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Tomato farmers at risk: The spread of a noxious moth which is destroying tomato crops across Yemen has locals complaining about the deteriorating quality of the plants. Tomatoes are a common ingredient in Yemeni kitchens. A strategy to use pesticides to protect the crops against the moth has largely failed. *Read more on Page 3.* (Photo by Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki)



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Presidential delegation arrives to negotiate peace talks in Dammaj as fighting continues

5 more killed in renewed clashes

Rammah Al-Jubari

DAMMAJ, Nov. 6—The presidential committee assigned to resolve the ongoing Houthi-Salafi conflict arrived in Dammaj on Wednesday in

an attempt to end violent clashes that have left dozens dead, including five more on Tuesday night, according to a Salafi source in the area.

This came following a truce reached on Monday between the two parties based on efforts initiated by Jamal Benomar, the U.N. special envoy to Yemen.

Soror Al-Wadei, a spokesperson for the Salafis in Dammaj, said shelling in the area decreased when the

government delegation arrived.

"We are committed to the ceasefire following Benomar's efforts and President [Abdu Rabu Mansour] Hadi's decree, but we also have to defend ourselves against Houthi aggression," he added.

Al-Wadei said there are more than 200 injured people in the Dammaj area. Earlier in the week, five Red Cross ambulances were able to evacuate 23 of the most critically injured, who are now in Sana'a receiving treatment, according to an organization spokesperson.

Al-Wadei says there is a growing shortage of medication in the area.

Adnan Hizam, an information officer for the Red Cross in Sana'a, said they want to take a more humanitarian role in Dammaj but are currently limited.

A presidential committee that visited Dammaj on Oct. 20 was able to convince fighters of both parties to leave their military positions in the mountain and allow government forces in. However, the committee was unable to reach a decisive solution for the conflict.

Dammaj is home to a religious school known as Dar Al-Hadith in which hundreds of Yemenis along with foreign students are studying

Salafi theology. Students from the school are reportedly involved in the fighting.

Ali Al-Bukhiti, a leading figure for the Houthis and their representative at the National Dialogue Conference, said the initial but fragile ceasefire broke down because of lack of understanding on the students' part.

"The foreigners in Dammaj are from more than 100 countries, and they speak multiple languages, so they didn't understand the ceasefire agreement," he said.

Neither party has announced a final agreement on a ceasefire. Each side is blaming the other for violating the truce proposed by Benomar.

Al-Bukhiti said the Houthis are ready to sign a ceasefire agreement on condition that the Salafis adhere to proposed demands such as allowing the government forces to take over their positions.

In a retaliatory action against the Houthis on Wednesday, some pro-Salafi tribes in Hajoor area of Hajja allegedly blocked a main road and did not allow oil trucks to reach Sa'ada.

President Hadi on Tuesday telephoned the peace delegation and urged them to end the conflict as soon as possible, according to official sources.

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Thousands of teachers demonstrate in the capital, call for new salaries, bonuses and health insurance

Despite previous agreements, Education Ministry hasn't paid up

Story and photo by
Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A. Nov. 6—Thousands of teachers protested in front of the Ministerial Cabinet in Sana'a on Wednesday, condemning the Education Ministry. Teachers say the ministry has yet to deliver on its promise to deliver bonuses and healthcare.

Four separate teachers' syndicates issued a statement listing their demands. The Education Ministry, according to the statement, made an agreement with the syndicates last year, agreeing to provide annual bonuses for teachers and to raise their salaries according to their degrees and years teaching.

The statement also called for allowances for teachers who choose to teach in rural areas where there are a lack of educators, as well as improved pay for new and retired teachers.

"The syndicates tried all tactics available to us, including letter-writing, meeting with the appropriate officials in the Education, Civil Service and Finance Ministries, as well as the Cabinet. It didn't work. We decided to stage protests in order to pressure them to meet our demands," the statement said.

Syndicate member Najla'a Al-



Protesting teachers say they will not back down until the Ministry of Education offers them promised pay.

Ademi told the Yemen Times that the Education Ministry hasn't provided teachers with bonuses since 2005, despite agreements.

Al-Ademi said that teachers nationwide agreed to hold these protests, and that teachers will not deal with the ministry dragging its feet.

Teachers will escalate their protests in the coming weeks if the ministry does not agree to listed demands, she said.

"I have been teaching for 27 years, and I only make YR82,000

[\$380]," said Ala Haider, a teacher at Al-Zubairi School who participated in the protest.

Haider said the Education Ministry promised in 2005 it would increase the salaries of teachers who hold bachelors degrees to YR160,000 (\$745).

Abdullah Al-Zyadi, an information officer at the Education Ministry, said these demands are not new and that teachers drew up the same list of conditions last year.

"The ministry agreed to meet their demands for bonuses, but not

health insurance. The ministry's budget cannot meet this requirement," Al-Zyadi said.

"The 2013 bonuses will be paid by the end of this month, but the bonuses for 2012 and the previous year will be postponed. There are more than 300,000 teachers [in Yemen] and our budget is simply not large enough."

Teachers ended a strike last year when the ministry promised to pay their 2012 bonus at the beginning of 2013, which never happened, they say.

Victims of US drone and missile strikes hold press conference

Story and photo by
Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Nov. 6—The human rights organization, AlKarama, held a press conference on Monday featuring those injured in U.S. drone and missile strikes and the families of those killed.

The conference highlighted the civilian casualties of U.S. strikes in Yemen and the results of AlKarama's recent report, "License to Kill: Why the American Drone War on Yemen Violates International Law."

Marib resident Ezzaldin Toaiman is a camel herder and a survivor of a strike that hit Shabwa on Oct. 14, 2011. He told his story at the press conference.

Toaiman, his brother and father were in their vehicle searching for missing camels in the Al-Zakr village in Shabwa, when they started to run out of gas. They drove to the near-by city of Azzan to refuel and decided to spend the night out in the open.

At 10:00 p.m., they reported seeing a bright light. A group of men staying near Toaiman and his family were hit by the strike.

"We fled the site, and another strike hit the spot where we had



Recently three major international organizations have releases reports.

been staying," he said.

"They were then targeted again, he said. Toaiman's brother and father were killed.

"The next day, when I was returning to Marib, I caught a ride with some men. On the way to Marib, the men told me they were members of Al-Qaeda. We were hit with a strike. Everyday died except me. I was seriously injured," Toaiman said.

"Following the attack, Yemeni soldiers arrived. I was in pain and

unable to stand. I heard one say, 'Yes, the operation is a success. The bodies were torn to pieces.'"

Toaiman says he is now responsible for 23 members of his family. In addition to his own child, he supports his nieces, nephews, and other family members.

The recently released AlKarama report was one of three by human rights organizations on U.S. drone and missile strikes that went public recently. All three document cases of drone and missile strike

civilian casualties.

Omer Al-Hassani, from Mahwit, also says he lost family in a U.S. strike. Al-Hassani's son Bandar was killed on Oct. 14, 2011 in the same attack that killed Toaiman's father and brother.

Al-Hassani's other son was released from a political security prison in Sana'a in August 2011. He was killed in a strike in Shabwa on Oct. 16, 2011.

A third son of Al-Hassani's, Abdullah, was shot dead in Abyan after fleeing Sana'a. His father says Abdullah was being harassed by political security forces.

Hassan Dahman, a Hadramout resident, said his son fell into a coma after inhaling toxic gases following a strike on a playground near his home.

Attorney and human rights activist Abdulrahman Barman said many of those who have been released from political security prisons have been killed in air raids.

"No one knows why they were targeted," Barman said.

The report, "License to Kill," is the latest from the organization and documents ten U.S. drone and missile strikes in Yemen and has been presented to the U.S. Congress.

Hodeida residents fed up with overflowing sewers



Courtesy of Media Center for Economic Studies

Infrastructure shortcomings are hurting tourism in the area

Samar Al-Ariqi

HODEIDA, Nov. 6—Dozens of Hodeida residents protested in front of the governorate's compound on Tuesday to demand action on ongoing issues in the area's sanitation network.

Protestors accuse authorities of not addressing the governorate's issue of constant sewage overflow. Health standards have deteriorated in the last eight months, residents say, compromising their quality of life. Businesses have had a hard time operating and tourists, turned off by the unsightly and unhygienic sewage situation, are vacationing elsewhere.

"Hodeida is currently encountering an environmental and health catastrophe," said Ghamdan Mohammed, the editor-in-chief of an Al-Hodeida news website. There are number of streets that are completely inoperable, blocked by the sewage, Mohammed said.

Contributing to the problem, according to Hodeida Security Chief Mohammed Al-Maqaleh,

is a lack of government forces in the area to stop people from destroying sewage infrastructure. It is not uncommon in rural areas for individuals angry at the government to try and gain leverage through attacks on public infrastructure.

"[Sabotage includes] placing stones and construction materials such as blocks, blankets, rugs and tires, inside the sewerage pipes," Al-Maqaleh said.

Mustafa Nasr, head of the Studies and Economic Media Center, said that infrastructure issues more broadly, of which sewage concerns are a part, have been a hard blow to domestic tourism in an area that is known for its scenic beauty and historic landmarks.

"[Tourists] are reluctant to visit Hodeida," said Nasr. Other concerns include "growing piles of garbage as well as frequent electrical outages for long periods during the heat of summer."

Complaints from Hodeida residents are not new. They have staged several protests this year to encourage government accountability for the infrastructure problems. In July, protestors raised diapers during their protest, symbolizing the filth residents say they have to live with.

Security search for suspect in the murder of Dhamar youth

Rammah Al-Jubari

DHAMAR, Nov. 6—The body of a young man was found stuffed inside a suitcase in the housing quarters of Saba Sports Club on Monday, according to security forces in Dhamar City.

Investigations are underway, said Major Hameed Amran, the head of Dhamar Police Station. Amran said the club's administration believes the suitcase belongs to a man who had been living on the premises for about five months.

Police are searching for the man,

who was last person seen with the victim, Amran said. The victim has been identified as Saddam Ibrahim. The suspect has been identified as an Indian national.

"[The suspect] is still at large, but we have his passport and have distributed his photo and name to all land, sea and air border crossings and security checkpoints," said Amran.

When contacted, the Indian Embassy in Sana'a's consular, Ram Cherqn, said they had not been notified of any charges brought against an Indian national.

'Race for Survival' marathon draws attention to malnourishment among children

Hodeida governorate is struggling to provide for a swelling population of children who do not have enough to eat

Nasser Al-Sakkaf

HODEIDA, Nov. 6—Five-hundred children took part in a marathon to draw attention to the childhood

malnutrition crisis in Hodeida, 266 km. west of the capital, last Thursday.

Hodeida governorate has the highest levels of malnutrition in Yemen for the children under the age of five, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

A UNICEF report says 32 percent of Yemeni children are suffering from malnutrition nationwide.

The 500-meter-long symbolic

marathon, "Race for Survival" is organized annually by the Tawasul Foundation, a local partner of the Care organization.

Hodeida has more than 500,000 children under the age of five, according to Rasha Al-Ardhi, the health and care office manager for UNICEF in Hodeida. More than 70,000 children in the governorate suffer from life-threatening extreme-acute malnutrition. About 160,000 children

struggle with moderate-acute malnutrition, UNICEF said.

Al-Ardhi said children with extreme-acute malnutrition need urgent health services.

Hodeida has five health centers dedicated to treating children suffering from extreme malnutrition. However, these centers are insufficient to receive all serious cases, Al-Ardhi said.

Three other centers are expected

to be established next year to receive emergency cases.

According to UNICEF, there are more than 500 centers in Hodeida governorate that treat malnourished children not requiring specialized care.

UNICEF reports that out of about 4 million children under the age of five in Yemen, about 250,000 are extremely malnourished and 750,000 are moderately malnourished.

Shawqia Al-Absi, the head of the For the Sake of My Nation Association, which raises awareness about the danger of malnutrition among children, said, "Deteriorated economic conditions for Hodeida locals, who mainly depend on agriculture for a living, is a major cause of malnutrition among children."

"Some families sell their houses in order to feed themselves," Al-Absi said.

Spread of noxious moth destroys tomato crops across Yemen

'We may not find tomatoes in the middle of winter,' warns Ministry of Agriculture



The price of tomatoes have skyrocketed as fewer and fewer crops are making it to market.

Story and photo by Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Nov. 6—The price of tomatoes in Yemen has jumped to YR400 (\$1.86) per kilogram due to the spread of the noxious moth, tuta absoluta, which is wreaking havoc on farms and destroying crop yields.

A strategy to use pesticides to

protect the crop against the moth has largely failed and caused locals to complain about the deteriorating quality of the tomato plants that are making it to consumers' tables.

"We were concerned about the price hike of food commodities," said Abdulla Al-Jubani, a local in Sana'a, "but now tomatoes are another concern."

"Tomatoes are a staple in our

meals. Even if we buy tomatoes, it does not taste good because of chemicals farmers are using."

Officials expect the situation to get worse. They predict costs will continue to rise as usable crops diminish.

According to the Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry, the moth's destruction of tomato plants has cost Yemen over YR71 billion (approx-

mately \$330 million) since its appearance last autumn through the end of August.

The government has promised various financial stipends for farmers to help them offset their losses, although it is unclear if any have been delivered yet. Mohammed Al-Ghashm, the deputy minister of the Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry, said Yemen has obtained several relief packages from foreign countries. He cited a \$550,000 grant from the United States Assistance and International Development (USAID) program, \$120,000 donation from the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization and a \$238,000 grant from the Community Livelihood Program.

Additionally, a combination of efforts from the Yemeni government, Credit Agricole Cooperative Bank, and Agriculture and Fishing Fund, are supporting the Agriculture Ministry with a YR250 million grant (approximately \$1.16 million).

In the meantime, officials are scrambling for a strategy to rid the country's farms of the moth. The head of the research and guidance department at the Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry, Engineer Wajeeh Al-Matwakil, said the biggest problem with combating the pest is the immunity it has developed to various pesticides that have been used against it in the past. As a result, the Ministry has abandoned the ineffective strategy, which also provoked a consumer backlash.

Although it has drawn criticism from organic farming advocates, the Ministry now has a plan to distribute hormones to farmers in order to disrupt the moth's breeding

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cycle. The hormones are expected to make female eggs unattractive to male moths, leaving them unfertilized.

However, Al-Matwakil says the plan is going to take time to enact.

"We may not find tomatoes in the middle of winter," he warned, adding that the spread of the moth has been greatest in Yemen's hot, coastal areas, where the majority of Yemeni tomatoes are grown.

For now farmers say they are scraping by until they received the promised hormones and see if it

works.

"I used to sell tomatoes making over YR5 million (about \$23,000) in one season, but now I cannot even make YR500 thousand (\$2,300)," said Yahia Al-Salami, a farmer in the Qa'a Jahran valley of Dhamar governorate.

The first known appearance of the tuta absoluta moth was in South America in 1970. The moth appeared in Spain in 2006, and the following year, it spread to France, Italy, Greece, Malta, Morocco, Algeria and Libya.



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Random construction chokes Sana'a

A lack of urban planning and expensive building permits lead to a surge in haphazard expansion

Story and photos by Amal Al-Yarisi

Seven-year-old Haitham Qasim stands in front of his only source of water—a communal tank—waiting his turn to fill the bucket, before happily going back to his house in the Jabal Al-Layl neighborhood in Sana'a.

Residents of this neighborhood are accustomed to very basic living standards.

To an outside visitor, the area looks like a poor rural neighborhood with unpaved narrow roads. There is no water service, and illegal electricity connections—bypassing meters—go unreported to the Public Electricity Corporation.

A dense population, rapid urbanization—without proper infrastructure development—and haphazardly constructed buildings are taking over the area.

More than 500 brick houses had been haphazardly constructed along the western side of Madbah area, which includes the Jabal Al-Layl neighborhood, near the University of Science and Technology.

Jabal Al-Layl, which means “night mountain” in English, earned its name because of the numerous residents in the area that construct their houses at night in order to evade the required government permission to build in the area.

Ahmed Al-Salami, a local resident, is constructing a second floor for his house. He has been living in the neighborhood for 30 years.

“There were only three houses 30 years ago, but the number of randomly-constructed buildings is



The cost and bureaucratic process of obtaining a construction permit discourages builders from going the legal route.

increasing day by day,” he said.

Madbah is one of several areas in Sana'a like Bani Huwat, Sawad Hiziez, Al-Rahaba and Al-Sunina that are going up without any organized planning. Most of these neighborhoods are located on the outskirts of the capital city.

The vast majority of families in Jabal Al-Layl are low income so they prefer not to spend money getting official permissions to build their houses, which on average runs about YR50,000 (\$232) for all fees, according to the Public Works Office.

“Instead of spending money to get official permissions, the residents prefer to just build houses using the money they already have,” said Mahdi Ghalib Al-Ahmadi, a local resident.

Um Abdulrazaq, a housewife residing in the area, said she doesn't feel right about the house she built without a permit, but she couldn't afford to get authorization.

For the past 10 years, along with her six children, Um Abdulrazaq has been living in a house with two small rooms, a bathroom and a kitchen.

“I would be living in street today if I hadn't constructed this house 10 years ago,” she said.

Al-Ahmadi said the state does not cooperate with low-income residents and requires an unaffordable amount of money to provide an official license.

“The state assists sheikhs and influential figures while ordinary people get nothing,” he added.

Al-Ahmadi said the state has not provided a landscape architect or urban planner for their neighborhood and does not offer compensation when a house is demolished—due to poor planning—and a new house is reconstructed according to city standards.

To get an official permit to construct a new building, residents have to have proof of ownership of the land before moving forward to make a complete plan for the building, according to official guidelines provided by the Public Works Office.

Unplanned and haphazard construction has spread widely in Sana'a over the past three years, due to Yemen's 2011 popular uprising that led to toppling of the former President Ali Abdulla Saleh.

Abdulrazaq Ata, the director of the Public Works Office in Sana'a, said, “Several people took advantage of the hard times we experienced to violate the law and construct random houses.”

Adel Al-Nehmi, the deputy head of the Public Works Office, said haphazard housing is only growing in Sana'a due to the weakness of the state.

“Countries worldwide have urban plans and landscape architects for their cities but not in Ye-

men,” he said.

Such unplanned urban neighborhoods usually create an environment for illegal activities and violation of municipal services. It also creates problems like a shortage of space for streets which cannot accommodate emergency situations.

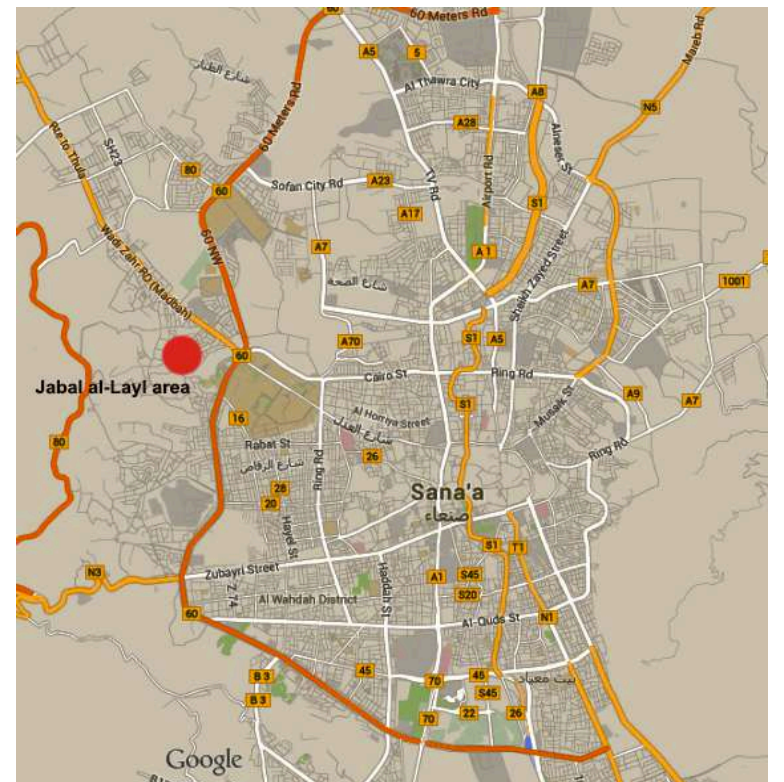
Although the capital city is overcrowded, the general authority for Land Survey and the Urban Planning is not working on specific plans for several neighborhoods, Al-Nehmi said.

The capital secretariat, represented by the mayor and Public Works Office, counters Al-Nehmi, saying they are currently preparing a plan to regulate unorganized neighborhoods and provide them with public services such as sanitation, running water, electricity and paved roads.

“Several houses had been previously demolished and their owners were compensated,” Al-Nehmi said. “This may happen again in unplanned neighborhoods.”

In order for the Public Works Office to issue a building permit, the following must be completed:

1. Applicants must provide proof of ownership of the land to be built on
2. Applicants must provide a detailed description of construction plans
3. Applicants must pay a fee of YR3,000 (\$14) for an urban planner at the Public Works Office to approve the construction
4. Public Works engineers must visit the construction site and appraise the safety
5. The General Authority for Land Survey and Urban Planning must grant permission for the land to be built on
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Unlicensed neighborhoods continue to expand in Sana'a.

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Makeshift neighborhoods usually lack basic services including water and sanitation.



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OUR OPINION

Time to release men accused of attempted Saleh assassination

If the coalition government—which already lacks legitimacy—is at all committed to the rule of law, then it needs to immediately release the five men accused of taking part in the Presidential Palace bombing in June 2011 that targeted former President Ali Abdulla Saleh.

Nearly three years after the start of a revolution to bring down a regime and to build institutions that are fair, transparent and democratic, this case illustrates how far we are from that goal. The five men have spent over two years in prison after being disappeared for six months. One man spent six months in the basement of the Presidential Palace. All were taken to secret prisons, where they claim they were tortured.

The state says it has signed confessions from each of the men admitting to their role in the bombing.

In interviews with Human Rights Watch (HRW), the men describe daily or near-daily interrogations where they were beaten and threatened. They describe being shackled, chained and suspended from the ceiling for up to 18 hours at a time.

Torture someone, and they'll confess to anything. The burden is on the state to prove that it did not use torture in this case. Unless those facts can be established, all accounts given are inadmissible in a court of law.

While many of these abuses occurred under the former regime, that does not absolve President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi from responsibility (and let us not forget that he was part of the former regime). President Hadi and the Cabinet ordered the release of three of the five men on June 5. Hadi must issue (another) presidential order, this time ensuring the release of all five men. If the accused are not released, those responsible for not upholding the order must be held accountable.

There is no ambiguity in international law about the right of the accused to an expeditious trial. It is also Yemeni law.

This is not a case of the president interfering in a judicial matter. The state has had more than two years to bring these men to trial. This would be a case of the president upholding the law by putting an end to criminal abuses committed by government security forces and a prosecutor who has let politics interfere with his duties and obligations.

This case is about more than the fate of these five men. We cannot allow the transitional process to be an excuse for not upholding due process and the rule of law. There is no grace-period for enforced disappearances, torture, secret prisons or imprisonment without trial.

Ahlam Mohsen

Ahlam Mohsen is the new deputy editor-in-chief of the Yemen Times. Mohsen is a Yemeni-American journalist who has been living in Yemen for the past year and a half writing and editing for local media. She holds a degree from Michigan State University in anthropology, women's studies and peace and justice studies.

Saudi Arabia's message to Obama

Jeff Jacoby
Bostonglobe.com
First Published Oct. 27

Is there an idiom in Arabic for cutting off your nose to spite your face? Saudi Arabia's abrupt rejection on Oct. 18 of the U.N. Security Council seat to which it had just been elected was described as "bizarre" and "baffling," a "perplexing" decision that left diplomats "gasping." No member of the United Nations had ever done such a thing, and the Saudi government's explanation was about as subtle as an uppercut.

"The . . . double standards existing in the Security Council prevent it from performing its duties and assuming its responsibilities," the Foreign Ministry charged angrily, and the results have been "continued disruption of peace and security, the expansion of the injustices against peoples, the violation of rights, and the spread of conflicts and wars."

It was even more stinging in its indictment of the recent Security Council resolution that effectively immunized Syrian dictator Bashar Assad from Western retaliation for his poison-gas massacre in August.

"Allowing the ruling regime in Syria to kill its people and burn them with chemical weapons in front of the entire world and without any deterrent or punishment is clear proof and evidence of the U.N. Security Council's inability to perform its duties," the Saudi statement said.

But if Saudi Arabia really wanted to fix the Security Council's glaring flaws, why would it spurn the seat it had long coveted? Denying itself a voice and a vote on the most influential U.N. body is a poor strategy for reform. The Saudis' sudden about-face — which almost surely was ordered by King Abdullah himself — was certainly dramatic. But what was it supposed to accomplish?

The answer came from Saudi Arabia's intelligence chief, Prince Bandar bin Sultan. "This was a message for the U.S., not the U.N.," he told European diplomats, according to Reuters and The Wall Street Journal. Bandar, who spent 22 years as the Saudi ambassador to Washington, let it be known that relations between Riyadh and Washington, already badly strained over the Obama administration's policies toward Syria, Egypt, and Iran, are poised to get worse. He reportedly said that Saudi Arabia will scale back

its cooperation with U.S. intelligence agencies in assisting the Syrian rebels fighting against Assad, and will seek other allies to work with instead. "The shift away from the U.S. is a major one," Reuters' source was quoted as saying.

In short, Saudi Arabia's refusal to take its seat on the Security Council had much less to do with the United Nations than with calling attention to Riyadh's alarm and frustration at how its most important Western ally has been acting.

Obama's flaccid response after Syria brazenly defied his "red line" over the use of chemical weapons angered the Saudis, not because the Saudi government is a champion of human rights — it is anything but — but because it is heavily invested in the rebellion against Assad, whose foremost patron is Iran, Saudi Arabia's most dangerous foe. Even more alarming to the Saudis is the administration's crush on Hassan Rouhani, the new Iranian president. Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons deeply worries Saudi Arabia. Washington's unfolding détente with Tehran — which the Saudis say they were never consulting on in advance — is only intensifying those qualms.

Some Americans may be tempted to shrug off Saudi complaints about

U.S. foreign policy. The Saudi regime isn't a very nice one, and many of its priorities, from the repression of women and basic democratic freedoms at home to the export of feverish Wahhabi bigotry abroad, are repellent.

Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia has been an important regional ally of the United States for many years. It has supported American operations against Al-Qaeda in the Gulf. Those CIA drone strikes against jihadists in Yemen, for example, have been launched from a base in neighboring Saudi Arabia. However odious some of its policies may be, its unwavering opposition to letting Iran acquire nuclear weapons is dead on. And its growing sense of abandonment by a U.S. administration that cannot be trusted to enforce its own red lines is a legitimate cause of anxiety.

President Obama came to office vowing to improve US relations with the Arab world. He gave his first formal interview as president to the Saudi-funded al-Arabiya TV. On one occasion he even bowed to the Saudi king. But symbols and gestures are no substitute for wise and effective foreign policy. You don't have to like the Saudis to understand, or share, their concern.

When will the presidents of U.S. and Yemen catch up?

Cori Crider

It's been a bad month for those who tend to defend drones. A major series of reports—two by the U.N., and two by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch—all cast serious doubts on the legality, morality, and efficacy of the drone wars. One of these—a landmark survey of civilian deaths from U.S. airstrikes by Letta Tayler of Human Rights Watch—features Yemen, and recounts several tragedies of the secret war here. (Reprieve clients, including Faisal bin Ali Jaber of Yemen, are in all these reports. A strike last August killed Faisal's brother-in-law, an imam who had denounced Al-Qaeda and his nephew.)

Like Guantánamo before it, the undeclared and unlawful drone war in Yemen poisons relations between my people and the Yemeni people. The opinions of the Yemeni and American people are also commonly misunderstood in both countries. In America, "armchair experts" often claim that "the people of Yemen support the drones." They show no signs of knowing that this summer, Yemen's representative National Dialogue body banned them by a 90 percent majority.

The situation in America is complex as well. With strikes raining death on their villages, Yemenis may well think Americans must support the strikes. (After all, America is supposed to be a democracy, and President Obama continues to authorize these killings). But as I said to Yemeni survivors of strikes at our Town Hall meeting this past April—it isn't true that Americans all support the drones. The truth is that most Americans don't realize their consequences.

This year, that has started to change. Now a tide against extralegal killings is swelling in the U.S. Child victims of drone strikes from Pakistan have travelled with Reprieve staff to educate congressmen in America about the dark side of drones. Faisal Bin Ali Jaber has been invited to address the U.S. media about the wrongful attacks on his family. This all comes too late for some victims, of course, but it is not too late for Yemeni families who still live in the shadow of the drones.

The hopeful truth is that a crowd of voices is now speaking against these secret wars. Each day the crowd grows larger, and its voice grows louder.

But in the face of this noise one stark silence remains: that of the U.S. and Yemeni governments.

When they do speak it is to defend these killings. You all may have seen an article recently penned by your President in support of drone strikes (for what audience it is unclear. The article was in English, which is nearly as odd as if President [Barack] Obama addressed the American people in Arabic). Perhaps you also noticed President [Abdu Rabu Mansour] Hadi meeting with Obama earlier this year while drones struck many of his villages. You may remember that President Hadi emerged from the meetings not criticizing the U.S. for the drones, not saying he had discussed the recent strike that killed a Yemeni child, but praising them. Compare this to the recently-elected Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, another drone-struck country. Sharif has felt it important to speak against the drones and to insist the rule of law be reinstated for all his people.

There is no sign President Hadi has done the same to protect Yemenis.

At some point Yemenis must ask:

why is this? Is it because President Hadi believes the administration's talking points on drones—that they are accurate and that they only strike when the prospect of civilian casualties is low? It is hard to be certain. What we do know is that when faced with tales of wrongful killings by drone, like that of the innocent imam Salem Bin Ali Jaber and his nephew Waleed, the president has said nothing. We have responded to Hadi, but he has not responded to us. Indeed, Reprieve's client Faisal Bin Ali Jaber wrote to Presidents Hadi and Obama at the time of their summit, calling for accountability. But he received not a single word in reply.

In the face of grievous injustices—senseless killings like that of an imam who days before his death had opposed Al-Qaeda — both governments remain mute.

There are murmurs that governments do occasionally respond to pressure over their biggest mistakes. HRW reports that over the summer, just weeks after Reprieve held a Town Hall Meeting in Sana'a for victims to testify to members of the National Dialogue, at least some family members of another wrongful strike in Yemen received token condolence payments for the loss of their loved ones. (The victims in question are a family of civilians killed in Rada'a in September 2012—a family the government begged not to speak at our Town Hall meeting in April). The victims did not speak, because they could not afford to risk it with impoverished families waiting back in the village. And yet for weeks after this event the government did not pay.

We have spoken to some members of the community who experienced this strike. Some insist no payment has been received. There are only two

possibilities: the Yemeni government is threatening people to state it has paid them when it has not, or it has offered a scant payment to only some of the victims. Either way it has offered no public apology for the hideous mistake.

To date, Salem Bin Ali Jaber's family have received nothing.

Partial and silent justice is not justice. Silent and ad hoc payments in response to the threat of media pressure are no way to right the wrongs of the secret war in Yemen. The proper response would be for Hadi and Obama to acknowledge mistakes like those that claimed the lives of Salem Bin Ali Jaber and Waleed, apologize for them, and investigate them, so they never happen again. There should be compensation for all civilian victims, in an appropriate and transparent compensation scheme.

Fundamentally, Yemen will continue to suffer these tragedies until the governments of Yemen and the United States decide to end the bombings. President Hadi, the time has come to listen to your people. President Obama, the time has come to listen to civil society. End the secret air wars. Fight terrorism within the rule of law.

Cori Crider is an American lawyer and the strategic director of Reprieve, a British charity that assists victims of the 'war on terror' around the world. Reprieve is currently sponsoring a poetry competition in Yemen—the winning entry will receive \$600, one percent of the cost of a hellfire missile. Send your entries to nodrones@reprieve.org.uk. Entries in both English and Arabic will be accepted.

A version of this article ran on Aljazeera.com in Arabic.

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Rewarding young business ingenuity

Yemeni students advance to regional entrepreneurship competition



A team at the Salem Al-Subah School says they are ready to showcase their wind-powered fan in front of regional judges in Kuwait.



Students spent three months designing "eco-friendly" products like this candlestick holder made of cardboard, expired flower and egg shells.

Story and photos by Mohammed Al-Hassani

Five teams of Yemeni students from schools across Sana'a have progressed to the regional round of an entrepreneurial competition hosted by the Injaz Al-Arab Foundation, an international NGO focused on finance and entrepreneurial skill building.

Injaz Al-Yemen, the organization's local subsidiary, supervised a local competition held last week to advance students to regionals.

The competition was the culmination of a three-month program that taught students practical business skills in five different schools.

"Injaz gave us [the tools] we need for our future," said 17-year-old Nawal Al-Sibri, a participating student.

Under the supervision of business mentors, the students were tasked with inventing "environmentally-friendly" products and creating a company to market it.

Yemen's winning schools will now join 25 others from across the Middle East in Kuwait City, Kuwait this December to compete for pres-

tigious awards at the Injaz Al-Arab Young Arab Entrepreneurs Competition.

Al-Sibri's team, which hails from Sana'a's Salem Al-Subah School, was chosen to compete regionally based on their invention of a fan powered by wind.

"It was a wonderful experience that taught us a lot," Al-Sibri said.

The Injaz Foundation will now assist the winners to release their products in the local market in time for the competition in Kuwait.

Local judges praised the Yemeni teams for their variety of invented

products. The Al-Mithaq School built an electric incense burner made of clay. The Khalid Bin Al-Waleed School also dealt with electricity, presenting an electric candlestick holder made of cardboard, expired flour and egg shells.

The Mohammed Matahar School focused on another house-hold need. They built a zero-energy heating and cooling device designed for home windows.

The Arwa Technical Institute chose to add a modern flare to the traditional water jug, retrofitting it with a faucet and an internal plastic lining to create a portable

cooler.

"The panel of judges looks for innovative things and how the students take advantage of new ideas," said Majed Al-Shamiri, the executive manager of Injaz Al-Yemen. "This is crucial for business success."

"Each company had to provide a written report about the company and its managerial structure."

The competition gave students a YR600,000 (\$2,790) budget.

Yemeni student companies have done well in the past at regional competitions, Injaz organizers said. At the 2010 competition

in Casablanca, Morocco, an Injaz Al-Yemen team won the prize for best marketing plan, and in 2012, a Yemeni team won a "best company" award in Doha, Qatar.

Injaz Al-Yemen was established in 2009 under the umbrella organization Injaz al-Arab, which is a subsidiary of Junior Achievement.

Junior Achievement is a worldwide organization that was started in 1919 and is dedicated to educating children on topics ranging from financial literacy and work readiness to entrepreneurship.

"We feel like real entrepreneurs," Al-Sibri said.



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Navigating Yemen's roads uninsured

Many companies refuse to offer public-transport drivers insurance

Story and photo by
Samar Qaed

Four years ago, a car accident claimed the lives of six people and left four others injured. The victims were part of one family from Dhamar governorate, about 100 km. south of the capital city, all traveling together in the public transport car. The driver, Mohammed Al-Rashidi, was jailed following the accident.

Two months prior to the deadly crash, no insurance company agreed to insure Al-Rashidi's car. He drove a Peugeot station wagon, that can accommodate nine and it is almost exclusively used for commercial transportation, taking Yemenis from one end of the country to the other.

Al-Rashidi is unable to leave prison until he has paid YR10 million (\$46,500), the blood money owed to the family of those killed. If he had insurance, he would not be in prison today.

Al-Rashidi is the oldest of his siblings. His father is blind. Many of the responsibilities of the home fell on his shoulders.

"I was the main provider for my family before entering prison," he said. "My family has been unable to pay the blood money so far. I'm already in debt because I paid for

the treatment of the injured. If I had been insured, I would not have wasted the past four years of my life in prison."

There are 13 insurance companies operating in Yemen. They form the Yemeni Insurance Association.

In Yemen, insurance—a system that aims to assess and protect customers from risk—was first offered in the 1970s. Marib Insurance Company was the first joint-stock (public and private) insurance company. It was established by the Yemen Reconstruction and Development Bank and the private sector.

According to a 1991 compulsory insurance law, anyone purchasing a license plate has to bring valid proof of car insurance.

The capital city's traffic department enforced this law until 2006. Since then, insurance companies have joined forces and refused to offer insurance for vehicles used for public transportation by individuals. However, insurance is available for vehicles used for public transportation owned by private companies.

There are 1.3 million vehicles nationwide, according to the traffic department. There are also 80,000 taxis and buses in the capital city alone.

Mukhtar Al-Khamiri, a taxi driver in the capital city, says he has wasted a lot of time going from office to

office to find coverage for his taxi. Every company he approached has rejected his request, he said.

"Insurance should be available. The company can stipulate conditions and if these conditions are violated, the company can stop insuring. But refusing to offer insurance at all is unacceptable," Al-Khamiri said.

Mansour Ghalib, the manager of United Insurance Company, told the Yemen Times that, "A reason behind the refusal to insure these cars is their poor conditions and the drivers' lack of commitment to traffic rules."

If traffic laws are enforced and insurance companies have some way to monitor the performance of drivers, then "insurance companies will go out to look for taxis to insure," Ghalib said.

The United Insurance Company insures 15,000 vehicles, almost 5,000 are used for public transportation.

There are drivers like Al-Rashidi around the country who are in prison because they have not paid the blood money owed to the families of victims they have harmed or killed in traffic accidents.

Kamal Al-Ajori, 22, is another driver who has been serving time in prison. He has been there since April, when his car collided with a bus and left one dead. Al-Ajori was



Traffic accidents are not rare on Yemen's largely law-less streets.

ordered to pay blood money to the victim's family and has not yet been able to do so.

Al-Ajori said he scrutinized the compulsory insurance law when he bought his vehicle. However, he was given a license plate without having to show proof of insurance to the traffic department.

Ridhwan Al-Khazan, the manager of the legal affairs office in Sana'a, said they stopped requiring the traffic department to have proof

of insurance prior to distributing license plates.

"We see nothing positive for the driver. We felt the companies were manipulating the driver, they were not being monitored. We have lots of complaints made by drivers against these companies," Al-Khazan said.

The Transportation Syndicate receives complaints from bus and taxi drivers who are unable to find insurance companies to insure their vehicles.

Abdu Al-Gharbani, the head of the syndicate, said these companies refuse to insure taxi and bus drivers because with the amount of driving they do, they are more vulnerable to traffic accidents.

He blames the absence of law enforcement and the lack of urban planning. Yet, the syndicate continues to negotiate with insurance companies.

"If insurance is offered, drivers wouldn't be in prison," he said.

'Where do I go?'

Overcrowded public hospitals and expensive private ones leave patients with few treatment options

Story and photo by
Amal Al Yarisi

A year ago, Kifaya Ahmed's husband died, leaving the woman to care for her two daughters. Ahmed's husband was diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver in early 2012. Following the diagnosis, the disease began taking a toll on her husband's health, culminating in several doctor's visits.

Ahmed was able to take her suf-

fering husband to a government-run hospital where she didn't have to pay for his treatment, but it didn't seem to help.

"The government hospitals do not provide high quality health and medical services for the patient," Ahmed said.

Her husband's health plummeted. Doctors said he would require liver surgery. The only trouble was an operation would require specialized care from a private hospital, and the cost was more than Ahmed could af-

ford.

"I sold all my jewelry to cover his medical expenses," Ahmed said. She was able to get her husband admitted to a private hospital, but he remained there bed-ridden for a month while Ahmed scrambled to come up with the money for an operation.

"Sorry, we cannot" was the only thing the hospital's officials said every time I met them," Ahmed recalled. "I attempted to convince the doctors to conduct the surgery, promising them to pay later, but it didn't work."

Finally Ahmed was able gather enough money from family and friends, but by then her husband had reached a point where doctors said he would require a liver transplant, which would need to be done abroad.

Using the money she scraped together, the couple flew to Egypt for the operation, but it was too late. Ahmed's husband died before the surgery could take place.

"My husband died because of negligence on the part of Yemeni doctors," she accused.

Ahmed's tale is not an uncommon one in Yemen where government-run hospitals offer medical services for free or low costs but are unable to accommodate both the number and severity of cases that they receive. This forces patients to seek care at private hospitals but often at exorbitant costs.

Ahmed has lost all faith in the medical system just like Fatima Sa'd who was denied admittance at a private hospital while she was in labor because she could not pay upfront.

"One of my female relatives took me to a private hospital. At that time, I had no money and my husband was at work," said Sa'd, who remembers vividly the day in August 2011 that she went into labor and began to lose blood.

"I was screaming at the top of my lungs, but they refused to help me because I was broke," she said.

Today Sa'd sits telling her story hugging her child, who she says barely survived childbirth after being taken to another hospital after

her husband arrived with cash in hand.

Stories like those of Ahmed and Sa'd are raising questions about a hospital's right to refuse patients who cannot pay. While private hospitals in Yemen defend their right to operate as businesses and not a charity, a significant portion of the population is left in a troubled position where government hospitals are overcrowded and underfunded but private hospitals—where care is often superior and more specialized—are financially out of reach. There is no law in Yemen that forces private hospitals to admit patients.

According to 2012 numbers from Yemen's Central Statistics Organization, there are eight government hospitals in Sana'a and 68 private ones.

Siham Al-Amiri worked for three years as a nurse in a private hospital, where she saw many patients turned away due to a lack of finances. She believes the hospital, where she no longer works, has the right to charge for services but she wishes there were more accommodations made

for those who simply cannot afford fees.

"Some doctors forget that saving the human's life comes first," she said.

Dr. Hussein Al-Matri, the manager of several clinics in the privately-run Azal Hospital, said some hospitals refuse to offer services to patients even in life and death situations, and that is their right. But at Azal, Al-Matri said they have a policy to offer life-saving care.

"Azal Hospital gives the patient [emergency] medical care even if they have no money," he said.

"In the end, any private hospital is concerned about the capital," he said but Azal accepts collateral such as jewelry and gold in exchange for future payment.

"This is how we keep the hospital afloat," he said.

At the private Modern German Hospital, according to the marketing manager, Ahmed Al-Yazori, they have a similar policy.

"At times, we forgive the patients if they do not have money, Al-Yazori said. "[But more regularly] we also

ask for the identification card as collateral until the patient pays [for those in emergency situations]. But those whose conditions are stable, we have the right to ask them for money in advance."

Many patients complain about a medical system where they are forced to resort to private hospitals because they cannot be accommodated in overcrowded public hospitals.

Dr. Abdulkareem Al-Khawlan, the manager of Sana'a's state-run hospital, Al-Thwara, said the hospital's administration is doing its best to accommodate patients given the financial constraints and limited resource issues it faces.

"Patients come to public hospitals from all over the nation, but these hospitals cannot accommodate everyone," he said, adding that recently the hospital was able to increase beds in the resuscitation room from 25 to 120.

He said private hospitals have to make up for the gap in services but advocated for a sliding-scale approach—where a patient pays what they can for treatment.



Some private hospitals will accept collateral in exchange for the promise of payment, others refuse non-paying patients at the door.

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Getting it right for Syrian refugees the second time round

Louise Redvers
IRIN
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On a rocky patch of wind-swept desert 80 km. east of the Jordanian capital Amman, teams of construction engineers are hard at work erecting metal shelters.

Welcome to Azraq, soon to be the newest-and possibly the best planned-refugee camp in the world.

The 15 sq. km. site has been under construction since April, affording the U.N. Refugee Agency (UNHCR)—which is used to setting up camps in a matter of weeks rather than months—the rare luxury of time.

No one is quite sure when Azraq Camp will open, but already there are schools, playgrounds, child-friendly spaces, food warehouses, an arrival and registration area, health posts and a fully-equipped hospital.

Instead of tents, specially-designed metal-frame shelters are being arranged in small family clusters close to latrines and washing facilities.

Many see Azraq as an important opportunity for U.N. agencies to correct some of the mistakes made at the now notorious Za'atari Camp, which was opened in a rush last summer in the northeast of the country in order to respond to a sudden influx of Syrian refugees and is now home to some 120,000 people. It has struggled ever since due to overcrowding, poor sanitation, vandalism and crime.

"We had 10 days to establish Za'atari and we had one hand tied behind our back due to lack of funding," explained Andrew Harper, UNHCR representative in Jordan. "We responded I think as well as we could, given that we had up to 3,000 people arriving a day..."

"But with Azraq, we have had the opportunity to put in place the best practices that we know and that should have been put in place at Za'atari, had we had the time and resources to do so."

A series of separate villages
The site on which Azraq is built was briefly used in the early 1990s as a resettlement camp for third country nationals fleeing Kuwait and Iraq during the First Gulf War. It was resurrected to accommodate an ever-growing number of Syrian refugees. UNHCR engineers used satellite images of the old camp to help them design the new facility.

Central to Azraq's planning has been a focus on fostering communities within the camp to help refugees feel a sense of ownership over the facilities there.

Bernadette Castel, the senior UNHCR field coordinator for Azraq Camp, told IRIN, "I think the most important change is that the services are going to be decentralized from the beginning."

"What you had at Za'atari was that services were all in one place on one side of the camp... Here we are developing separate villages. So the idea is that the refugees in each village will have their own community services, like primary health posts and child-friendly spaces and that should reduce congestion."

In addition to improving access to services, aid workers hope that people who feel more ownership of their facilities will be less likely to vandalize the playground next to their house, for example, or to steal from someone in their village if they are known by name by the community police officer.

With more personal service, people will be less anonymous and the hope is—more willing to work



Workers put up specially-designed metal shelters—more resistant to the elements—in Azraq, a new camp for Syrian refugees in the Jordanian desert.

together instead of against one another, both among themselves and with aid workers.

Each village—expected to house 8,000-15,000 people—will be separated into lots where there will be 12 separate shelters sharing two water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) stations, one for men and one for women.

The plan is for families and people from the same areas in Syria to be housed together, with additional spaces left empty to accommodate relatives arriving later, where shelters or tents can be erected as re-

Hopefully it will increase their sense of ownership of the structures and help make them feel at home

quired. Part of the reason the layout of Za'atari became so chaotic was that families moved their tents and caravans from their allotted spots to be closer to friends and family.

Aid workers believe bathrooms will be kept cleaner and more intact if they are more private and shared by families. Shorter distances to the latrines will also prevent the protection concerns that existed in Za'atari over women and girls having to travel long distances to access bathrooms, especially at night.

"We hope by grouping families together to share the WASH facilities, we can facilitate a sense of

ownership and avoid some of the problems we saw in Za'atari associated with large numbers of people using communal latrines," Castel said.

"A lot of this camp has been based on what refugees experienced in Za'atari themselves, so we are trying to take on those direct lessons," she added.

Desert location

One of the big challenges for refugees living in Za'atari, as well as for aid agencies working there, is its desert location and inclement weather, either scorching hot or freezing cold.

Azraq is located in the middle of the desert, some 20 km. away from the nearest town of the same name. Its climate is as forbidding, if not worse, due to a propensity for strong winds that create daily sand tornadoes.

"At times it has actually been hard to do our site work," one aid worker complained, "so it's hard to imagine how it will be living here for a long period of time."

After all the desert-related struggles of Za'atari—including sand-triggered respiratory infections and difficulties in providing water, why would authorities and aid workers even consider building again in the desert?

Feda Gharaibeh, director of the Humanitarian Relief Coordination Unit at Jordan's Ministry of Planning (MOPIC), which allocated the site, said there was no other choice.

"This is Jordan. Most of our land is desert. There is no perfect place for a camp. You must also remember that there have been people living in villages in Mafraq [governorate] and Za'atari [town] for many years and surviving the same weather conditions as Za'atari [camp]."

Designed by refugees

The innovative metal shelters are meant to better protect refugees from the harsh conditions at Azraq than the tents initially used in Za'atari. They are six metres long and 4.5 meters wide with raised ceilings high enough for people to stand comfortably and a double-

clad steel tube frame to offer winter insulation as well as protection from the heat and winds.

"There are wind speeds here of up to 60 or 70 km. per hour, so you can't use tents. They wouldn't last very long," said Zakariya Amayreh, a Jordanian project officer with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), which is leading the shelter installation at Azraq.

"That is why we have designed these shelters. It is the first time they have been used in the world and they are a unique design especially for Azraq," he added with pride.

In each unit, there are two windows that open, ventilation holes, a lockable door onto a side porch entrance for extra privacy, and several metal curtain lines to allow for flexible space division inside the main room.

The only part of the shelter that has not been provided is the floor, which has been left as sand for the refugees themselves to cover.

"Hopefully it will increase their sense of ownership of the structures and help make them feel at home," Castel said.

To provide better insulation in winter, the floors will be raised, either with panels or concrete, with the final design still being worked on, Amayreh explained.

With an individual price tag of around 1,450 Jordanian dinar (\$2,050), the shelters are significantly more expensive than tents, which cost up to \$850 each including delivery, but they are expected to last much longer than tents, which usually need replacing every six to 12 months.

The shelters, pre-fabricated off-site by three different Jordanian firms, were designed in consultation with Syrian refugees from Za'atari. They are cheaper than the container-style caravans donated by Gulf States to Za'atari, which can cost as much as JD 2,500 (\$3,500). The shelters can be easily removed and transported back to Syria by the refugees, should there be an opportunity to go back.

Just over 200 shelters have been erected so far and the plan is to put up 5,000 in the first phase of the

camp, catering for up to 50,000 people across four villages.

Delayed opening

But for all the building that is going on at Azraq, and the 600 UNHCR staff that are ready to be relocated there as soon as it opens, there is one key component missing: the refugees.

The site, which staff say is ready to go, had been slated to open in July, but has been pushed back indefinitely. In recent weeks, some NGOs have withdrawn workers from the site, moving them back to Za'atari or to other urban-focused projects. Donors are beginning to wonder what is happening to their investment.

UNHCR's Harper said it is up to the government to decide when the camp will be used, but added, "It is hard to justify opening Azraq when we are only receiving 300 or so people a day."

Jordan is home to more than 540,000 Syrian refugees, the vast majority of whom live outside Za'atari camp in towns and cities. In recent months, thousands have returned to Syria while at the same time, some refugees have reported having a harder time crossing into Jordan.

"When we had large numbers crossing the border, we moved forward with preparing the camp," Harper said, "but since then those numbers have decreased and we're seeing a decrease in the numbers at Za'atari, so there is some spare capacity there."

Gharaibeh from the Ministry of Planning told IRIN the government was waiting on the results of a UNHCR survey at Za'atari to know the exact number of people living there. The count is expected to be completed by the end of October.

"It's very expensive to open a camp and to introduce all the facilities, with food, water, electricity, etc, so we try our best to utilize Za'atari camp to the utmost and then start to move people to Azraq," she said. "If we receive a sudden influx, then people will be moved to Azraq camp, so it's mainly for emergency."

Asked if the camp may not open at all, she said, "It is not clear yet," repeating: "It's very expensive to run a camp."

So far, U.N. agencies and NGO partners have spent around \$25 million preparing the roads, water pipes, drainage system, shelters, registration and distribution centers, hospital and schools. But Harper denied Azraq was a white elephant.

"Given the size of the operation, the number of people already killed in Syria, that over four million are displaced inside the country, two million more are refugees and no political solution is in sight...it would be irresponsible for us not to be properly prepared."

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Debating Federalism in Yemen

Rafat Al-Akhali
Atlanticcouncil.org
First Published Oct. 28

The Southern Movement in Yemen, known as Southern Hirak, is closer than ever before to achieving a negotiated resolution that addresses at least some of its demands. Capitalizing on Southern grievances following the 1994 Civil War in Yemen, Hirak established itself as a protest movement in 2007 that demanded the examination of many rights-based issues in the South, but quickly turned to demand secession when their original demands were ignored.

As Yemen's National Dialogue Conference (NDC) reconvenes after extended Eid Al-Adha holidays, all eyes are on the "8+8" Committee which is negotiating an agreement to address the grievances of the Hirak Movement. The committee, with eight representatives from the South and eight representatives from the North, was formed on Sept. 10 and in one month of intensive discussions and negotiations made significant progress towards reaching a consensus. However, a final agreement remains elusive, causing the NDC to delay its closing ceremony which was initially scheduled for the Sept. 18, marking six months since its launch. As negotiations resume this week, it is worth looking at what has been achieved so far and the different positions around the negotiation table.

Federalism: Reaching a Middle Ground

The negotiations started with two

extreme positions: the traditional elite powers (particularly those from the ex-ruling party GPC and the Muslim Brotherhood party Islah) calling for maintaining the status quo of the simple centralized state in Yemen under the banner of maintaining Yemen's unity, and the Hirak representatives calling for the independence of South Yemen based on pre-unification (pre-1990) borders. Through negotiations, committee members dropped these extreme positions and participants reached consensus on adopting a federal system in Yemen. The discussions focused on the form of the new federation in Yemen, particularly the number of regions and which governorates will form each region.

Designing a Federal System

Again, the negotiations proceeded with two initial positions. Hirak demanded a two-region federal system: Northern and Southern regions based on 1990 borders, while the majority of the representatives from the traditional parties wanted a four or five region federal system with each region including a mix of Northern and Southern governorates. The main concern of those taking the second position was that a two-region system would be a first step towards secession of the South. Hirak's insistence on including in the agreement the right of self-determination for the South after five years of adopting the two-region federal system only served to support those fears. Hirak representatives, however, feared that the people of the South would reject anything less than autonomy over what was once South Yemen and the right of self-deter-



Debate over the future of Yemen is currently underway at the NDC to determine how the country will preserve unity.

(Graphic by the Yemen Times)

mination.

Representatives of the eastern Hadramout, Shabwa, and Al-Mahra governorates (once part of South Yemen) added another layer of

complexity to the negotiations by demanding a separate eastern region in the new federal system and refusing to be part of any future southern region. Over 50 members of the NDC from these governorates signed a widely-publicized petition for the creation of the eastern region. This position added a third option to the negotiations table: a five-region federal system but still based on 1990 borders, with two regions in what used to be South Yemen (an eastern region and a southern region), and three regions in North Yemen.

With both sides resisting this third proposal, the facilitators, in an attempt to break the deadlock, suggested introducing a referendum after five years. The suggestion put forth two options for the negotiators:

- To start with five regions with a referendum in five years providing the option for regions to consolidate their territories (i.e. giving the chance for the two pre-1990 Southern regions to consolidate into one if the majority of the people in those two regions choose to do so); or
- To start with two regions (along the pre-1990 borders) with a referendum in five years providing the option to form new regions.

An implicit understanding in these options was for Hirak to surrender demands for a referendum on independence (right of self-determination), and for Northern representative to relinquish demands for mixed regions between Northern and Southern governorates.

Two final options were explored but not accepted by the committee members. One proposal put forward the option to form two regions in the pre-1990 South, two regions in the pre-1990 North, and a fifth region in the center containing a mix of Northern and Southern governorates. The other proposal suggested beginning with a fully decentralized authority at the level of the current 21 governorates for a transitional period of five years, and then a referendum

for any governorates that want to unite to create regions (i.e. build the system from the bottom-up). These two options failed to address the reservations of the two negotiating sides, as they did not give Hirak representatives autonomy over their region or the right of self-determination, and the two options did not provide assurances to the pro-unity negotiators that secession will not happen in the future.

The negotiators have returned from their Eid holidays with these options in mind to try and reach a final settlement in the next few weeks.

The current debate is focused on the first two levels of government: central (federal) government and regional governments, with little focus on the municipal or city-level government. Without empowering the third level of government with enough authority and responsibility—and explicitly protecting such powers under the new constitution—the NDC delegates will continue to overlook the demands of Yemeni citizens for a government that is more responsive to their local needs. Yemen will move from a centralized system with a single power center in Sana'a to yet another centralized system with two to five power centers that remain out of touch with the ordinary citizen.

An agreement that includes multiple regions or governorates, and a referendum in five years with the option to consolidate these regions, will likely result in maintaining the initial design of the agreement and a failure to consolidate. Once elite and popular interests are aligned at a more local level, there is little incentive to give up these interests and powers to a more consolidated, centralized authority. This is also true of any agreement with less number of regions and a referendum in the future to allow the creation of new regions. Once new elite interests are aligned and power is gained, there is little incentive for these elite to allow new regions to be created, and they will therefore do everything in their capacity to stop that from happening. Therefore, while the option of having a referendum in five years might seem like a good way of breaking the deadlock, in reality it

is most likely to not have any effect once powers are entrenched in the initial design, and the negotiators are probably well-aware of this.

Existing power centers and elite players can more easily maintain their interests with a smaller number of regions than with a larger number of regions. With only two regions to manage, the political elite can easily maintain control over Sana'a using traditional networks and patronage systems and well-known Southern players will consolidate control over the second region. This arrangement would make it easier for the elites to deal and coordinate with each other in the future. The establishment of more regions, however, introduces an element of ambiguity as to what key players will emerge in these regions and might, therefore, be a less comfortable option for the traditional power centers in Sana'a.

A transition to a federal system seems to be the only solution that could preserve Yemen's unity. However, the third-level of government needs to be empowered with substantial authority protected under the constitution. This system could reduce resistance to the division of territory as the regional governments would exert limited influence, and political authority would be drawn away from the traditional center of power in Sana'a. A five-region federal system with mixed governorates from South and North Yemen, and with substantial authority at the municipality-level, would ideally weaken the power of the current political elite in the North and South and create a more responsive and sustainable governance system. The next few weeks will be decisive in shaping the future of the "New Yemen."

Rafat Al-Akhali is the chairman of Resonate! Yemen based in Sana'a, which works to bring the voices and ideas of young Yemenis to public policy discourse and support youth action on issues of national and international significance.

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انذا تقدمت أو تأخرت عاتبتني الناس واذا وقتت مكاني اتهموني بالفساد. فمن أنا؟

هل تعلم

أن الكسوف لا يستمر أكثر من 7 دقائق و 8 ثوان وذلك بسبب السرعة التي تدور بها الأرض حول الشمس

الحلول بالمفوق

3 سيل
صوم
لحم
4 الجوز
عروس
فروع
5 احمد عيد
اللبل
بخيلة
تعمير
تتكبير

مسافر
الحوار
الرقيب
المجال
الامركية
رائع الطلعة
مفصولة
7 غيمة متحركة
احمد عيد
المحمول
الملازم
8 الحب المستحيل
المستعدة

لو تعرفوه
9 الاستيعاب
10
رائع الطلعة
غيمة متحركة
11 كثرة الثثرة
12 الحب المستحيل
كثير الافتخار

لغز
1- مضافة مستوية - مكنس الضمالة (أم)
2- يلعب من بطولة طرف بعد الثاني ويكف للثاني - علم مؤنث 2- مكنسة مصرية
3- بين العين (أم) - صمغ أو رصم - ينسب إلى إحدى الدول الأوروبية
4- جمع امرأة - مكنس نظيف - متشابهان
5- صوت المدحان (أم) - صربية (أم) - الفاشية (أم)
6- نص (أم) - الطموض (أم) - متشابهان
7- الجوز - السيدة فيروز - تنسب من الثاني
8- مكان للعبادة (أم) - سأل
9- بئر شجون التي - حبير المتكلم - حيا
10- من السلم الموسيقي - بورتو - ثيرها (أم)
11- المتكلم (أم) - حب - متشابهان
12- لسير - واقع - سعب - متشابهان
13- لتكلمها - ضمير المذنب - متشابهان
14- لتكلم (أم) - لعاب - ومدة قياس (أم)
15- صناعة - وتقر

معمود
1- مغرب إزمي
2- مكنسة مصرية
3- هذا الجوز - يشبهه بطريقة قاطرة (أم) - شكر
4- مكنسة مصرية (أم) - مكنسة من مكنسات (أم) - مرض صبري
5- صوت المدحان (أم) - صربية (أم) - الفاشية (أم)
6- التمشيق (أم) - لتتمي (أم)
7- من مكنسات البصر - علم مؤنث - ينسب إلى إحدى الدول الأوروبية
8- متشابهان - توضحت - وضع
9- بئر شجون التي - حبير المتكلم - حيا
10- مكنسة مصرية (أم) - مكنسة من مكنسات (أم) - مرض صبري
11- من أنواع الثاني (أم) - مخلوق من تار
12- الفرار (أم) - مكنس يابن (أم)
13- اللع (أم) - الرجمة (أم) - حرف جر (أم)
14- لعاب (أم) - ينسب إلى إحدى الدول الأوروبية
15- موصلة لثني

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Yemen largely functions as a gender segregated society. Women and men tend to socialize- both inside and outside of the home -within their respective groups. When women and men who are seen out together, they are typically family. But younger generations especially seem to be moving towards a more integrated approach to male-female relationships, where mixed gender groups are found hanging out in public at universities, in restaurants and at cafes. Many say marriages often spout out of these friendships. Hawana Yamani wants to know:

Can women and men just be friends?

❖ **Naseem Al-Mutwakel**, a 20-something from Sana'a says friendship is sacred and sincere. "A family must know about any friendship that develops between a man and a woman."

❖ "More relationships are devel-

oping between women and men outside of marriage and family all the time in Yemen although society is yet to catch on," ar-

gues **Jamal Al-Mesbahi**, 29-year-old freelancer from Thamar.

❖ "We aren't living in the Stone Age," says **Saeed Raweh**, a private company employee from Aden. "I'm against families prohibiting mixed gender friend groups. Our children spend a long time outside, and it's normal for them to have friendly relations with one another. We should teach our children what is right and wrong and then trust them. My wife has male friends. They visit her at home, and I know that."

❖ **Hailan Mohammed**, a 24-year-old student from Taiz says, "I supports male-female relationships in certain contexts like offering help in schools, insti-

tutions and work places, but outside of that, it should be limited."

❖ "A man draws attention to himself if he is seen in the streets with his sister, let alone a female he is not related to," says **Rashad Al-Sharafi**, a 39-year-old, government employee from Ibb. "Friendship between men and women, particularly

in Yemen, is based on certain interests," which Al-Sharafi says often goes beyond friendship.

❖ **Sadeq Al-Awadi**, a 30-year-old from Ibb says, "I can't be friends with someone from the opposite sex because such relationship will never be the same as [the relationship I have with my male friends]."

hp acer

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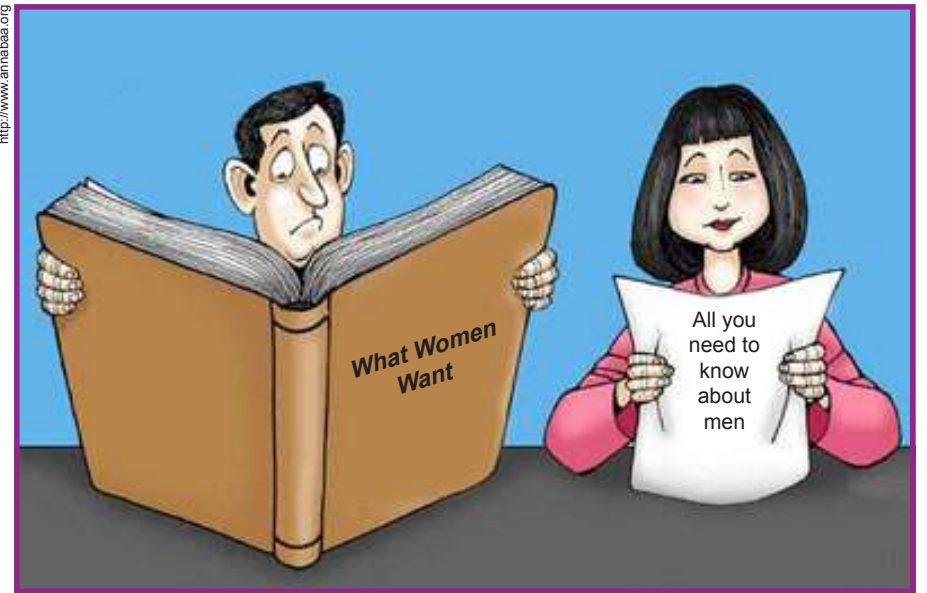
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Hawana Yamani, "In a Yemeni State of Mind," is an interactive youth radio program that discusses a range of community issues and topics. The show allows callers to voice their opinions freely while on air. During our live broadcast we also accept SMS and Facebook messages. Tune in to Hawana Yamani Saturday through Thursday from 4-5:30 p.m., and let your voice be heard!

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