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In Yemen all the way from the Great Wall of China

Tribes reconcile as president threatens civil war

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, Apr. 3 — As President Ali Abdullah Saleh threatens civil war and the separation of the country if anti-government protests continue, tribal leaders and opposition parties accused Saleh of leading the country towards civil war and separation.

The governorates of Al-Jawf, Sa'ada and Abyan have already been taken over by those opposing the government. Those in control of these governorates claim that their acts are only a step towards forcing the current regime to step down. Security forces have also been withdrawn from Marib and Shabwa governorates.

Many tribes that have a history of revenge attacks lasting over three decades have reconciled for the first time. They have been united in their opposition to President Saleh. In Al-Tagheer Square, two previously opposing tribes who have been trying to kill each other for almost 30 years, now live together in one tent as a family.

The Al-Jawf governorate now is run by local tribes that rebelled against the Saleh regime. It was reported that 'thugs' looted government buildings

taking everything including windows and bathroom fittings. Sheikh Sanan [please check spelling] Al-Iraqi, one of Al-Jawf's tribal leaders, said that everything is now stable and under the control of the revolutionaries.

"The foundations of government are working normally. The revolutionaries control the governorate and have peacefully taken over the public buildings," said Al-Iraqi.

Al-Iraqi said that his tribe, and their traditional enemies the Al-Otmi, have ended the revenge killings that have been on-going for 30 years. Their common opposition to President Saleh was what allowed mediation to occur between the two tribes. The end to the revenge killings and the reconciliation of the tribes is due to their common desire to force the president to leave office.

On Feb. 21 the governorate witnessed clashes between pro- and anti-government demonstrators in which one person was killed.

"The killer was the director of the social welfare fund from the Al-Hamd tribe. His tribe helped the revolutionaries to catch the offender, which shows that tribal standards are not the way

they were before the revolution, and civil war will not start between the tribes," said Al-Iraqi.

According to Al-Iraqi, the executive of the governmental social welfare fund, went to the roof and started shooting at protesters, causing 28 injuries, seven of which are in a dangerous condition.

Last week, President Saleh assigned new leadership to military camp 115 in Al-Jawf governorate. The soldiers rebelled against the new leadership and left the military camp, allowing the revolutionaries to take over.

"Now the revolutionaries protect all the property at the camp. All documents and equipment are the same way as they were before."

Some of Hamdan's tribes took over the Central Bank in Al-Jawf, demanding YR 20-30 million to leave it. "The central bank is still under the control of these thugs. They are from Hamdan's tribe. They are known to be supporters of the regime," said Al-Iraqi.

The revolutionaries are protecting the bank from the outside. "The thugs tried to reach a deal with the deputy governor where they would leave safely without taking any money, but he rejected the deal. I don't know for whose good he did that!" said Al-Iraqi.

The Murad and Abeeda tribes from Marib have a 30 year history of revenge killings, but now share one tent at Al-Tagheer Square. Nasr Al-Qadhi, one of the tribesmen, said that the whole revenge problem was created by Saleh. "The best way for him to rule us was by creating crises among us, to keep us busy," he said.

In Marib governorate, between five and seven thousand people demonstrate everyday at Al-Tagheer Square in the city. Hussein Al-Qadhi, one of the protester leaders in Marib, said that the



Last Friday, hundreds of thousands of Saleh supporters demonstrated in the capital while the government continues to lose control in outlying governorates

tribal youth have made public commitments to protect public buildings, and that they are the only ones allowed to carry weapons.

"We are protecting the governorate as the security have withdrawn. We face some thugs from different tribes, some are from my own tribe, but it's not a tribal issue anymore," said Al-Qadhi.

"Some of the pro-government tribes in Marib, like the Al-Jeda'an and Al-Kua'lan are closely connected to the General People's Congress. They distributed themselves pretending to protect the high road from Sana'a to Marib after security withdrew. But they are really looting," he added.

Al-Qadhi said that some of the protesters had tried to coordinate with the

Al-Jeda'an tribe, but were rebuffed. A gas crisis is emerging as one of the problems from the political turmoil in Marib. Al-Qadhi said that he and two others talked to the head of the gas and oil office in the governorate and offered to protect the transmission of gas from Marib to Sana'a.

"I went to Ben Me'a'ili, the head of the oil office, and offered to transfer the gas myself with some of the protesters if he provided us with 10-20 tanks. The government has accused us of preventing the transmission of gas, so we wanted to show the world their lies by delivering it ourselves," said Al-Qadhi. Ben Me'a'ili rejected the offer even after giving his word to cooperate, according to Al-Qadhi.

Some tribes were encouraged by officials to steal weapons from security depots after security forces withdrew from Shabwa, according to Naji Al-Sumi, head of the political department of the Islah Party in Al-Jawf governorate. The security forces have yet to withdraw completely from Shabwa.

The tribes formed a public committee to defend the governorate four days before the president or the Joint Meeting Parties did. The committees reached an

agreement with the security forces in the governorate to support the security as long as they are doing their job.

"The amazing thing is that it was the tribal position that brought balance to the political game," said Al-Sumi.

"One of the protesters saw his uncle for the first time in 16 years. They had not seen each other because of a revenge issue. They hugged and cried in public, forgiving each other. No civil war will occur in Yemen as long as the tribes are acting this way," he added. Al-Sumi said that no tribe will try to harm another tribe, as they don't want to start new revenge issues. And this makes all the tribes on one side.

Al-Qaeda member have made their appearance in Shabwa. They have started contacting some figures in Shabwa and introducing themselves clearly as Al-Qaeda members in the Azan and Mazna'a areas of Shabwa.

The tribes have made a coalition to demand that Al-Qaeda leave the governorate, according to Al-Sumi. "It's obvious that Al-Qaeda appeared after the president said 'Yemen is a time bomb'. Then the security withdrew in preparation for Al-Qaeda to appear," said Al-Sumi.

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Army detains citizens in Abyan

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, April 3rd – A local source in Abyan governorate told the Yemen Times on Friday that a military unit stationed in Lauder district has detained 11 citizens after an unknown armed group kidnapped two soldiers belonging to the same contingent.

On Saturday, the military unit released two of the detainees while the other nine remain in custody, according to Khaled Al-Abd, a local journalist in Lauder.

Al-Abd explained that the two soldiers' kidnapers may have been provoked because, "Their sons, who are also soldiers, were brutally assassinated last week while on duty at a security checkpoint at the district's entrance and the authority has not responded with any action."

The detentions come at a time of heightened insecurity in Abyan. According to Mohammed Al-Shadadi, several military camps have been abandoned over the past week. Al-Shadadi is a member of parliament from Abyan governorate who recently resigned from the ruling party in solidarity with pro-democracy protesters.

Last week, an ammunition factory to the north of Ja'ar in Abyan exploded after security forces aban-



Victims that were killed in the explosion of an ammunition factory in Abyan last week. The governorate has always been a stage of violence and a place where the regime plays the Al-Qaeda card to remain in power, according to human rights watch

doned the plant to looters who later set the building on fire. More than

150 people were killed in the disaster.

In August and September of 2010, the government waged sporadic war-

fare in Lauder and other Abyan districts, against insurgents belonging to

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

But Abdulrahman Al-Barman, a human rights activist at the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) told the Yemen Times that, "Abyan has become the stage upon which the regime plays the Al-Qaeda card, so as to remain in power."

He claimed that those who call themselves as jihadists are actually "...in contact with President Saleh himself and they carry out their tasks at precise moments when the regime is in trouble."

He said that the detention of citizens by a military unit is "...a crime of kidnapping according to Yemeni kidnapping law. It is illegal for any person to abduct citizens so as to release hostages."

He explained that the state of insecurity in Abyan indicates "...a breakdown of the regime and a widespread disrespect of the law amongst officials. Everyone is now free to act from their post with no reference to the law."

Barman said that, "This lack of respect for the law and the deterioration of security in Abyan will continue as long as Saleh remains in power. If he left office, all extremism would dry up and the effects of Al-Qaeda's would be restricted."

Media war in Yemen escalates between state and opposition

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, Mar. 30 – The media war in Yemen between government and opposition media is increasing with both sides swapping accusations of subjectivity and dishonesty. The recent developments in Yemen have caused each side to escalate their rhetoric against each other to the level of incitement and insult.

Dr. Samiya Al-Aghbari, assistant professor of journalism at Sana'a University, told the Yemen Times that in general the media in Yemen are not objective and tended towards provocation. She described the Yemeni media as declamatory and irrational, indicating that much of the media depended upon rumor and exaggeration instead of accurate information.

"Objectivity in the Yemeni independent, government and partisan media is completely absent. Unfortunately, our media people have been working in qat sessions," she said.

Al-Aghbari claimed that the media war in Yemen has been growing due to a lack of confidence between the state and opposition parties.

"The Yemeni media is full of insult," she said. "The media in Yemen are not interested in normal people, but they are interested in the agendas of political

parties and their interests." Al-Aghbari urged the media to be more interested in the youth and the everyday people who constitute the hope of Yemen.

Abdulmalak Al-Fuhaidi, editor-in-chief of the Al-Motamar.net website – a mouthpiece of the ruling party – said that government media should defend the government and the president. He described the government media as neutral, and said that it showed the opinions of political opponents. He accused the opposition media of subjectivity, lying and the falsification of facts.

"Our media defends the constitutional legitimacy [of the government] against chaos, while the opposition media misrepresents the facts."

"The minority wants to overthrow the majority. The opposition media want to show the minority as the majority of Yemenis," he said.

Al-Fuhaidi indicated that it was his duty to defend the ruling party and its policies. "If we didn't defend our political party and our president, who will defend them?"

He revealed that he adheres to the orders and the regulations of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC).

"The GPC has political and regulatory sectors, and we implement their regulations. But they do not control the

editing of our stories," he explained.

Abdulbasat Al-Qaedi, managing editor of the independent weekly Al-Ahali newspaper, told the Yemen Times that there is no balance in the public media.

"The government media should satisfy all sides in Yemen. This media belongs to all Yemenis," he said. "Unfortunately, the regime exploits the public media to serve its interests and ideas."

"The public channels and newspapers are turned into the mouthpiece of the president and the ruling party. They don't talk about any other side, although the public media belongs to all Yemenis without exception," he said.

"The government media incites Yemenis to fight against each other. This media serve chaos and increases the violence. The wrong use of this media is very dangerous and leads to fighting sometimes."

According to Al-Qaedi, the "corrupt regime" spoils all journalists, including opposition ones. He said that both public and opposition media lack objectivity and credibility, but he held the regime as responsible for this.

"Opposition journalists do not have the same resources as the state media, so those journalists try to criticize the situation by exaggerating," he said.

Opposition parties offer new vision for president's safe exit

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, April 3rd – Opposition parties including the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) have offered a new vision for the safe, smooth and timely exit of President Ali Abdullah Saleh. The plan follows a succession of other initiatives proposed by the JMP that were met with rejection by President Saleh.

The proposal makes provisions for the president's departure and the handing over of power to the vice-president, the formation of a transitional national council comprised of politicians, youth and businessmen, the creation of a national unity government under the chairmanship of the opposition, the founding of a transitional military council, and the establishment of a high committee for elections and referendum.

A leader within the JMP, Mohammed Al-Sabri, told the Yemen Times that this new vision was announced with just enough time to spare.

"The regime has been stealing money and arming Yemenis with various weapons. Meanwhile, the president only makes useless

speeches at his public gatherings and accuses the opposition parties of rejecting dialogue," said Al-Sabri.

"We have announced a vision that guarantees a safe exit for president. If he refuses it, he will be held responsible for what happens in the subsequent days," he explained.

Al-Sabri severely criticized the president's inner circle, pointing out that they will damage the president in the long term.

"President Saleh believes that he created Yemen and the Yemeni people. He deals with Yemen as if he owns it. Unfortunately, our president has been repeating the same mistakes made by the former Egyptian and Tunisian presidents. He has not yet understood the lesson," he said.

Al-Sabri strongly believes that the president will be overthrown if he refuses the proposed safe exit. He explained by saying that, "The ruler who challenges his own people is stupid."

He indicated that the president has mobilized soldiers and poor Yemenis to support the existing regime but said that, "It's impossible

for the president to resist for a long time. While he stalls, Yemenis will not be depressed and their demands for change will persist."

After being informed of the new proposal, the Yemen Times phoned Ahmed Al-Soofi, media secretary for President Saleh. He said that he had not yet heard about this "vision", but after the Yemen Times explained the main points of the proposal, he commented: "The opposition officials were chewing bad qat when they announced their new initiative. This vision will only prolong the period of the crisis."

Sakhr Al-Wajeih, an independent parliamentarian, believes that the president is genuinely tired of power but that he will only pass his post along to an honest leader.

"We suggested that president should hand over power to his vice president, who was already personally selected by him. If the president refuses this proposal, it means that the vice president isn't honest and good man," said Al-Wajeih.

Al-Wajeih said that this new proposition should reveal how seriously the regime is considering calls for President Saleh's departure.

Pro-democracy protests continue in several governates

By: Mohammad bin Sallam

Sana'a, April 3rd - The protests and demonstrations in the squares of change and freedom, which have been ongoing for more than 2 months in the squares of freedom and change throughout the republic, are continuing in their call for President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his regime to leave.

On Saturday morning the capital city witnessed a huge influx of citizens into 'Change Square', including women, children, and the elderly. This was in addition to hundreds of soldiers and government officials who support the revolution of the youth.

On the same day, in the afternoon, there was a march which spanned all the streets surrounding Change Square. The protestors chanted against the President, and called for the downfall of his regime.

The youthful protesters did not give much importance to the pro-

Saleh protesters, saying that those who went to the demonstration were those whose "interests were being served by the regime, and that they only think of the present and not the future."

They talked of their pride in the surge of the Yemeni people into the squares of change on Friday, and the continuation of the huge numbers for the duration of their protests calling for Saleh to leave.

The youth protesters in Change Square in the capital made clear that the demonstrations would continue until the regime fell. They also refused any proposals that would end the protests and demonstrations before the fall of the regime.

In Hodeida Governorate, at dawn on Saturday, the protesters in 'People's Square' were attacked with batons and hit by live bullets in an attempt to break up the protest. The attack left 7 people injured, and the security forces tore down a number of the protester's tents that had been

erected on the street adjacent to the square.

In Taiz Governorate the youth continued their protests in 'Liberation Square', and hundreds of academics and university students joined them. There were no reports of confrontations between them and security forces.

In front of a large crowd in 'Sabaeen Square' in Sana'a Present Ali Abdullah Saleh swore to sacrifice "everything that is dear for the people." This was during a speech he gave on Friday, which they called the Friday of Brotherhood, and Saleh wished that the opposition would not use inflammatory language.

The ruling party was able to gather 250,000 people from across Yemen on Friday in Sabaeen Square in support of the President, chanting "the people want Ali Abdullah Saleh."

On a related note Reuters said that a number of Sana'a residents said that they received the equivalent of 250 USD for every person who

participated in the protest supporting Saleh that was held in Sabaeen Square in Sana'a.

Other from outside Sana'a said that they received between 300 & 350 USD for participating.

Official documents revealed that the authorities have been enticing the crowds to come with large sums of money.

In a letter, which the Yemen Times has a copy of, sent by the head of the local council in Shu'ub in the capital city, Brigadier General Muhammed Al-Ulufi, to the Minister of State of the capital city, Abdulrahman Al-Akwa'a, Al-Ulufi asks to be reimbursed for the money that he spent on bringing people to the 'Friday of Brotherhood and Forgiveness'. The letter showed that the total amount of money spent in Shu'ub alone was 19,560,000 Yemeni Riyals.

The News Yemen website also stated that there was fighting between citizens, who participated in the Friday of Brotherhood that was

organised by GPC Party supporters, in Sports City on Friday night because of disputes over money.

Sources said that while they were receiving the money they were owed for their attendance in the pro-Saleh festival, there was an escalation in words between some people which resulted in some stabbings occurring with jambiyas.

In light of the continuation of the protests and the increase in the unrest in Yemen, the British, French, American, and Russian authorities warned all citizens on non-essential business to leave Yemen immediately. They warned that the situation could mean that they are not able to evacuate them.

The British Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that the situation in Yemen was "worsening quickly."

London called for "all parties" in Yemen to "calm down and undertake all necessary measures to stop the unrest."

It added that "the Yemeni people want their lawful requests met, and that the British government supports them in this."

In a worrying security development, two people set fire to one of the youth protesters on Friday night as he was leaving Change Square.

Numerous media outlets reported that the youth, Maher Ahmed Yasin (19 years old) was subjected to a attack as he left Change Square in Sana'a by two people on a motorbike who set fire to him after they set him alight with petrol.

Sources said that the First Armoured Division, who were situated near where the incident occurred, were able to put out the fire, and they transported the youth to the Field Hospital and then to the Science and Technology University Hospital.

Sources added that the reason for the attack was that the protester was wearing a hat that was emblazoned with the phrase "the people want the trial of the murderer."

Yemen's fisheries could bolster economy if regulated

By: Ali Saeed

The government of Yemen announced on April 1st that 2,443 tons of fish had been exported during the first quarter of this year from the southern port of Aden and its international airport, with an estimated value of YR 1.1 billion (about USD 5.2 million).

Abdullah Hadi, director of the fishery wealth office in Aden, told Saba News agency that the exported frozen fish included squid, rockfish, shrimp, and other Yemeni fish. The exports went to many Arab, Asian, and European countries. The top importers were Jordan, Lebanon, France, Germany, Russia and China.

He added that the fishery wealth office in Aden have received many applications from international companies to import and market Yemeni fish because of "its good quality and its nutritional value."

Yemen's economy currently relies heavily on oil revenues, with more than 70 percent of the state's budget coming from this fast depleting resource. There appears to be little action as yet to diversify Yemen's resources.

Many economists think that Yemen's fishery wealth could be utilized as one promising resource in the future. Yemen is well located for shipping exports being in the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula with outlets to both the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. In addition, Yemen has a 2,250 km coastline and more than 150 islands, most of them in the Red Sea.

Reports from the Ministry of Fishery Wealth indicate that Yemen has a huge fishery resource that could allow Yemen to produce around 400,000 tons of seafood every year. There are more than 400 types of fish in Yemeni waters according to the ministry, but currently only 60 kinds of fish are being exploited.

Dr. Mohamed Jubran, professor of economics at the University of Sana'a,



Yemen's production of fish during the 1990's hovered at 400,000 tons. As stock decreases, now production has decreased as well.

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told the Yemen Times that at the beginning of the 1990s, Yemen used to produce around 400,000 tons of fish annually. However, production has decreased due to "destructive economic policies that have harmed Yemen's fish stocks."

He explained that due to rules of fishery stock preservation not being applied, fishery stocks have recently been heavily exhausted, and that production is decreasing year by year. He added that the exhausting of Yemen's fishery stocks is due to unregulated fishing and on-going fishing in areas where fishing is banned.

He claimed that this practice which is threatening Yemen's fishery wealth

is monopolized by "a group of Yemeni businessmen and some private companies which are close to the regime's family."

"For instance, the state's revenues from fishery exports in 2008 did not exceed YR 400 million (about USD 1.9 million), whereas the private sector's revenues were YR 100 billion (about USD 468 million)," said Jubran.

The professor said that if good economic measures and policies were taken to regulate the fishery sector, then revenues from this sector would contribute greatly to the national economy. Fishery exports currently make up about 40 percent of non-oil exports.

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In lunch banquet in presence of winner of second prize: Sabafon celebrates delivering BMW X1 car of the international roaming prize

Sabafon has celebrated for the second time on Wednesday 16 of March 2011 the delivery of BMW X1 car, the prize of the international roaming. The company held a lunch banquet on honor of winner / Ahmed Nasser Saleh Gambor, from Shabwa who is living in UAE.

Mohammed Al-Shami, Senior Manager of the Strategy and Business Development, at the Marketing Department has handed over the key to winner who said, " honestly, the prize was a pleasant surprise to me, and I take the opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Sabafon for the good reception, and for obtaining the grand award." Al-Shami stressed in his speech that the ceremony

has come in line with Sabafon's tenth anniversary. He talked in his speech about the service of international roaming noting that the company has introduced a lot of important products and services, including the international roaming, which was launched in 2001 as one of the most important core services that has enabled the customers to enjoy the international roaming through using their own numbers all over the world.

" The international roaming has undergone significant developments since its kickoff, as well as our constant efforts over the years that our services should meet the satisfactory level of the aspiration and ambitions of our customers,"

al-Shami said noting that the advantage of the variation of this service. " They included the international roaming billing system and the pre-payment system, which represented a significant effective trend. We then launched the International (GPRS), roaming service which has given our customers the advantage of the easy and smooth follow up of their business through the internet services," Shami added.

Entering the draw requires selecting Sabafon roaming network while being in Yemen, in addition to making calls for 20 minutes or sending 40 SMS.




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In Yemen all the way from the Great Wall of China

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Yusuf and Miriam are a Chinese couple who arrived in Yemen on the first day of 2008. They came to study Islam at the University of Science and Technology (UST).

Like many Muslims in China, they wanted to improve their knowledge and understanding of Islam in a Muslim country, even if this meant spending several years far from home.

Today there are more than 100 Chinese students in Yemen, many of whom are studying Arabic or Islamic Jurisprudence. Some of them come to Yemen as couples, and some actually find their soul mates from within the Chinese student community in Yemen.

Many students have already graduated from various disciplines such as computer science, environmental protection and engineering.

"After finishing a bachelor degree in various disciplines and even working for some years, some Chinese Muslims decide that they want to know more about their religion. So they decide to travel to other counties," said Yusuf.

He and his wife applied to study in a number of Muslim countries and were accepted by UST, and so they came to Yemen.



There is nothing like a good basketball game to break the everyday routine.

"We heard that Yemen offers good Islamic studies compared to other countries. It is not just about education, it is also about living in a Muslim society that clearly practices the religion," explained Yusuf. "We saw with our own eyes how women are wearing decent clothes and how almost everyone prays in mosques."

Organized community

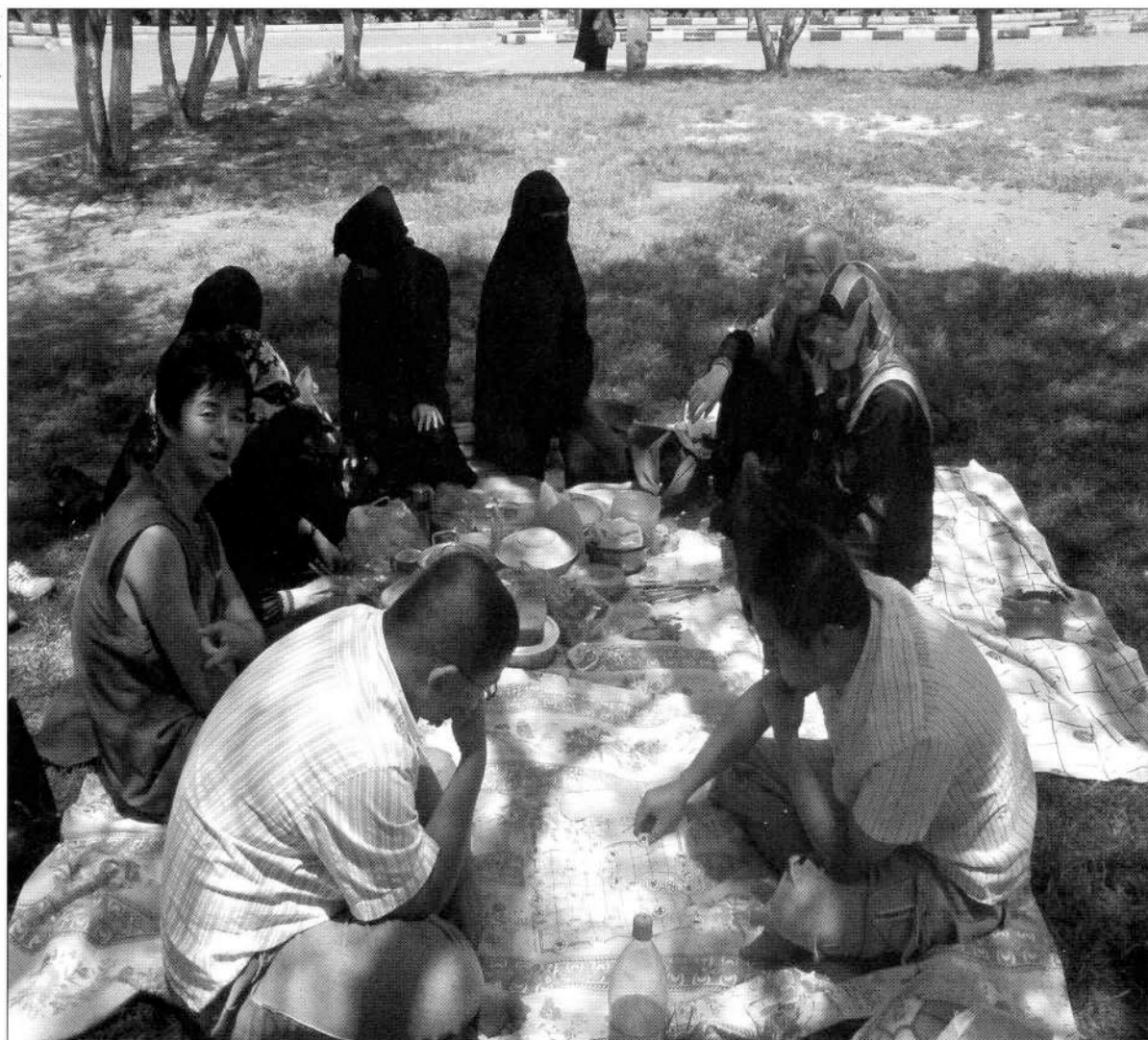
There is an existing organized student community which facilitates the settling of new students. The community has elections through which they choose the coordination council members who help them organize. They even have a regular newsletter in Chi-



Chinese students during one of the field trips to Hodeida City, where they love the beaches on the Red Sea.



Ismail with a Yemeni friend and his daughters during Eid. The Chinese community interacts with Yemenis and celebrate together.



Inside Sana'a having group picnics in Al-Sabeen Park is one of the weekend activities.

nese about student life and for posting announcements.

The students are not on scholarships, therefore they need to work for a few years in China before being able to afford the tuition. Sometimes their education is sponsored by relatives or philanthropists in China who believe in Islamic teachings.

There are coordinating persons in China who arrange for the student's contact with the university and the existing community in Yemen. When new students arrive, senior students receive them at the airport and help them settle in.

Suliman came to Yemen towards the end of 2008. He was received at the airport by Yusuf and others who showed him around.

"I never felt a stranger in Yemen. Yemen feels like my second home and my brothers who had been here before me made it easier for me to settle in," he said.

Reflecting on the news of unrest in Yemen, the students explained that when their families see the news about Yemen they worry. The students call their families on a daily basis to comfort them.

The community also helps new comers identify the best places to shop or eat outside.

"The food here is expensive and the quality is not good," said Miriam. "There is an impression here that if anything is made in China it is of bad quality. This is not true, because in China we have great products and we don't need to import anything." She thinks that the problem with Chinese products in Yemen is that Yemeni merchants import bad quality products in order to sell them cheap and make more profits.

But if there is one thing new Chinese students should do before coming to Yemen, it is to make sure they have what they need from home, because some things cannot be found in Yemen. "Bring your spices from China," said Habiba, one of the female Chinese students.

First impressions

The first impression is usually upon arriving at the airport. Coming from a major economic power, for many who have not been to a developing country before, Sana'a International Airport is a surprise. The second impression is the pleasant weather. Many students who come during winter are relieved to see the sun and enjoy the warm weather.

But then comes the shock of bulging cheeks.

"It was so strange to see people eating [chewing] qat. When we first saw them it was like were carrying grass in plastic bags," said Miriam.

As the new arrivals settle in, they start to realize how different Yemen is. For the female students it was strange not to see many Yemeni women out-

doors.

"We went to the market on the second day after our arrival, but all we saw were men. Where I come from, women are very much part of public life," Miriam commented. "When we enter the market place they all stare at us, even though we have covered our faces according to Yemeni tradition. Somehow they still recognize that we are Chinese."

In their free time and between semesters many of the Chinese students travel around the country.

"Inside Sana'a we go to the old city and the Rock Palace on the outskirts. Outside Sana'a, we have been to Aden, Ibb, Taiz, and Hodeida," said Suliman. "The best cities are the ones with beaches."

He regretted that many ancient sites are not taken care of. They could have held significant tourism potential for Yemen had more attention been given to them.

"The president's mosque is magnificent and we like going there," added Yusuf.

In China, there are trains that connect the cities. Tourism in Yemen, according to the students, would have been much easier had there been a rail network.

"There is a proverb in Chinese that says, if you want to become rich, first you have to pave the roads," laughed Yusuf.

"Even the way to the Rock Palace is very difficult and I feel tired before reaching it. There is so much dust and there are no trees," explained Miriam.

Love stories

Ramdan and Habiba had come together in the same batch and their acquaintance started on the flight. In less than four months they were already married.

"I tried her cooking and was automatically hooked," he laughed. The couple got married in Yemen and are already expecting a child.

Yusuf and Miriam had their first born in Yemen. They named their son Yaseen and he is already nine months old. For many of the Chinese students, social events such as marriages and births are very much a part of their usually four year stay in Yemen.

They feel that they have created many friendships here in Yemen, especially within the community. Although they are likely to return to China after graduating from university, some like Yusuf want to continue with higher studies in Islamic Jurisprudence if he can.

"There is a large Muslim community in China, and we need specialists who know Arabic and can teach Islamic studies there or even translation," he said.

Some students may want to stay in Yemen longer for business ventures.

"We hope for Yemen to develop more and for Yemenis to be happy," said Ismail. "When we were in China we heard good things about Yemen, but some things here are disappointing such as qat."

"Qat is a strange thing," said Ramadan. "Maybe we will try it to see how it tastes, but Yemenis waste so much time [on qat] and sometimes even skip prayers."



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Founder of Yemen Times

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Yemen a good
world citizen."**

OUR
OPINIONWhat Yemenis
need to know
about US policy

I just returned from a two week visit to the United States. I visited Washington, New York and Los Angeles and met with many Americans of various political, religious and cultural backgrounds. I have also met with people involved in the US policy including journalists, experts and officials.

They all asked me about Yemen. The most common question is who or what comes after Saleh? They are all concerned about Yemen falling into the hands of fanatic Islamism or Al-Qaeda sympathizers.

What I realized is that the public is interested in knowing more about Yemen and wants to be involved in the US policy towards the Middle East, especially in the current political climate. There is a misconception that the Americans are isolated and have no interest in the world around them. However, there is a huge gap in understanding and lack of relevant and interesting information available to them.

The internet is so full of things about Yemen but there are two problems with this, the first is that the information is conflicting and usually dependent on who provides it, calling its credibility into question. The second is making people take the time in their busy lives to go online and seek information on Yemen.

Why should an average American research Yemen and make an effort to reach a better understanding of this complicated country? It is our responsibility as Yemenis, especially those with access to the American community, whether through English media or direct interaction, to create this interest.

During my visit to the states I was interviewed by several media outlets and spoke at many events. Everyone I talked to was genuinely interested and intrigued by me and what I had to say. I gave them a glimpse into Yemen through my eyes and I am sure now they are a little more informed.

We need to do more of these visits. Yemenis need to take initiatives and reach out to the world not just America in a positive, constructive way and tell them more about us and our priorities as a nation. It is only through helping create a more informed American public that we can influence the American policy on Yemen. Of course, we can directly talk to American decision makers but how many Yemenis have access to them?

We also need to show them that we as a nation have what it takes to rebuild our country and create a new and better Yemen. We do need support and empowerment to fight our own battles and we don't need the Americans or the world in general to fight them for us. Why should Americans sacrifice their men and women for a Yemeni cause? There is a cheaper and more effective way of doing this that would eventually produce better results on the long run for Yemen and the world.

The war against terrorism is not a physical war with guns and troops. If we want a safer world we need to make people happier and less inclined to be involved in terror. And we do this through soft security, eradicating poverty and empowerment of civil society, especially women's movements.

It is about people and this is what we should emphasize to the American people, policy makers and the world.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Stay out of Yemen!

By: Rep. Ron Paul

Statement before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing: "Yemen on the Brink: Implications for U.S. Policy"
Mr. Chairman, I am extremely concerned over current US policy toward Yemen, which I believe will backfire and leave the United States less safe and much poorer. Increasing US involvement in Yemen may be sold as a fight against terrorism, but in fact it is more about expanding US government control and influence over this strategically-placed nation at the gateway to Asia.

The current administration, according to today's testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feltman, has dramatically increased foreign aid to Yemen, from \$17 million in FY 2008 to \$40 million in FY 2009, to \$67 million for FY 2010, to, according to the president's recent budget sent to Congress, \$106 million for FY 2011. That represents an incredible six-fold increase in US aid to Yemen over just four years, at a time when the US economy continues to falter.

When I look at the US assistance plan for Yemen I see that it is primarily focused on nation-building. That is the failed idea that if the United States sends enough money to a foreign government, with which that government purchases US-manufactured weapons and hires US-based consultants and non-governmental organizations, that country will achieve a strong economy and political stability and in gratitude will become eternally friendly to the US and US interests. I have yet to see a single successful example of this strategy.

According to Assistant Secretary Feltman's statement, "Priorities for U.S. assistance include political and fiscal reforms and meaningful attention to legitimate internal grievances; better governance through decentralization, reduced corruption and civil service reform; human rights protections; job-related training; economic diversification to generate employment and enhance livelihoods, and strengthened natural resource management." How can we believe that the US government can achieve abroad what we know it cannot effectively achieve at home? We are going to spend millions of dollars to help create jobs in Yemen as we continue to shed jobs in the United States?

Yemen is a country mired in civil conflict. The Shi'ites in the north, who make up a significant percentage of the country's total population and a majority in their region, have been fighting against what they see as the

discriminatory policies of the Sunni-based government in the capital, Sana'a, for years. Yemenis in the south, who up until 1990 were a separate country, likewise oppose the central government and threaten to escalate this opposition. Added into this mix are elements of what are called al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), some of whom are left over from the US-supported fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, and others that have been radicalized by their exposure to Wahhabi extremism in US-allied Saudi Arabia. Still others in AQAP are veterans of the insurgency against US occupation of Iraq. We cannot forget either those Yemenis who were held for years by the United States without charges at Guantanamo Bay. How many of those were innocent of terrorist actions or intent but became radicalized under such conditions?

Saudi Arabia's concern over the Shi'ite unrest in north Yemen has led to unsubstantiated claims of Iranian involvement in an attempt to draw the US into a regional problem that has nothing to do with the United States. Saudi Arabia has struggled with unrest among its own Shi'ite population and is determined to prevent any spill-over. There are some here in the US who repeat false claims of Iranian involvement in the hope of expanding the US military presence in the area. Others in the United States irresponsibly call for a US preemptive war in Yemen. We should be clear on this: expanded US involvement in Yemen plays into the hands of bin Laden and his organization as has been made clear on many occasions. Luring the United States into a conflict in Yemen by falsely advertising it as part of a war on terror will certainly radicalize the Yemeni population against the United States. It will weaken our over-extended military and it will further destroy our economy.

Similarly, the US-backed central government in Sana'a stands to gain by claiming its internal problems are part of a global crisis that requires US intervention. The central Yemeni government has much to gain by making its battles and its problems our battles and our problems. But that gain will come at the expense of US soldiers, US security, and the American economy. I wonder how long it will be before the US establishes a permanent base on the strategic territory of Yemen?

I hope, as we begin to debate the foreign affairs budget for next year, that we may yet change course from that of the last administration, where the failed policies of interventionism, militarism, and nation-building have left the United States in a diminished position in the world.

COMMON SENSE

Mr. Obama: Give the
Yemeni people a chance!

For over a month and a half now, the Yemeni peaceful protests against the dictatorial corrupt regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh continue to attract the attention of, not only people in the Arab World, but of policy makers and interested people throughout the world. These protests are not simply echoes of the political ambitions of any politicians or political factions. On the contrary, the protests are spearheaded, organized and coordinated by a multitude of highly educated and politically conscious youths and youth groups, who can no longer remain idle while their country is victim to one of the worst governing regimes in the world (Yemen is ranked 133 among 169 nations in the UNDP Human Development Report of 2010, and this is mainly based on official non-credible disputable data, to say the least).

In all the peaceful demonstrations throughout the Republic of Yemen, the protesting youth and their backers from all walks of Yemeni life and from the various elements of Yemeni society (and from the overwhelming members of Yemeni expatriate communities overseas) have proven beyond any reasonable doubt that their protests are very much warranted, understandable and indeed civilized. Notwithstanding all the repressive and bloody efforts by the security organs of the dictatorial regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh and his mercenary thugs to quell these protests, culminating in several sacrificed fatalities and considerable numbers of wounded protesters, most of who are in the prime of their youth, the protests have remained remarkably peaceful and more importantly determined to arrive to the legitimate aspiration of the Yemeni people for a real democratic corruption free government. Even the innocent martyrs of the Jaar Munitions Factory may be considered as indirect victims of Saleh's (AQAP? - They publicly disassociated themselves) mercenaries. After thirty-three years of ongoing repression, it is about time that Yemen is liberated from the many various notorious repressive security organs of the Saleh regime and freed from the grossly misleading propaganda machine for the glorification of Saleh, to which the media organs of the Government have been turned, at considerable public expense.

Like all aspirers for universally accepted civil, political and human rights, the protesters of Yemen have demonstrated the sincerity of their intentions, the legitimacy of their cause and the civility of their approach. Moreover, despite their strong tribal associations and the relative ease by which armaments can be obtained in Yemen, the protesting youth of Yemen have never succumbed and will never allow themselves to fall prey to the ongoing systematic intimidations to push the protesters to resort to a violent showdown with the regime. The sophisticated youth of Yemen know well that non-violent and peaceful protests have almost always achieved their desired goals and brought on sustainable democratic governments and civil and human rights, as India, South Africa, the United States (civil rights movement), Tunisia and Egypt have clearly shown in just the last sixty years. Even the Yemeni people have come to realize that the steadfastness of their youth are worth lining up behind. Several of the officials (that were once loyal elements of the Saleh regime, in both the military and civilian sectors of government), have now seen the folly and ridicule of continuing to have Yemen fall further down the abyss of decadence and a life without dignity for the overwhelming majority of Yemenis. The Saleh regime continues to witness the defection of even former relatives and in-laws of the President. The true patriotic sentiments of these kin prevailed over their own narrow selfish sentiments. The latter instead opted to join the first true movement for the liberation of Yemen, which they are convinced will catapult Yemen into becoming a state of modern government institutions that are run in a transparent manner and are subject to effective accountability based on sound performance and public scrutiny and oversight.

If all the above is easily ascertainable to most observers inside and outside of Yemen and more important discernible by the overwhelming majority of the Yemeni population, one is simply alarmed by the rather cool attitude of most officials in the Administration of President Barack Obama. The main characteristic of the views projected by people like the Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, and the Secretary of State, Ms. Hillary Clinton on the situation in Yemen, has so far been at best not taking note of the clear majority support that the peaceful protest in Yemen enjoys, which transcend all political, religious, social, tribal and geographical lines within the population of Yemen.

On the pretext of a baseless worry on the future of the "fight against terrorism", the US White House has been misled to believe that Saleh represents a guarantee that this war can continue to satisfy the aims of the United States in this war. However, only under democratic governments can terrorism be subdued and remain undesirable to the majority of the Yemeni people. As it is now, terrorism exists in limited areas of Yemen, thanks to the liberty the Saleh regime has always given to extremists and eventually to terrorists to operate freely in Yemen over the span of its 33 year rule. Moreover, most of the current active terrorists in Yemen (Iraq, Afghanistan, etc) that are allegedly tied to Al-Qaeda are not even Yemenis, but Saudi Arabians, many of who infiltrated to Yemen in late 2009, as reported by the Saudi press then. Most observers are almost certain that this was with the tacit approval of the Saleh regime (some suggest in the hope of being able to defeat the Houthis protesters in Sa'ada and other Northern Governorates and to counter the Secessionist Revolt in the South). Now Al-Qaeda (in the Arabian Peninsula) is used by the regime to gain western support for the regime to continue its unholy subjugation of the Yemeni people. The question that is bound to arise: where do the interests of the Yemeni people and the genuine hopes and aspirations of the majority of Yemenis fall in the formulation of US foreign policy? Ignoring such a fundamental consideration when drawing foreign policy is certainly counterproductive in the US War on Terror, since the existence of terrorism and the freedom enjoyed by mostly non-Yemeni terrorists is inseparable from a continuing Saleh regime. On another note, the assertion that Yemeni tribes are actually protecting terrorists, which one finds in some of the "expert" analysis on terrorism and Yemen, is baseless and has been categorically denied by most influential tribal leaders, many of who also have publicly confirmed that Saleh's removal will end the atmosphere and facilities enjoyed by terrorists and provided by no other than Ali Abdullah Saleh himself.

Hassan Al-Haifi has been a Yemeni political economist and journalist for more than 20 years. His blog may be read at: <http://com-senfromyem.blogspot.com>

SKETCHED OPINION

By: Hamid



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Afghanistan Quran protest leaves at least 7 dead

By Mohammad Bashir

Afghans protesting the burning of a Quran by an obscure U.S. pastor over-ran a U.N. compound Friday and killed at least seven international staff in the deadliest-ever attack on the United Nations in Afghanistan.

Thousands of demonstrators flooded into the streets after Friday prayers and headed for the U.N. mission in usually peaceful Mazar-i-Sharif, a city considered safe enough to be in the vanguard of a crucial security transition.

The governor of Balkh province said insurgents had used the march as cover to attack the compound, in a battle that raged for hours and raised serious questions about plans to make the city a pilot for security transfer to national forces.

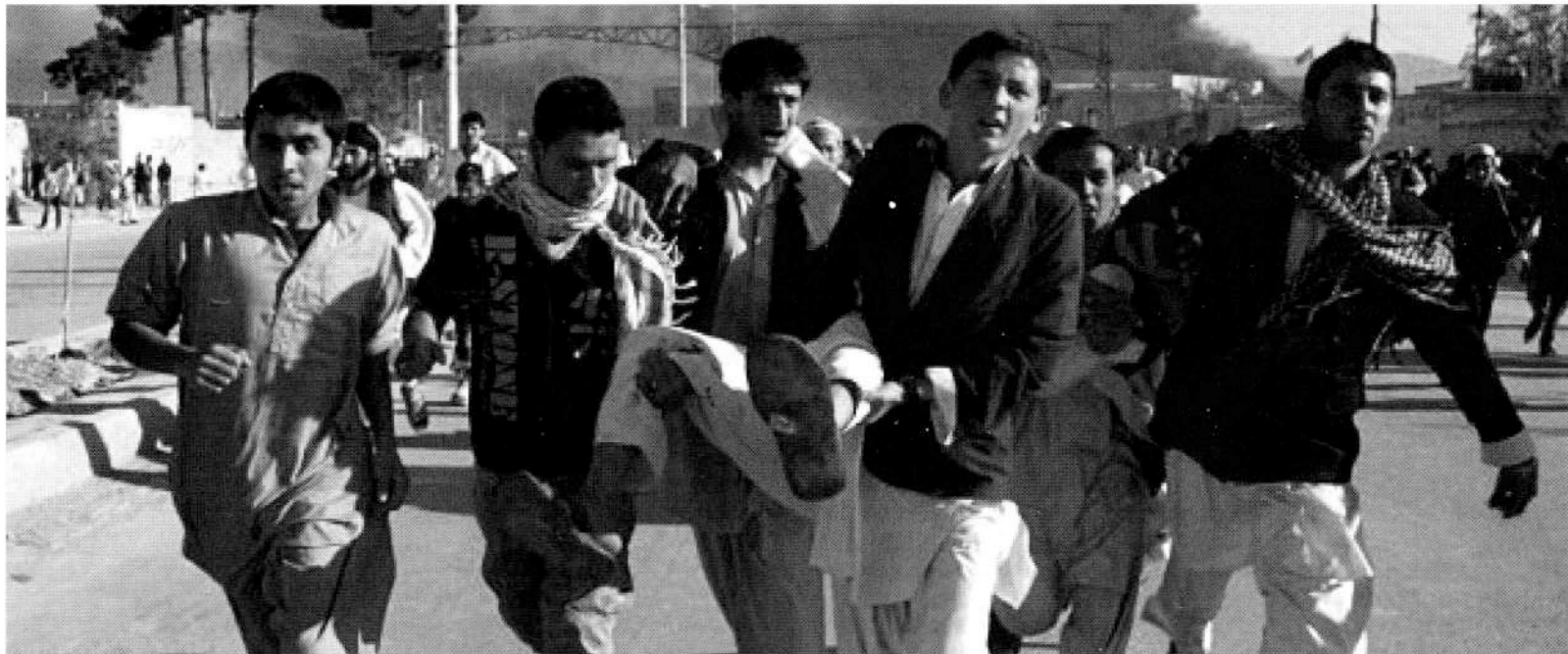
The confirmed dead were three international U.N. staff and four international Gurkha guards.

In New York, U.N. peacekeeping chief Alain Le Roy told reporters after briefing members of the Security Council who convened an emergency session to discuss the attack, that some of the protesters seemed to be more than demonstrators.

"Some of them were clearly armed," Le Roy said, adding that they appeared to have targeted the foreigners at the compound. "We are not sure at all that the U.N. was the target."

"Maybe they wanted to find an international target and the U.N. was the one in Mazar-i-Sharif," Le Roy said, adding that an investigation of the incident was in progress.

The attackers overwhelmed security guards, burned parts of the compound and



climbed up blast walls to topple a guard tower. Five protesters were also killed and about 20 wounded, some after trying to take weapons off U.N. security guards.

"The insurgents have taken advantage of the situation to attack the U.N. compound," said Governor Ata Mohammad Noor.

He told a news conference that many in the crowd of protesters had been carrying guns. Some 27 people have already been detained over the attack, he added.

Le Roy said U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's chief-of-staff, Vijay Nambiar, and head of U.N. security Gregory Starr were heading to Kabul Friday night.

He added that U.N. security in Afghanistan would be reviewed.

Ban and the U.N. Security Council condemned the attack.

Deadliest attack

The attack was one of the worst on the world body in years.

"It is the worst incident ever for U.N. staff in Afghanistan. Mazar mobs were active in the 1990s, repeatedly ransacking UN offices ... but so far as I remember, they never actually killed anyone," a former U.N. employee in Afghanistan told Reuters.

The worst previous attack was an insur-

gent assault on a Kabul guest house where U.N. staff were staying in October 2009. Five employees were killed and nine others wounded.

The two largest recent attacks on U.N. compounds in other countries are a 2007 bomb in Algiers that killed 17 U.N. staff, and a 2003 attack on the Baghdad hotel that was the U.N. headquarters there, which killed at least 22 people.

Christian preacher Terry Jones, who after international condemnation canceled a plan last year to burn copies of the Quran, supervised the burning of the book in front of about 50 people at a church in Florida on March 20, according to his website.

He told the British Broadcasting Corporation he did not feel guilty over the deaths in Mazar. "We are not responsible for their actions," Jones said, when asked about the attack.

Thousands of demonstrators marched through western Herat city and about 200 in Kabul to protest the same incident, but there was no violence at either demonstration.

Long-standing anger over civilian casualties has been heightened by the Quran burning and the recent publication of gruesome photographs of the body of an unarmed Afghan teenager killed by U.S. soldiers.

'Cowardly' attack

The Afghan police and army, whom the United Nations rely on for its first line of defense, were apparently unable to control the crowd. The NATO-led coalition said German troops answered a request for help, but it was not clear when the call was made or answered.

U.N. officials in New York said earlier that as many as 20 U.N. staff may have been killed. They said later that figure had included people who turned out to be Afghan demonstrators.

An Afghan police spokesman said two of the U.N. dead were beheaded. Le Roy said no one was beheaded, although one victim's throat was cut.

The head of the mission in the city, a Russian, was injured but was now in the hospital, the Russian Foreign Ministry said. Russia called on the Afghan government and international forces to "take all necessary measures" to protect U.N. workers.

Romania's Foreign Ministry said preliminary information suggested a Romanian citizen was among the dead, the Norwegian U.N. mission confirmed a Norwegian was one of the dead and Sweden confirmed a Swedish man was also killed.

U.S. President Barack Obama, Afghan counterpart Hamid Karzai and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen joined condemnation of the attack. (Additional reporting by Hamid Shalizi in KABUL, Stephanie Nebehay in GENEVA, Amie Ferris-Rotman in MOSCOW and Louis Charbonneau in NEW YORK. Writing by Emma Graham-Harrison; Editing by Alex Richardson and Peter Cooney)

Facing housing crunch, Saudi Arabia edges to allowing mortgages

Shura Council approves legislation amid drive to encourage home-building

By David Rosenberg
For the Media Line

The day a Saudi will be able to walk into a bank and walk out with a mortgage is getting closer after the country's Shura Council this week approved a much anticipated mortgage law.

Getting a mortgage industry up and running has wide-ranging implications, not just for ordinary Saudis, for whom home ownership is beyond the financial reach of many, but for the economy and its building industry, which analysts say will benefit from the resulting surge in demand and construction.

"One of the many things it would do is encourage new housing development," Matthew Green, associate

director of Middle East research at CB Richard Ellis, a U.S. property services firm, told The Media Line. "Saudi Arabia has an undersupply in residential property. It would encourage developers into the market. It would allow those who cannot at the moment afford to buy their own home."

The mortgage law is one of a host of reforms the kingdom has undertaken in the past several weeks as it nervously tries to douse any potential flare-up of unrest of the kind that has spread across the Middle East. While the kingdom has shunned political change, the country's housing shortage has emerged as a target area for people-pleasing action.

King Abdullah announced plans earlier this month to spend \$15 billion to build 500,000 new homes and fund more generous government loans to

buyers as part of a massive economic stimulus program. Last Friday, the Saudi state news agency announced the establishment of a Ministry of Housing to tackle the growing crisis.

Already the most populous nation in the Gulf, the number of Saudis has grown 20% since 2002. Demand for homes is going to swell in coming years as the country's young population reaches the stage in life when they marry, start a family and want a home of their own. Some 47% to the country's current indigenous population of 18.5 million are under the age of 18.

But the government's plan to develop 500,000 units won't come close to addressing demand, according to Banque Saudi Fransi. They forecast the country will need to add 1.65 million new homes to its stock by 2015. Credit Suisse estimated demand is even bigger, saying the country will need some two million more units by 2014.

More than half of all Saudis rent due to the high prices of land and housing, which have become unaffordable for

low- to middle-income families because mortgage lending isn't an option for financing a home purchase. Ordinary bank loans entail substantial down payments, short terms of no more than 15 years and high interest rates. As a result, most people have to draw down on savings.

CB Richard Ellis says Saudi tiny mortgage market, not counting government home loans, equals 1% of gross domestic product, compared with 7% in the United Arab Emirates and 16% in Bahrain.

Not surprisingly, given the limited options for home buyers, home-building is geared toward the wealthiest. Jones Lang LaSalle, a U.S. real estate services company, estimated in a report March 27 that 70% of all new homes were built for people in the top 10% income group. Aside from the lack of financing for low- to middle-income families, new construction is typically done on a small scale of five units or less, which is more expensive, it said.

Indeed, CB Richard Ellis estimates about 15% of the country's housing is vacant because the people who need homes can't afford the ones being built.

"There's a long-term problem in Saudi Arabia with shortage of housing partly related to inability for people to get mortgages," Daniel Kaye, senior economist at the National Bank of Kuwait, told The Media Line.

Officials have been dragging their heels for years on establishing a mortgage market, but Shuaa Capital, a Dubai-based investment bank, said growing pressure for reform should speed up the process.

"Of course, the proposed law will not be implemented overnight," Shuaa analyst Roy Cherry said in a March 29 report. "We expect the Shura Council's approval to require a number of follow-up steps including the king's signature before it actually becomes enacted. However, given the heightened reform friendliness of MENA governments over the past couple of

months - this should not take long (at least in relative terms)."

Shuaa cited eight companies, among them Dal Al-Arkan, Saudi Arabia's biggest developer, and builder Arabtec Holding as the companies most likely to benefit.

The downside for consumers is that the law will make it possible for lenders to repossess homes if the borrower falls behind in his mortgage, a process that is virtually impossible under the current law. The government's Real Estate Development Fund, which current dominates the residential real estate finance market by offering sharia-compliant interest-free loans, is rumored to have a significant default rate.

Home prices will probably also rise. Even before the mortgage legislation was announced, Jones Lang LaSalle said it expected rents and land prices in Saudi Arabia to climb 10% over the next two to three years as the housing aid and other stimulus measures boost demand and purchasing power.

Republic of South Sudan faces precarious start

By: IRIN

A resurgence of internal armed opposition in Southern Sudan illustrates that the birth of this new independent nation, scheduled for 9 July, will be marked not only by celebrations of long-fought liberation from the North, but also by anxiety about the government's ability to maintain peace and stability across a vast and ethnically diverse region.

Claims of rebel unity feed this anxiety. The most prominent man now fighting the southern army (SPLA), George Athor, a former SPLA general, who broke away after claiming fraud in April 2010 gubernatorial elections, recently announced that five opposition forces active in several states had forged a united front against the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

"Our objective is realization of democracy in the new country of South Sudan," Athor said by satellite phone from his undisclosed hideout in Jonglei.

"We must ensure that all Southern Sudanese are equal irrespective of tribe," Athor said, arguing that there is "no equality among southerners" under the rule of the SPLM, which is dominated by the Dinka, the region's largest ethnic group.

SPLA spokesman Col Philip Aguer dismissed Athor's unity claim, insisting that all the various opposition forces scattered across the South had in common was support from Khartoum. Aside from a few documents of dubious authenticity, no hard evidence has emerged to support this allegation, made repeatedly since rebellions escalated after the elections last year, and then again after a lull surrounding January's secession referendum.

Over recent weeks hundreds have been killed in the violence, which echoes the internal conflicts that raged during the South's decades-long armed rebellion against the North. That larger civil war ended with the 2005 signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

"Current reports indicate that more than 10 conflict incidents relating to militia groups occurred in March,"

said Giovanni Bosco, head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Juba, the Southern capital.

He added that almost 16,000 people had been newly displaced in Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states as a result.

"The recent increase in the intensity and scope of violence in parts of the South is worrying. Even more worrying is the impact of fighting on civilians, including on the high number of returnees [from the north] present in some of the affected areas," said Bosco, noting that the fighting - and related relocation of five NGOs in Jonglei - limited the humanitarian response and risked disrupting the current start of the school year.

"Of additional concern are reports of newly laid land-mines, which pose a threat to the security of civilians and jeopardize the agricultural season," he said.

The UN has also warned that more than 10,000 civilians displaced by clashes between the SPLA and Athor's group in Jonglei were "in a dire state with serious shortages of food, water

and medicine... a number of elderly people have died" while fleeing to places of sanctuary set up by local authorities.

"This is not what we expected," said Philip Aguer (not related to the SPLA spokesman), a former SPLA child soldier whose father died in the civil war. "We are disappointed with what we are now experiencing," he said, referring to the army's alleged "mistreatment of innocent people" in its counter-insurgency operations.

Inclusive leadership needed

Several analysts have underlined how important it is for all citizens to trust the government of the soon-to-be independent state to represent their interests.

"South Sudan [as the new country will officially be named] will need to demonstrate that it belongs to all South Sudanese; that it does not belong to any ethnic, religious or political group," Jok Madut Jok, an academic specializing in conflict analysis, who now serves as Minister of Culture, said in a 25 March speech at the University of Juba.

Civil society groups have criticized Salva Kiir, President of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), for failing - beyond offering amnesty to various rebel leaders if they disarmed - to significantly make good on public promises in the referendum's run-up to accommodate his political and military opponents.

On 17 March, the Carter Center issued a statement urging the SPLM to be more inclusive in the transition to independence and criticizing the party for its "dominance over all decisions" and its prevention of "meaningful participation from opposition members".

For Zach Vertin, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, "Managing diversity and building a common national identity in the new South will not be easy, particularly in a still-militarized environment. How the GoSS and the SPLA handle these latest rebellions may set the tone for the post-independence period, as relationships are redefined between state and non-state actors," he told IRIN.

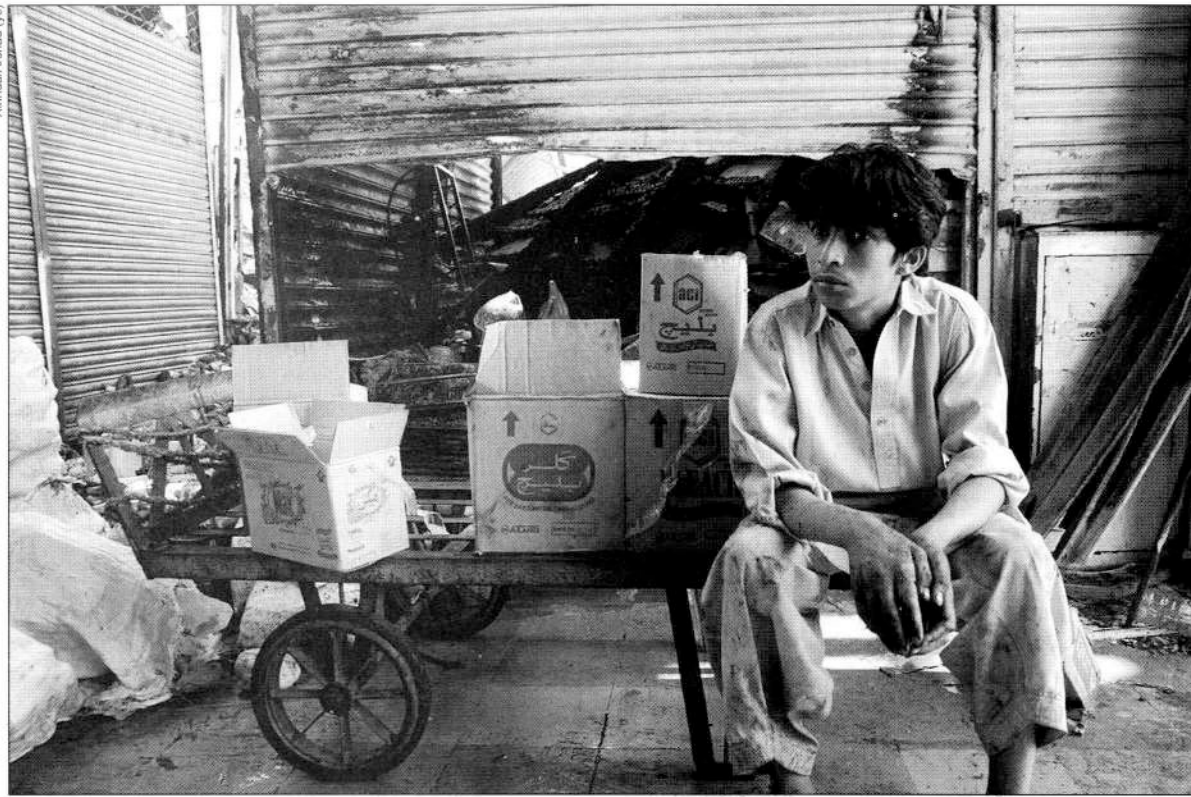
"A forceful response [to armed opposition] on its own is unlikely to yield solutions, particularly where lo-

cal communities, ethnic tensions, and legitimate grievances are mixed in. Southern leadership should open political space and articulate a strategy to address genuine grievances so as to consolidate its legitimacy among the public more broadly. Otherwise, these may not be the last of the rebellions," he warned.

Ali Verjee, a senior researcher with the Rift Valley Institute, told IRIN: "The violence has demonstrated that the currents of discontent within both the SPLM and SPLA are far from resolved, and have a growing constituency of support, which may grow further still."

"While the causes of the violence are complex, it's worth noting at least two holdovers from the CPA: a continuing failure to successfully integrate other armed forces into the SPLA and dissatisfaction with the flawed 2010 elections, which collectively opened more wounds than they healed."

"The patterns of behaviour that have so far defined the approach to military integration and political competition, if sustained, will not end Southern Sudan's instability," he warned.



KARACHI, March 28, 2011 — A boy sits outside his burnt shop after fire took place at a market in southern Pakistani port city of Karachi. At least 108 shops and godowns were gutted in a fire, which erupted in the metropolitan's second largest wholesale market, commonly known as the Empress Market of Saddar Town.



SIRTE, March 28, 2011 — Libyan rebels pray after they were ambushed by forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi in the eastern Libyan town of Sirte.



KABUL, March 28, 2011 — An Afghan balloons seller carries his balloons for sell in Kabul, capital of Afghanistan.



DAMASCUS, March 29, 2011 — Syrian Vice President Farouq al-Shara (R) meets with visiting Chinese special envoy to the Middle East Wu Sike in Damascus, Syria, March 28, 2011.



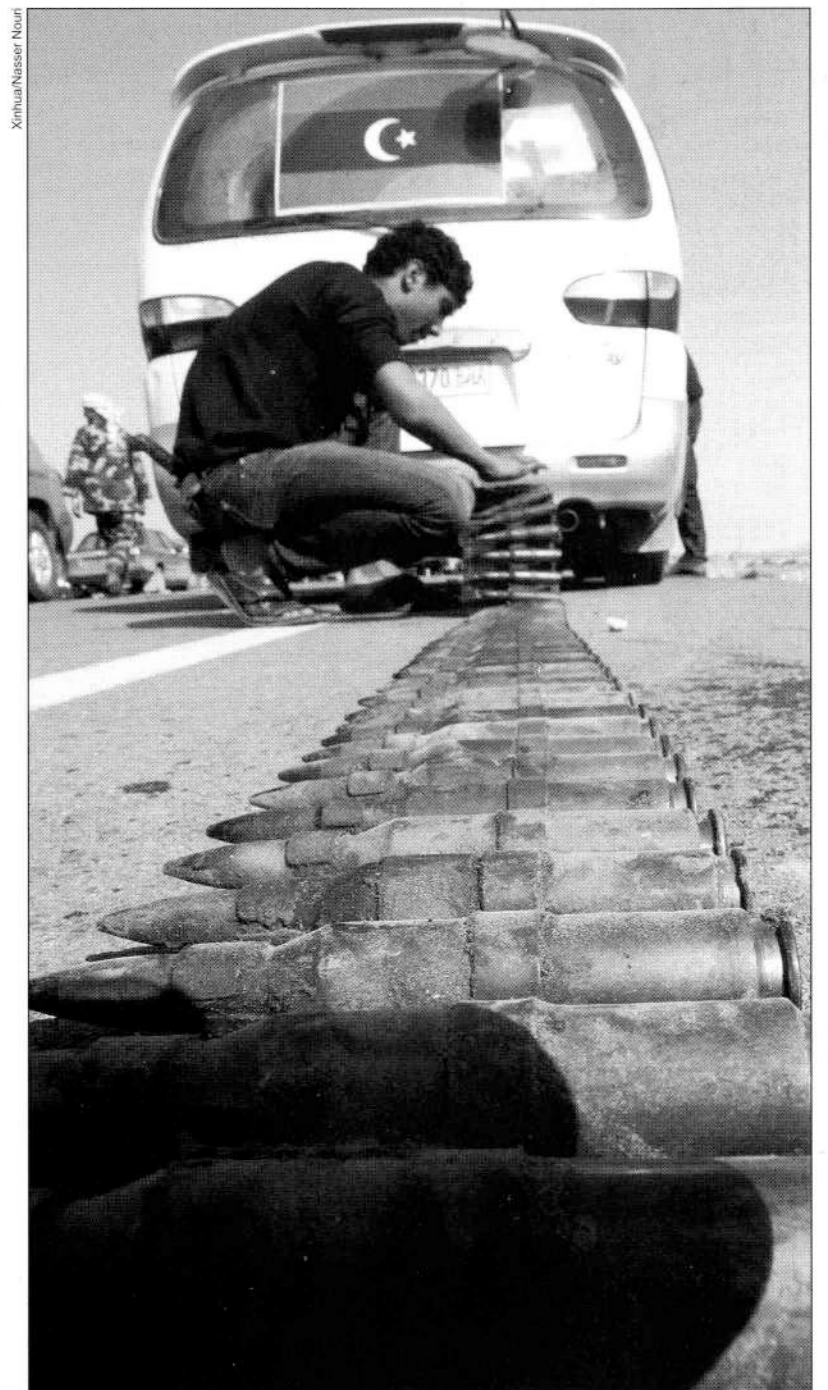
TUNISIA, March 29, 2011 — A refugee from Libya is seen at a camp in Tunisia near Libya, March 26, 2011.



ANNABA, March 28, 2011 — Fans cheer before the Group D qualifying match for the African Cup of Nations CAN-2012 between Algeria and Morocco held in Annaba, east of Algeria, on March 27, 2011. Algeria won by 1-0.



BANGKOK, March 28, 2011 — Thai army soldiers demonstrate the efficiency of the Russian helicopters in transporting troops at a military barrack in Bangkok. Three MI-17 V-5 helicopters from Russia costing 29.1 million U.S. dollars, were delivered to Thai army on Monday. The medium transport helicopters - to be stationed at the Army Aviation Center in Lopburi province, about 150 kilometers north of Bangkok - will be used for disaster relief missions such as extinguishing wild fire and assisting people in distress.



BENGAZI, March 27, 2011 — Libyan rebels arrive at the frontline between Sirte and Ras Lanuf, eastern Libya. The rebels claimed that they have entered Ras Lanuf.

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Youth Talk

Compiled by Mahmood Al-Matari and Safiya Al-Jabry

In this section we talk to young people about their concerns, hopes and dreams. Every week we hit the streets and share what young people have to say right here.

This week's question:

What are your hopes and dreams for the future of Yemen?

Abdulrahman Alshamiry

One of the greatest proverbs I admire states, "Dreams are not the ones which come when you sleep, but they are the ones which keep you up at night." I dream of the very best for my beloved country, Yemen, a country that in my opinion is highly respected by other nations where people live in harmony and peace. A homeland where positive values are practiced, religious beliefs are upheld and obedience to the law is put into effect regardless of race, tribe or position. We all are supposed to be counted for doing our share in any way we can to help our visions come to reality and to shape a better Yemeni future that is accessible to everyone in our social system.

Wala'a Almakari

Do you mean Yemen without Saleh? I'm 100% sure it's going to be much better than now. Our oppressive president claims that his position is some sort of protection for us, but Yemeni youth will continue saying "You are definitely mistaken." There must be more than one person who can lead Yemen back to its dignity and esteem. Ali's ouster means a real life for Yemen.

Najat Ahmed

The dreams I have for my country are too many to be measured. What I hope for is a country that will raise the full potential of its youth and give them the chance to march towards development and civilization.

Samar Al Harazi

Yemen without corruption, Yemen without barbarism, Yemen without tribalism... those are just some of the dreams and hopes I have for my country.

Ahmed M Zawia

I dream of a country where we are able to walk and travel freely and proud as Yemeni citizens. However, this will not happen unless we all change our views and work for our country, and not on our own personal interests. Allah does not change the condition of people unless they change themselves.

Saddam Al-Adwar

My dream is to see a government with qualified youth given roles. To see people walk around without carrying weapons or chewing qat. To see people go on with their daily lives normally and contributing to service and development.

Ali Al-Maznaec

I hope to see the country prosper and progress. I would like to see a fight against corruption, the elimination of qat, better education and to see faces of ambitious youth in the new government.

Taha Muthana

I hope for a better future for my country. My dream is to have a regime that engages youth and cares more for the production system instead of the consumption system. I would like to see all Yemeni people giving, sharing and helping to build new Yemen.

Next Week's Question:

Do you think that President Ali Abdullah Saleh is making the right decisions for the country?

Follow this section for a new question every week and feel free to reply with your answers or feedback by sending an e-mail to yt youth@gmail.com

So this is your chance to share your humorous stories, poems or opinions with other young readers!



Pro-government demonstrations last Friday were protected by tanks and low flying helicopters. These soldiers posed to several photo ops for their admirers.

YT photo by Jeb Boone

We were all wrong about Yemen

By Abubakr Al-Shamahi

They said it could not be done. President Saleh has ruled Yemen, a proud country with a history dating back to biblical times, for 32 years. Apparently well-loved by his people, he has reneged on his pledges to not run for the Presidency again three times, each time due to apparently spontaneous protests in support of him. 'We have no one apart from Ali,' goes the people's chant.

But now new chants are being screamed around the public squares of Yemen, the same chant that has also been heard in Tunis, Manama, Cairo, Benghazi and Damascus; 'the people want the downfall of the regime.'

That the Saleh kleptocracy is on the verge of being overthrown should not be a surprise, considering the state Yemen finds itself in. This is a country where

the average age is 18, unemployment is atmospheric, corruption is a way of life and poverty is everywhere.

However, Saleh was never strong enough to be able to repress his people in the open. His repression has been underhand, robbing the Arab world's most fertile country of its resources. This less visible form of subjugation is hard to make clear to the people, who see no bullets flying at them, and therefore no reason to rise up.

Then there were societal factors such as the level of education. Experts pointed especially to the lack of a middle class as a fundamental obstacle in the path of any Yemeni revolution. Qat renders Yemenis unproductive for a large proportion of the day, and many of the early protests petered out in the afternoon, as protesters went home to get their fix.

There is a real fear that Yemen will become the world's next failed state.

The state has faced serious uprisings, and al-Qaeda activity. Yemen is also one of the most weaponised societies on Earth, with 75 million firearms in a country with a population of 25 million.

I can happily say that it seems that the naysayers were incorrect.

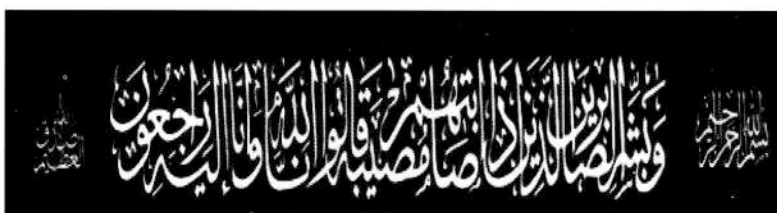
Momentum has gathered slowly, and now millions of protesters are demanding the immediate resignation of the President. The army is mostly on their side, joined by large number of parliamentarians and diplomats. The sheer will of the youthful protesters, with their organization and tenacity, is a hopeful sign of a cultural change in Yemen.

Another indication of the change that Yemen is seeing is in the composition of the protesters themselves. They come from all walks of life, and from different political standpoints. The tribes are a significant presence here,

yet a positive one. They have left their weapons behind, and have taken it upon themselves to frisk those coming into the protest area, to ensure the safety of those calling for change.

Various tents hold discussions on politics and the future of the country, university professors lecture about their fields of study, women speak on the main stage and are applauded and cheered by men of this patriarchal society, singers entertain the crowds with popular music and revolutionary songs.

We were all wrong about Yemen, and even if the demands of the youthful protesters are not met immediately, there is no denying that a barrier has certainly been broken. The way that Yemenis have overcome the various barriers placed in front of them will surely be studied for years to come; a new style of revolution, peacefully protesting, despite all the odds.



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Ali Al-Qadhi: "Only the regime's Al-Qaeda exists"

Ali Abdraboh Al-Qadhi, a sheikh from the Murad tribes of Marib, is head of the *independent block* in Yemen's parliament. Al-Qadhi was a close friend of Yemen's most beloved president, Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, and a leader of the Nasserite party in the 1970s. After participating in a failed coup attempt in 1978 he was sentenced to execution but later pardoned by President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Al-Qadhi is considered one of the most important political and tribal figures in Marib province. The Yemen Times' Shatha Al-Harazi met Al-Qadhi to and asked him about the controversial and notorious role played by Al-Qaeda in Marib.

mountains that was less than 40 square kilometers. For me this is proof that Al-Qaeda does not operate outside of the regime.

So you're saying Al-Qaeda doesn't really exist?
It's only the regime's Al-Qaeda.

What do you mean by the regime's Al-Qaeda?

The regime moves them wherever they want to. Whenever the regime is in trouble they use Al-Qaeda as a tool to scare the west and the United States and make them think that if not for Saleh, Al-Qaeda would overrun Yemen.

To what extent does Al-Qaeda exist in Marib?

A tribe took over a check point in Marib on Sunday and the government said they were Al-Qaeda; the same tribe took military tanks and a police car in an open desert area. Why didn't the military follow them? They were in an open area with no

Is there any chance that Al-Qaeda could take over Marib, as the regime says?

That will never happen. Al-Qaeda can never overcome Marib as there is nothing called al-Qaeda there.

What about all the recent Al-Qaeda attack that have been taking place in



Marib?

This question should be asked to the parliament. How do these attacks happen? If Al-Qaeda members are in Marib where do they disappear to after the attacks? Do they have stairs to the sky that walk up after attacking us?!

What do you say to the US who have expressed their concern about Saleh leaving?

I felt sorry after hearing the US defense minister's declaration that if Saleh leaves the battle with Al-Qaeda in Yemen will escalate. This is simply not true. The truth is that when this regime departs Al-Qaeda will vanish.

Why is the US taking different approach toward Libya than it is towards Yemen?

This question should be asked to the US ambassador and the military councilor. Ask them why they are applying such double standards to Yemen. 53 protesters were killed last week and over 600 seriously injured and what was the US response? They only condemned the attack, whereas in Libya the international community were talking about invading after the country when a similar number were killed.

Does that mean you would like to see international troops arriving in Yemen too?

Of course I don't want this. All I ask is that they speak out against Saleh and stop clinging to the idea that he is the only guard against Al-Qaeda.

Political analysts say the US wants the president's sons and nephews to stay in power after he leaves as they are well trained in counter-terrorism measures, do you think this is the case?

They can stay if Saleh leaves. The opposition does not have a problem with them



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