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# YEMEN TIMES

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## Yemen: Fear of failure

Yemen presents a potent combination of problems for policy-makers confronting the prospect of state failure in this strategically important Red Sea country. It is the poorest state in the Arab world, with high levels of unemployment, rapid population growth and dwindling water resources. President Saleh faces an intermittent civil war in the north, a southern separatist movement and resurgent terrorist groups. Yemen's jihadi networks appear to be growing as operating conditions in Iraq and Saudi Arabia become more difficult. The underlying drivers for future instability are economic. The state budget is heavily dependent on revenue from dwindling oil supplies. Yemen's window of opportunity to shape its own future and create a post-oil economy is narrowing. Western governments need to work towards an effective regional approach with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, in particular Saudi Arabia. Future instability in Yemen could expand a lawless zone stretching from northern Kenya, through Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, to Saudi Arabia. Piracy, organized crime and violent jihad would escalate, with implications for the security of shipping routes, the transit of oil through the Suez Canal and the internal security of Yemen's neighbors.

By: Ginny Hill  
www.chathamhouse.org.uk

The US Congress designates Yemen a 'front-line state' in the war on terror, and the State Department places a high priority on Yemen's internal security because of its close proximity to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Yemeni armed forces receive counter-terrorism training and direct military financing from the US.

President Saleh's primary concern, however, is his own survival. He has awarded key army posts to relatives and allies within his own Sanhan tribe and has thrown a Sanhan 'ring of steel' around his palace. His son, Ahmed, commands the Republican Guard, while his nephews, Tarik and Yahya, control private presidential security and the central security forces.

In 2006, Yemen's military expenditure was thought to be 6.6% of GDP, although the true figure is likely to be higher. Estimates of the number of guns in circulation in Yemen vary from six million upwards. During the last year, the government has successfully

enforced a ban on the public display of AK47s in Sana'a by nonmilitary personnel. However, Yemen remains a conduit for international arms-smuggling, notably for weapons destined for Somalia.

### Resurgent terrorist groups

Yemeni mujahideen fought Soviet troops in Afghanistan in significant numbers during the 1980s. Yemenis continued to train in Afghanistan under al-Qaeda's high command throughout the 1990s and make up the largest national grouping of remaining detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi claims Yemen is currently playing host to more than 1,000 jihadi fighters and al-Qaeda affiliates.

Veteran jihadis allegedly struck a 'covenant of security' deal with the security services on their return home from Afghanistan - freedom of movement in return for a promise of good behaviour inside Yemen's borders. That deal held for several years before and after the 2000 attack on the USS Cole while it was refueling in Aden harbour (resulting in the deaths of seventeen sailors) and the maritime bombing of a French oil tanker in 2002. However, Islamist violence in Yemen has been escalating since a February 2006 jail-break, when 23 terrorists tunneled their way out of a high-security prison. The first attempted use of twin car bombs followed seven months later in thwarted attacks on two separate oil installations. Since summer 2007, the tempo of terrorist activity has steadily increased, with eight Spanish tourists killed in a suicide bomb in July 2007, two Belgians shot in an ambush on a tourist convoy in January 2008 and a low-level bombing campaign against Western targets in Sana'a during the spring of 2008. Twin car blasts outside the US embassy on 17 September 2008 confirmed fears of a resurgent terrorist movement. Eighteen people died when six suicide bombers in two vehicles breached the outer perimeter of the security cordon and detonated their explosives at the main gate to the compound. It was the



A top view of Sana'a city, because of the deteriorating economy the gap between the rich and the poor has been increasingly visible.

second assault on the embassy in six months.

Yemen's jihadi networks appear to be growing as operating conditions in Iraq and Saudi Arabia become more difficult. In March 2008, a Saudi terrorist financier admitted that al-Qaeda's branch in Saudi Arabia was defeated and called on his remaining associates to flee to Yemen. An influx of insurgents returning from Iraq and an ongoing active recruitment process within Yemen have energized al-Qaeda's domestic support base. In addition, a new mood has emerged among some

active jihadis, who reject negotiation or compromise with the authorities. New recruits are targeting the security services, in retaliation for the alleged torture and humiliation of their captive associates. In July, a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a police station in Hadramawt. In a subsequent state-

ment, a splinter cell pledged to continue attacks against security and intelligence structures.

### The Sa'dah rebellion

Yemen's bloody four-year revolt in Sa'dah, a mountainous zone on the border with Saudi Arabia, is led by members of the charismatic Houthi family. The Houthis condemn Yemen's alliance with the US and President Saleh has repeatedly tried to portray the conflict as a battle against terrorism. But this complex stop-go civil war has its origins in the 1962 revolution that toppled the Zaydi Shi'a Imam and established the modern republic. The rebellion is also fuelled by bitter local grievances over economic marginalization, market access and the lack of service infrastructure in the Sa'dah region.

The Houthis are Zaydis, who practice a form of Shi'a Islam prevalent in

northern Yemen's highlands. The Houthis are calling for freedom of worship and social justice. They accuse the government of corruption, and of meddling with the delicate religious balance between Zaydi Shi'as and Salafi Sunnis. They are alarmed by Saleh's perceived support for Salafi groups aligned with Saudi-style Wahhabi Islam. For his part President Saleh has cynically manipulated Saudi fears of Shi'a unrest on the Yemen-Saudi border to raise cash and munitions to prosecute his war.

The government's military campaign is conducted by army commander and Salafi convert Ali Muhsin, a Sanhan kinsman of the president who is widely expected to play a powerful role as kingmaker during a future succession. Rumors abound of rivalry between Ali Muhsin and President Saleh's son Ahmed, whose Republican Guard has also been deployed in Sa'dah. Several Yemeni newspapers have claimed there is a proxy war between the two men's forces, under the cover of quash-

ing the Houthis. During spring 2008 the conflict appeared to be intensifying.

It spread from the northern governorate of Sa'dah to an eastern suburb of the capital, Bani

Hushaish. Just days before his thirtieth anniversary celebrations in July, President Saleh sent his family out of the country, supposedly in response to threats against his life, so his subsequent declaration that the Sa'dah war was 'over' took everyone by surprise. President Saleh promptly reshuffled the military, removing several allies of Ali Muhsin from leadership posts.

In early August, state-run media reported that rebel leader Abdel Malik al-Houthi had accepted President Saleh's peace terms.

The rebels agreed to surrender their strategic mountain-top positions and hand over their heavy and medium weapons to the authorities. However, skeptics doubt that the cessation of hostilities will hold and suspect that parties to the conflict are rearming.

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# Yemen: Fear of Failure...Continued

## Southern separatism

Like the Sa'dah rebellion, Yemen's southern separatist movement has a regressive element. Protestors hark back to the 1970s and 1980s, to the time before the unification of the North Yemen Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen). Demonstrations started in Aden in the summer of 2007 when retired officers from the disbanded southern army demanded higher pension payments. The regime's heavy-handed response inflamed latent separatist sentiment, which spread over the following months to Al Mukalla, Ma'rib, Radfan, Ad-Dali', Abyan and Lahij. Demonstrators hoisted the flag of South Yemen, tore the modern unified Yemeni flag and chanted revolutionary slogans. Army tanks appeared on the streets, at least seventeen people died and many hundreds were arrested.

Underpinning these separatist gestures is the perceived exclusion of southerners from northern patronage networks in business, politics and the military. Yemen's oil-producing zones lie within the former boundaries of South Yemen but southerners complain that the Sanaa regime is hogging the profits. In recent months, a number of activist leaders have been released from jail but underlying grievances continue to fester.

Spasmodic grenade attacks and bomb blasts target military checkpoints throughout the south, leading to confusion over what is and what is not terrorist activity.

## A veneer democracy

The rush to establish democracy during the early 1990s, in the months after unification, brought the vote to a poorly prepared conservative, tribal society with low levels of literacy. The parallel extraction of oil allowed President Saleh to establish an inclusive patronage structure binding the tribes, opposition politicians, businessmen and religious extremists into a web of personal loyalty through the distribution of oil rents. This formula has ensured President Saleh's survival but it has distorted party politics and stifled grassroots

## political participation.

President Saleh seeks the validation of political pluralism, without wanting to create a genuine opposition. Since the introduction of democracy, his ruling party – the General People's Congress (GPC) – has increased its share of the vote in every ballot. The GPC is a pragmatic 'big-tent' umbrella group, but the president cultivates loyal factions within every party. President Saleh's close alliance with the late Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein al-Ahmar, formerly president of the largest opposition party, Islah, demonstrates the unique political logic holding the Yemeni state together. As paramount sheikh of Hashid, Yemen's most influential tribal confederation, Sheikh Abdullah was the primary representative of the traditional social structure and President Saleh's essential mediator with the tribes. An enduring partnership between the two men, although sometimes tense and distrustful, formed a central aspect of northern Yemen's political dynamic until Sheikh Abdullah's death from cancer in December 2007.

Islah can be defined as a conservative, religious movement that calls for social reform in accordance with Islamic principles. The party leadership claims to accept the current constitution, thus appearing to recognize the need to operate within Yemen's democratic framework, but Islah qualifies its support for the constitutional status quo by insisting that Shari'a law should form the basis of all legal rulings. Yemen's constitution already conforms to this position, but it is

## Water

Yemen's capital, Sanaa, sits on a mountain plateau at 2,200m, with a population of two million. Sanaa is the first Arab capital projected to run short of groundwater but no one can predict exactly when the water table will fall beyond a viable level for human use. Commercial water vendors currently deliver a full tank for around 1,500 riyals (£4.28/\$7.50) but prices will rise as pumps sink deeper and water quality deteriorates because water at lower levels is contaminated with mineral deposits.

The wild card remains desalination – using solar power to heat seawater, steam, condense and pump it from the coast – but this will also come with a price tag.

As much as 90% of Yemen's groundwater is currently used for agriculture and a rising amount goes to irrigate high-value crops of qat (a mildly narcotic and stimulant leaf, chewed for pleasure). Profits from qat sales sustain the rural economy and slow the process of urbanization but they also drive demand for deeper wells. As water becomes increasingly scarce, water for human use is likely to be prioritized over qat irrigation, but reducing or eliminating qat consumption will have unpredictable consequences for settlement patterns and political stability.

Landowners rely on subsidized diesel to power their water pumps. They are supposed to obtain a permit to drill new wells but the sector is poorly supervised. Decades of unregulated drilling have depleted Yemen's aquifers, extracting groundwater faster than rainfall can replenish supplies. Rigs are now boring well shafts to mine fossil water that was capped and sealed in the rocks during eras of prehistoric geological change.

The National Water Resource Authority (NWRA) is tasked with issuing licences for water wells and enforcing the water laws.

However, NWRA's lowly status among Yemen's central institutions reflects the lack of top-level recognition that secure water supplies underpin the country's future stability.

a very loose interpretation. Since unification, Islah's representation in parliament has fallen from 66 out of 301 seats to its current tally of 45. This reflects both the growing institutional dominance of the GPC and Islah's slower learning curve as the weaker force within an emerging political framework.

However, it remains the ascendant force in the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), a coalition of five opposition parties currently squabbling with each other and with the government over preparations for parliamentary elections in April 2009.

In Yemen's first credibly contested presidential election, in 2006, JMP members put their considerable differences aside to unite around a single compromise candidate. Former oil minister Faisal bin Shamlan campaigned on an anti-corruption ticket. The issue was extensively debated in the media and during well attended public rallies. Yemeni journalists observed that bin Shamlan had been carefully chosen to nudge the boundaries, but not to win. 'If there was a really serious challenge, the consequences would be dangerous,' said one journalist.

Although President Saleh was re-elected with a 77% majority, the competition successfully introduced the concept of change via the ballot box in a country where the ruling party and the state are often regarded as one and the same and the great majority of Yemenis are too young to remember any alternative.

European Union election observers initially judged the 2006 presidential poll to be an 'open and genuine contest' but they went on to condemn 'fundamental and systemic weaknesses'.<sup>17</sup> The EU listed unfair use of state resources, the exclusion of women from participation at all levels, clear bias in the state media, detention of opposition supporters, and concerns that the counting process lacked credibility.

Under the terms of the current constitution, President Saleh must stand down at the end of his current presidential term in 2013, after 35 years in power – leaving Yemen to face its first democratic transition of power. A constitutional amendment is currently under review that would limit the presidency to two terms of five years – and many Yemenis assume that it will not apply retrospectively. They see it as a stalling tactic that would allow President Saleh to stay in power.

At some point Saleh's crown is expected to pass to Ahmed, but the president's career was forged in the crucible of war and his son has had a softer political and military initiation. Yemenis are currently unable to judge whether Ahmed, with his low public profile, has the skill or temperament to lead their country. No clear competitor has emerged as yet.

## An impending economic crisis

The underlying drivers for future instability in Yemen are economic. 'The economic element of any scenario planning exercise points to collapse within four or five years,' according to one European energy expert. However, the trajectory is hard to predict because public data on oil exports and energy revenue are so unreliable.

Oil was discovered in Yemen in the 1980s. The country has the lowest output of all the Middle East oil producing states and the extraction trend has turned downwards, as two mature fields, Masila and Ma'rib, approach the end of their life cycle. Crude oil production has declined from a peak of 460,000 barrels per day in 2002 – falling by 12% in 2007/20 – to the current rate of 300–350,000 barrels per day. Yemen's oil sector provides 90% of export earnings and 75% of government revenue. It will be difficult for the economy to maintain its modest 3–4% growth rate, which is barely keeping ahead of population growth, as oil exports fall.

The World Bank predicts that state rev-

enues from oil and gas sales will plummet sharply during 2009–10 and fall to zero by 2017, but Yemen's crunch point will come long before the oil wells finally run dry. The government currently needs to cover rising domestic consumption, as well as a fixed allocation to oil companies to cover their initial and ongoing investment costs. As production levels drop towards consumption levels, the share of crude oil sales available to support the national budget is shrinking. During the first half of 2008, Yemen increased production to benefit from high prices – oil export revenues jumped from \$1.2 billion during the same period in 2007 to \$2.6 billion. However, high global prices place a unique strain on the national budget. Owing to limited refining capacity, Yemen pays market rates to import more than half of the diesel required for domestic demand and subsidizes the sale at 72 rials (20p) a litre. The World Bank estimates diesel subsidies will cost \$3.5 billion in 2008 – about 12% of GDP. Only twelve of Yemen's 87 oil blocks are in production, with less than a dozen of these under active exploration. It is possible that high profit margins will make future extraction viable in sites that were previously considered too expensive or technically challenging. The expansion of the pipeline infrastructure in recent years has also increased the potential for commercial extraction where transportation costs were initially prohibitive.

Yemen's government is relying on new finds, and hoping that offshore exploration will identify sizeable oil fields. However, the rising number of piracy attacks in the Gulf of Aden has the potential to inhibit offshore oil exploration and disrupt liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipping. Yemen LNG's plant will come online in 2009, bringing roughly \$10.9 billion into the state coffers during the course of the 20-year production agreement. The anticipated LNG revenue will provide a welcome cushion but it will not make up the shortfall from the impending decline in oil exports.

## Reform and aid

Yemen ranks among the world's most corrupt countries and corruption is worsening. According to Transparency International's 2008 Corruption Perception Index, Yemen now ranks 141st out of 180, compared to 111th in 2006. The problem is so acute, says one Yemeni democrat, that the regime is 'killing the chicken instead of stealing the eggs'. Timely reforms are essential to strengthen government institutions and diversify the economy, but implementation is hampered by lack of technical expertise within the relevant ministries, as well as deliberate inertia from beneficiaries of the status quo. Western donors acknowledge concerns about Yemen's capacity to allocate funds reliably, but their own commitment to the long-term process of reform is often subordinated to immediate security concerns. For years, President Saleh used to respond to allegations of dishonest profit with the Maoist-style retort that those who spoke of corruption were themselves corrupt. In February 2006, however, he publicly threw his weight behind an ambitious reform agenda. In November 2006, he was rewarded with combined pledges from Britain and Yemen's Gulf neighbors to disburse \$4.7 billion by the end of the decade. Three months later, on 14 February 2007, Yemen was permitted to apply for funds from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), a US aid initiative explicitly tied to governance benchmarks. The MCC's approval came as a result of Yemen's 'aggressive and demonstrable' reform effort.<sup>30</sup> In September 2007, the MCC approved \$20.6 million as threshold funds intended to speed up early reforms. US officials were on the verge of attending a formal signing ceremony in October 2007 when news broke that a prominent terrorist suspect had escaped custody and was negotiating to secure his freedom through tribal intermediaries. Jamal al-Badawi is wanted by the United States for his role in the USS Cole bombing. (Yemen has refused repeated requests for al-Badawi to stand trial in the United States on the grounds that there is no extradition agreement in place.)

The inauguration ceremony was promptly suspended, provoking claims from Yemeni reformers

that the US preoccupation with security was distorting development priorities. Al-Badawi is back in custody and the MCC website still lists Yemen as having 'threshold' status, but negotiations appear to have been indefinitely suspended, with rancor, disbelief and disappointment on both sides.

The World Bank remains Yemen's biggest donor. The Arab donors, collectively, are also a significant source of aid. Britain's Department for International Development (DFID) is committed to

spending £50m a year by 2011 – a 400% increase on the 2006 budget. DFID signed a ten-year Development Partnership Arrangement with the government of Yemen in August 2007.

As priorities, the World Bank and DFID are lobbying for civil service reform and incremental reduction of diesel subsidies. However, both measures contain the potential for widespread social unrest and remain unlikely to be agreed and fully implemented in the runup to the 2009 parliamentary elections. A previous attempt to abolish diesel subsidies, in 2005, led to riots on the streets. Reducing the size of the civil service payroll (which can be seen as a de facto national welfare fund) is likely to have a similar impact. The pressure to abolish diesel subsidies will only increase as domestic consumption rises, oil production falls and Yemen moves towards net oil imports. Advocates of subsidy reform view the reductions as part of an integrated programme: the sooner Yemen switches financial resources to capital development expenditure, such as building new schools and hospitals, the faster government spending can stimulate job creation and economic growth. In the short term, though, reducing diesel subsidies will increase the cost of food, water and transport, and spark higher inflation rates.

'There is no alternative,' says one European diplomat. 'Saleh will be forced to make this decision and the longer he leaves it, the harder it will become. Not engaging with the problem is not going to achieve anything.' However, subsidy reduction proposals are clouded by allegations of diesel smuggling. The World Bank recorded a 'notable shortage in diesel fuel in May ... The recent diesel crisis in Yemen reflects the limited refining capacity (and subsequent reliance on imported diesel) and the growing domestic demand (which includes smuggling to neighboring countries) fueled by subsidized domestic prices.' Diesel smuggling is a facet of elite corruption that has led one international economist working in Yemen to complain that 'more and more people are being pushed into destitution while a handful of people are living as if there is no tomorrow'.

## Effective intervention

Aid is a crude tool and donors are caught in a double bind. Western diplomats frequently articulate the urgent need for transparency, accountability and genuine political participation but they also recognize the need to find traction within the system as it currently stands. Donors are cautious about pushing hard and fast for change in a country where internal security remains paramount and vigilante Islamists, linked to Islah, recently flexed their muscles through the creation of a self-appointed Saudi style 'vice and virtue' authority. Optimists point to the success of the Social Fund for Development – an innovative quasi-governmental body that delivers community services to meet local needs – as well as to the formation of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption. Pessimists complain that, despite impressive rhetoric, the early momentum on reform has slowed, and argue that President Saleh may tolerate cosmetic measures but will never sanction reforms that would dismantle elite patronage networks. 'Look at the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption – they're trying to move forward on a couple of corruption cases but the level that they're targeting is well below where the actual major graft is happening. I don't think they have any authority to go to that level. There's no way that this regime would let them do that,' concludes one of the pessimists. Yemen, however, remains protective of its international image and is sensitive to accusations of corruption. Western donors can use their leverage to support individual Yemeni reformers and provide technical assistance to maintain reform momentum inside key ministries.<sup>33</sup> They can also press Yemen to complete its promised implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).<sup>34</sup> The government of Yemen has already taken steps to improve donor coordination by establishing the Aid Harmonization and Alignment Unit. The UK, the EU and the US now need to work towards an effective regional approach with the Gulf countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, which have far greater access to and influence over President Saleh.

## Options for Western governments

Having told Yemen's government that the nation's future stability depends on political and economic reforms, Western donors need to demonstrate commitment and consistency. Brussels, London and Washington must resist the temptation of knee-jerk reactions to short-term security

## Framing policy in a fragile state

The OECD defines a fragile state as one that is unable or unwilling to 'provide physical security, legitimate political institutions, sound economic management and social services for the benefit of its population'.<sup>a</sup>

Fragile states share a number of features: widespread poverty, low taxation and weak legislative assemblies. They are vulnerable to economic shocks and natural disasters. Military interference in politics is common, and there are likely to be areas where tribes and non-state actors wield more power than the official authorities. Governments in fragile states struggle to stamp out organized crime and terrorism – and key members of the ruling elite may even be complicit. Over time, the potential for growing links between crime, terrorism and armed rebellion makes each issue more intractable and contributes to a vicious cycle of deteriorating security conditions. Instability can spread beyond national borders, through refugee flows, arms-smuggling and drug-trafficking. Fragile and failing states are home to around one billion people – among the world's poorest citizens – but these states present significant difficulties for development. Governance conditions are often poor, inhibiting donors' willingness to deliver aid and compromising governments' ability to spend the money effectively. As a result, these states receive less assistance than would be expected on the basis of need.

Yet it is more cost-effective to use aid as a tool to prevent state failure than to step in after a crisis has unfolded. The benefit of averting civil war in a low-income fragile state is estimated to be around \$54 billion.<sup>d</sup> The cost of a single failing state over its entire history of failure is around \$100 billion, including hefty losses to its neighbours. Once started, the typical cycle of state failure lasts for almost 60 years.<sup>e</sup>

Since 9/11, the international community has increased its focus on fragile states but policy positions are still evolving.

While there is no template for preventing the slide towards failure, a consensus is emerging on principles to guide intervention in fragile states. They include:

- identifying political incentives and local 'drivers of change';
- proposing realistic, targeted reforms;
- working within a regional context;
- recognizing that prevention is better than cure;
- developing better early warning systems.

In Yemen's case, the risks are already clear. In 2005, it ranked eighth among the countries most at risk of disintegration in the Carnegie Endowment's Failed States Index. Although it ranked 24th in 2007, by 2008 it was 21st, showing that recent gains are quickly reversible.

violations. In particular, they must avoid volatile aid flows, which make it hard for ministers to manage their budgets and which compromise Yemeni reformers who are pushing for controversial measures.

Western governments must also accept that as long as they view Yemen primarily through the prism of security, the authorities there will play on those fears – appealing for aid money and political legitimacy to pursue their own internal agenda. Selective insistence on the rule of law creates cynicism about donors' motives in a country that is widely hostile to US foreign policy. Yemen is already suffering a blowback effect, in which the arrest and assassination of suspected terrorists have provoked violent retaliation.

Yemen's civil society is still in an early growth phase, but donors should continue to encourage non-profit and pressure groups that could play an important role in strengthening democratic institutions in the future. Donors must continue supporting Yemen's government to develop adequate power generation, food security and sustainable water supplies to meet the needs of its swelling population. Western diplomats need to be realistic about what can be achieved within the timeframe and stay focused on the regional dynamics. Western policies towards Yemen will not succeed without the tacit approval of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen's fortune cannot be determined without the financial and political clout of Riyadh. Yet Yemenis remain sensitive to Saudi involvement in affairs in Sanaa.

Policy-makers should consider their contingency plans for a future emergency. In the event of state collapse, Western governments may be restricted to maritime deployment in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The presence of Western forces on Yemeni soil would be a highly provocative measure.

## Conclusion

Yemen faces several complex and intertwined challenges in the coming decade: an economic crisis forced by declining oil reserves, the strain on political stability posed by the impending transition of power and multiple internal threats to security. Whether the country coheres and progresses or reverses and fragments depends on the foresight of the ruling elite, the position adopted by Yemen's neighbors and the policies pursued by the international community.

Eighteen years after unification, a fully democratic nation-state is still in formation. Yemen has demonstrated significant features of stability in adjusting to the introduction of universal suffrage, overcoming civil war and averting the threat of US military intervention after 9/11. The traditional social fabric remains intact, especially in the north, offering informal, flexible forums for crisis management and conflict resolution. Yemen's collapse has been predicted for years but the country has muddled through. However, it remains an incomplete state where the majority of the population live without reference to laws made in Sanaa. A corrupt, self-interested government that fails to provide the bare minimum of social services has little relevance and legitimacy outside, and even inside, the major urban areas. With a nascent civil society sector and a flimsy middle class,

Yemen is unable to generate sustained momentum for political change. Low literacy rates, unreliable public data and the absence of grassroots democracy inhibit a genuine national debate that would create sustained internal pressure for accountability and reform.

Yemen's electorate should expect to vote for a new head of state in five years' time, but proposed constitutional amendments may extend President Saleh's lifetime. A replacement candidate is most likely to emerge eventually from within the president's family, but in its current fragile condition Yemen remains vulnerable to unexpected shocks – such as Saleh's sudden death or a contested succession. If oil exploration reveals substantial new reserves, Yemen will be able to leverage loans and a support package to underpin the annual budget until those new fields become operational. Even in the absence of extensive new finds, as domestic oil production draws closer to red-line levels, Yemen's neighbors and international institutions may judge that it is cheaper to subsidize a fragile state than reconstitute a failed one. In the meantime, uncertainty over Yemen's future prevents sustained, integrated investment on a scale that would salvage the economy. With the exception of a handful of recent business deals, the cash-rich member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) show no signs of sinking significant sums into commercial

ventures in Yemen. Yemen's longed-for admission to the GCC also remains out of reach. 'In order to avert disaster, there are so many things that need to happen simultaneously and they're all interconnected,' says one Western diplomat in Sanaa. 'Growing a non-oil-based economy doesn't happen overnight and the country's prospects get worse with every month that goes by,' says another. 'Failed state is an emotive term which Yemeni officials don't subscribe to but they do recognize that there are serious challenges ahead. Yemen is fragile but we don't know whether Yemen will fail as a state,' says a third, senior diplomat. Future instability in Yemen could expand a lawless zone stretching from northern Kenya, through Somalia and the Gulf of Aden, to Saudi Arabia. Piracy, smuggling and violent jihad would flourish, with implications for the security of shipping routes and the transit of oil through the Suez Canal. State failure in Yemen would reduce any chance of progress towards peace in Somalia and further endanger the security of countries throughout the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

*Ginny Hill is a freelance journalist and TV producer. She has reported from Yemen and the Horn of Africa for the BBC, The Economist, The Christian Science Monitor and Jane's Islamic Affairs Analysis. Her film on Somali refugees in Yemen was broadcast by Channel 4 News, CNN, Al Jazeera English and France 3. Research for this paper was supported by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.*

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# When a complicated society kills a girl's innocence



Two girls destined to a rough life in the streets because of poverty. When it comes to the survival, the conservative attitude towards females disappears.

By: Ola Al-Shami

“I get up early in the morning to clean cars at street intersections,” Fatima Bint Ali, a seven year-old girl, said. “I work with my brother Ali so as to be able to buy breakfast.”

Sociologists say that a girl like Fatima is usually forced to work on the street, and may feel oppressed and hated by those around her. According to sociologist Afaf Al-Haimi, the family is the main reason for pushing girls like Fatima toward the street.

Social studies have proven that Fatima is probably acquiring bad habits on the street. She doesn't go to school because there is no law to prevent these children from working on streets during the school time.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Yemen has no precise statistics according to Safia Al-Saidi, director for Working Children Rehabilitation Centre.

According to Al-Saidi, female child labor is about to reach twenty percent of the total percentage of child labor in Yemen. This number is increasing and

Fatima is one example of these homeless girls.

Fatima's brother Ali, twelve years old, said, “I study at a school which is too far from my work in this intersection. I work to save money so that I can complete my studies because my father is disabled.”

“We don't have a house. We spend all day on the street and when night comes we go to a cheap hotel to sleep. We don't have any other solution,” he said.

Neils Nieman, a researcher specialized in child labor, said, “The direct solution is the best thing. I first establish contact with a child on the street and, when he trusts me, I start to support him and encourage him to go to school. I also supply him with food and clothes. This is the best way”

However, NGOs depend on studies and have their own policy to deal with Fatima or any working child.

Naseem Al-Rahman, UNICEF representative, said, “We don't have precise information on female child labor. Most of it is hidden due to cultural norms and goes unreported.” He added that UNICEF doesn't deal with children directly, but rather conducts stud-

ies and accordingly forms programs to help them.

Fatima after all is a victim of a complicated society. To those she encounters, she intones, “Nobody helps me to go to the park, although I usually work near it. I want to wear nice clothes and go to play with the girls there.”

Despite Fatima's pleas, the policy of organizations concerned by female child labor in Yemen continues to be to conduct research, then help girls like Fatima. Afrah Hammad, media representative in the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, explains that the nature of their work is principally to draw policies to enhance the study of female child labor and to support the gathering of facts related to these girls' situation in Yemen.

Consequently, Fatima must either wait until these studies are completed or until she finds a volunteer to support her plea to be treated as a human. Al-Haimi wishes that the families of girls working on the street would take better care of them and look out for them more. She also stressed that, if a girl's work is important, parents must focus on education for it is the only guarantee for a better life.



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## Words of Wisdom



The problem is the helplessness people feel. Most people feel they have lost control, and even a sense of direction. They drift along with the current. They feel uncomfortable with the flow as they believe there is no one in charge.

This is because the Yemeni individual is used to an autocratic system in which things are predetermined and people are given exact roles to play.

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

OUR  
OPINIONWill there  
be elections?

This is the very question that haunts every political circle and intellectuals interested in Yemeni politics. We have three possible scenarios: the GPC will go ahead with the program as planned regardless of the demonstrations and the opposition parties' demands, the JMP and the GPC will reach a hasty compromise and the elections will happen on time, or the JMP and the GPC will agree to postpone the elections until they reach a reasonable agreement.

The first scenario will simply mean that the ruling party will be competing against itself which is ridiculous. No international observation delegation will come and no local NGOs will participate, it will be a mockery. Word has it that, if this is the case, the GPC will nominate a number of female candidates to distract observers and get the people to talk about something new. The GPC banners hung on the main streets calling for women's rights and political participations, as well as the public statements read by several high-level GPC officials also confirm this point. The prime minister himself had said on more than one occasion that the government wishes to nominate several women to decision-making positions in government and in parliament. This is a good thing for women, but is simply a side product that could have been achieved within a more democratic framework of a multiparty system, not a gender-sensitive single party system.

The second scenario simply means rushed elections and confused voters. It also means that while the JMP says it is not having any negotiations with the ruling party, it is essentially doing so behind closed doors. People will feel deceived and will wonder about the credibility of the opposition, especially since one day it pushes its supporters to the streets calling the ruling party the enemy and the next day they are best friends, regardless of the fact that many of the supporters are still in jail or recovering from it. This is one of the major problems with Yemeni politicians: Whether government or opposition, they only involve the public when they need to create mass pressure, but in reality don't care what the people really need or want.

The third scenario - the most likely - is for the dialogue process to take its due time until a suitable compromise is reached. It does not matter that the elections take place on April 27. It is more important that they are real elections and a step forward in the democratic process, that all parties are represented, that the campaigning takes its due course and that promises made to the people are understood, weighed and decided upon.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

## Youths and the dilemma of past experiences

By: Dr. Suad Al-Sabaa

Like other graduates from the various universities, he celebrated on the graduation ceremony of his batch, wore jasmine and the graduation uniform.

He also enjoyed a youthful parade before his classmates and teachers, plus other guests attending the ceremony. His family members are very happy since their relative completed the university education and obtained a bachelor's degree qualifying him for a prospective job.

That graduate should have felt very happy on his graduation day and being prepared for shouldering the practical responsibility. His family members took deep breaths with the hope that the graduate will compensate them for what they suffered while bearing expenses of his education.

After graduation, it is time for him to invest his reading capacities by following any job vacancies posted on newspapers. What matters for him is begin his career and prepare a good resume for getting a job.

Thinking about his past and future, he didn't know what to put in his resume.

It was profitable for that graduate to place all his certificates from the first grade at primary school up to the final university education year in his own file. His file would be filled with certificates. But "Will employers accept him as an eligible candidate for any posted job vacancy? He makes sharp glances at posted job vacancies to identify the most important requirements and any required past experience for getting the job.

## "Real dilemma"

Having a deep breath, he says, "It is a real dilemma." How can he demonstrate previous experience while in fact he is just a fresh graduate? At this point, the graduate begins his journey in search for deliverance to the dilemma related with required past experience.

Most of the youths get disappointed, and therefore stop thinking about applying for any posted job vacancies requiring previous experience even if they are talented and hard-working students.

Some of the graduates resort to dishonest means to get documents showing they have previous experiences as required by any posted job vacancies. Others expend hard efforts to pay bribes and get nepotism brokers, who may help them get jobs while the third group of graduates conduct surveys on already salaried employees in any institution they are applying for a job in and then pay a large sum of money in exchange for getting jobs.

Those, who take the bribes, assume their role to prepare documents, minutes and legal justifications for their client to be accepted for the determined job. The way these procedures take place is impossible to be breached by those claiming to fight corruption and nepotism.

## Employers contribute to corruption

Had employers but learned how much they contribute to frustrating the youth when they set unreal requirements for any posted job vacancies, they would not have done so. Had they understood that they force youths to bring false certificates of previous experience, thereby making them corrupt as

of the first step in their career and allowing corrupt individuals to make money at the expense of youth's future and the future of production and community development, they would have set no requirements to be met by job applicants.

In a posted job vacancies, I read that an employer is seeking a young boy to work in his car-maintenance workshop, and the requirements he listed include that the applicant should have previous relevant experience and be fluent in English (speaking and writing). I wondered whether the applicant will work in Washington or in Sana'a. I turned to cast doubt that such vacancies are posted only to avoid being accountable for violating the equal opportunity principle before the government.

We usually find those who already got the jobs don't meet any of the requirements listed in the vacancy announcement. They only have strong nepotism connections or money, and in our country, by money you can do whatever you want.

Source: Al-Tagheer.com

## Official media and democratic course

By: Mohammed Abdulwahab Al-Yousifi

Official media in the developing countries represent one of the pillars for survival of totalitarian regimes. Therefore, the job of official media in these countries, including Yemen, is to ensure survival of totalitarian and oppressive regimes. The official media is viewed as a means to bring people together, educate them and enlighten their minds.

At this point, one can observe weaknesses and limitations associated with performance of the official media in the third world countries including Yemen. One of these weaknesses is that official media outlets are owned by states, and this has its negative impact on performance of these outlets, as well as imposes additional restrictions on them. This makes out of the official media outlets an administrative system, affiliated

with one of the cabinet's ministries.

In the third world states, official media outlets are usually administered by personnel, who are government servants and not professional journalists.

Here, it becomes easy for one to explore the quality of a message being conveyed by media outlets with controlled performance and powers.

Another weakness is represented by the low-standard laws that regulate performance of the official media and limiting their articles to ensuring longer survival of a totalitarian regime.

There are no effective laws to protect the real message and ensure independence of media outlets, and this is the primary reason why we find individuals operating in an atmosphere lacking independence and freedom, thereby leaving a negative impact on their performance.

Weakness three is that of the media outlets being solely owned by the state. The private

sector is not allowed to own media outlets, particularly the visual and auditory ones. In addition, more restrictions are imposed even on ownership of newspapers in Yemen. As many as 60 applications submitted to the Information Ministry to obtain licenses for establishing private newspapers have not been considered.

As a result, some applicants resorted to file lawsuits against the Information Ministry, two of which are being discussed in courts. Lack of competition and multiplicity makes the media message lose its vitality, as well as infects with the media community with recession and fragility.

With regard to role of the official media in enhancing partisan and political pluralism, and the freedom of expression, plus supporting the democratic transformations in Yemen, this matter can not be separated from the other issues indicated above. As far as I am concerned, this issue plays an integral role in weakening role and performance of

the official media.

Anyone observing performance of Yemen's official media will be convinced that this performance is the main reason why the country's emerging democratic experience is weak. Performance of the official media is responsible for emptying out content of the country's emerging democracy and shaking Yemeni citizens' trust in the democratic process and its results. A potential risk is being posed to the pioneering democratic project in favor of other smaller projects threatening the entire country.

The official media outlets with budgets coming from public funds are exploited in favor of the ruling party and changed into a partisan instrument for this party. As a result, we see no distinction between what is published by state-run and ruling party-affiliated media outlets.

Source: Al-Sahwa.net

## An electoral coalition against crisis-producing factors

By: Nabeel Al-Sofi

No to parliamentary elections dedicating elements and factors that produce national crises. And, the elections may not be reconsidered unless the real causes of the political and national crisis are diagnosed and treated.

Both statements are quoted from a famous article by former Yemeni Parliament Speaker Yasin Saeed Numan and current Yemeni Socialist Party (YSP) Secretary-General.

I hope that Numan and his colleagues in the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) welcome my objection to them as a citizen, who was once an active member in their coalition. I agree with you (Numan) in this context, as well as in your warning to the authority that "This authority is no longer accepted to take its decisions through the old style."

Dear Numan, you need to bear in mind that your talk about the national crisis invites us to search for solutions from parties other than those involved in the crisis, irrespective of how much each party contributed to the crisis.

The issue has nothing to do with condemnation or blame. Rather, it is a call for joint work outside those directly involved parties through technical innovation that concentrates on the content. The opposition leader seems to have been dealing with his supporters as a capital harvesting mistakes of the authority and confronting top priority issues among the affluent individuals in society in lieu of great historians.

This is an action, which the old institutions, including the Presidency, the Nasserite Unionist Popular Organization, Islah Party, YSP and the ruling General

People's Congress (GPC) aren't undertake. Dependence on JMP to make good additions for Yemen is nothing more than extra fatigue for the opposition coalition and homeland as well.

As the average Yemeni citizen doesn't get more than 12 dollars a year of his state's budget that goes to anonymous structures and posts, the visions and plans set by members of political parties' general secretariats or their old generations serve only less than this rate of opposition members and supporters.

Yemen is in need for a new political coalition, which must be fundamentally different from issues of the national crisis and those who generate it. The JMP is the sort of coalition that deceives traditions of currently existing political parties and rules of their establishment. It is a kind of coalition that gives a top priority to the broad issues of today. It is a coalition that is extremely engaged in housing crises, as well as other problems relating with social planning.

The opposition coalition pays a great attention to trivial up-dating grassroots like this example: 'The Sabafone celebrates the occasion of having two million subscribers.' The opposition views this number, achieved by communication technology, as more valuable than speeches given by Sheikh Hamid Al-Ahmar and other opposition

leaders.

Upcoming elections: real test for the opposition

The upcoming parliamentary elections constitute a golden chance that may test the opposition coalition in light of three aspects outside the opposition's demands and ruling party's control.

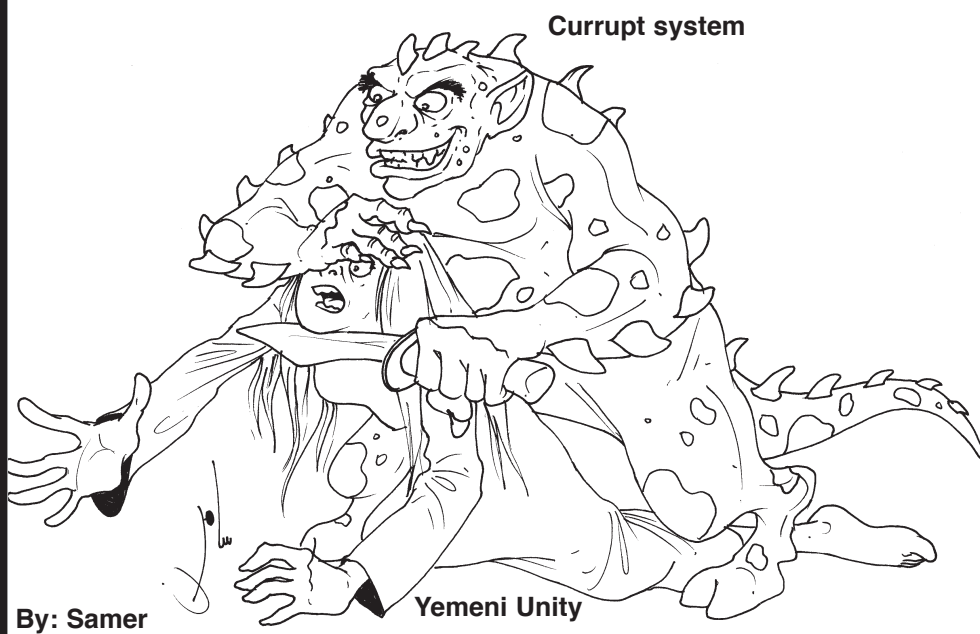
First, the opposition doesn't rescind its decision to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections despite the fact that the way it boycotts appeared to create obstacles to arrangements for the electoral process.

Second, there is a need to establish a new electoral coalition based on cultural pillars that should agree only on the less number of common features. This coalition is preferred to include men and women, who should nominate themselves for Parliament seats in selected constituencies to give a different speech from those delivered by parties directly or indirectly involved in the national crisis.

Third, President Ali Abdullah Saleh should stop using the elections for the sake of further political control. In other words, as long as the opposition is boycotting the elections, President Saleh and his party leaders need not run in the elections alone.

Source: Newsyemen.net

SKETCHED OPINION



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# Yemen Press Review



**Al-Sahwa.net, affiliated with the Islah Party**  
Monday, Dec. 1, 2008

## Top Stories

- Opposition leaders: We will peacefully resist bequeathal of power
- Armed clashes between Dhamar tribesmen and republican guards over artesian well
- Security authorities repress journalists and protesters

Several journalists and activists were attacked by the government's security forces on Thursday as they were trying to cover a massive rally protesting against the upcoming parliamentary elections, the website reported.

During the protest, journalists including Saeed Thabit, Vice President of the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, Twakol Karman, Chairperson of Women Journalists Without Borders, Abdul-Star Bajash, editing manager of Newsyemen.net, Abdu Aish, a correspondent of Aljazeera.net, and Saleh al-Soraimi, a correspondent of Sahwa Net, all were assaulted and beaten.

The website went on to say that President of Yemeni Teachers Syndicate Ahmed Al-Rabhi along with other dozens of activists and opposition supporters were arrested. Over 20 protesters were wounded, four seriously in the protest which

was faced by live bullets and batons.

An Interior Ministry official said the troops fired into the air to disperse the "illegal" demonstration in the capital Sana'a, but he refused to comment on any injuries. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

The Secretary-General of the Yemeni Socialist Party Yasin Saeed Noaman said that the anti-election protest held in Sana'a is a strong expression of the popular objection to plans aimed at rigging the elections and forging citizens' wills.

He explained that the rally is a clear message that people refuses forging elections, considering peaceful struggle as the only way for citizens to claim rights.

Parliament Member Abdul-Malik Al-Qasos said that massive crowds gathering in Sana'a are evidence of increasing awareness about rights, change and the importance of inclusive political reforms.

"Violence and arrests used against reporters and protesters are a breach of the state-constitution which guarantees citizens the right to demonstrate. It is also evidence of the ruling party's fears of that possibility that democracy will transfer into reality on the ground," Al-Qasos commented.

The Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), also known as Yemen's major opposition coalition, which includes six parties, demands reforming the electoral law, banning government officials from using their influence to affect the vote while official media must be used in an impartial and

neutral way. Several on-off negotiations between JMP and the ruling party have failed to reach a compromise.



**Almotmar.net, affiliated with the General People's Congress (ruling party)**

Monday, Dec. 1, 2008

## Top Stories

- Islah party leads the ugliest campaign against military and security institutions
- Political leaders: the world labels Islah as a terrorist party
- JMP leaders request American support

Yemeni media sources said Wednesday that Joint Meeting Parties JMP leaders have recently visited the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a and met the US Ambassador, presenting to him their plan for a coup against democracy and the constitutional legitimacy. The sources indicated those leaders asked support for them in order to implement their coup plan under the banner of change and rejection of results of the people's will at the ballot boxes, the website reported.

Shabwa press website quoted reliable sources as saying the American Ambassador rejected the request and advised them instead to seek arbitration of democracy via the results of elections.

The American Ambassador confirmed to them that the United States of America would support nothing in Yemen with the exception of democracy with choices of the people being reflected in ballot boxes and that the alternative to democracy is chaos and violence that cannot be accepted and would not serve any party.

On a side note, the website reported that former JMP member Faisal Ahmed Al-Shami said Tuesday behavior of the opposition coalition that resorted to creating crises and exaggerated in its talk about tension in the nation compelled him to resign and join GPC due to the latter's credible addresses and being moderate in its orientations and principles.

Faisal Al-Shami who was chairman of the partisan committee at constituency 88 in Baadan district, delegate of Yemen Socialist Party YSP general conference as well as member of governorates committee resigned his post last Saturday as member in the YSP and asked to join the GPC, based on his satisfaction with GPC credibility and moderate orientations.

**Nabanews.net, an independent news website**

Sunday, Nov. 30, 2008

## Top Stories

- Government orders suspending oil tenders, direct negotiations with petroleum companies
- President Saleh welcomes Independence Day by confirming Yemen's sovereignty

- Ruling party prepares 60 women to run for JMP seats in Parliament

The Nabnews.net learned from informed political sources that the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) has been preparing as many as 60 women from the various governorates to run in the upcoming parliamentary elections in lieu of Parliament members affiliated with Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) that decided to boycott the elections.

According to the same sources, the ongoing arrangements came in light of a decision reached by GPC General Committee during its meeting last week, which was chaired up by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. And in light of a study discussed at the meeting, the ruling party is planning to exploit JMP's boycotting the electoral process to enhance women's political participation after it realized that JMP member parties were opposing women quota while some of them said that women's nomination in the election is prohibited.

The sources indicated that the study reviewed the constituencies where JMP candidates won in the most recent parliamentary elections in 2003, and therefore suggested a new distribution map on these constituencies to be shared by GPC, parties of the National Opposition Council, women and independent candidates the ruling party plans to support.

They noted that the ruling party's general committee is due to name members of the committee that will be in charge of preparing qualified

women to run for Parliament seats, adding that the list of female candidates will not be limited to GPC members but will also include independent women candidates who will accept to get support from GPC.

Other special sources confirmed to Nabnews.net confirmed that GPC is planning to back well-known leaders in JMP, who are expected to run in the elections as independent candidates, among them there will be reputed women enjoying good popularity.

The sources added that arrangements have been made in this context, attributing the plan to the reason that voter turnout for the registration process was good over the last three days.

The news comes amid atmosphere witnessing tens relations between GPC and JMP over protests staged by the latter's supporters in front of voter registration centers. The protests were accompanied by clashes between JMP fans and security personnel.

In the meantime, JMP member parties describe procedures taken by the government in the electoral regard as "an abuse of their democratic rights".

As GPC reaffirms that the upcoming elections will not be postponed, the JMP member parties bet they will not allow the elections to take place. Both sides turned to accuse each other of "revolting against democracy", which is why political observers are projecting the crisis between the ruling and opposition parties in Yemen to become sharper.

## Mufti OKs Move to Jewish Jerusalem

**Until recently only a handful of Arabs lived in western Jerusalem – an area dominated by Jews. But The Media Line has learned that the move of Arabs into western Jerusalem has not only speeded up, it has also been sanctioned by the top Palestinian Muslim authority.**

By: Abd Al-Karim Shweiki  
The Media Line news agency

**M**ore and more Palestinian Jerusalemites, fearing the loss of their Jerusalem IDs or their social security benefits, and running away from the very high prices in eastern Jerusalem, are moving to neighboring Neve Yaakov, Pisgat Zeev and French Hill where the vast majority of the residents are Jews.

There is no clear estimate of how many Palestinians are already living there, but Palestinian officials in the city estimate that hundreds of Palestinian Jerusalemites have already moved to these Jewish neighborhoods.

A senior Palestinian official told The Media Line that Palestinian negotiators had already accepted that Neveh Yaakov, Pisgat Zeev and French Hill would be part of Israel in a final agreement over the issue of the status of Jerusalem.

Husam, who has lived in Pisgat Zeev for five years, says, "It's very expensive to live in east Jerusalem and therefore I moved to Pisgat Zeev where houses are less expensive and services are more accessible.

"I know many friends and others who did the same and I think that it will not be too long before Pisgat Zeev and Neve Yaakov will be mixed Arab-Jewish communities," he adds.

Husam does not give his last name fearing reactions from both Jews and Arabs, even though he says that so far he hasn't faced any problems living in

Pisgat Zeev.

Indeed, more Palestinians are connected to Pisgat Zeev than ever before: the mall in Pisgat Zeev is full of Arabs, with women wearing headscarves, while Palestinians in the neighboring Shu'afat and Beit Hanina have been instructed to go to Israel Police headquarters in Neve Yaakov when they face problems in their neighborhoods.

While Husam rents in Pisgat Zeev, there are others who have bought houses there, as well as in Neve Yaakov, while wealthier Palestinians have bought homes in French Hill.

Rami, who has lived in French Hill for six years, describes his life as fantastic.

"I pay the equivalent of \$500 a month in rent; unlike Arabs, people there don't interfere in the lives of others. I don't even know my neighbor's name," he says.

"I don't spend a lot of time searching for parking, I go up to my apartment with the elevator, close my door and that's it," he adds, when asked if he faces problems with his Jewish neighbors.

Palestinians consider Pisgat Zeev, Neveh Yaakov and French Hill as "settlements" built on Palestinian land, while Jews consider them "neighborhoods" in Jerusalem.

Until recently Palestinian leaders protested to the Americans and the Europeans regarding Israeli plans to build new houses in Pisgat Zeev and Neve Yaakov.

When asked in a small gathering in Jerusalem the Muslim opinion regarding buying or renting houses in these neighborhoods, the grand mufti of the Palestinian Authority, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein, answered, "There is no problem, you can go ahead."

Hundreds if not thousands of Palestinians have returned to Jerusalem from outlying areas - that are across the Green Line and not considered part of the city - in recent months after hearing plans that the Israeli census for the year 2008 will include eastern Jerusalem.

Rumors have spread that those who are not included in the census will have to give back their Israeli IDs.

Trying to calm down the "panic" in the city, the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics summoned the Palestinian media, explaining that there was nothing to worry about and that the census would include all of Israel, including east Jerusalem.

It is almost impossible to find an empty apartment for rent in the east of the city for months to come, while owners of rental properties have raised rents to a minimum of 800 dollars a month and some predict they could reach \$2,500 a month.

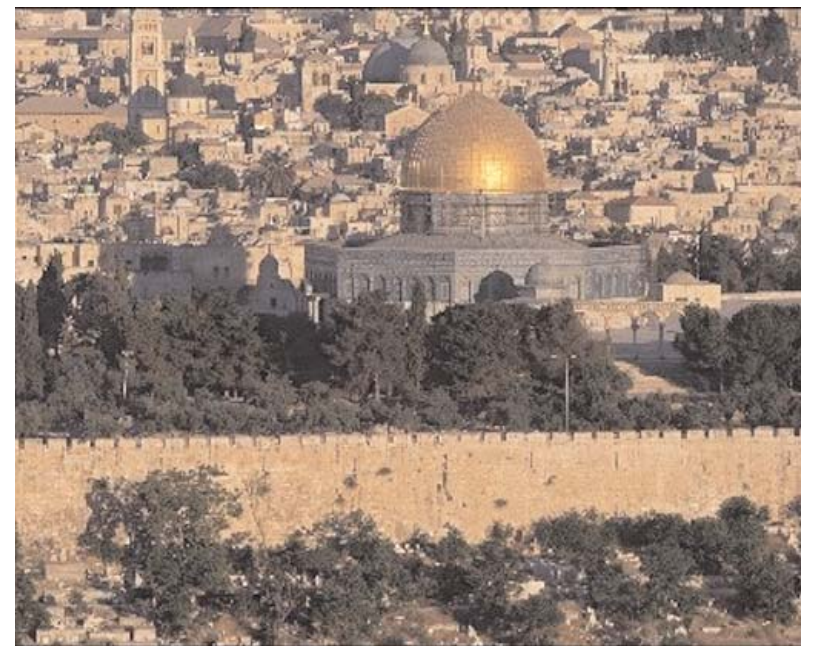
It is estimated that 90,000 Arab Jerusalemites live in suburbs such as A-Ram, Dahiet, Al-Barid, Abu Dis, Al-'Eizariyya, Al-Zaiem, as well as Ramallah and Bethlehem, where many own homes.

This is not the first time that Arab Jerusalemites have decided to return to western Jerusalem; it happened in the late 1990s when the Israeli Interior Ministry began confiscating IDs from Palestinians living outside the borders of the city, and again in 2001 after building the security barrier.

In their study, "A Fence Around Jerusalem," published by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Kobi Michael and Amnon Ramon wrote: "Already now, the closures and checkpoints that impede the entry of residents of the territories to Jerusalem, combined with the fence, have brought about increased migration by Palestinians holding Israeli ID cards into the city, driving up rental costs. If the regime at the crossing points to the city were relatively convenient, West Bank Palestinians can be expected to move into the homes being vacated around Jerusalem by those who have taken up residence inside the city.

"The building of the fence along the planned route will affect the size of the Palestinian population in the city.

Holders of Israeli ID cards currently living outside the city may



want to return to the "Israeli side" of the fence - especially those who are living in rented lodgings (as distinct from home owners who invested in purchasing or building). A large-scale re-entry of Palestinians into the city could change the demographic balance to the "disadvantage" of the Jewish population, contrary to the declared policy of every Israeli government since 1967," the study added.

The study noted that, "restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities, have greatly limited Arab residential construction within Jerusalem. As a result, many Arab residents of the city who hold Israeli ID cards chose to establish their homes on the other side of the municipal boundary, where the Israeli Civil Administration is more accommodating in terms of granting construction permits and sometimes even looks the other way at extensive Palestinian construction."

Indeed, it is very easy to find an apartment for \$60,000 in Ramallah and even to pay it with a loan from any of the banks working in the West Bank. The minimum cost of an apartment in east Jerusalem, however, can reach \$180,000, with no Palestinian bank ready to give loans

in east Jerusalem where the authority is the Israeli Police, with which Palestinian banks prefer not to deal in order to get their money back if clients decide not to pay.

While buying houses in Pisgat Zeev, Neve Yaakov or French Hill can easily be supported by a loan from an Israeli bank, Palestinians living there say that apartment rents are also less than in eastern Jerusalem.

The Civic Coalition for Defending the Palestinians' Rights in Jerusalem estimates that 20,000 apartments were built without permits from the Jerusalem municipality in eastern Jerusalem in addition to 28,000 homeowners fined by the municipality for not adhering to the law.

The coalition estimates that eastern Jerusalem needs more than 20,000 new apartments to solve the housing crisis there.

It is almost impossible to explain why Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem gave the green light for Palestinians to live in Pisgat Zeev, Neveh Yaakov and French Hill, when they don't support the idea of living in Maaleh Adumim, Gilo or Har Homa, despite the fact that Palestinians consider them all settlements.



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## Comic book workshop celebrates French book festival



By: Khaled Al-Hilaly

In celebration of the French book festival 'Livre de Fete', the French Cultural Center, the Cultural Department for International Cooperation at the French Embassy and the French Department at Sana'a University organized workshops on drawing and writing comics in Sana'a recently.

French comic book artist and 1997 Angoulême International Comic Book Festival award-winner Fabien Rypert is in Yemen for the first time to conduct the workshops.

Rypert designs famous comics for children and adults. Although he started out as an electrical technician, he used to collect comics and that's how he was inspired to produce his own. As an intern in a drawing studio, he started creating characters for postcards and T-shirts, the most popular of which was 'Boogy' the frog, now a main character in his children comic books series of 'Boogy and Rana'.

Participants at the workshops learned how to create a one-page comic strip step by step. Stressing the need to compliment talent with a solid education, Rypert said, "Reading is essential for children and education is very important as you can't always depend on your talent."

He praised the talent of participants and said, "A girl called Jumanah showed me her drawing and if she was in France, her comics would surely be published."

According to Georges Mouden, Linguistic Attaché at the French Embassy in Sana'a, "Children's literature was chosen as the theme for the Sana'a book festival, because comics are still rare in Yemen and we are trying to enrich this area."

Sama'a Abdulghani, a participant in the workshops, studies in the ninth grade and is very interested in comics. She wants to be a writer and artist and likes black and white drawing whether with coal or pencil. "We learned where to write the scenario or the story, how to divide the paper, how much space to leave between the box and the drawing

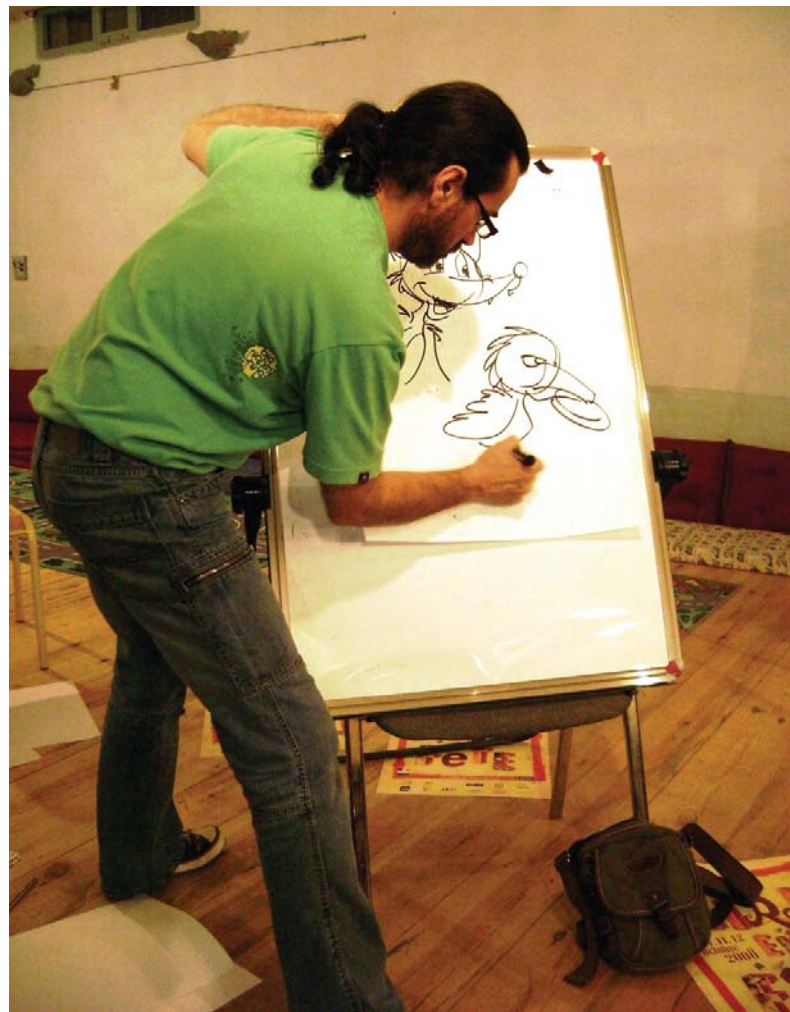
as well as drawing the characters," she said.

Rypert advises those interested in comics to be brave and to try develop their skills. At the beginning of his career Rypert had met artists who discouraged him and advised him to stop drawing comics but he insisted and persisted until published his art.

Salla Al-Awadhi draws people and faces because she likes reality. Al-Awadhi learned how to draw animals and how to write text for stories under the supervision of Rypert. She aspires to be an architect.

Estelle El-Hallak said, "We learned how to draw birds and animals, and use our imagination." She hopes someday to tell somebody's life story through a comic. "Sometimes one drawing can be better than a great speech, but the dialogue and text are also important," Rypert concluded.

"Livre en fete" is an annual celebration for reading in France and French cultural centers worldwide. It aims to increase reading by organizing various activities related to literature and reading.



Angoulême International Comic Book Festival award-winner Fabien Rypert demonstrates to students how to draw a comic strip



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