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Southerners prepare for Houthi invasion

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, March 23—Armed forces loyal to Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi have been on high alert in Aden following the Houthis' takeover of Taiz city on Sunday, taking up positions along the governorate's borders in anticipation of an assault.

Popular committee members and military forces have been gathering in the Karesh area of Aden governorate, near the border with Lahj, according to popular committee member Mohammad Herhaj.

"Defending Aden and southern Yemen is not just the responsibility of popular committee members, it involves all southerners and everyone is getting prepared," he said.

In a speech televised Sunday evening, Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi said his group's decision to mobilize for war was "imperative" under current circumstances and that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its affiliates—among whom he counts Hadi—are being targeted, as opposed to southern



Resigned Defense Minister Al-Subaihi reportedly pictured in Karesh area, where southern popular committees are amassing in preparation for a potential assault by the Houthis.

Yemen and its citizens.

Heraj said southerners have nonetheless interpreted Al-Houthi's speech as a declaration of war, and that they are ready to defend themselves by any means necessary. "If they don't have weapons they will fight with stones, they will never give up," he said.

Fighter jets were seen flying over the governorate on Saturday and Sunday, although no strikes were reported. Pilots working alongside the Houthis had bombed the Presidential Palace in Aden on Thursday night, with Hadi escaping unhurt from the attack.

In a speech televised Saturday by Aden Live TV, Hadi called the attack on his residence "crazy and irresponsible" and said he is not acting for the sake of power but to "maintain the unity, stability and security" of Yemen.

Speaking with the Yemen Times on Monday, Southern Movement leader Abdullah Naji compared Houthi aggression to the 1994 civil war. "Northern forces won the war in 1994 because they had supporters from the south, but now the situation is different. Southerners

will not allow the Houthis to rule the south," he said.

Khalid Al-Kathiri, head of the Information Committee of the Supreme Commission of Liberation and Independence, a body within the Southern Movement, issued a statement through local media calling on southerners to unite and for fighters to gather along the borders and repel what he described as "blood-thirsty occupiers."

Hadi began a week-long recruitment drive on March 15 in an effort to raise 20,000 fighters, and ordered the return of any military personnel forced into retirement following the 1994 civil war.

The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting Sunday, in which Special Envoy Jamal Benomar warned Yemen is on a "rapid downward spiral" as the conflict acquires "worrying sectarian tones and deepening north-south divisions."

The Security Council condemned "unilateral actions" taken by Houthis and reaffirmed its support for Hadi, who made a request Monday for military assistance from the Peninsula Shield Force, the military wing of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Houthis appoint new defense minister

■ Fareed Al-Homaid

SANA'A, MARCH 23—The Houthi Revolutionary Committee announced Hussein Nagi Khairan as acting minister of defense on Sunday, replacing Mahmoud Al-Subaihi following his defection to the south on March 7.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, gave no reason for the selection of Khairan other than the need to fill a position left vacant by Al-Subaihi's departure earlier this month. "Al-Subaihi is no longer the defense minister and any role he plays in that capacity is illegitimate," he said.

Al-Bukhaiti confirmed that all military units in the country will now come under the control of Khairan as acting minister of defense, except those in the south pledging support for Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi.

"There are some rebel brigades and camps in the south that are helping members of Al-Qaeda to attack legitimate military forces in those areas," he said, referring to Hadi loyalists, which Houthis commonly characterize as affiliates of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Khairan, 62, is originally from the Arhab district of Sana'a governorate. Prior to being appointed chief of staff by Hadi in December 2014, he served as commander of the 1st Marine Infantry Brigade on Socotra island since 1993.

Al-Subaihi, who now acts as a rival defense minister in areas falling outside of Houthi control, had served under the Houthis since his appointment on Feb. 6 before fleeing to his home governorate of Lahj.



Khairan served as commander of the 1st Marine Infantry Brigade in Socotra for over two decades.

Houthis push south from Taiz city

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, March 23—The Houthis took control of Taiz city, Taiz governorate, on Sunday and have since established a presence in the south of the governorate.

Around 350 armed Houthis wearing military uniforms took over Taiz International Airport on Sunday morning, according to Aidi Amin Al-Yousefi, deputy security chief of Taiz governorate.

The men had Houthi slogans plastered on their weapons and were wearing Special Security Forces (SSF) uniforms, but were not members of the SSF, Al-Yousefi told the Yemen Times. According to him, they took control of the civilian and military airports, as well as the judicial compound and a number of important government buildings.

Checkpoints were set up at the entrances and exits of the city and the surrounding mountain heights, he added.

Having taken over vital institu-

tions in Taiz city, it appears the Houthis have since spread southward in the governorate.

"Armed Houthis are patrolling some neighborhoods in Taiz and have set up checkpoints in the areas of Naqil Al-Ebel and Al-Raheda, which are located 30 and 80 kilometers south of Taiz," said a senior source in the governorate's security forces, who refused to mention his name citing fear of repercussions by the group.

Many believe Taiz's fall paves the way for the Houthis' advance on Aden.

Fadhil Abu Taleb, a member of the Houthi Political Office, said the group's popular committees will enter all of Yemen's governorates, not just Taiz, to purge them of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

Deputy security chief Al-Yousefi said helicopters brought military reinforcements from Sana'a to Taiz on Sunday, but he could not confirm which unit they were from. However, Abu Taleb said "the sol-

diers being transferred into Taiz are from the SSF [Special Security Forces]."

There are many military camps in Taiz governorate, including Khalid Bin Al-Walid, an armed forces camp, a Reserve Forces camp for the Republican Guards, an SSF camp, a police camp, and a reception camp in which soldiers are trained directly after they enlist.

Each camp contains about 2,000 soldiers and officers. Many soldiers within the SSF and Reserve Forces camps remain loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and may fight alongside the Houthis should fighting break out with forces loyal to Aden-based Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, considered the legitimate president by the international community.

Tens of thousands of Taiz residents continued protests in front of the SSF camp on Monday, condemning the presence of the Houthis' and forces loyal to Saleh, according to Laith Al-Ahdal, a local

who took part in the protest.

Based on video footage and protester accounts, security forces and Houthis assaulted the protesters and sprayed them with water and tear-gas. Thousands launched a sit-in in front of the SSF camp demanding soldiers not to suppress protests and not to support the Houthis, Al-Ahdal said.

Regarding the clampdown on protesters, Abu Taleb said, "It is within the security forces' duties to stop protesters if they are damaging buildings and stores and halting traffic. It is true that our armed men along with the security forces are confronting the protesters, however they are doing that peacefully."

"There are those who try to ignite sedition in Taiz but we will not allow that," he said.

Located 256 kilometers south of the Sana'a and with a population of over three million, Taiz is bordered on the north by the governorates of Ibb and Hodeida, with Al-Dhale to its east and Lahj to the south.

Houthis mobilize for "long-term" war

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, March 22—The Houthi-controlled Supreme Security Committee announced a "general mobilization" for war on Saturday, taking control of Taiz city Sunday as they push southwards toward Aden.

Militias and military convoys under Houthi control moved towards the governorates of Taiz, Al-Dhale, Marib and Al-Baida following the announcement, with forces loyal to Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi making preparations in Aden.

The announcement came hours after a speech by Hadi was aired on Aden Live TV, in which he responded to Houthi-led airstrikes on the Presidential Palace in Aden on Thursday and accusations he was behind Friday's deadly bombings in the capital.

Hadi called the attacks in Aden "a continuation of the military coup that began in Sana'a" and vowed to replace "the Iranian flag hoisted in the mountains of Marran with

the flag of Yemen," referring to the Houthi stronghold in northern Sa'ada governorate and alleged backing for the group from Iran.

Suicide bombings at the Badr and Al-Hashoush mosques in Sana'a city on Friday killed 137 and left hundreds injured, according to statistics from the Ministry of Health, while a failed attack at Al-Hadi mosque in Sa'ada governorate left only the attacker dead.

A group purporting to be a Yemeni branch of the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks online, although it has not been independently verified, while Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has denied involvement.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, blamed Hadi for "dragging Yemen into war" and accused him of "conspiring with Al-Qaeda to kill soldiers, blow up mosques and take innocent lives."

"We assure everyone that this is

not a war against civilians but is being waged to protect them. What happened in Taiz and elsewhere is within the framework of our general mobilization," he added, referring to the group's capture of Taiz city on Sunday.

According to Al-Bukhaiti, "general mobilization" is meant to prepare both armed forces and wider society for "long-term warfare" and will involve the funneling of all government, financial and human resources towards the war effort.

Nabil Al-Sharjabi, political analyst and professor of crises management at Hodeida University, says the diversion of national resources for war "will devour everything."

"Announcing a general mobilization means depleting the national economy and dedicating all of the country's resources to war. It will lead to the collapse of the economy, it will be a disaster if the Houthis continue with this madness," he said.

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Lahj: AQAP launches deadly assault, US withdraws

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, March 23—Months of deteriorating security in Lahj governorate culminated on the weekend in the US withdrawal from Al-Anad airbase, the brief takeover of the capital Al-Hawta by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and the release of multiple soldiers kept hostage.

On Sunday evening, the Southern Popular Resistance, a militant branch of the Southern Movement, released nine men from the 201st Armored Brigade stationed in Radfan district of Lahj governorate.

A total of 12 soldiers were kidnapped by the group in the Al-Hamra village of Radfan on Feb. 15. Three were later released, but the group said they would only release the remaining nine once several demands were met.

The militants called for 200 Radfan locals to be incorporated into the 201st Armored Brigade, for military personnel forcibly retired in 1994 to be reinstated, and for five recently-established checkpoints in the district to be removed.

On March 12, the brigade agreed to meet all the demands except for incorporating 200 new members and removing one of the five checkpoints.

Colonel Naji Al-Arashi, chief-of-staff for the 201st Armored Brigade, said the detainees were released after the checkpoints were removed from the entrances of Radfan district, and that 200 locals were not being incorporated into the brigade.

US evacuates airbase

The US evacuated around 35 soldiers from Al-Anad airbase in Al-Anad city, Tuban district of Lahj on Saturday evening and Sunday at dawn.

Colonel Ali Hassan Muthanna, staff major of general operations in Al-Anad base, told the Yemen Times that the soldiers were evacuated in two airplanes, the first one left at



The US withdrew from Al-Anad (pictured) shortly after AQAP launched an assault on the governorate capital Al-Hawta.

midnight on Saturday while the other one left around 2 a.m. on Sunday.

"They left Yemen because of deteriorating security conditions in the governorate and because of the popular committees' control over the governorate," he said. "This happened after Al-Qaeda killed over 40 soldiers on Friday and took over all public headquarters in the governorate."

In Muthanna's view, the Americans feared Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), who took brief control of the governorate capital on Friday, could stretch to Al-Anad and they left in order to avoid becoming victims themselves. US military personnel evacuated the base a day after the Yemeni trainee soldiers left on Friday, he said.

The US established a presence in Al-Anad two years ago and began training Yemeni counter-terrorism forces, he said, adding that every three months around 45 soldiers are trained in counter-terrorism tactics.

The US Department of State said in a March 21 press release it supports Hadi as the legitimate president of Yemen and that, "There is no military solution to Yemen's current crisis." The release did not say how many Americans were withdrawn.

Popular committees take over Southern popular committees took temporary control of Al-Hawta city, the governorate capital, on Friday night and early Saturday morning.

AQAP had gained brief control of the city from government forces earlier on Friday, according to Basem Al-Zuraiqi director of the Ministry of Information's local office in the governorate.

Popular committees control all public institutions including the governorate office, police station, general security building and Special Security Forces headquarters, Al-Zuraiqi told the Yemen Times. They also set up checkpoints at all entrances to the governorate.

On Friday confrontations between AQAP militants and local security started when the armed men raided the police force, the Special Security Forces, and local government buildings.

Twenty-nine soldiers were killed in the political security building and the governorate building which witnessed the largest clashes, he said. Sixteen soldiers guarding Ibn Khaldoun Public Hospital also died during the overnight break in to the hospital, according to Abdulwali Al-Ghazi, an officer in Lahj Operations Department in Al-Hawta.

Al-Hawta-based journalist Basem Al-Zuraiqi, an eyewitness to the casualties, and Naji Al-Arashi, war chief-of-staff in the 201st Armored Brigade, confirmed the number of casualties.

Both men accused AQAP of perpetrating the attacks, and the group later announced responsibility via its Twitter handle.

Al-Baida-Marib border tense after clashes leave dozens dead

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, March 23—The situation remains tense on the border of Marib and Al-Baida governorates following deadly clashes between Houthis and Marib tribesmen from Thursday to Sunday that left at least 33 dead.

"The Houthis entered Qania area of Mahila district of Marib at around 7:00 a.m. on Thursday with about 200 armed men and 200 soldiers from the 26th Mechanized Brigade, located in Marib," said Mohammad Bohaibeh, a prominent sheikh in the Murad tribe. The tribe is the largest in the governorate, and was involved in the clashes.

Adel Al-Asbahi, the security chief of Al-Baida, said ten tribesmen and 23 Houthis were confirmed killed, but the number could be higher and no information is available regarding the number of wounded because both parties took them away.

According to Bohaibeh, the clashes left 30 Houthis and five tribesmen dead between Thursday and Sunday.

Qania area is located on the border of Al-Baida governorate, where Murad tribesmen have been positioned for many months in anticipation of an invasion by the Houthis.

Waleed Al-Dailami, leader of Houthi popular committees in Rada'a city of Al-Baida, told the Yemen Times the Houthis did not enter Marib and were only trying to close off the border between the two governorates.

"We are fighting Al-Qaeda militants in Al-Baida and have closed all entrances through which they leave and come back to the governorate again. The only entrance that is left is in Qania area from where the Al-Qaeda members enter into Yakla district of Al-Baida, where the [AQAP] militants are heavily positioned," he added. Al-

Dailami claimed there are hundreds of Al-Qaeda fighters in Yakla area of Rada'a district who are allied with Murad tribesmen to fight the Houthis.

Bohaibeh denied this version of events, saying the Houthis entered Marib territory. "Hundreds of tribesmen are on alert in anticipation of new attacks by the Houthis from Al-Baida. We will not allow the Houthis to spread into Marib and control it as they have in other governorates and will do our best to counter them."

Abdulmalik Al-Ujairi, a member of the Houthi Political Office, admitted that they entered Qania area of Marib.

"We thought it would be difficult to enter this area but we achieved quick progress there, contrary to what we believed," he said.

Al-Asbahi also said the clashes took place inside Marib, as well as along the border.

"The Houthis say they want to secure the entrances to Al-Baida but it seems that this isn't true because the fighting is taking place in Marib," he added.

By Sunday evening tribesmen had regained control over locations taken by the Houthis, according to Mohammed Ahmed Al-Wels, a journalist based in Marib.

Late Monday night Al-Wels told the Yemen Times that clashes renewed that evening, leaving 13

Houthis and four tribesmen dead. Al-Asbahi and sources from both parties to the conflict were unable to be reached for comment.

The Houthis were given permission from tribesmen of Al-Baida to enter the districts of Al-Zaher, Al-Sawma and Maswarah to pursue AQAP fighters, but they have taken over other districts as well. This is not the first time fighting has broken out between Houthis and Marib tribesmen. Clashes occurred in the northern Marib district of Al-Jidan but ended with the signing of an agreement on Nov. 25.

Marib is an important governorate because it includes several oil fields and the Marib Gas Power Station that provides electricity to several northern governorates, including Sana'a. Al-Baida is also important as an entry point to the country's south and as a governorate which has an active AQAP presence. In the latest in a string of attacks, on March 21 AQAP militants targeted Houthis in Rada'a city.

"The fighters have launched an attack on Safwan neighborhood in Thi Kaleb area and killed all Houthis there," AQAP said on its twitter handle, claiming a total of 30 Houthis were killed.

The attack was confirmed by Al-Asbahi and Al-Dailami, but both said they did not know the number of dead and that the casualty figures given by AQAP are likely inflated.

Correction

In a report titled "Majority of Yemeni minors lack birth certificates" published March 18 in issue 1869, it mistakenly read that 51 children in rural areas in Yemen were registered and received birth certificates. The correct number is 479,474. Additionally, the project to promote birth registration began in October 2013, not September.

Job Opportunities in Taiz

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Main Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow-up and supervision, coordination and documentation of training programs associated with the project includes identifying schedules for training and evaluation of training and educational materials related to training and full coordination with the Department of Training and Hope Foundation for Training and Entrepreneurship. Providing training programs and awareness, according to need.
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Send his resume at the following address before 31 March 2015

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Family planning

Theater Shows Campaign in Five Governorates

Funded by Yamaan Foundation for Health & Social Development (the German Government Support through the German Development Bank -KfW), the Charitable Society for Social Welfare (CSSW) conducted theater shows campaign on family planning and reproductive health during the period of November -2014/February 2015.

The campaign included 10 theater shows in five different governorates including Aden, Abyan, Lahj, Dhamar, Mukalla and Sayoun. In order to target a large number of beneficiaries, shows were conducted at crowded places such as schools and markets. Number of beneficiaries is estimated to be 5000 in total.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness of family planning and reproductive health issues among the community and correct the misconception of family planning. The campaign is part of the Yamaan's myriad BCC activities on family planning and reproductive health, which aim to demonstrate the importance of family planning and its effect on the family and community.

Dr Akram Alsharjabi, the reproductive health Program Manager at CSSW, pointed out that this campaign is part of CSSW awareness raising activities in family planning, stressing on the important role of mass activities, that target large groups, in passing accurate information in creative ways. He also expressed his gratitude to Yamaan Foundation for their financial support.

Dr Jamal Badr, BCC Manager at Yamaan Foundation, said "We try to reach the whole population especially those in remote areas who have little knowledge of family planning, we conduct many activities such as theater shows, radio shows, TV flashes educational sessions, mobile cinema shows, as well as family planning counseling training programs". "We aim to raise awareness on family planning and reproductive health issues through these activities" he added.

UN humanitarian coordinator in Yemen:

'Despite its poverty, Yemen is the most hospitable'

Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Middle East, is heavily dependent on international aid by donor countries and international organizations.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has historically enjoyed strong ties with the Yemeni government in terms of cooperation on the refugee issue.

As the country slips closer to civil war following the Houthi coup and the fleeing of Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi to Aden, as well as the closing of many Western and regional embassies, UNHCR continues to function in Yemen.

The Yemen Times sat down with Johannes van der Klaauw, the UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen, as well as the UNHCR representative, to assess what impact the political turmoil has had on the UN's work in the country.

■ Interview by Ali Aboluhom

Let's start with the latest developments: The ongoing conflicts in Yemen must hamper your humanitarian efforts. How do you manage to continue reaching out to people in need of your help, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs)?

We are here to address the humanitarian need of the population. The working environment for us is very challenging and very complex because in order to deliver humanitarian aid and reach out to the population and the people who are in need of assistance, we need to work with partners and local administrations. At the moment, we have a situation where we have a dysfunctional government, if at all, and we have Ansar Allah [Houthis] here in Sana'a who became in charge of security.

We as humanitarian actors, we work with officially established administration. But they are at the moment destabilized and we have to deal with that and provide the population with aid. The current political crises, as such, unfortunately have not generated many humanitarian needs because the country already has humanitarian needs. Sixty percent of the Yemeni population is in need of humanitarian support, education, medical care and food.

The current political impasse makes it difficult [for us] to act but we can only hope that the current political situation will be solved. We need to be prepared as a humanitarian community for the worst so we have a contingency plan to be able to access the affected population in war-torn areas in Marib, Al-Baida, Amran, Hodeida. Hopefully nothing bad happens in Taiz and Ibb.

Apart from the political crisis, the country is on the verge of economic meltdown because we all know the

government no longer has enough money to pay salaries of the public sectors employees. This is a very worrying matter, especially after the World Bank has suspended its operation here as it supports the government in terms of health, the education sector and the Social Welfare Fund.

Is there any coordination between you and the Houthis in terms of delivering humanitarian aid to people in need?

As a humanitarian community, we need to work with established government structures so we still have our relations with the line [essential] ministries, education, health and social affairs. Following the resignation of the Cabinet, we still work with deputy ministers. I recently signed a memo of understanding with the undersecretary of the Ministry of Health.

Ansar Allah are somehow involved in the issue of security in Sana'a and if we need to pass by checkpoints and secure freedom of movement for our staff then we need to communicate with those who are in charge of safety and security, so we talk to them.

As humanitarian actors we are neutral and impartial and in order to be able to deliver humanitarian aid, we talk with those who are in charge to ease delivery.

Staff for most international organizations have been evacuated. What is the status of UN employees in Yemen?

Our staff has not been evacuated. The UN humanitarian community has temporarily removed some international staff out of the country as a precautionary measure, but let's not forget that most humanitarian workers within the UN and international NGOs are Yemenis and they

are the backbone of our work. They are excellent and have the capacity to continue our work.

International staff is now working from a distance and we will bring them back as soon as the political crisis is solved. I want to emphasize that the humanitarian community is committed to staying here to meet humanitarian needs, we just need the environment to be safe and secure. We do not want Yemen to be abandoned.

What impact has the departure of embassies from the capital had on assistance?

The donor community has said that this will not impact its commitment to fund the humanitarian programs because humanitarian aid by the donors are not conditioned. Developmental aid by the donors including good governance and respect of human rights can not be assured at the moment and they have frozen this aid, but the humanitarian assistance which addresses life-saving measures and protection, will continue.

We have video conferences with donors in the capitals of Europe—we had a video conference last week from London, Amman and Brussels. We are reaching out not to the traditional donors: We have a message for the GCC countries because they have suspended their support for Yemen in infrastructure, budgetary and other finance matters.

This is a big problem because Yemen relies on that assistance, but at least they still continue their humanitarian support. Saudi Arabia, for instance, decided to give food aid of \$54 million a few months ago.

As of July 2014, more than 334,000 people were registered as internally displaced in the north as a result of ongoing conflicts. Have you been able to assist them, and if so, what kind of assistance have they been granted?

We have seen ongoing conflict in the north since 2004. We have seen displacement in Al-Jawf, Al-Baida, Shabwa and Abyan governorates. Even if the displaced return, as in Abyan, there are still needs to be addressed. Their homes have been destroyed and the schools are not functioning, so we as a humanitarian community coordinate with the local networks to help us more quickly see where the problems are.

We have provided people with food, non-food items, shelters, medical assistance and schooling

for children who have been out of school.

The figure you mentioned is mostly in the governorates of Hajja—namely in Harath district—Amran, Sana'a and Sa'ada.

Every day Yemen receives refugees, mostly from the horn of Africa. Somalis are granted prima facie refugee status by the Yemeni government. Other migrants are not treated as generously; the Yemeni government acknowledges that they are kept in prisons before being deported to their home countries. Do you provide them with any assistance?

Based on the geographic position, Yemen is a transit country for thousands and thousands of people from, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea who leave their country often in pursuit of work in rich Gulf countries. Since this migration movement is not regularized, smugglers and traffickers exploit them, particularly those who take the route from Bab Al-Mandab, where traffickers and smugglers are very active.

They are mostly Ethiopians and some Eritreans. The ongoing number of arrivals in Yemen are of a mixed migration, we indeed have economic migrants, and we have people who flee prosecution and violence, including women who are very vulnerable and need protection.

At UNHCR we try to help people who arrive on Yemeni shores by identifying the refugees among them, the asylum-seekers who seek refugee status, people with medical problems, and to provide those arriving with protection, because they are subject to traffickers exploiting them.

The irregular migrants who try to find their way to GCC countries are documented and the problem facing Yemen is that the government is unable itself to, upon arrival, screen the people of mixed migration flows. Yemen is conscious of its obligations under the international laws it signed to protect refugees.

It has to look after vulnerable migrants, minors and women, but it does not have a system, so we as humanitarian actors, we have set up a system along with international and local partners so those arriving can receive medical support and protection. For undocumented arrivals, UNHCR is not involved in their return; it is the task of the Yemeni government.



Despite the resignation of the Cabinet on Jan. 22 the UNHCR continues to work with deputy ministers, according to Johannes van der Klaauw.

There are 9,397 asylum-seekers and most of whom from Ethiopia, representing more than three quarters of new arrivals in the first half of 2014. Have they been granted asylum?

Yemen has a very unique policy towards Somalis, they are granted prima facie refugee status to stay in Yemen, but anyone else, Ethiopians, Iraqis and even Syrians, are required to apply for asylum status and need to go through individual procedures to check their documents and their motives for applying.

Yemen so far does not have a Refugee Status Determination (RSD) system or the capacity to do this mission so we in UNHCR do this work. Yemen is not unique, there are tens and tens of countries which so far do not have a functional governmental RSD system, so we do this.

If you are Ethiopian, Iraqi, you come to UNHCR in Sana'a or Aden and apply for RSD but this is a long-standing process which might take months because required documents need to be assessed carefully, and most of them have not shown up as they so far do not have all the documents.

As of August 2014, Yemen was granting temporary protection to Syrians, allowing them to access services available to other refugees. Has UNHCR provided them with any assistance?

Syrians have been granted a special policy from the Yemeni government, they do not have to go through RSD procedures because it takes a long time. Instead, they are granted temporary protection so that their children can access education and so they can go to service providers.

This is a very good, commendable decision by the Yemeni government and it shows the hospitality of the Yemeni people, but they must always renew their visa. There are 2,000 registered Syrians who have been granted temporary protection. They are given access to services available, including the freedom of movement, but thousands others who do not have documents are not given this access.

Has technical support still been extended to the Yemeni government by UNHCR for its efforts at regional coordination and implementation of the Sana'a Declaration?

Yes. As a humanitarian community we still support the Yemeni government in the health and education sectors, as well as with refugees and IDPs.

The UN deals with many troubled areas, such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, and others. Is there anything unique about Yemen—perhaps its strong tribal nature—that makes dealing with the locals different than other conflict-torn places?

Despite Yemen being a poor country, it is the most hospitable. It is the only country in the region that has signed international commitments to protect refugees and asylum seekers, human rights and children's rights. It takes the responsibility seriously but it does not have the capacities and stability to ensure the implementation of these commitments.

This interview, conducted on March 19, has been edited and condensed.

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Political crisis and Yemen's literary resurgence

■ Fared Al-Homaid

“I have sold hundreds of novels since last June—not world literature masterpieces, but ones written by Yemeni authors. Do you believe that?!” said Abduljabar Al-Attoani, owner of Abu Thaar Bookstore in the capital Sana'a.

Despite ongoing political and economic turmoil, national literature saw an unexpected surge in 2014. Twenty novels were published by Yemeni authors last year, and while that figure may seem insignificant in a regional or global context, it is considerably more than the eight books produced the previous year. Indeed, it is about ten percent of all the books ever published by Yemeni writers, and considering the hardships facing the country today it is an extraordinary achievement.

The Yemeni novel in history

Ahmed Al-Sakkaf's *Qarov's Girl*, published in 1927, is considered modern Yemen's first work of fiction. Since then, a mere two-hundred books by Yemeni writers are thought to have been published. Until the publication of Mohammed Abdulwali's celebrated work *They Die Strangers* in 1971, marking the beginning of popular literature in Yemen, just eight books were produced.

Abdulwali's masterpiece, a collection of 30 short stories translated into several languages, introduced Yemeni literature to the world for the first time. His reputation was sealed a year later with the publication of *Sana'a: An Open City*, which looked at the history of North Yemen before the 1962 revolution and is considered one of the greatest Arabic novels of the 20th century.

Abdulwali's popularity signaled a flourishing of literature in the 1970s and 1980s, and brought renewed attention to lesser-known works as well, including *Qat Kills Us* (1969) and *The Victim of Avarice* (1970)

by Yemen's first female novelist, Ramzia Al-Iryani. Only Zaid Mutee Dammaj's *The Hostage* (1984) would match the success of Abdulwali's novels, but works produced in those years established Yemen's literary tradition and continue to define it today.

Development and greater access to printing houses saw an increase in literary output in the 1990s, but low levels of literacy and a lack of government support has made it difficult for writers to find success within Yemen, all the more so given the country's political climate in more recent years.

Abdulmalik Al-Qattaa, the general manager of the Copyright and Related Rights Department at the Ministry of Culture, says government support for writers and other artists ground to a halt soon after the 2011 uprising.

“Two or three years ago we used to print books by Yemeni writers for free but it's no longer possible to provide that kind of support. The ministry can't even print its own publications, like our *Al-Eklil* and *Culture* magazines,” he said.

Before political turmoil and dwindling resources forced an end to government aid, support for writers also came from the ministry's Heritage and Cultural Development Fund, which would purchase up to a hundred books by Yemeni authors and distribute them at public libraries, schools and book fairs.

Novelists themselves, who are forced to look abroad if they wish to have their work released by a reputable publishing house, will also point to a lack of development in the private sector. Gamal Hasan, whose book *Memory's Insects* was released by Lebanese publishing house Difaf last year, says the greatest difficulty facing new Yemeni writers is finding someone to publish their work.

“Working with local publishers, who have little knowledge of marketing and sales, gets a writer nowhere. Novelists want to see the reactions of their readers and crit-

ics, but that's not going to happen if one works with Yemeni publishers,” he said.

History in the Yemeni novel

As sales at the Abu Thaar bookstore indicate, Al-Attoani is convinced locally produced literature offers an untapped market. Demand has increased, he thinks, because there are more choices available and novelists are receiving greater attention in local media.

“Yemeni readers want books about their country and issues they can relate to,” he said. “Many of my customers come to the store looking for Yemeni novels regardless of the author, they just want to read something about their own society.”

Hatim Al-Azazi, a 28-year-old English literature graduate, thinks Yemeni fiction has gained in popularity because the quality of writing has improved in recent years and moved away from the social realism that has long defined literature throughout the Arab world. “What is good about the new generation of authors in Yemen is that they are rebelling against the superficial and dull style of traditional writers and have embraced more interesting and complex themes,” he said.

Some of those themes include topics many conservative Yemenis find controversial, such as religion and gender equality, but Al-Azazi is hopeful that younger generations will embrace the change and support young writers in the country.

Whatever their differences, this new generation of writers have their predecessors, both within Yemen and across the region, to draw upon and respond to in their works. Reem Wajih, a 28 year-old English teacher in Taiz, says young writers today would not be able to forge a new path without the work of traditional novelists like Habib Sorori, Ahmed Zain and Ali Al-Maqri.

“The large number of books being published today, which is actually small compared to other countries, is thanks to the achievements



By drawing on the past while breaking from tradition, many of Yemen's writers appear to be searching for answers and forging new paths in reaction to the country's current crisis.

of traditional Yemeni and Arabic novelists. Young authors see that as an encouragement for writing,” she said.

However, in understanding why Yemeni literature is seeing such unprecedented demand and output, themes evident in contemporary works may offer the clearest insights. Political crisis, history and questions of identity feature prominently in much of the work being produced today.

Marwan Ghafory's *Sa'ada's Braids*, Mohammed Algharbi Amran's *The Revolutionist*, and Habib Sorori's *Soslofs Daughter* are but some of the novels dealing with conflict and revolution in Yemen today, while books like Ali Al-Muqri's *Adeni Incense* look further back to Aden's cosmopolitan past.

Others, like Samir Abdulfattah's *Adjacency: Another Life*, or Safa'a Al-Habal's *My Destiny is a Butterfly*, address one's relationship with society and the position of more

marginalized groups like women. All of these themes may be viewed through the prism of revolution and conflict, creating a social milieu that stimulates reflection and artistic creativity whatever part of the world it is happening in.

Hasan, author of *Memory's Insects*, thinks political and economic instability in Yemen and the wider region are the main drivers behind Yemen's literary revival. “What the country is going through gives writers a will to write. They try to reflect on what is happening around them within their works.”

Hasan believes social conflict and struggle provide the ideal environment for literature. “Novels portray peoples' everyday lives, not normal or happy ones but lives that are full of sorrows and difficulties. Take Russia as an example: Unlike the advanced West, Russia became a dominant country in literature during the second half of the 20th century despite the miserable economic

situation it was in.” Al-Azazi points to the wider Arab Spring as a starting point for today's surge in creativity, and indeed it has been recognized as such throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Notions of freedom and revolution that took root in 2011 have since been overshadowed by a sense of impasse and arrested development, however, and this setback ties contemporary works into long-standing themes evident in much of 20th century Arabic literature.

The new generation of Yemeni writers, and their growing readership, represent an attempt to come to terms with political and social crisis. In looking to recent history, and in combing new and old themes, novelists are searching both for a way forward and for a sense of identity. Ongoing political turmoil may not bode well for Yemen, but if 2014 is any indication, the outlook for its national literary scene is a promising one.

JOB VACANCIES

AN ASSYSTEM COMPANY

1. JOB DETAILS:

Name		Department	Operations
Job Title	Logistics Manager	Section	Logistics
Reporting to	Plant Manager	Job Grade	

2. JOB PURPOSE:

MANAGE ALL LOGISTIC MEANS (AVIATION, MARINE, LIFTING AND HANDLING MEANS, CAMPS, ROAD TRANSPORT OF GOODS AND PERSONNEL INSIDE AND OUTSIDE BALHAF SITE) IN ORDER TO SUPPORT BALHAF SITE LNG ACTIVITIES.
MANAGEMENT OF STOCK AND WAREHOUSE ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT PLANT AND SITE ACTIVITIES

3. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES: (PLEASE USE ONLY ACTION VERBS)

- To be accountable for the HSE performance of all YLNG logistics including handling/lifting, cargo road transportation and aviation operations to ensure that YLNG HSE targets are met.
- To participate when necessary to the work permits meetings, incidents accidents enquiries and analysis and carries out the necessary HSE reporting.
- To identify all HSE international and national regulations applicable in his domain of activities, promotes and supervises the necessary preventive and corrective action plans to ensure the Safety of personnel, the protection of the Environment and the integrity of equipment in his domain of activities.
- To ensure that all the applicable Safety and Environment regulations regarding logistics and transport activities are enforced
- To act in accordance with YLNG HSE and business Ethics policies
- To be contract holder of all YLNG Logistics contracts i.e. to lead the preparation of Logistics contracts and support the Contracts department in the CFT process, to manage the Contracts to ensure that they are used most effectively.
- To be the Budget owner of all YLNG Logistics Operations i.e. to prepare in liaison with Balhaf Services and Marine the Opex and Capex budgets for approval by the Operations Manager and to constantly monitor costs.
- To review and approve the procurement of goods and logistics services to ensure application of YLNG supply chain practices and optimize coverage by duly approved contracts. To define and adapt contractual strategies to reduce costs and improve performance.
- To provide necessary guidance and technical expertise to Balhaf Logistics, Marine and Aviation to achieve operational support of facilities in safe conditions and at minimum cost.
- To maintain records and statistics to ensure accurate reporting including Key Performance indicators.
- To monitor closely the performance of the Yemeni employees and their career development including trainings to achieve the Yemenisation program targets or propose amendments to the program
- To maintain liaison with international and local contractors and Government authorities, ensuring meaningful relations and appropriate cooperation and support.
- To be responsible for the YLNG Logistics efficiency to ensure no production shortfalls are linked to Logistics.
- To set objectives and methods for General Services, Logistics, Stock Management, Marine teams and liaise effectively with corporate departments such as Contracts and Procurement to ensure good support to site operations.
- To define and implement the logistics corporate and operational structures, optimize it and control its effectiveness.
- To anticipate and plan on long and short term plans the correct number and type of logistics resources to optimize logistics operations.
- To supervise the planning and implementation of computerised inventory control systems, classification of all materials in Stock in accordance with the Material Control System in use, and the presentation of reports on inventory control and management. To ensure that all inventory control activities are directed towards the optimisation of the YLNG's investment in stock materials and consistent with operational objectives

4. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: (DRAW EXAMPLES FROM KEY RESPONSIBILITIES)

- Aviation and transport: Fleet utilization optimization
- HSE: minimize number of incidents
- Follow up of Log budget and contract implementation

5. FRAMEWORKS, BOUNDARIES, & DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY:

- Logistic contract and budget holder
- The logistic department in Balhaf includes the management the following means of 2 fix wings aircraft, 2 helicopters, 100 light vehicles, 40 Heavy and Handling and lifting vehicles, 4 tug boats
- The Logistic manager is in charge of 2 warehouses, 3 fuel storage locations, a camp with all catering activities for more than 1 000 people and of the MOF

6. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND:

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in Logistics discipline or equivalent

Experience:

- 10 years' experience in Logistics and the administration of Logistics Contracts, with a good knowledge in Materials Management and Warehouse Administration.
- Has held positions requiring a high level of commitment to the safety and welfare of the workforce.

Job Specific Skills:

- Good knowledge of CMMS System (SAP).
- Excellent knowledge of spoken and written English
- Management skills
- Lifting and handling basic knowledge

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JOB VACANCIES

AN ASSYSTEM COMPANY

1. JOB DETAILS:

Name		Department	FN
Job Title	IST Security Senior Specialist	Section	IST
Reporting to	Head of IST	Job Grade	

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES: (PLEASE USE ONLY ACTION VERBS)

- Track, Monitor, Signal all security events of IST systems
- Evaluate and assess current IST systems from Security point of view
- Define and identify all required process and procedures of security activities and review and update all YLNG IT security process and procedures.
- Create strategies for Security risk mitigation
- Propose, implement the right Security tools, applications, systems and operate it.
- Establish and manage the required team and perform team assessments and evaluations.
- Efficiently identifies and solves Security issues.
- Conduct security audit activity on all IST systems.
- Demonstrate leadership to define requirements for security Aspects Company wide.
- Submit performance reports to internal and external entities when required.
- Ensure safe operation of IST equipment.
- Ensure all systems, networks; applications are free of any security threats.
- Follow and implement international IT security standards
- Keep tracking changes, challenges in the IT security field and reflect any changes required on YLNG network.
- Report all security events concerning YLNG networks, systems, applications on proactive way and put the right solutions on place.
- Prepare designs, solutions to meet any security threats.
- Generate performance reports, KPIs on security levels for all systems, networks and applications.
- Study new applications and end user devices security requirement and propose secured access solution.
- Manage Event logs of all systems, tracking and reporting for all networks and applications.
- Design, implement IT security measures supporting Mobility and BYOD.

3. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: (DRAW EXAMPLES FROM KEY RESPONSIBILITIES)

- All YLNG IT security Process and procedures are updated and published.
- YLNG IT security is kept to the international acceptable standard, to be measured against the standard
- YLNG systems are kept secured against all threats to be measured via the (daily, weekly, monthly IT security dashboard).
- Half year audit mission to be conducted.

4. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND BACKGROUND:

- Qualifications: University degree (B.Sc) in Computer Science or Information Systems, IT
- Professional security certifications such as CISSP, CISM are strongly preferred.
- Certifications: any of the ISC2, CISM CISSP, Cisco CCIE, CCNP or CCSP are required
- **Experience:** 10 Years' experience in Information Systems field. With Minimum of 5 years of formal experience in IT security function.

Job Specific Skills:

- The job holder must have detailed up to date knowledge and should have following capabilities:
 - Must have a strong track record in selecting compliance and operations solutions.
 - Demonstrated track record in large scale IT security operations governance, planning and monitoring.
 - This senior position requires a comprehensive knowledge of the information security technologies, options, security standards, understanding of security systems and services, brands and experience in working effectively with all levels of the organization.
 - Strong technical, facilitative and collaboration skills,
 - Must have an in-depth understanding of network security issues, security event logging / monitoring, operating systems (Windows, UNIX, and Android), Firewalls, Intrusion prevention, AV technologies, authentication mechanisms, ethical hacking tools, vulnerability assessment & scanning tools, application security assessments, incident response and knowledge of common information security management frameworks.

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A turning point in Tunisia

Larbi Sadiki

aljazeera.com

First published March 19

What does it mean when fanatics attack relics and mosaics? Simply put, a jihadist front may be expanding to engulf Tunisia in chaos as it has done in neighboring Libya.

There are three possible explanations. It would be easy to say that Tunisia's once-thriving tourism industry was the target of the attack. In fact, it is more than that. What is being targeted is the civic way of life enabling citizens to live at once as Muslims and democrats. This should be the primary concern of Tunisia's citizens and the new political elite shaping the country's "Second Republic" after the January 2011 Revolution.

Wednesday's deadly attack on a museum in Tunisia should not be oversimplified as a threat against tourism. It is far more serious than that. It may mark the assault against civic political organization and a fledgling experiment combining Islam and democracy.

That experiment, the Arab Spring's first approximation of a durable democratic transition since the

2011 Arab revolts is a blend of Islam and democracy. It seeks a two-fold synthesis: 1) between a moderate brand of Islam that tolerates ballots, gender equality, rule of law, pluralism, accountable government, and co-existence with the West; and 2) a form of democracy that is inclusive of all faiths and freedom of worship.

Anathema to jihadists

The experiment has a bigger chance of success in homogenous Tunisia than any other Arab state. Tunisia's famed religious scholar Muhammad Tahar Ibn Ashur (died 1973) came closest to elaborating an interpretation of Islam that promotes enlightened Muslim identity and rationality. His masterpiece "The Higher Goals of Islamic Law" (published in 1946) would be an anathema to jihadists and literalist religious preachers.

The terrorist attack against a museum adjacent to the country's Parliament in the upscale Bardo neighbourhood, signals a tactical shift by jihadists in Tunisia and North Africa in general. Until Wednesday, attacks against state symbols, especially the army and security forces, were confined to the Jebel Chaambi, the mountain areas near Kasserine. Ambushes of army units in 2012, 2013 and 2014 by extremists, particularly

the Uqba Ibn Nafaa group, caused dozens of fatalities among soldiers. Last July alone, 15 soldiers were killed by this deadly unit.

The daring operation executed in the heart of a rich suburb within the precincts of power is more than symbolic. It places the entire elite staffing of the so-called "Second Republic" on notice. This is the deadliest attack since the democratically-elected secularist president, 86-year-old Beji Caid Essebsi, was sworn into office three months ago.

Essebsi's secularist party Nidaa Tounes, winner of the November 2014 parliamentary elections, rules Tunisia in a consortium with Ben Ali associates and leftist partners—historically known for hostility towards Islamists, including the moderate Ennahda Party.

Tunisia's security apparatus

The last thing jihadists want for Tunisia is for democracy to triumph, much less for secularists even if democratically elected to run this North African—Arab and Muslim—country with a population of 11 million.

Tunisia's security apparatus suffers from incompetence if not out-and-out laxity. The stigma lives on. Back in 1988, a Mossad commando elite unit was able to assassinate the

PLO's number two in command, Khalil Al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), in Tunisia. Wednesday's attack will add to security woes in a country that needs to direct its limited resources towards the civilian economy in order to create youth employment and lower budgetary deficits and international debt.

The attack has always been on the cards. And there is no reason why it was allowed to happen with such ease.

The deteriorating security conditions in Libya, Syria and Iraq are proving infectious. Libya, more immediately, threatens stability in Tunisia. Borders are porous and the illegal transit of weapons and jihadists, including battle-hardened Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) returnees, compound the threat to this Mediterranean country.

For over six months, intelligence about terrorist plans to expand the jihadist fronts have circulated in the country and it is known to most politicians. In late 2014, jihadist commanders close to Libya's branch of ISIL—including Turki Al-Bina'ali of Bahraini origin—schemed to take the jihadist war to neighboring Tunisia.

The Tunisian commander heading Uqba Ibn Nafaa, Khalid Al-Chayieb,

might have adopted such a strategy. He has hundreds—if not thousands—of Tunisian fighters in Syria's ISIL to call upon for the activation of this plan. And it is not inconceivable that Tunisian and Libyan returnees from Syria are mobilizing to widen jihadist operations, bringing the war to Tunisia's urban centers.

Allegiance to ISIL

Like in Libya, where local militias have pledged allegiance to ISIL, Uqba Ibn Nafaa is following suit. As far as rhetoric is concerned, the war of words against the new political establishment in Tunisia began late last year. Wednesday's attack must be understood to fulfill this logic.

Yet it would appear as though this jihadist message was not taken seriously enough by security strategists in Tunisia. Many Tunisian citizens have not forgotten the not-so-veiled threat by Uqba Ibn Nafaa in September-October 2014 to carry out punitive operations against the army and security forces referred to as a "tyrannical" system (taghoot).

In January, it was Paris, with the attack on Charlie Hebdo. In March, it is Tunis, with the attack on the museum in Bardo.

What is it about relics and ruins that keep on drawing fanatics? Whatever it is, it has nothing to do

with Islam. The advent of Islam in Afghanistan did not spell the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan (dynamited by fanatics in March 2001)—nor did it herald cultural erasure and historical vandalism such as that we witnessed at the hands of ISIL this month against the Assyrian archaeological site of Nimrud in Iraq.

Nor did it bring destruction to Roman or Carthaginian relics, including the largest collection of mosaics in the Mediterranean. The early Muslim proselytizers to Tunisia, as elsewhere, appreciated the Roman architectural genius. In the Zeitouna and Kairouan mosques, among the oldest in the Muslim world, they borrowed that genius using some of the most exquisite marble pillars to raise buildings, rather than erase them.

Indeed, if there is a pattern to be discerned from Wednesday's attack on the National Museum in Bardo, the threat is far graver than a loss of tourism for Tunisia.

Dr. Larbi Sadiki is a senior lecturer in Middle East Politics at the University of Exeter, and author of Arab Democratization: Elections without Democracy and The Search for Arab Democracy: Discourses and Counter-Discourses.



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طلب تقديم عطاء

منظمة المساعدة الإسلامية (بريطانيا) هي منظمة دولية غير حكومية مسجلة مع وزارة التخطيط والتعاون الدولي، وتعمل في اليمن منذ عام 2012 في قطاعات المياه والصرف الصحي، واستجابة لطوارئ الغذاء والمواضع غير الغذائية والخدمات الصحية الأساسية.

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Invitation for Prequalification

Republic of Yemen

Sana'a Water Supply Enhancement Project
IDB Loan Financing No.: 2-YAR -0094
Brief Description of Works

The Republic of Yemen has received a loan from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) toward the cost of Sana'a Water Supply Enhancement Project, And it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payments for the two areas, No. SANCW-8N and SANCW-11, under this project.

The Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corp. intend to prequalify contractors and/or firms for the said project. The description of the two areas and the scope of works are as follows:

SANCW-8N Project Area

The area is located in Sad Shuoub zone, east of al-Jiraf zone and it lies between the Airport Road and Sa'ela Shuoub zone. It is considered a residential area with few commercial activities and governmental offices. The area is about 100 ha.

SANCW - 11 Project Area

The area covers Haddah and Faj Ottan with significant commercial, medical, institutional and governmental activities. The area of the project is about 620 ha.

The project scope includes installation of approximately 460 Km of pipes work of various diameters ranging from 25 mm up to 400 mm in the areas 11 and 8N. with approximately 100,000 house connections. In addition, the project includes drilling of two wells with necessary testing in the east part of Al Jeraf (in area 8).

Prequalification will be conducted through prequalification procedures specified in the *Guidelines for Procurement of Goods and Works under Islamic Development Bank Financing*, May 2009, and is open to all bidders from eligible source member countries, as defined in the guidelines.

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Parties reflect on UN's Benomar

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

As Yemen teeters on the brink of civil war, it has been almost five years to the day that Jamal Benomar was appointed UN special envoy. In response to airstrikes on the Presidential Palace in Aden and deadly bombings in Sana'a and Sa'ada last week, Benomar has issued repeated calls for participants to return to negotiations. "Peaceful dialogue is the only way forward," he said following a UN Security Council meeting on March 22, the same day he left Yemen for the Saudi capital Riyadh. However unlikely that may now seem, some in Yemen are resentful of Benomar's involvement and now see little point in national talks that appear to have only delayed the inevitable.

Once a beacon of hope, Benomar has proven a controversial figure during his tenure in Yemen. He brought with him decades of experience in conflict resolution, having previously worked in Rwanda, Afghanistan, and Iraq. He developed a particular approach to peacemaking, one that stresses the continued involvement of political actors removed from power as well as more marginalized ones, including civil society organizations, women, and other minority groups.

His was a piecemeal process based on dialogue and power-sharing to ensure stability during the political transition. With hindsight, however, many feel that his "transitional model" has brought more violence than peace. Some believe Benomar's experience and political acumen also enabled him to impose himself on the political process in a way few mediators could, leaving them to question his impartiality and to hold him personally accountable for its divisive outcomes. The UN envoy has been criticized by all stakeholders

and the wider public, but accounts of where he went wrong vary.

Accounting for Benomar's failure

As Islah Party spokesman Abdulmalik Shamsan suggests, Benomar's failure may lie with the nature of high-level politics, an arena closed to all but the most senior stakeholders. Talks at the Movenpick Hotel in Sana'a were not as inclusive as the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), and their daily proceedings remained inaccessible to the public. Benomar may have become disconnected as negotiations dragged on, and Shamsan says he ought to have listened to criticisms aired on social media and local news outlets within Yemen. "I think the United Nations and Benomar should pay attention to the reasons the public have lost trust in them," he said.

Others think those criticisms are over-stated and may not reflect public opinion in the country. Ali Al-Sirari, a member of the Yemeni Socialist Party, believes most of the negative press surrounding Benomar to be part of a "systematic media campaign to undermine his efforts and distort his reputation." He is confident Benomar was the right man for the job, and that without him Yemen would have plunged into turmoil long ago.

That Benomar was able to stave off conflict for as long as he did may be viewed as a success in itself, but many feel he was merely postponing the inevitable and making it worse in the process. Moreover, for some his policy of involving powerful political actors in the process, like GPC members and later the Houthis, went beyond inclusion to become an expression of weakness at best, and even unwarranted privileging.

Soror Al-Wadei, a member of the Salafi Rashad Union Party, says Benomar played a "destructive role"

in national politics. "On Sept. 21 the Houthis took over the capital and he knew what would happen, it's treacherous," says Al-Wadei. He and his supporters are especially resentful of Benomar's response to the conflict between Salafis and Houthis in the Dammaj district of Sa'ada in 2013, which resulted in the former being displaced from their homes in January of 2014.

Benomar "always sides with the powerful at the expense of the vulnerable," says Al-Wadei. "Why didn't he visit Dammaj when he went to Sa'ada? He would have seen the destruction caused there, but he didn't bother to look."

That Benomar's policy of avoiding confrontation at any cost was flawed, or that he was too weak to stand up to those flouting peaceful dialogue, is a common grievance amongst participants.

Hatem Abu Hatem, a leading figure in the Nasserist Party and member of its Central Committee, says Benomar's failure to stand up to Houthi aggression cost him his reputation. "Benomar's initiative was praiseworthy, but as time went on people lost faith in him, especially after the Houthis took control of Sana'a," he said. "He never even addressed the Houthis' constitutional declaration [of Feb. 6] and their refusal to revoke it."

Grievances against Benomar's peculiar approach to peacemaking were already evident when he took up the position in April 2011. Tawwakol Karman, a prominent anti-regime protester and later recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for her role in the national uprising, had called for his removal shortly after he was appointed. Any deal that would hand Saleh and members of his former regime immunity would serve to legitimize violence against protesters, she argued.

For their part, members of Saleh's



While most criticize the role Benomar has played in Yemen's transitional period, opinion is divided over the extent to which he, along with the international community, is to blame for the current crisis the country is facing.

ruling party, the General People's Congress (GPC), claim they were disadvantaged in the peace process. Abdulmalik Al-Fuhaidi, the editor-in-chief of GPC mouthpiece Al-Motamar Net, said members of his party hold grievances against Benomar because "he has not dealt with all political parties fairly."

"The GPC is a leading political party headed by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, but Benomar condemned Saleh for derailing the transitional process. This is unfair and misleading," said Al-Fuhaidi, before adding that Benomar should not be held personally responsible for its failure either.

Like Al-Fuhaidi, prominent Houthi activist Hussein Al-Bukhaiti feels responsibility for the failure of the national dialogue ultimately rests with its participants. "Benomar is only a mediator, we should be self-reliant and solve our own problems,"

he said. "Saudi Arabia imposed the Gulf Initiative, and the international community imposed Jamal Benomar—we shouldn't need to rely on foreign interference. Benomar can not help Yemenis if they can not help themselves."

Another popular grievance—one that serves the interests of both Houthis and members of the former regime—is that outside interference has been the cause of Yemen's derailed peace process. Much of the rhetoric surrounding foreign intervention may be just that, but the role that foreign interests played in Yemen's transition may have had a real, if less sinister, part to play.

Accusations that Benomar was overstepping his mandate first became public when, in September 2013, 46 delegates signed a petition condemning him for reporting to the UN Security Council that agreement had been reached on a six-region

federal plan while discussions remained ongoing. Leading members of Islah, the GPC, and the Houthis complained that he, together with Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, had flouted procedure to force through decisions.

With so much already invested in Benomar's so-called "Yemen Model," some feel that the international community tried forcing through a transition while ignoring the reality on the ground.

Al-Fuhaidi goes so far as to accuse Benomar of misleading the international community with regards to the political situation in Yemen in an attempt to ensure a successful outcome. "If he thoroughly and accurately reported on the situation in the country, I think the Security Council would have made more informed decisions," he said. "Benomar's briefings were intended to misrepresent the situation in Yemen."

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Iraqi Kurdistan nears breaking point

Cathy Otten
IRIN
First published March 20

The pressure of hosting more than one million people displaced by militants from the group calling itself Islamic State (IS) on top of the 225,000 refugees from Syria is taking a devastating economic and social toll on Iraqi Kurdistan and increasing risks for the most vulnerable.

The population of the semi-autonomous region has grown by 28 percent in the space of 12 months, piling pressure on education and health services. Poverty in the region has more than doubled, according to the World Bank. With further military offensives planned against IS, there are fears that yet more people will seek safety in the region.

The scale of the influx has created significant competition for jobs, pushing down wages and household incomes across the board, while demand for water, electricity and waste management is outstripping supply.

Meanwhile, the falling price of oil has hit government revenues and a long-running budget row with the federal authorities in Baghdad has halted fiscal transfers to the Kurdish capital Erbil—meaning public salaries have gone unpaid for months.

"The Kurdish Regional Government [KRG] does not have enough cash to pay its own staff, so how can it then pay to look after IDPs [internally displaced people] and refugees?" asked Hayder Mustafa, director general of development and coordination and cooperation in Kurdistan's Ministry of Planning.

Avoidable tragedies

The majority of the displaced in Kurdistan live in grim conditions, without family or friends to host them or money for accommodation. Despite efforts to transfer the displaced into tented camps, many still live in informal set-

tlements and on construction sites. The washing lines strung between naked concrete pillars of half-built hotels and shopping malls serve as a poignant reminder of the economic confidence Kurdistan once had.

The Khero family are Yazidis who fled their village of Giruzer near Sinjar, in Nineveh province, when it was seized by IS militants. IS believes members of the minority Yazidi religion are devil worshippers and have singled them out for brutal treatment including killings, slavery and kidnap.

Seeking refuge in Erbil, they ended up in a shack settlement on a patch of land next to the luxurious five-star Divan Hotel, once popular with the overseas business delegations that used to flood to Kurdistan.

During a rainstorm last December, three-year-old Rana Khero went missing. After a frantic search the police drained a manhole and found her body. Today the little girl's tiny brightly coloured shoes are still visible at the bottom of the hole. Her mother Zeitoun Hussein, 30, who is pregnant and has four other children, told IRIN, "I am very sad but what can I do?"

"A lot of these places are so dire but we don't have resources to fix these problems," sighed Peter Joshi, Senior Emergency Response Advisor at the Erbil Refugee Council (ERC), a government department also responsible for IDPs.

"If we had the money we wouldn't have people living here: It is an unlivable space," he said, adding that the government's financial issues meant services were being reduced across the board. "We have cut down on security and fire fighters in all IDP and refugee camps in Erbil governorate—to the level where it becomes hazardous."

"In some camps we have 50 people sharing one latrine, this is not acceptable," Mustafa said.

The scaling back of refuse collections and water supplies is already having an impact, with a number of camps reporting scabies outbreaks in

recent weeks. The cold and snow of winter was hard enough for families, but as the heat of summer looms, so do new threats of water-borne diseases.

Economic collapse

As the pressure on host communities to share dwindling resources grows, there are fears of social unrest and tensions, such as those witnessed in Lebanon and Jordan, which both host hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees.

A new World Bank report assessing the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees and internally-displaced Iraqis on Kurdistan notes, "The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is facing a multifaceted and complex crisis compounding concurrent and mutually aggravating security, political, economic, and social risks."

"The combination of the Islamic State crisis and the budget freeze has had a chilling effect on all investment, which has declined by two thirds so far in 2014," the report adds, explaining that the once-booming construction sector had been particularly hard hit and that the presence of IS militants along Kurdistan's borders had affected the country's ability to be a safe base for and trade route to the wider Southern Iraq market.

"The Kurdistan Regional Government has been particularly generous in hosting a major proportion of the IDPs," Abdul Haq Amiri, head of office for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Iraq told IRIN. "But... their resources are limited and they can not shoulder the burden alone. They will need additional international support."

The UN is struggling to raise money for the Iraq crisis response. Apart from a one-off donation last July of \$500 million from Saudi Arabia, it has received only piecemeal amounts from other donors. In February it announced that unless more cash came through this month up to 60 percent of its programming would be cut or curtailed.



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As of March 19 the Strategic Response Plan (SRP)—a document setting out what money is needed for which sector—was only 38 percent funded, leaving a \$1.4 billion shortfall.

"Things are really very bad," explained Jane Pearce, World Food Programme (WFP) representative. "We are looking at how we can cut back to make what we have go further but we have already been operating on a shoestring so it's not like there is a lot of room for maneuver."

Lise Grande, the deputy special representative of the UN secretary general and humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, told IRIN that with military offensives on IS territory such as Mosul being openly planned, more displacement was likely.

"We need to be ready for it with stocks pre-positioned and in order for us to do that, we need money, and that's money we don't have right now," she said.

According to Sibel Kulaksiz, a senior country economist for the World Bank in Iraq, there are several scenarios for how the crisis will develop; the worst-case forecasts an influx of 100,000 more Syrian refugees and 500,000 IDPs, for which the KRG will need an additional \$2.5 billion to cope. "Efforts are needed at the national and international levels to stabilize the situation [in the KRG] by delivering much needed services to the displaced people and host communities," she told IRIN.

Ahmed Ali, a senior fellow and director of Iraq security and humanitar-



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ian monitor at US NGO EPIC, says the financial challenges facing Kurdistan—particularly the non-payment of wages—could be as much of a driver of instability in the region as the security situation.

"We have seen some protests in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil due to the lack of salary payment," he said. "The government already has to deal with security challenges and it will also have to

find a way to address public grievance and then you have to take into account refugees and IDPs... We have seen in Jordan with Syrian refugees, that there were some protests and discontent among populations in the camps, so it is a challenging situation for the government."

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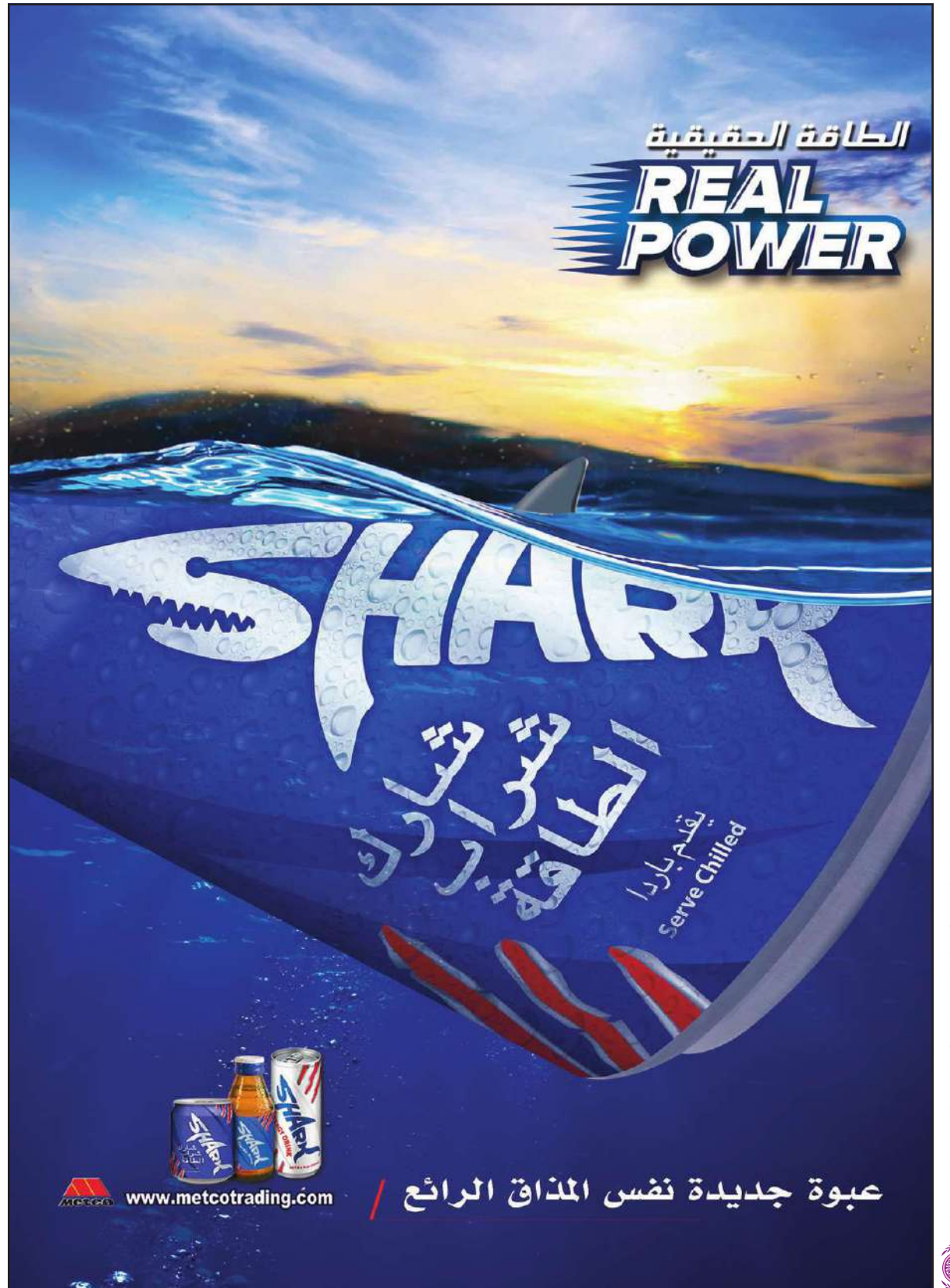


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