concerns about Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and expanding Iranian influence. After all, Hadi is not the first southern leader to flee Sana'a for relative safety in Aden: In late 1993, then-Vice President

Ali Salim Al-Beidh did exactly the same shortly before the next year's civil war.

The current crisis is once again rooted in contestation of the balance between multiple local and regional powers. The primary reason for the recent political collapse in Sana'a was not Iranian grand ambition, but rather the Houthi leadership's rejection of a new draft constitution derived from outcomes of a year-long National Dialogue Conference (NDC). The NDC, sponsored by the United Nations between 2013 and 2014, recommended the formation of a six-region federal state in order to better manage Yemen's complex divisions. Similar recommendations were put forward during national dialogue conferences before the 1994 civil war, when a federal-style devolution of power may have avoided conflict.

The recently proposed federal state solution threatened the Houthis' core interests for reasons that are familiar. In Yemen, the core problem has always been that powerful tribal groups in the highland mountains around Sana'a have few economic resources at home, so they seek to control relatively valuable resources in outlying regions. This is true of Houthi leaders and their tribal supporters today, just as it was true of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his tribal supporters in the 1990s. That may help to explain why Houthi leaders have reportedly been working in coordination with Saleh to advance shared interests against individuals from other regions like Hadi, who comes from an area east of Aden in the southern province of Abyan. Houthi leaders and Saleh fear being restricted inside the NDC-designated region "Al-Azal," which includes Sana'a, but is land-locked, while being surrounded by "Tihama" region and its Red Sea ports to the west; "Al-Saba" region and oil-rich Marib in the interior desert to the east; "Al-Janad" and "Aden" regions with more prosperous agricultural and industrial lands to the south; and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the north. It is an open question if the Houthi alliance with Saleh will outlast the coming year, just as it is unclear how many outlying regions (including the resource-rich eastern region of "Hadramout") one or both will control.

The Houthi seizure of power has a much longer history than is recognized

by narratives that depend on the so-called Arab Spring or on Iranian grand ambitions. Since 2011, Yemen's political transition has typically been viewed as part of the rebellions known as the "Arab Spring," beginning in Tunisia, then Egypt and later Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. Yet among these six "Arab Spring" states, Yemen was the only one considered a "failed state" prior to 2011. The possible overthrow of old sclerotic regimes may have come as great surprise elsewhere, but in Yemen it was fully expected as early as 2009. By this time, Houthi fighters had already waged five years of armed rebellion north of Sana'a, while hundreds of thousands of southern street demonstrators known as "Hirak" [the Southern Movement] had engaged in daily peaceful protests for more than two years. Prior to the Arab Spring in January 2010, the United States, Britain, Saudi Arabia and other Western and regional states formed an association called "The Friends of Yemen" to guide Yemen through very troubled waters. While the agenda steering Yemen's current transition originated in 2011 (known as the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative), the underlying problems it addresses stretch as far back as 1990, when Yemenis grappled with the presence of multiple regional divisions during the national unification process.

It is necessary to dispel the idea that the Houthi rebel movement is an Iranian proxy, aiming to establish "rule of the Ayatollahs" on the tip of the Arabian peninsula while extending the "Shia crescent" along Saudi Arabia's southern border. Iran may provide funding, economic and military supplies, advice and training to Houthi leaders, who have adopted some slogans of Iran's revolution. Yet Yemeni Shias are not the Twelver Shias closest to Iran in southern Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Rather they are Fiver (Zaydi) Shias, who differ from northern Shia in significant ways—not the least of which is that Zaydi do not own a history of animosity toward Sunnis. Thus, in the future, the Houthi political organization, Ansar Allah, is unlikely to resemble Hezbollah of Lebanon, fighting battles on behalf of sectarian interests in neighboring countries. There is a possibility that, if the Houthis retain power in Sana'a and use military force in coming months to expand their control, then the resulting conflicts could

radically change the character of sectarian relations in Yemen. This has not yet happened, and it is far from inevitable because Yemeni tribes have strong traditions of conflict resolution. Yet every effort should be made to avoid fomenting the sectarianism seen in Iraq and Syria.

In addition to tribal peace-keeping traditions, another factor limiting the spread of sectarian conflict is that Houthis are one of many regional actors trying to secure their interests within Yemen's decentralized system. As a result, Houthi leaders must be wary of upsetting complex regional balances in the country, and possibly becoming overextended, if they pursue military operations far from their home base in the mountains, and end up fighting more than one enemy at a time. The greatest regional opposition to the Houthi is southern Hirak, which since 2009 has sought a return of southern independence. Hirak remains divided with multiple leaders, yet the movement has been strengthened by the Houthi seizure of power in Sana'a and Hadi's escape to Aden. The latter appears to confirm Hirak's position that southern interests are best served by breaking ties with Sana'a. For Houthi leaders, there is a risk that their actions in 2015 will be blamed for the failure of Yemeni unity. Moreover, the Houthis can not afford to lose access to energy resources in the south, which hold the most promise for Yemen's future economy.

Today's crisis reflects the same unsolved problems of the past and is unlikely to be resolved through policies that defy those long-established dynamics. Thousands of years of Yemeni history tell of multiple local authorities governing different regions of the country. Until now, Hadi has favored the NDC six-region federal plan as the best way to move the country forward. Before he and other southern leaders change their minds, Houthi leaders would be wise to embrace some form of federalism in Yemen.

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## Obama's admission not enough: US spin on Middle East violence must change

**Ramzy Baroud**  
middleeasteye.net  
First published Feb. 23

Truly, US President Barack Obama's recent call to address the root causes of violence, including that of the so-called "Islamic State" (IS) and Al-Qaeda was a step in the right direction, but it is still miles away from taking the least responsibility possible for the mayhem that has afflicted the Middle East since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"The link is undeniable," Obama said in a speech at the State Department on Feb. 19. "When people are oppressed and human rights are denied—particularly along sectarian lines or ethnic lines—when dissent is silenced, it feeds violent extremism. It creates an environment that is ripe for terrorists to exploit."

Of course, he is right. Every word. However, the underlying message is also clear: It's everyone else's fault but ours. Now, that's hardly true, and Obama, once a strong critic of his predecessor's war, knows it well.

Writing at MSNBC.com, Sarah Leah Whitson went a step further. In "Why the fight against ISIS is failing," Whitson criticized the anti-IS alliance for predicating its strategy on militarily defeating the group,

without any redress of the grievances of oppressed Iraqi Sunnis, who last year welcomed IS fighters as "liberators."

"But let's not forget how Iraq got to that point," she wrote, "with the US-led Iraq war that displaced a dictator but resulted in an abusive occupation and destructive civil war, leaving more than a million dead."

Spot on, well, almost. Whitson considered the "displacing of a dictator" as a plus for the US war, as if the whole military venture had anything to do with overcoming dictatorship. In fact, the "abusive occupation and destructive civil war" was very much part of the US strategy of divide and conquer.

Many wrote about this to the extent that the argument itself is in fact, history. At least, however, both arguments are a significant departure from the pseudo-intellectualism that has occupied the larger share of mainstream media thinking about terrorism and violence. Not only does the conventional wisdom in US media blame the bloody exploits of IS on the region itself, as if the US and western interventionism are not, in any way, factors, at least worth pondering. (In fact, for them US intervention is a force of good, rarely self-seeking and exploitative). Even worse, no matter how they unravel the argument, Islam somehow

ends up being the root of all evil—a reductionist, silly and irresponsible argument, to say the least.

It is also a dangerous one, for it infers the kind of conclusions that will constantly point the arrow to the direction of a self-destructive foreign policy, the kind that has set the Middle East ablaze in the first place.

But that is not your everyday diatribe. The constant injection of all sorts of bizarre arguments, like that of Graeme Wood's recent piece in the Atlantic, is aimed at creating distractions, blaming religion and its zealots for their "apocalyptic" view of the world.

Wood's argument, designed to be a methodical and detached academic examination of the roots of IS is misconstrued at best, disingenuous at worst. "That the Islamic State holds the imminent fulfillment of prophecy as a matter of dogma at least tells us the mettle of our opponent. It is ready to cheer its own near-obliteration, and to remain confident, even when surrounded, that it will receive divine succor if it stays true to the Prophetic model," Wood concluded with the type of liberal positivism that has become as galling as religious zeal. Mohamed Ghilan, an Islamic law scholar, dissected Wood's argument with integrity based on real, authentic know-

edge of both Islam and the Middle East region. "An analysis of what ISIL is about and what it wants that looks to Islam as a causal source of their behavior is not only misguided, but also harmful," he wrote.

"It obscures the root causes for why we have an ISIL, an Al-Qaeda, an Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis, and any of the other groups that have risen and continue to arise. It creates further confusion and contributes to a rising Islamophobic sentiment in the West. And when given the guise of academic rigor, it accomplishes all of this rather perniciously."

Indeed, the age-old ailment of shallow, lacking writing about the complex and involved reality in the Middle East persists, even after 25 years of full American military engrossment in the region.

Since the first Iraq war (1990-91) until this day, America's mainstream intellectuals and journalists refuse to accept the most prevalent truth about the roots of the current crisis; that military intervention is not a virtue, that war begets chaos and violence, that military invasion is not a harbinger of a stable democracy, but invites desperately violent policies predicated on winning, regardless of the cost.

Nonetheless, that very admission came from former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, who,

by virtue of his previous position should indeed be able to assess the link between the US war on Iraq and the current upheaval. Although he rightly blamed regional powers for exacerbating the conflict, he laid the blame where it surely belongs: The Iraq war, invasion and the way the occupation was handled afterwards. "I was against this invasion and my fears have been founded. The break-up of the Iraqi forces poured hundreds if not thousands of disgruntled soldiers and police officers onto the streets," he said. That was indeed the backbone of the initial home-grown resistance in Iraq, which forced the US to shift strategy by igniting the powder keg of sectarianism. The hope then was that the "disgruntled soldiers" of Iraqi resistance would be consumed in a civil war inferno involving Sunni-based resistance against Shia-based militias, themselves working for or allied with the US and US-imposed Shia government in Baghdad.

"The aim of creating democracy without the existing institutions ushered in corrupt sectarian governments," Annan said. For Annan, the war and invasion come first, followed by the sectarian-mismanagement of Iraq, also by the Americans, an admission that is rarely echoed by US officials and media as demonstrated by the obstinately deficient

media coverage.

One is rarely proposing to ignore existing fault lines in Middle Eastern societies, standing sectarianism, fundamentalism, brewing, unresolved conflicts, and of course the monster of authoritarianism and corruption. None of this should be unheeded, if indeed a peaceful future is to be made possible. On the other hand, the argument that desperately seeks every possible pretense—from blaming Islam and believers of some strange apocalypse to everyone else but the US and its allies—is a poor attempt at escaping a heavy moral, but also political responsibility.

The danger of that argument lies in the fact that its promoters don't mind seeing yet another war, like the one that was visited upon the Middle East a decade or so ago, the one that wrought Al-Qaeda to the region, and orchestrated the rise of IS, and the bloodbath that followed.

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Our heartfelt condolences on the sudden demise of our beloved Managing Director

**Mr. Beshar Abdul Hak**

On February 25th, 2015



We pray to the Almighty Allah to give strength to his family and relatives in overcoming their irreplaceable loss.

May his soul rest blissfully in the garden of abode.

Extending deep and profound sympathy from the Management and Employees of  
**Sana'a Beverage & Industrial Co Ltd, Sana'a**  
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# Pest threatens Yemen's fragile date industry

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

Although Yemen has close to five million date palms of its own, over a million tons of dates were imported into the country last year. There are fears that greater reliance may be placed on imports as farmers struggle to contain the red palm weevil, a pest that has decimated plantations throughout the world and threatens the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Yemenis.

Once confined to tropical Asia, the red palm weevil found its way to the Middle East in the 1980s before moving on to parts of Africa and Southern Europe. Spread over long distances by the movement of infested planting material, the pest has been reported in about half of date-palm growing countries, and the beetle is known to attack 17 palm species worldwide.

Its first appearance in the region was in Saudi Arabia in 1987, and by 1992 the beetle had infested crops in Egypt—the world's largest date producer—before arriving in Oman in 1993, and Bahrain in 1996.

Yemen's first red palm weevil infestation was reported on May 26, 2013, during a visit by members of the Agricultural Research Center of Hadramout to a farm in the governorate's Al-Qatan district. Researchers from Seyoun city visited the farm in central Hadramout following a report from its owner, Sheikh Abdullah Omar Al-Jaru.

Dr. Abdullah Salem Alwan, the then general director of the research center in Seyoun, confirmed the infestation but was unable to determine its origins. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman are all hosts to the pest,

which is known to fly up to two kilometers at once. It is most likely, concluded Alwan, that the beetle or its eggs were transported together with planting materials imported from abroad.

Drawn to palms younger than twenty years, whose bark is easier to penetrate, the red palm weevil usually proves deadly unless detected early on. The beetle attacks the tree by feeding on its juices and releasing a honey-like substance, which in the most severe cases can be seen covering the tree's exterior.

Adult females feed on the tree before laying between two and five hundred eggs in the crown of the palm, at the base of its leaves, or in open lesions. Tunneling through the tree for around a month after hatching, larvae grow up to seven centimeters in length before leaving the tree and forming cocoons at its base.

In highly infested trees, sounds from larvae burrowing and chewing through the bark can be heard when placing one's ear to the trunk. This has inspired more sophisticated techniques of detection, such as using sensitive listening devices capable of picking up the faint sounds earlier on. In 2008, authorities in Abu Dhabi began experimenting with dogs trained to sniff out the red palm weevil before it has a chance to spread, with claims that the German Shepherds used were able to sniff out the pest from up to 100 meters away.

Infested palm trees can usually be saved if treated early on through the use of insecticides. Trees are monitored following treatment with the use of traps baited with pheromones or plant-derived chemicals that attract the weevils and lure them from the tree.

Treatment works in the early

stages of infestation, but preventative measures are more important if the spread of weevils is to be contained. Following its discovery in 2013, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance provided YR60 million (\$280,000) toward training and technology in an attempt to prevent its spread to other farms within Yemen.

As of yet, the weevil has not been reported outside of central Hadramout, but authorities remain concerned and have begun working with the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to address the issue, which has funded a comprehensive training and eradication program.

Started in October 2014, the training program "will promote the application of integrated control mechanisms targeting date palm growers and nurseries, plant protection professionals and technicians," according to Etienne Peterschmitt, Deputy FAO representative in Yemen.

Dr. Mohammad Sallam, the FAO Representative Assistant in Yemen, says collaboration is crucial given Yemen's lack of resources, which explains why action has not been taken until so recently.

"The organization does not perform any tasks unless it receives a formal request from the relevant authorities. The state created a program to combat the weevil in May of 2013 but there were some activities that were not performed and so we were contacted to implement this training program," said Sallam.

The FAO has committed itself to providing the equipment and technology needed for eradication, including pesticides, spraying machines, pheromone traps and the



The red palm weevil has only been reported in Hadramout governorate, but that is where 40 percent of farmed palm trees are located. An extensive training and eradication program is currently underway in an effort to prevent the pest's spread to other areas of Yemen.

like, while offering training seminars as well. Although the weevil has not been reported outside of central Hadramout, Sallam says the program is being extended to other governorates as a pre-emptive measure.

Training began with a three-day workshop for 27 agricultural engineers, where participants were taught preventative techniques and trained to use GPS (satellite navigation) systems for predicting and monitoring the spread of weevil infestations, according to Musa Al-Aidaroo, the national consul-

tant of the FAO project on the Red Palm Weevil Control in Yemen.

The course was then extended to farmers and others invested in date agriculture throughout the country, with 423 participants in all, he added. FAO Representative Assistant Sallam is confident the project "will contribute to maintaining agricultural output, enhance food security and livelihoods in rural Yemen."

There are an estimated five million date palm trees in Yemen, found mostly in the governorates of Hadramout and Hodeida, but

also in Shabwa, Al-Mahra, Al-Jawf, Aden and Abyan. With local harvests of just 75,000 tons per year, most dates sold in Yemen arrive from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and elsewhere, says Mohammad Al-Hallani, director of operations at the Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Nonetheless, domestic production provides income for some 225,000 Yemenis and their families, most of whom live in Hadramout, where 40 percent of farmed palm trees are located, according to Al-Hallani.



KfW



## Graduating Ceremony of 105 Midwives and 32 Female Doctors in Family Planning Training Course

By Ula Khaled

Thursday, February 19, 2015- a training program for 105 midwives and 32 doctors was concluded. During the period of August 30, 2014 - January 29, 2015, with technical and financial support from Yamaan Foundation for Health & Social Development (the German Government Support through the German Development Bank -KfW), Al-Wahda Institute for Medical Sciences in Sana'a organized a training program for midwives and doctors in 9 governorates.

The program lasted for five months and included 12 days course for each governorate. This competency-based training aimed to provide participants with knowledge,

experience, and technical skills on how to provide counselling, use family planning methods (including IUD insertion and removal), and on infection prevention.

Dr. Abdulkarim Alarashi, General Director of the Health Office in Sana'a Capital, highlighted the urgent need for improving family planning health services, "such training programs are essential to provide high quality service to women especially to those who find difficulty reaching these services" he explained. Additionally, he praised the collaborative efforts of Yamaan Foundation with Al-Wahda Institute and all partners for implementing the training program. He also expressed his appreciation to the German Government Support through KfW for improving family planning and reproductive health of Yemeni

people.

Dr. Majed Alsharjabi, Social Marketing Project Director at Yamaan Foundation, emphasized on participants' responsibility to apply the knowledge and skills they gained during the training in order to ensure high quality services, stressing on the role they play in saving women's lives. He also confirmed that Yamaan Foundation will continue supporting them and will never stop serving the community, "During these crucial times, it's our duty to stand and serve our community, Yamaan will always continue its work in fulfilling the need of the Yemeni People" he expressed.

At the end of the ceremony, participants were honored with certificates for completion the course and given a complete midwifery kit including IUD instruments.



General Director of the Health Office in Sana'a Capital, Dr. Abdulkarim Alarashi together with Yamaan Foundation honoring midwives



Side from the audience

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٤٤٨٣٣٩	فاكس:

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٧٣٣٤٥٥٦٤٥	موبايل:
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٠١/٤٢٤٤٣٣	
٠١/٣٧٠٩١/٢	مدارس صنعاء الدولية
٠١/٣٧٠٩٣	ف:
٠١/٤٤٨٢٥٨/٩	مدرسة التركي الدولي
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٣/٢٠١٤٧٤	فرع الحديدة:	
٠١/٥٦٥٦٥٦	٠١/٢٥٠٨٠٠	السعيدة
٠١/٤٤٤٤٤٤	الإماراتية	
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٠١/٤١٨٢٨٩	وزارة المياه والبيئة
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٠١/٢٦٠٨٢٣	بنك اليمن والخليج
٠١/٢٦٠٨٢٤: ف	عدن: ٢/٢٧٠٣٤٧/٨/٩
٠٢/٢٣٧٨٢٤	ف:
٠١/٢٠٣٢٧١	بنك التضامن الإسلامي
٠١/٢٧٧٢٢٤	البنك التجاري
٠١/٢٧٧٢٩١	ف:
٠١/٥٣٨٣٦٦-٧٧	مصرف اليمن البحرين الشامل - الستين الغربي

٠١/٤٠٧٠٣٠	بنك اليمن الدولي
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٠١/٥١٧٥٤٤	البنك القطري الدولي
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٠١/٢٨٦٥٠٦	بنك سبا الإسلامي
٠١/٢٧٤٣٧١	بنك كاليون
٠١/٤٠٧٥٤٠	يوناييتد بنك لميتد
٠١/٥٣٨٩٠١	بنك كاك الإسلامي
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٠١/٥٠٦٣٧٢	زاوية (Budget)
٠١/٢٤٠٩٥٨: ف	بورب كار
٠١/٢٧٠٧٥١	فرع شيرتون
٠١/٥٤٥٩٨٥	فرع عدن
٢/٢٤٥٦٢٥	صنعاء ١-٤٤٠٣٠٩
٠١/٥٨٩٥٤٥	فرع شيراتون
٠٢-٢٤٥٦٢٥	عدن

٠١/٤٤٥٥١٨/٧	NIIT لتعليم الكمبيوتر
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١٧٧	طوارئ الكهرباء
١٧١	طوارئ المياه
١٩٩	طوارئ الشرطة
١١٨	الإستعلامات
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٠١/٢٩٠٢٠٠	رئاسة الجمهورية
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٠١/٢٣٥٤٢٣	وزارة الصناعة والتجارة
٠١/٢٣٦٥١٢	وزارة العدل
٠١/٢٣٠٠٥٠	وزارة السياحة
٠١/٤٠٢٣٥٤	وزارة المغتربين
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٠١/٢٨٩٥٧٧	وزارة شؤون الداخلية
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## INTERVIEW

### The Yemen Times speaks with Dr. Amal Hassan, the "youngest and best surgeon of the year"



Dr. Amal Hassan, a Yemeni physician who is only 30 years old, was recently honored at the Arab Health Conference held in Dubai from Jan. 26 to 29, 2015.

The international conference was established 40 years ago and gives awards for research and inventions in the field of medicine. In over five decades, no Yemeni researcher has won a prize at the event. Hassan is the first woman and second person from the Arab region—and second youngest—to receive an award.

Born and raised in Hajjah city in Yemen's northwest Hajjah governorate, Hassan finished high school in 2000, placing fourth nationwide in the field of science.

She says she has always wanted to break stereotypes. After the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack in the United States, and Yemen's subsequent negative portrayal in international media, Hassan wanted to show the world a different side to the country and its people.

"I've dreamt of representing my country in a positive way and finally my dream has come true," she said. Since graduating from the Faculty of Medicine at Cairo University in Egypt in 2009, she hoped to participate in the conference so that "a Yemeni's name would be pronounced in an international event with great merit."

After receiving her master's degree in surgery in Egypt, Hassan has been conducting research while working at the Saudi German Hospital in Sana'a since early 2014. Among the seven Saudi German Hospitals in the Gulf region, Hassan was the only physician to participate in conference. She has also worked in her home governorate

#### ■ Ali Aboluhom

#### Why did you choose this major?

I admire my mother for looking after patients in our governorate. She works for the Red Crescent Association. I grew up in Hajjah city,

eager to emulate what my mom has done for her patients. Nobody from my family has ever imposed my studies or career on me. My father has always encouraged me to do what I am passionate about. Since I was a child, I dreamed of becoming a surgeon, especially for women

who suffer when they give birth. I decided to alleviate the pain moms suffer during labor—which in some cases can lead to the death of both the mom and baby due to a lack of medical care.

#### Did the health situation in

#### Hajjah governorate contribute to your decision?

Certainly. Hajjah, like other Yemeni governorates, lacks health services and the government is unable to provide outreach programs to people in remote areas. Hajjah governorate is made up of hundreds of villages located atop mountains and in valleys, places where health services are not easily delivered. If hospitals in Hajjah city are short of staff or supplies, how could they be found in remote areas?

Women who come from remote areas to give birth in the city often suffer pain on the way and some of them die before arrival due to the distance and the bumpy roads linking their villages to the city. Even if they arrive to the hospitals alive, they might give birth during the drive or arrive with severe complications due to the delay.

#### As a Yemeni family committed to conservative traditions, did your family oppose your residence in Cairo alone for study?

Of Course, they objected to it at first. But I remained adamant until they became convinced of my dream. At the beginning my father accompanied me to Cairo and he returned back to Yemen when he became confident that I had an apartment to live in.

#### You are still young and Yemenis are accustomed to seeing older physicians for their wives or daughters. Have you been unfairly treated because of your age?

Yes, not only here in Yemen but also in Egypt. I did not waste any time after getting my bachelor's degree and I pursued my master's in obstetrics the following year. That's why I look young. In Egypt, the people in hospitals thought I was still a student doing my undergrad degree. While I was practicing in Al-Qasr Al-Aaeini Hospital, looking after women who needed urgent surgical intervention, their husbands and relatives were skeptical about whether I could deliver their babies. But they were grateful when they saw their wives and babies in good health. I face the same problem here in Yemen. When I came back after completing my bachelor's degree in 2009, I worked from the Al-Jumhouria Hospital in Hajjah for five months before I decided to go back to Egypt to resume my master's.

People in Yemen usually place their trust in older and foreign doctors, and when they first see me they think I'm a nurse.

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