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Negotiations between Saleh and JMP fail

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

Sana'a, Mar, 27 — Talks between President Saleh and the Joint Meeting Parties, the coalition of the opposition parties, failed to produce an agreement this week. Saleh called the JMP leaders to see if they would accept foreign or gulf countries mediations to find a solution out to the political crisis facing the country.

"Yemen is a time bomb..... It's different than Egypt" said Saleh threatening the prospect of a civil war, Al-Qaeda spreading in Yemen and the country separating if his regime withdrew from power immediately.

Saleh has said he's willing to step down but he still needs time to negotiate the mechanism of the transfer of power. On Thursday and Friday Saleh also held meetings with General Ali Mohsen, who defected to the opposition on Monday, and the US ambassador. Another sticking point in the negotiations concerns the fate of his family: his son, Ahmed, and nephew, Yahya, head Yemen's Republican guard and the central security forces and many of

the protesters are demanding they too be removed from power.

Political analyst Abdulkareem Hilal believes the US will want to try and keep them both in power after Saleh leaves because they are both well trained in counter-terrorism strategies and experienced in counter-terrorism operations.

In a phone call with Genral Mohsen, Saleh is alleged to have offered to step down if Mohsen resigns as well in order to avoid more bloodshed.

"Last week's events, the loss of his allies, resignations of diplomats, and the high pressures in the streets, means Saleh is looking for a safe way to step down," said Hilal.

As people waited for an announcement from the President on Sunday as to whether and when he'd be stepping down, the foreign minister denied telling Reuters the day before that Saleh would soon be passing on the reins of power to his vice president, Abo Rabo Mansur Al-Hadi.

The Coordinating Council of the Youth Revolution of Change that consists of 40 different movements and

coalition of the revolution rejected all political talk of a transfer of power to the vice president. The council called on all the protesters to continue their sit-in at Sana'a University until the President steps down.

The protesters have strengthened their demands since the sniper attack on Marsh.18 in Sana'a which left at least 53 dead.

The Studies and Economic Media Center (SEMC) has called on Yemen's general prosecutor, Dr. Abdullah Al-Aulufi and the EU member states to freeze the assets of President Saleh and his family. SEMC said in a statement that all his assets, including movables, real estate, cash, shares and banknotes invested in banks and companies ought to be frozen immediately.

It also suggested imposing a travel ban on the senior officials loyal to the President, including those involved in corruption scandals and plunder of public property.

Last week also the Organization to protect Childhood, SYAJE issued a statement to Dr.Alulufi to arrest the president for being in charge of securi-

ty forces responsible for killing 13 children in protests since feb.19.

Meanwhile protesters are calling for demonstration to be increased from three times a week.

Demonstrations on Friday were peaceful despite citizen's fears of clashes between the first Armored Division forces headed by General Muhsen who are guarding anti-government protesters and the Special Forces.

Friday was dubbed a day of departure by anti-government protesters and a day of tolerance by government loyalists who gathered in large numbers outside the president's mosque to hear Saleh speak.

Saba news agency reported that presidential rally on Friday was attended by 10 million people from around the country. Witnesses put the number at more like 500,000.

"Friday was a public referendum showing the legitimacy of the regime," said the president in an interview with al-Arabia T.V.

"The minority can't force the majority to do what they want."



Protesters around Yemen have vowed to reject any offers made by President Saleh except for his immediate, unconditional resignation.

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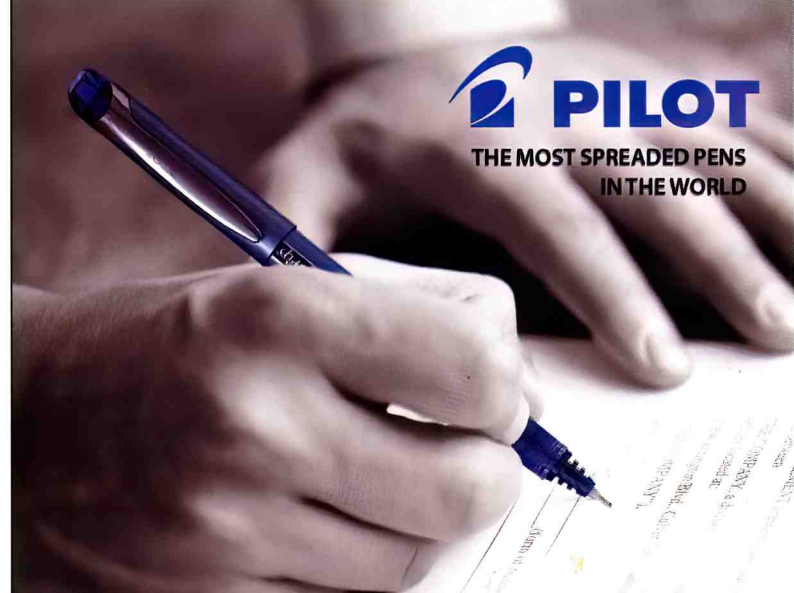
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Forty killed in clashes in northern governorate of Al-Jawf

SANAA, 23 March 2011 (IRIN) — The anti-government uprising, backed by opposition parties, has sparked clashes between pro- and anti-government tribesmen in the northern Yemeni governorate of Al-Jawf where at least 40 people have been killed in the past few days, said Sheikh Abdulhamid Amer, chairman of local NGO Social Development and Peace Association.

"The clashes broke out five days ago when government-paid thugs opened fire on peaceful protesters supporting the 'Youth Revolution' in front of the governorate administrative buildings in Al-Jawf city," he told IRIN.

The governorate administrative buildings and the locally-based 115th Infantry Division are both controlled by anti-government tribesmen. Amer expected further casualties in the ongoing clashes with pro-government forces.

Anti-government tribesmen took over control of the 115th Infantry Division after its commander, Brig Abdurabu Hussein, refused to hand over to Brig Ali Haidara al-Henshi, appointed by President Ali Abdullah Saleh to replace Hussein, local independent news website barakish.net reported on 22 March.

According to the website, Hussein, who declared his support for the "Youth Revolution", handed over control of the division and its equipment to the tribesmen.

The website said Hussein was dismissed by Saleh a day after Houthi gunmen on 20 March seized two tanks, eight vehicles and four artillery pieces from a contingent of the 115th Infantry Division deployed in the governorate's Al-Safraa area. Houthi rebels have waged an on-off war with the government since 2004, demanding greater autonomy for the northern



Yemen is one of the most heavily armed countries in the world second only to the United States

region of Sa'dah.

The tribes in the Al-Jawf area are part of the Bakil confederation, many of whose senior sheikhs are now opposed to Saleh.

"Strategic military positions in the

governorate are now controlled by anti-government tribesmen and Houthi gunmen," NGO chairman Amer told IRIN. "About 20 troops and Houthi gunmen were killed in the latter's attack on the contingent."

Military defections

During a meeting with members of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces on 22 March, Saleh urged military commanders who had defected to return to what he called

"constitutional legitimacy".

"The era of coups has ended. He who wants to come to power must get there through the ballot box. All of us know that the Yemeni people possess arms. Those who defected from the government's armed forces want to drag the country into a civil war," Saleh warned.

"Military defections will have a negative impact on the homeland. The homeland will divide into several parts. Those dissidents must have thought well before taking such emotional decisions," he said.

Fears of more widespread fighting have grown following the defection of Gen Ali Mohsen Saleh, commander of the Northwestern Military Zone (NWMZ), and Gen Mohamed Ali Mohsen, commander of the Eastern Military Zone (EMZ), plus several other division commanders in northern and eastern governorates.

They announced their support for the ongoing "Youth Revolution" after the 18 March attack on protesters in front of Sanaa University, which left some 52 people dead and more than 250 injured.

Hadhramaut clashes

Accusations have been traded between Saleh and his opponents in the army following clashes between EMZ troops, supporting the uprising, and Republican Guard forces in Hadhramaut. Three soldiers and an officer were killed in these clashes, eyewitnesses told IRIN from Hadhramaut on 22 March. They said EMZ tanks are now deployed on the streets of Mukalla, capital of Hadhramaut Governorate.

The era of civil wars has ended. It is Saleh himself who is provoking civil war rumours. The Republican Guard, which has divisions in most

Yemeni governorates, is led by Brig Ahmad Ali Abdullah Saleh, one of Saleh's sons.

On the same day, Aljazeera TV reported that Republican Guard forces were besieging the Aerial Defence Division in the western governorate of Hodeidah, after its commander declared his support for the "Youth Revolution".

The opposition has rejected Saleh's offer of a peaceful transfer of power after parliamentary elections in early 2012, and demanded his ouster.

"Saleh must quit as soon as possible," said Mohammed Qahtan, spokesperson for Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), an opposition coalition of six major parties. "The era of civil wars has ended. It is Saleh himself who is provoking civil war rumours."

Qahtan said next Friday would be the "Friday of Advancing", with protesters advancing towards the presidential palace.

JMP Chairman Yasin Saeed Numan said Saleh's offers should have been made before the Yemeni people took to the streets, "not now".

"Now, we are led by people in the street. We don't have the capacity to persuade protesters to accept such offers."

Even before the current political troubles, Yemen was ranked 140 out of 182 countries on the UN Development Programme's Human Development Index. The country is grappling with poverty, water scarcity, internal conflicts, terrorism, and decreasing oil production. Humanitarian access to beneficiaries is limited due to banditry, the presence of armed groups, and Al-Qaeda influence in some areas. It is the poorest country in the Middle East.



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Newspapers under threat in Yemen



By: Ali Saeed

Independent newspapers in Yemen are going through difficult times in an attempt to keep publishing regularly. This difficulty is due to a noticeable decrease of advertisements from businessmen and companies caused by current pro-democracy protests demanding the ouster of President Saleh.

Talal Al-Shabibi, advertisements officer at Al-Masdar independent weekly newspaper said that advertisements in his newspaper have dropped off by almost 70 percent.

The paper employs 25 people including journalists and administrative personnel. Advertisement revenues contribute to over 70 percent of the operational budget of the paper, according to Al-Shabibi.

He highlighted that some employees at the newspaper have not received their salaries due to the acute shortage of ads, leaving the news organization in a budget crisis.

The problems at Al-Masdar newspaper is only one example of dozens of independent newspapers which highly rely on ad revenues to keep running.

Hilal Al-Jamra, managing editor of Al-Nida'a local independent weekly told the Yemen Times that in the past, the paper had no trouble selling advertisements and generating enough revenue to stay up and running. Now, things have changed.

Al-Nida'a distributes around 7,000 copies per a week at a price of YR 70 for one copy, according to Al-Jamra.

He indicated that their paper does not heavily rely on ad sales and most of

their revenue comes from sales of the paper itself.

"Our paper is the most expensive newspaper in Yemen and that is why we have not been affected by the current reduction in ads," he said.

However, the Al-Nida'a newspaper does not have a large number of employees. The paper's staff does not exceed more than 12 employees, nine of which are journalists and reporters.

In spite of the present general economic stagnation in Yemen, officials of independent newspapers seem to be optimistic about the future of the newspaper industry if pro-democracy protesters succeed in realizing the objectives of their revolution.

"We hope the future of the newspaper industry to be brighter if the revolution triumphs," said Al-Shabibi.

Injured protester refuses to leave sit-in until president's ouster



Yahya Al-Khadari

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANA'A, Mar. 27 — Yahya Al-Khadari, 35, was one of the victims of the attack on anti-government protesters on Friday March 18th at Sana'a University.

Al-Khadari received three shots to his legs when he tried to find out the whereabouts of the snipers. Now he is determined not to leave his tent outside Sana'a University until the president leaves office, even though he is on



Al-Khadari has vowed to remain at the Sana'a University protest camp in spite of the gunshot wound to his leg

crutches for the next two months.

Al-Khadari came from Amran governorate to Sana'a after the success of the Egyptian revolution. He insisted on taking part in the youth revolution in Sana'a, quitting his job and leaving his family behind.

"I vowed not to leave this place until the president leaves. I'll stay at the sit-in even if my stay costs me my life," he said.

"We have two choices: his leaving or death," said Al-Khadari. "My injury has

increased my motivation for change."

He said that snipers were shooting educated people in the head and shooting those who looked uneducated in the legs. "They don't want educated people in the country. They want to keep people in Yemen stupid and ignorant."

"I have all kinds of weapons in my home, but I'll not bring them here because we want to keep this revolution peaceful. I confirm that all the tribesmen here are determined not to use weapons," he said. "I'm ready to sacrifice myself for a better life for those kind people."

He pointed out that tribesmen have converged with the intellectual, honest and oppressed people here, and that they have gained political awareness from them. "I've seen lawyers, politicians, MPs, journalists, doctors and students. They are kind and very peaceful."

Al-Khadari explained why he joined

YEMEN: Dialogue prospects diminish, as government faces mounting defections

SANAA, 21 March 2011 (IRIN) - The authorities' use of force against anti-government protesters demanding the ouster of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh is thwarting mediation efforts and dialogue, observers warn, amid reports of defections by senior military commanders.

More than 80 people have reportedly been killed and hundreds more injured in nationwide protests since the first week of February. A 21 March statement by two opposition blocs denouncing a Saleh-imposed state of emergency, said the "Friday massacre" on 18 March at Sana'a University left some 52 protesters dead and more than 250 injured.

The news channel Al Jazeera reported on 21 March that the head of Yemen's Northwestern Military Zone, Maj Gen Ali Mohsen Saleh - reputedly a half-brother of the president - had declared his "peaceful support" for the protesters and was deploying his forces to protect them in the capital, Sana'a. The commander of the army's Eastern Division has also reportedly defected from the government's side. The country has four regional military commands.

Initially, young protesters, backed by an opposition coalition of six major parties known as the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), were demanding that Saleh remove his relatives from key military and security posts before any dialogue with the government, said Abdullah al-Faqih, a political scientist at Sana'a University.

However, that changed after 18 March when so-called "pro-government snipers" fired at protesters from the rooftops of buildings in Sana'a.

"Now they [the opposition/protesters] are refusing any dialogue with the authorities after this massacre. They are demanding the ouster and trial of Saleh and his regime and relatives," Al-Faqih told IRIN.

Three hours after the attack, Saleh ordered the setting up of an investigation committee including the ministers of justice and human rights, the attorney-general and the state lawyer, with a further three members to be selected by JMP.

"Regrettably, what happened foiled a planned mediation by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. After the investigation, the perpetrators will be referred to court for trial," Saleh told a press conference just hours after the attack.

Reacting to what he called "ceaseless violence against protesters", Mohamed Abu Luhum, a senior official in the

ruling General People's Congress party resigned from his post and withdrew an offer he made on 17 March to mediate between the ruling party and JMP-backed protesters.

Abu Luhum had suggested that in return for a suspension of the protests, Saleh remove his relatives from key security and military posts, ask parliament to draw up a new constitution within 40 days, supervise presidential elections before the end of 2011, and hand over power to his successor within the first quarter of 2012.

"There can be no dialogue with an oppressive regime using excessive violence against peaceful demonstrators," Abu Luhum said.

Accusations traded

While JMP accuses the government of using security personnel, undercover officers and paid thugs to kill protesters, the latter accuses the JMP of passing arms to protesters and encouraging them to storm nearby houses.

"This is part of a criminal plan to kill off the protesters, and the president and his relatives are responsible for the bloodshed in Yemen these days," Mohammed al-Sabri, a JMP spokesman said.

The Interior Ministry, however, said it received information that JMP members were handing guns to protesters to fight local residents and shopkeepers who were not allowing them to erect tents near their premises.

"Recurrent casualties in front of Sana'a University are the result of sporadic confrontations between protesters and residents in the area, who mostly have small arms such as AK-47 rifles and pistols," Interior Minister Mutahar Rashad al-Masri told IRIN.

He said the protesters were attacking nearby houses, intimidating women and children and stealing items such as blankets, curtains and mattresses.

"Fluid" situation

There have been a string of resignations from the government and ruling party in protest at the violence against the protesters, including Huda al-Ban, minister of human rights; Nabil al-Faqih, minister of tourism; and Hamoud al-Hitar, minister of religious guidance and endowment.

Saleh then dismissed his entire cabinet on 20 March, but asked members to stay on until a new cabinet is appointed. The move was described by observers as a tactic to stop further cabinet resigna-

tions. Most of those who resign from the government or the ruling party immediately declare their support for what they call the "Youth Revolution", and go to their own tribal areas to mobilize their followers to join the protests.

Meanwhile, Saleh is holding daily meetings with "loyal" tribal sheikhs, said Omar al-Asbahi, a political analyst.

"The situation is fluid. It may lead the country to a civil war due to Yemen's tribal nature and the widespread availability of small and medium-sized arms. There are an estimated 60 million weapons for a population of 23 million," he told IRIN.

Tribal leaders were previously trying to help resolve the political crisis, but this is no longer the case. Some, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, have sent their sons to camp out in Sana'a.

"Go ahead. Don't fear what happened to your brothers yesterday [protesters killed or injured on 18 March]... We will not leave this place unless we see Saleh and his regime stand trial," Sheikh Amin al-Ukaimi, a senior Bakil tribe leader, told protesters at Sana'a University on 19 March.

"Yemen will be the third country putting an end to oppression and enjoying freedom after Tunisia and Egypt."

Many of Yemen's northern tribes belong to one of two tribal confederations: the Bakil and the Hashid. The Bakil is Yemen's largest tribal confederation, but is historically not as well organized as the smaller but far more politically active Hashid confederation.

President Saleh's Sanhan tribe belongs to the Hashid confederation. The Hashid are traditionally led by the influential al-Ahmar family. Two of the late Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein al-Ahmar sons - Hamid and Hussein - are currently the strongest opponents of Saleh's rule. Many of the Bakil's senior sheikhs - like Amin al-Ukaimi and Faris Manaa - are supporting the two sons against Saleh.

Anti-government protesters want an end to corruption, the delivery of jobs, a more equitable distribution of wealth, and the reform of a governmental system that presides over the worst development indicators in the Middle East. But given the tribal nature of Yemen politics and the large number of guns in private hands, a frequently voiced concern is that the country could descend into civil war under the pressure for change, adding to the country's humanitarian burden.

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the revolution: "I'm a merchant and want to develop my trade and serve my country, but officials here impede me and want to share my trade." He indicated that if the revolution succeeded then Yemen's economy will improve greatly.

Al-Khadari criticized the counter-demonstration held by the ruling party, describing it as an "unreal." "Most protesters come to these [pro-government] demonstrations to seek money and personal interests," he said.

"The president has lost everything. He has used all his cards like tribesmen, thugs, and religious sheikhs. He even used psychological warfare against us, but he has failed in all his attempts," said Al-Khadari.

"Although he has used the country's

money, media, police and religious leaders to be in power, he has failed in his maneuver," he said.

"Yemenis are wise and seek peace and stability but our regime tends to create wars, revenge attacks and problems among Yemenis," he said.

According to Al-Khadari, Yemen has no Al-Qaeda or secessionist threat. The biggest problem in Yemen is the president. "President Saleh always says that Yemen without him will turn into Somalia. Yemenis are able to protect their country without this president."

Al-Khadari praised General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar and his soldiers joining the revolution, indicating that this will make the protesters more comfortable and safer.

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OUR
OPINIONThe point
of no return

It seems Yemen has reached a defining moment and the balance of power has tipped in favor of change.

At first I was doubtful about the strength of the street; whether it could triumph over the regime and force it to surrender. Give it until the end of next year, I thought. But witnessing what has just happened, it would seem as if Yemen is diving into a whirlwind of change that is too rapid to comprehend.

I thought it would be a coup or a revolt by the elite. I also wondered, not doubting the sincerity of the protestors, what was their threshold? What it would take to break them?

I was not there when the shootings at happened at Sana'a University on Friday the 18th March but I was told by those who were that there was a strange almost hysterical sense of determination amongst the protestors that conquered all fear. With this absolute courage comes a hint of madness as the men continued to surge forward despite the bullets raining down on them.

After the shock, came guilt then anger. Brave men and women resigned from the government making a political statement that will go down in history. These resignations are a sign that change is coming. The fear of upsetting the ruling party or being seen as pro-change has evaporated, even for those inside the regime.

My only concern is that we get consumed by emotions and forget to calculate and plan. Revolutions can become an instrument for instability and if not controlled carefully can become a recipe for disaster especially in a society still experimenting with the notion of institutions.

For many Yemenis it is not going to be worse because they have already at rock bottom. This is in fact the essence of change: people have nothing to lose.

But for others, who have managed to create a respectable steady life for themselves, the coming insecurity is terrifying. There is no backup plan, and this is the price we have to pay for change.

Many ask whether Yemen is going to be another Libya or another Egypt or whether we'll have our own model. I guess it has to do with how big the jump is that we're taking as a nation. This is directly proportional to the time we have been tamed under this one-man's rule.

But the price will be paid in full, because what we are doing is not just for tomorrow or the day after it is in fact for the many generations to come.

And one day, in the far future we will look back in awe at what we have done today and tell the stories of the youth revolution today to the people of tomorrow.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

We need a change

By: Habib Abbas

We need a change in Yemen. People are fed up with the suffering of hardship and injustice they have to deal with everyday in their own country. For many Yemeni citizens, it has become far more relieving to simply immigrate and live in countries where they don't belong than living in their own land. Being a citizen in Yemen is like being a bird in a cage, deprived of the simplest pleasures of life. Year after year, hope turns to disappointment and people's daily conversations barely go on without complaining of their economic hardship.

"Citizen" is a word that means a lot to people from the Western world. However, it is often linked to the poor man with limited resources in many of the Arab countries. Our home country has proven to us day after day and year after year that connections and money are the engine and the only weapon with which a person can achieve their dreams whether simple or extravagant.

So we need a change. But in order not to confuse things, let us pause for a moment to reflect on the meaning of the change that we want. Does it mean a change of the president? A change in the regime? If we do mean to change the regime, what will that entail? What do we mean by the regime? Are we talking about changing people or changing the system? Do we mean a change of high officials or do we mean a change to the military institutions that control many resources of the country? The most important question is why do we want a change? If we change the current regime in a day and a night, as what happened in Tunisia and Egypt, are we ready with alternatives that will achieve the goals of the change we desire?

Things need to change. But don't we also need to change the paradigms and behaviors of the people as well? The regime that has been sitting on the throne of power for the last 33 years wasn't born from a vacuum. Rather, it came from the good of our people through their multiple elections in the past. I do not know why people would keep electing officials that don't do them justice. It might be ignorance or it might be because of the absence of confidence in the presence of a better alternative. Perhaps people think of the current regime as the best of the worst. Some might question the validity of all previous elections and that our current system was based on forgery and fraud. The reality, I feel, says otherwise. I cannot disbelieve my eyes nor my ears, which have witnessed the millions of citizens that have kept electing the current regime year after year at their own behest.

We definitely need to see a change, but the people also must admit past political mistakes and take full responsibility for the choices they have made and learn from them. Unfortunately, in every place you go in Yemen, you see a form of corruption. Everywhere you go, you can sense a form of corruption among the people. There is always dishonesty, disorganization, racism, waste of precious time in qat gatherings,

insincerity in one's work, etc. You can see corruption almost everywhere, even in religious, judicial, education, and health institutions. Is it then the fault of the regime alone?

We absolutely need a change, but people demanding change need to be aware of those who want to use the youth movements as a means to achieve their own hidden agendas. Yemen's unity was born for longevity and those who advocate the separation of Yemen can go fly a kite as far as I'm concerned. Yemenis, northern and southern, are one nation, and for a change to head in the right direction, it must endeavor to maintain our nation's hard won unity. People need to also be aware of those corrupt hypocrites who might appear on the surface to claim that they support change and they try to incite people on the streets to fight. Meanwhile, these fat cats sit in their luxurious homes, watching our people die at a distance biding their time until they can take power. People also need to remember that while calling for a change, it must be done peacefully. When people go out to speak up demanding freedom and an end to the corruption, they must be treated with dignity. It is the duty of the security forces and the regime to protect its own people and defend them under any circumstances.

We need a change and I am not sure of our government is fully aware of that yet. But the regime that was trusted by the people multiple times must understand that people can no longer tolerate the false promises and whoever believes that they cannot perform their duties as an elected official must give up their seats with dignity before they are removed.

We need a change, but we must have the best alternative regime ready to take over once the current regime is over so that we can avoid possible more chaos and disorder in the country. It is wise for all political parties to start putting forth reliable, honest and strong political leaders who can gain the confidence of the people through their proven capability to take the country out of its current political and economic situation. Those leaders need to have the necessary skills and passion to serve the citizens more than anything else. The good news is that no one has to start from scratch. There is a lot that can be learned from other democratic nations such as the USA which has gone through many civil movements until it became the great country it is today.

The tribal system in Yemen must also change. This system has had its time and it absolutely no longer suitable for this modern era. People need a just system with a solid constitution and law that is fully respected by all, rich and poor. A system that promotes justice, freedom, equality, ethics and high values that guarantee a life full of dignity to its people.

To end, we must look at the big picture when demanding a major change. Vision, goals, and mechanism of making the change happen must be so clearly defined. We have to believe that change must come from within all of us: officials, political parties, and citizens.

May peace be upon our beloved home country and its people.

Yemen: Why Salih must go now

By: Brian Whitaker

As turmoil continued in Yemen yesterday, President Salih offered to step down by January next year after organising new parliamentary elections. The opposition has rejected this – and rightly so. He should go immediately.

Tying his departure to elections would provide Salih with an excuse to cling on beyond January, on the grounds that elections could not be organised in time. The elections that were due next month have already been delayed by two years and on March 10 they were postponed again – allegedly because the electoral registers were not ready.

There is no good reason why elections have to be conducted with Salih manipulating them from the driving seat, and there are plenty of reasons why he should not be around when they occur. A presidential aide quoted by al-Jazeera yesterday said: "Ali Abdullah Salih will not leave without knowing who he is

handing over to." In other words, he wants to stay in power in order to shape the elections' outcome.

Salih has also invoked the scaremongering argument used earlier by Mubarak in Egypt: "Après moi le déluge". He warned yesterday of a bloody civil war if he is forced out of office. There may well be trouble after he goes, but there will be serious trouble too if he stays. It is already happening and the longer he remains in power the worse it is likely to get.

The United States, meanwhile, is still reluctant to abandon Salih. Without declaring support for him, it continues to fret about "instability" and yesterday defence secretary Robert Gates refused to be drawn on whether the Yemeni president should step down immediately. "I don't think it's my place to talk about internal affairs in Yemen," he said.

Short-sightedly, US policy towards Yemen continues to be shaped by concerns about terrorism, and very little else. The US media perpetuates this by continuing to portray Salih as some kind of bulwark against al-Qaeda. The latest example came yesterday from the Washington Post:

"According to news wire reports and Internet postings by Yemenis, Saleh's army repelled an attack by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula on a military position east of Lawdar, a city in the southern part of the country, killing 12 militants and injuring five."

The fact of the matter is that Salih has a vested interest in claiming victories against al-Qaeda but not in actually defeating it. The continuation of militant activity in Yemen is what he relies on for international support.

Following his declaration of a state of emergency at the weekend, Salih is now seeking to legitimise it through an act of parliament. The text of the draft emergency law has been published (in Arabic) on al-Masdar's website. It provisions are truly draconian, restricting all forms of media, travel and public meetings, even regulating the opening of shops and allowing for the "temporary takeover" of property.

COMMON SENSE

Is it over?
Which Ali will it be?

Undoubtedly, the defection of Brigadier General Ali Muhsin Al-Ahmar to the Youth protestors against the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh represents a significant turn of events in the month long nationwide popular uprising against the ageing ruthless regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh. It is too early now to rush into great expectations, until one is assured that the seemingly sudden turned angel and protector of the Youth, Ali Muhsin Saleh Al-Ahmar, does not simply replace his sometimes presumed to be relative, if not half brother, Ali Abdullah Saleh. This presumption was substantiated by the early designation of most of the top ranking military and security positions to mostly close relatives of the President. Whatever the case, the defection (whether premeditated or sudden) did indeed tip the balance considerably in favor of the revolting youth leading the first serious political challenge to the wily political manipulator, Saleh proved to be throughout the second longest reigning military dictatorship in the Arab World (after the Qadhafi regime in Libya). For sure, the defection came just in time after the heavy dose of Saleh's bloodletting streak that was let loose when thugs of the regime (widely reported to be orchestrated by his son and nephew) showered the peaceful protestors in Change Square with a rainfall of lethal bullets (52 fatalities) on Bloody Friday, March 18, 2011. This is an alternative approach to buying loyal supporters at the cost of YR 20,000 – YR 50,000 per day paid to each of the demonstrating "supporting" loyalists, as some informed sources have reported. Apparently the investment no longer paid off in fruitful political dividends.

But the observer is inclined to suggest that there are a lot of pieces that fit into this puzzling turnaround of events and the sudden change of hearts, or so it seems, between the two top ranking brass in the military. Actually, the metamorphosis has been transpiring for some time, if not a few years. With the eruption of the nationwide protests led by the Youth in Change Square, the outcome began to emerge: It is either Ali, the current President or Ali the powerful second ranking officer in Yemen's military chain of command? It is not hard to discern that there had been a lot of animosity brewing between the two Alis for some time. Understandably, this is encouraged by the penchant of the presiding Ali for sending some of his closest aides off on aerial fact-finding missions on a helicopter that fails to stay in the air too long, or a car with loose wheels or no breaks, both of which are explained officially as deadly accidents caused by "technical difficulties". The defecting Ali saw wisely to finding a way out of an inevitable end, unless SOMETHING stops the ticking clock on his time bomb. In this kind of a showdown, it is brains that must prevail over the nozzles of sheer brute force. They did. The equations of power were almost equal in this showdown, with admittedly Ali Muhsin enjoying some more useful political clout on account of tribal and religious associations, relative to his adversary's reliance on a combination of cruelty and the cash in the Central Bank of Yemen. Needless to say the CBY role of setting monetary policy was set aside a long time ago and the YR plummeted from a strong exchange rate of US \$ 1 = YR 4.55 to its struggling rate of YR 215, only kept nervously stable by regional and international donor support. The economic disorientation of such volatility sent Yemen into the list of worst performing economies of the world, with no relief in sight.

The relationship of the two Alis over time took on serious turns and winds, as everybody with some knowledge of the Yemeni power equations would have been able to discern, even before the spreading winds of revolt began to engulf Arab dictatorships one after the other, finally finding fertile grounds in Yemen about a month ago. There are some who are ready to suggest that the second Ali saw a good opportunity to relieve himself from any possible process of elimination being engineered by the presiding Ali, and from early on calculated that his political arithmetic may add up successfully with gestures of support to the Youth Movement. This may have been encouraged by the experience of the Egyptian revolt against Hosni Mubarak, with some alterations promulgated by the tribal and religious factors, where Ali Muhsin has some political clout.

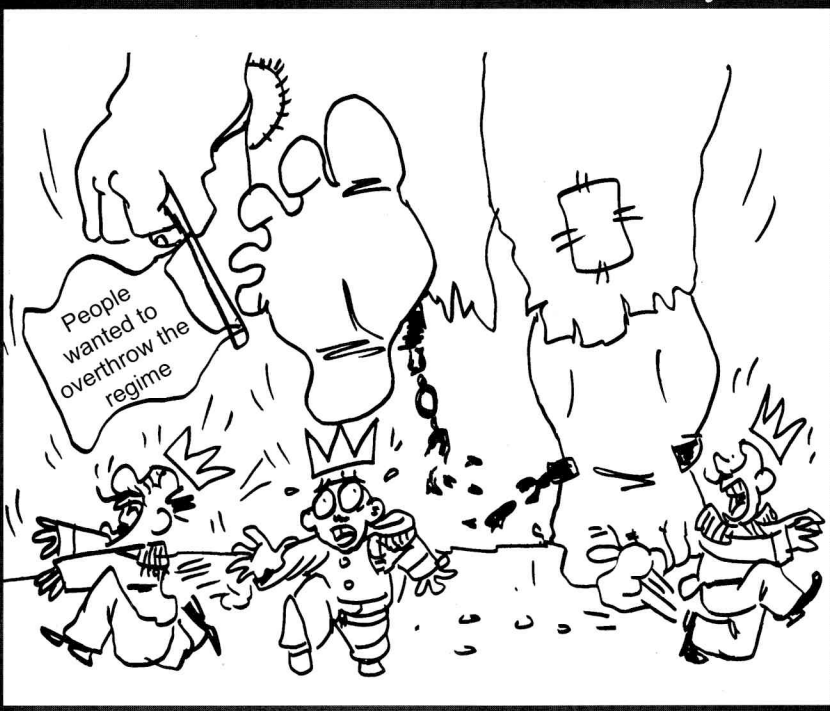
On Bloody Friday (March 18, 2011), the Saleh regime tried foolishly to crush the Youth encampments near Sana'a University once and for all. Saleh stumbled into a trap of his own making and clearly showed that Saleh's reliance on brute force and unethical security measures go beyond the normal accepted security deployments and practices of modern states, even for the region. There are reports that, it was after one hour of indiscriminate shooting at the protestors that Ali Muhsin took the cue that he had to abide by his heretofore unrevealed promise to protect the protestors, who conveniently (by chance or design) had camped strategically right under the headquarters and base of the First Armored Brigade – Ali Muhsin's military domain, ever since the early days of the Saleh regime. The mistake that President Saleh made at the beginning of the revolt in getting Liberation Square occupied by his "loyalists" rather than the protestors, as the latter had attempted (like their Egyptian predecessors), proved a life saver for the Youth and a favorable tactical factor for Ali Muhsin. The relative ease by which some of Ali Muhsin's men are said to have come down from the hill of the First Armored Division to Change Square on that tragic day, sent Saleh's thugs scrambling for their lives as they saw the onrush of Ali Muhsin's men begin to chase Saleh's snipers from the rooftops and apartments of the buildings overlooking Change Square, as some observers have suggested. The President failed in decisively ending the protest (there were even bulldozers ready to tear down the tents, it was said). In addition, the horrible bloodletting produced a massacre that clearly did not go well domestically, even among some of the President's staunchest supporters and of course with some of the friends of the Saleh regime, in the international community. Within two days the Saleh regime fell apart like worry beads falling from their broken string. Further futile attempts to salvage the situation by trying to buy time by Saleh were unsuccessful.

By Saturday, March 26, 2011, it was clear that Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime was breathing its last gasps, and a dignified method was being sought for the seemingly undefeatable Saleh to step down. If Ali Muhsin had been able to come out of this a hero and a more astute maneuverer than his former close partner, then surely he has outdone Ali Saleh by achieving a more agreeable picture in history than his long-time fellow strong man. That in itself is worth more than any future possible military and political gains, which one could assume that Brigadier Ali Muhsin neither seeks or aspires for, as the latter stated more than once. Ali Muhsin has nudged his possible eliminator with one easy clean sweep – decisively, the survival of the fittest!

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

SKETCHED OPINION

By: Hamid



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Syria troops open fire on protesters, witnesses say

By: Zeina Karam and Bassem Mroue
For the Huffington Post

Troops opened fire on protesters in cities across Syria and pro- and anti-government crowds clashed in the capital's historic old city as one of the Mideast's most repressive regimes sought to put down demonstrations that exploded nationwide Friday demanding reform.

The upheaval sweeping the region definitively took root in Syria as an eight-day uprising centered on a rural southern town dramatically expanded into protests by tens of thousands in multiple cities. The once-unimaginable scenario posed the biggest challenge in decades to Syria's iron-fisted rule.

Protesters wept over the bloodied bodies of slain comrades and massive crowds chanted anti-government slogans, then fled as gunfire erupted, according to footage posted online. Security forces shot to death more than 15 people in at least six cities and villages, including a suburb of the capital, Damascus, witnesses told The Associated Press. Their accounts could not be independently confirmed.

The regime of President Bashar Assad, an ally of Iran and supporter of militant groups around the region, had seemed immune from the Middle East's three-month wave of popular uprising. His security forces, which have long silenced the slightest signs of dissent, quickly snuffed out smaller

attempts at protests last month. Syrians also have fearful memories of the brutal crackdown unleashed by his father and predecessor, Hafez Assad, when Muslim fundamentalists in the central town of Hama tried an uprising in 1982: Thousands were killed and parts of the city were flattened by artillery and bulldozers.

The Assads' leadership — centered on members of their Alawi minority sect, a branch of Shiite Islam in this mainly Sunni nation — have built their rule by mixing draconian repression with increasing economic freedom, maintaining the loyalty of wealthy Sunni merchant class in the prosperous cities of Damascus and Aleppo.

Bashar Assad now faces the same dilemma confronted by the leaders of Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain — ratchet up violence or offer concessions. A day earlier, his government seems to test out the latter track, offering to consider lifting draconian emergency laws and promising increased pay and benefits for state workers.

As massive crowds rejected the government's offers, the worst violence appeared centered around Daraa, where the arrest of a group of young men for spraying anti-regime graffiti last week set off a cycle of growing demonstrations and increasingly violent government crackdowns. The Syrian government said 34 had been slain in Daraa before Friday, while the U.N. human rights office put the figure at 37. Activists said it was as high as 100.

Thousands poured into Daraa's cen-

tral Assad Square after Friday prayers, many from nearby villages, chanting "Freedom! Freedom!" and waving Syrian flags and olive branches, witnesses said. Some attacked a bronze statue of Hafez Assad. One witness told The Associated Press that they tried to set it on fire, another said they tried to pull it down.

Troops responded with heavy gunfire, according to a resident who said he saw two bodies and many wounded people brought to Daraa's main hospital.

After night fell, thousands of enraged protesters snatched weapons from a far smaller number of troops and chased them out of Daraa's Roman-era old city, taking back control of the al-Omari mosque, the epicenter of the past week's protests.

The accounts could be immediately be independently confirmed because of Syria's tight restrictions on the press.

In Damascus, the heart of Bashar Assad's rule, protests and clashes broke out in multiple neighborhoods as crowds of regime opponents marched and thousands of Assad loyalists drove in convoys, shouting, "Bashar, we love you!"

The two sides battled, whipping each other with leather belts, in Damascus' old city outside the historic Umayyad mosque, parts of which date to the 8th Century. About two miles (three kilometers) away, central Umayyad Square was packed with demonstrators who traded punches and hit each other with sticks from Syrian flags, according to

Associated Press reporters at the sites.

An amateur video posted on the Internet showed hundreds of young men marching through Damascus' old covered bazaar, some riding on others' shoulders and pumping their fists in the air, chanting, "With our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice for you, Daraa!"

Security forces chased and beat around 200 protesters chanting "Freedom, Freedom!" on a bridge in the center of the city, an activist said.

After dark, troops opened fire on protesters in the Damascus suburb of Maadamiyeh, a witness told the AP. An activist in contact with people there said three had been killed.

The scenes of chaos and violence shocked many in this tightly controlled country where protests are usually confined to government-orchestrated demonstrations in support of the regime, and political discussions are confined to whispers, mainly indoors.

"There's a barrier of fear that has been broken and the demands are changing with every new death," said Ayman Abdul-Nour, a Dubai-based former member of Assad's ruling Baath Party. "We're starting to hear calls for the regime's ouster," he said.

Also startling was the scope of the protests — in multiple cities around the country of nearly 24 million.

Troops opened fire on more than 1,000 people marching in Syria's main Mediterranean port, Latakia. One activist told AP witnesses in the city hospital saw four protesters slain. Another was reported slain in the central city

of Homs, where hundreds of people demonstrated in support of Daraa and demanded reforms, he said. He, like other activists and witnesses around the country, spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation by the regime.

Demonstrators in the southern village of Sanamein tried to march to nearby Daraa in support of protesters there, but they were met by troops who opened fire, said an activist in Damascus in touch with witnesses there. He said the witnesses reported fatalities — some as high as 20 dead — but that he could not confirm the number.

A video posted on Facebook by Syrian pro-democracy activists showed what it said were five dead young men lying on stretchers in Sanamein as men wept around them. The voice of a woman can be heard saying, "down with Bashar Assad."

An unidentified Syrian official asserted that an armed group attacked the army headquarters in Sanamein and tried to storm it, leading to a clash with guards.

Further protests erupted in the town of Douma, outside the capital, and the cities of Raqqa in the north and Zabadani in the west, near the border with Lebanon, a human rights activist said, reporting an unknown number of protesters detained.

The protests in Damascus appeared led by relatively well-off Syrians, many of whom have been calling for reforms for years and have relatives jailed as political prisoners.

They contrast sharply with the working-class Sunni protesters in conservative Daraa, where small farmers and herders pushed off their land by drought have increasingly moved into the province's main city and surrounding villages, looking for work and in many cases growing angry at the lack of opportunity.

The protests in Daraa appeared to take on a sectarian dimension, with some accusing the regime of using Shiite Hezbollah and Iranian operatives in the crackdown.

The start of the protests' outbreak far from the urban centers makes Syria's uprising like Tunisia's, in which protests in the peripheries spread to the cities, said Bassam Haddad, Syria expert and director of the Middle East studies program director at George Mason University.

That doesn't necessarily mean the regime is in danger, he said. "If this continues at the level we see right now or if the regime finds a way to deal with the protests at this level, the Syrian regime will be able to weather the storm." But he said the bloodshed could only cause protests to expand.

The White House urged Syria's government to cease attacks on protesters and Turkey said its neighbor should quickly enact reforms to meet legitimate demands. The U.N. said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke to Assad Friday morning and underlined "that governments had an obligation to respect and protect their citizens' fundamental rights."

Egyptians fret of pushback as democratic reforms progress

By: David E. Miller
For The Media Line

Opposition fears collusion between military regime, emboldened Islamists
Four days after Egyptians overwhelmingly voted in favor of constitutional changes intended to usher in a new democratic era, worrying signs of political regression have already begun to emerge.

As the army announced the referendum results, the Egyptian government issued a law on Wednesday banning "certain" types of protests, gatherings and sit-ins if they cause harm to business or a loss of public or private money. Offenders, who include those who organize or call for protests, may face a prison term of up to one year or a fine of 500,000 Egyptian pounds (\$84,000).

Government spokesman Magdi Rady said the law would only be implemented "in cases of emergency," but that has done nothing to assuage critics, who contend that its vague wording could be used to ban all forms of protest.

"I'm worried that this law can be used against any political demonstration," Ahmad Saad, a 25-year-old student and activist in the Justice and Freedom Youth group, told The Media Line. "The term 'public interest' is a flexible criterion."

The new law was indeed swiftly implemented when the evening it was announced military police forces entered the campus of Cairo University and broke up a sit-in by communications students demanding the resignation of Dean Sami Abdel Aziz, Egyptian daily Al-Masry Al-Youm reported. The soldiers reportedly used Tasers to quell the protest and detained three professors for several hours.

"We had female students call us last night saying they were Tased on campus," Rawda Ahmad, deputy executive director of the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, a Cairo-based organization, told The Media Line. "The army doesn't know how to use the language of dialogue when dealing with civilians."

"There is a big crisis in terms of human rights in this transitional period," she added.

Some 18.5 million Egyptians took part in Saturday's referendum, supporting amendments to Egypt's 1971 constitution by a majority of 77% in favor. The eight amendments restrict the president to two four-year terms rather than the unlimited number of six-year terms that kept Hosni Mubarak in power for nearly 30 years. They also make it easier for individuals to run for president and reinstate judicial oversight of the election process.

Supporters of the amendments said they will allow a swift move to parliamentary and presidential elections to tackle Egypt's dire economic difficulties in the post-revolution era, and assure that an entirely new constitution is drafted by the new elected government. But critics argue that the changes, drafted in just 10 days and reviewed by the public for only three weeks, change little in Egypt's political system. They expressed doubt that a new constitution would ever be initiated.

The April 6 Youth Movement, a central player in the demonstrations that toppled the Mubarak regime, actively supported a "no" vote on Saturday's referendum. The movement claims the

amendments do nothing to diminish the sweeping presidential prerogatives, leaving the door open for a new dictator taking power.

On Wednesday, a number of youth activists met with representatives of the military council to complain about the delay in trying senior members of Mubarak's regime. The military council representatives replied that "no one was above the law", but the council did not intervene in the legal work of the prosecutor general.

But Ahmad Saad of Justice and Freedom Youth said Egyptians expected actions, not just words.

"There should be an official government position against members of the previous regime," he said. "Many of them, including Gamal Mubarak [the president's son] were untouched. People will relax when they see these men punished, and the counter-revolution crushed. In the meantime, nobody trusts anyone."

Saad said the ultimate demand of Egyptians was for a President elected by the people and the return of the army to its barracks. He added that the judicial system was the only authority

that still enjoyed Egyptians' trust.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, April 6 Youth said that although the referendum passed smoothly, the army was shunning Egypt's youth movement rather than engaging it.

"The lack of dialogue ... and the tendency of the military council to impose scenarios without discussion is completely unacceptable," the statement read.

During a visit to Cairo on Wednesday, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates praised the role of the Egyptian army during the mass demonstrations that ousted Mubarak on February 11. While stressing that he didn't want to "second-guess" the military's transitional government now in control of Egypt, Gates said it was important they allow the opposition time "to develop political parties and to develop organization and structure."

Structure and organization is exactly what many Egyptians didn't want to give Egypt's radical Islamists, some of whom welcomed the referendum results.

Upon hearing that the amendments had passed, popular television preacher

Muhammad Hussein Yaqub rejoiced at what he called the "ballot box raid," using an Arabic term denoting the military raids against infidels in early Islamic history. He later explained on his program that his words were spontaneous expressions of happiness, not a declaration of war against Egypt's secular constitution.

"I'm interested in one thing: that [Egypt] be a caliphate and Islamic law [sharia] implemented," another TV preacher, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Zughbi, said in a live broadcast ahead of the referendum. "All other Arab countries in the Middle East will follow Egypt." Nagib Gibrail, an Egyptian Copt and head of the Egyptian Union of Human Rights, responded by filing an official complaint to the military council and Egypt's attorney general.

"The emergence of the salafists [Muslim fundamentalists] in this manner proves that the state and the supreme military council have welcomed those who destroy everything," Gibrail told the Arab daily A-Sharq Al-Awsat. He urged the introduction of a constitutional amendment banning religious propaganda of any kind in Egypt.

Saudi women embrace feminism — on their own terms

By: Rob L. Wagner
For The Media Line

Most reject Western ideas, but seek formula that blends with Islamic faith

Perhaps one of the most significant developments emerging from the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions is the growing Arab women's rights movement that has spread to the anti-government demonstrations in Bahrain and Yemen.

Absent, however, from the chorus of women's voices demanding equity in the workplace, freedom to travel and a role in government are Saudis, who have done little to join their Arab sisters to create a feminist movement. In fact, no such organized movement exists in Saudi Arabia.

"I don't see signs of a feminist movement," says Isobel Coleman, a senior fellow for the Council on Foreign Relations in New York. "I see signs of rising consciousness among women—a questioning of why things are they way they are."

Rasha Alduwaisi, 30, a Saudi mother, is a leading force behind the first tentative steps to galvanize women through the Saudi Women Revolution Facebook page. She acknowledges a feminist movement is an uphill battle.

"There's almost no organized effort whatsoever to try to obtain these rights we're seeking," Alduwaisi told The

Media Line. "Saudi women are raised to be subordinate, and grew up with the society drilling in them that their issues are marginal. This upbringing in my opinion is playing a huge role in the reluctance and hesitation in taking the steps that such a movement calls for."

Saudi Arabia has long stood apart from other Arab nations in how it treats its female population. Older generations of Saudi women through most of the 20th century were largely content with gender roles imposed by the patriarchal religious establishment. Post-secondary education for women was elusive until a minority of wealthy Saudi women began studying abroad in the 1980s. University education blossomed in the years following 9/11. Today, more than 60% of Saudi Arabia's university students are women.

The rapid shift to educating Saudi women has given them a voice, but it also created a divide between today's young females and their mothers' generation. Disparate views on the role Saudi women play in society have contributed to a lack of unity. In addition, the ambitions of rural women, who may focus on economic survival in farming communities, contrasts sharply with educated urban women who may seek positions in government and business.

These differences have prevented the development of a grassroots to campaign.

"Public demonstrations and mobilization are treated criminally in Saudi

for just about anything, so it's particularly hard for women to form a robust movement," Coleman told The Media Line. "Here, social media will help."

Marwa Al-Saleh, founder and general manager of Almarwa.net, a web design and online marketing company in Al-Khobar, promotes the Saudi Women Revolution Facebook page with Alduwaisi. Al-Saleh says most Saudi women are unaware of their rights. "Sometimes they think their rights are against Islam."

The definition of feminism remains a sticking point with young Saudis who say they want a feminist movement on their own terms, which includes Islam as a major component. Alduwaisi says she prefers a "Saudi-Islamic" feminist movement, noting that she wants rights that consider religion and a Sharia-based judicial system.

Coleman, who authored the book *Paradise Beneath Her Feet: How Women are Transforming the Middle East*, which examines Islamic feminism, says Western feminism appears threatening to Saudi men because it's perceived as leading to high divorce rates and promoting promiscuity. She noted the portrayal of women in American films and television feed negative stereotypes of Western women. "Islamic feminism provides a more comfortable alternative path toward change," she says. "It can be seen as more culturally relevant and less threatening to core Islamic values."

Alduwaisi and Al-Saleh reject the Western definition of feminism, although there is no shortage of Arab women speaking to the Western media on behalf of Saudi women.

For example, some prominent Saudi women, such as Wajeha Al-Huwaider and Mai Yamani, frequently address Saudi women's rights on Western news shows. Yet they have little traction with women living in Saudi Arabia because their idea of feminism reflects Western concepts not compatible with Islam.

"These women represent the opinion of a minority," Alduwaisi says. "So I don't think many Saudi women would want to have them be the face of the movement. I believe if we want this movement to be a success we'll need a more moderate or conservative face."

A 29-year-old Saudi woman journalist, who asked not to be identified, says few young women have role models beyond the Prophet Muhammad's wives, Aisha bint Abu Bakr and Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. "If I was looking for role models, I'd want women who looked and talked like me, covered with the hijab and addressing me as a Saudi woman. Not some Western ideal of what a Saudi woman should be."

Al-Saleh says women's rights critics who wave the warning flag of Western liberalism are looking for excuses to deny Saudi women a role in society. She points to neighboring Arab countries that have found room for women in the workplace and government. "Is

Saudi Arabia the only Islamic country? Look at the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar."

Yet even an Islamic feminist movement faces significant challenges. Much like the Western suffragette movement of the early 20th century, the most vocal critics of Saudi feminism may be women. Rowdha Yousef and 15 other women, for example, launched the "My Guardian Knows What's Best for Me" campaign in 2009 in reaction to calls to eliminate guardianship laws.

The push-pull of differing agendas makes empowering women slow going, although there are potential allies in powerful places to help create momentum. Prince Alwaleed bin Talal complained in February that Arab women were "economically and socially marginalized." He routinely hires women in key corporate positions and makes it a point to showcase female entrepreneurial talent.

Princess Lolwah Al-Faisal has been a powerful ally in furthering the integration of Saudi women in the workplace and education by lending her support to several women's groups. Princess Fatimah Kulsum runs a slew of welfare and charity groups for women. Princesses Adela bint Abdullah Al-Saud and Seetha bint Abdullah Al-Saud have emerged as the female representation in King Abdullah's reform agenda by lending their names to various programs.

However, the larger issue should a

Saudi-Islamic feminist movement succeed is just how to interpret women's rights guaranteed in Islam.

"There are more progressive interpretations that can get women very far, but there will always be those who want a more conservative interpretation that will impede rights for women," Coleman says. "Protecting those universal rights ultimately depends on a separation of the religious and legal spheres."

Pending codification of Islamic law (sharia) in the Saudi judicial system may resolve issues of interpretation, but the basic premise of sharia is that's always applied in the context of time and place. Male guardianship, for example, is outmoded in the 21st century kingdom, according to activists.

Abuses of guardianship over travel issues also play an important part in the future of a woman's movement. A hadith, which contains the words and deeds of Mohammed and pertain to matters of Islamic jurisprudence, states that women must not travel without a guardian if the journey takes longer than three days. Travel in modern society no longer takes three days. If an Islamic feminist movement were to take root, reinterpreting the hadith would be a core issue on the table.

"The first priority is to get rid of male guardianship on woman after 18 in everything: Education, travel, work, business, finances, medical services, government and marriage," says Al-Saleh.

Children shot during protest violence still suffering

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

The fourth and second floors of the Science and Technology Hospital in Sana'a is full of the injured from the sniper attack at Change Square last Friday, Mar. 18th. Many of those shot on Friday were taken to the hospital. Forty-eight of the 53 killed died at this hospital. Three of the remaining 29 injured still at the hospital are in critical condition in the intensive care unit (ICU). One protester died of his wounds on Tuesday, and among those in the ICU is a 12 year-old child facing death with a bullet lodged in his head.

Photos of the Friday March 18 martyrs are everywhere at Sana'a University, where the anti-government protest continues. Some have set their profile pictures on social networking sites to those who were gunned down. The gruesome result of Friday's massacre is 53 dead by bullets, 200 with bullet wounds, and over 600 injured from tear gas.

The Yemen Times learnt that last Tuesday, a delegation from the European Union, the ambassadors of the US, the UK, Spain, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands visited the injured and discussed ways of helping them.

Many citizens from all areas have visited the injured to show their support. The hospital witnessed a flood of citizens offering to donate blood for the injured. "We have enough blood, even reserve blood. We were amazed. Once we announced our need the whole city came to donate," said one hospital worker.

Many of the bullet wounds were in the head or chest, shot by snipers from above.

In some hospital rooms you find crowds attending those still suffering the cramping effects of exposure to poisonous gas. In another room a child endures a pain-ridden sleep while his mother is crying and cursing the forces that brought them here.



Salem al-Harazi, 11, was shot in the face last Friday, Mar. 18th by snipers. The bullet missed his brain but passed through both of his eyes, leaving him alive but blind.

Young boy blinded by sniper

Salem Al-Harazi, an 11 year-old victim of a sniper at Friday's massacre, has been transferred from the ICU to a normal room. Salem has lost both his eyes. The bullet entered his left eye, and came out his right eye, destroying both and the nasal septum in-between. Salem was breathing through his nose, hardly sleeping and speaking of his fears when the Yemen Times visited him. His seven year-old brother sadly sat beside Salem: "He was shot by sniper who is bad. I will always help him to get whatever he wants."

His doctor Nasr Ateiah said that Salem has no hope of being able to see again. "His condition is stable now, but unfortunately we can't do anything

more to help. Even if they took him abroad, they can't put in artificial eyes to allow him to see," said Dr. Ateiah.

Salem, who is in the fifth grade, told his mother that school had given students the day off on Thursday morning. He left the house to go to the protest without telling his mother who was cooking lunch at the time. At nine o'clock she went to search for him with her little boy. "I was worried and in a terrible condition. I thought that he might be at one of the protest areas, so I went to look for him at the pro-government protest," said Salem's 35 year-old mother with tears under her veil.

When she didn't find Salem, she returned home and told his father when he came back that evening. His father

spent the whole night looking for Salem at the anti-government protest by Sana'a University, but he couldn't find him among the crowds. "We spent the whole night crying, and praying for God to find him," said his mother.

On Friday morning the mother, father and the younger brother all went to look for Salem again at the Sana'a University protest. His name was announced from the protest stage, but he was sleeping in one of the tents and missed the announcement. That night they saw the news on the state run Yemen TV.

"His father was going crazy, hitting the wall and shouting that his son was among the killed," said Salem's mother. She said that they didn't know any-

thing about Salem's fate until Saturday morning.

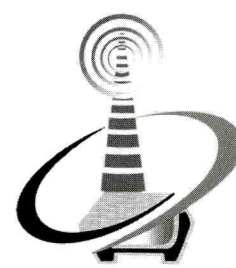
Salem, who woke up to complain that his hand hurt, told the Yemen Times that he spent Thursday without food, but he found an empty tent to sleep in. He woke up to the call to prayer. "When I heard the shooting, I ran with some people towards the shooting. I helped the men in destroying the wall," said Salem in pain. Salem's mother said the Salem went to protest to call for the regime to fall. "The security didn't touch us. I was shot by the snipers that I saw on the roofs of the buildings, covering their faces," said Salem. It was one of the last things he would ever see.

"I would never allow my friend Mohammad to go to the protest, because he will be hurt," said Salem. He is sobbing, but the tears cannot find their way out of his shattered face.

"What did he do to deserve this? He is only a child. I cannot imagine my life after this. He was the family's hope. His father is tired and can't feed us any more. We put our hopes on Salem, but how will he live this way? Last week at this time my son was alright. God will take our revenge on them," said his mother crying.

Announcement of Extension for Public Tender No. (1) of 2011

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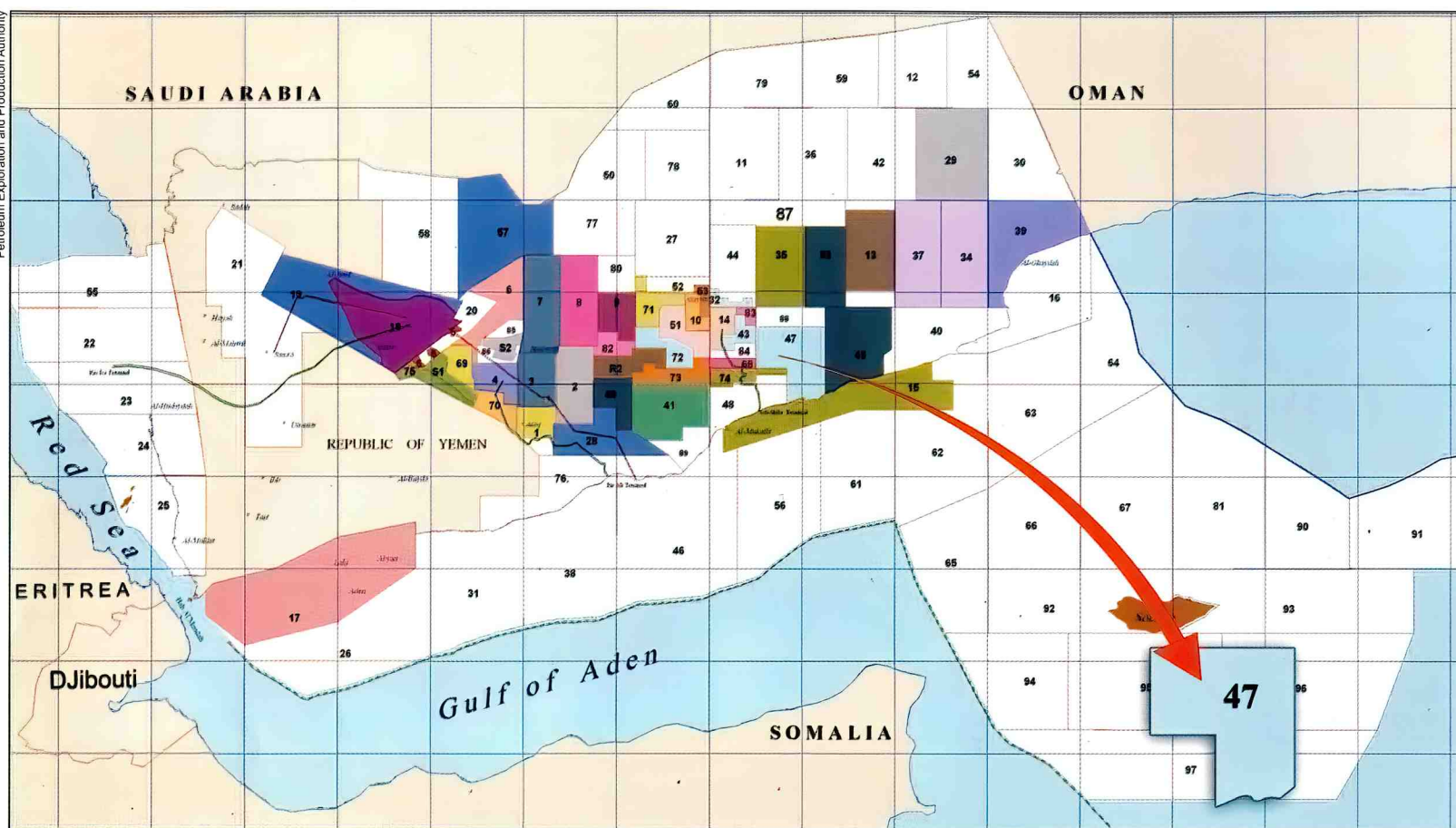


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Bid Opening will take place at Chairman of Board office, 3rd Floor, Public Radio & TV Corp's Headquarters, in presence of bidders or their authorized representatives.

Good Luck !

Yemen announces new oil block



Block 47 will add 10,000 barrels of oil per day to Yemen's production capacity

By: Ali Saeed

The Yemen's Petroleum Exploration and Production Authority (PEPA) said on Saturday that a new oil block in Hadramout, 1200 km east of the capital Sana'a will start operations soon.

The block is expected to produce around 10,000 barrels a day, increasing Yemen's oil production capacity from 270,000 to 280,000 barrels a day, according to Abdulkarim Ghaylan, secretary of PEPA chairman Nasser Ali Al-Humaidy.

Yemen currently has 12 oil blocks in operation throughout the country and in sea zones. With block 47 beginning to yield oil, the number of operating oil blocks in Yemen will increase to

13.

Al-Humaidy commented that 10,000 barrels a day production capacity is a preliminary estimation. As the facilities in the oil block continue to develop, production capacity is expected to increase.

Oil revenues still make up more than 70 percent of the state's budget resources. With the recent increase in oil prices due to social and political unrest across the Middle East, especially in Libya, budget revenues for Yemen are expected to go up this year.

Nasr Al-Humaidy, chairman of PEPA (Petroleum Exploration and Production Authority) said in a press release that the Norwegian company DNO is carrying out production operations in block 47. Preliminary oil reserves in the block are estimated at

about 26 million barrels, producing from two wells known as Ya'leen and Sharna.

He explained that PEPA works on attracting local and international oil companies to invest in oil exploration that remains a vital resource for the state.

Ali Al-Wafi, a Yemeni economist with 25 years experience on the Yemen's economy said that this increase of production will improve oil revenues but the rise in oil prices globally is what truly as the biggest chances of refilling the country's oil coffers. "An increase in oil prices could double Yemen's oil revenue without having to expand production in the slightest," he said.

"An increase of 20 percent in the price of 300,000 barrels of oil is more

than the value of 10,000 barrels in this new production expansion," he explained.

Yemen started producing oil in 1986 with revenues averaging USD 500 million. Beginning in 1992, oil wealth started dwindling due to low production capacity. Since oil producing started in the country, Yemen's total production of oil per day has not exceeded more than 500,000 barrels.

Saudi Arabia's daily production capacity has been hovering around 9 million barrels a day since 2008. A World Bank reports warn that Yemen will run out of oil by the end of 2017.

More than 70% of Yemen's entire gross domestic product is based on oil revenues and oil production related infrastructure.

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IDEAL

Cell phone love affairs: A path to marriage or disaster?



By: Tom Finn

Girl-boy on-phone friendships are on the rise in Yemen, creeping into homes, schools and universities across the country. The Yemen Times' Amira al-Arasi caught up with a range of young men and women to discuss their experiences and thoughts on this growing phenomenon. Most preferred to remain anonymous.

A plague...

Ferdous Taqi, an undergraduate student, believes that on the phone friendships have become a plague sweeping through society. She insists that almost every young woman with a mobile phone engages in it. Ferdous said that she has not done this because she does not want to lose her self-esteem by becoming just another experience for a man.

Princess Charming...

Undergraduate S.M.'s exploits started when she was in secondary school. "A phone relationship with one man is not enough for me although I consider each one to be my prince charming. As soon as I hang up on one of them I call up the other."

She says her "gullible" dad does not follow up on her movements. "He drops me off at the gate of the university, and I go out through the other to be picked up by a friend to tour the city in his car."

Trapped...

We came across A.S. sitting alone in class at her college. She said her first, and last, experience of phone relationship ended with her having a child not recognized by his biological father. "I met him first at this university," she says, "he used to borrow my notebooks to catch up with the lectures." One day she was surprised to find his phone number

written on one of them. She called him out of curiosity and before long he proposed to her and they were married. However, she could not gain his trust, he suspected her of having a phone affair with others and put her under semi-house arrest. Eventually she left him and went to her parents' taking with her their baby boy which the father refused to recognize as his child. Her ex-husband justified his dubiety by saying that he could not rule out the possibility that she might have cheated on him with other men because she had betrayed her family's trust before marriage!!

"A vent for my worries"...

K.A. is a secondary school girl. She says that her family is very stringent to the extent of depriving her of their compassion, which she later found outside the walls of her home. "My relationship with this young man," she explains, "is restricted to night calls during which he checks upon me. He's the only vent for my worries and is my source of advice. He's well-mannered because he cares about me and my education more than my family does. Our calls never go beyond boundaries of politeness."

Desperate mother...

S.N. has been married for five years and has two children. She was married conventionally within her family and does not have a degree. She said that she because her husband is not working to sustain his family something, she has been forced to have affairs with other men on the phone as a means to make ends meet for her children and herself without depending on anybody. She insists that she is not unfaithful and instead she blamed this on her family and her husband who had compelled her to take that road.

Marriage must follow...

A.A., a college student, considers relationships on the phone that are based on honesty from the beginning as not forbidden and that not every girl that has a relationship with a man is necessarily a bad girl. She says that she supports phone relationships provided that they end in marriage and that they do not go out of their formal and polite course. She commended her mother's understanding and said she is her friend with whom she shared every detail of her affair.

Islamic values prevail...

Samah al-Rada'ee holds family responsible for implanting Islamic values in their children. She said that she had rejected men's bids. Her shortcut to turning down their repeated attempts is simply ignoring numbers that are not memorized on her contacts list. In the case of repeated calls, she would give the phone to one of her brothers to answer.

Filling an emotional vacuum...

A.H. is an employee in her late thirties. She tells us that she used to be a beauty which made her so vain that she rejected all those who had proposed to her. With an involuntary sigh she said that now no one wants her any more after becoming old.

"Nowadays, I engage in affairs only on the phone," she said, "my number is not registered in my name. I talk to young men for fun and to fill an emotional vacuum that could be only satisfied through such indecent calls. I think this the is only way that makes me feel desired. But I can't say that I'm fine doing this".

Girls are the losers...

Sara, a student in the college of arts thinks tells us that girls usually bet among themselves on a young man to lure, but they are rather losers compared to young men with the same inclination. Young men also have their say in the matter and they, too, prefer to remain anonymous.

H.A., a college student says he absolutely refuses such relationships although he had one with a girl in the same college department. After their affair developed further, she asked him to meet her family and propose. His response was withdrawing. "Our customs and traditions prevent me from engaging to a girl with whom I had a relationship," he explains.

Girls are braver than boys...

H.M. an employee and a college student says that girls are braver in initiating such relationships. "They attract men by their eyes, their gait or even putting on makeup". He adds that he does not object to marrying a girl he had known through such a phone relationship. "It's the only way," he clarifies, "to know, get closer to and notice her behavior." But, he goes on, "in general I have no respect for girls having love affairs on their mobile phones".

"They end in disaster"...

Rami al-Hashidi an English student at the College of Arts had a love affair with one of his classmates that began by exchanging notebooks. Then it grew and soon they were going out to public places together. At that time he felt that they were meant for each other. But he was also seeing other girls and the family of his classmate ended the relationship forever and withdrew the girl from the college.

Now Rami believes that love can only come after marriage and his view of college girls has changed. "Those young

men may not trust their wives to run their houses or bring up their children". He says he will only marry a girl from the countryside or one with only secondary school degree. He explains his decision by saying that young women are very naive and that can be deceived with a few sweet words.

"The responsibility lies in the hands of the girl"...

As for Z.A., he is against marrying a woman after a phone relationship. "How could I be sure that she would not engage in such activities after marriage?" he wonders. The responsibility, he argues, lies in the hands of the girl. She could set limits for her behavior. So if she is a respectable person, she would not allow men to go too far with her. He also believes it is only the girl who breaches her family trust and that betrayal is not on the agenda of young men. As for betting with his friends on girls, he asserts that he does not do that even if told he has no courage, because being brave, in his opinion, is not in seducing women, but in being a man of principles.

Doctor: A discharge of emotions...

Mr. Taha al-Hazmi, professor of psychology at Social Service Department describes what Yemen's young men and

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women are doing as a dangerous trend which could end in mental illness, psychological disorder, or marriage.

He adds that it is only a way to discharge emotions accumulated by social and psychological factors caused by their being deprived of their right to express themselves within their families. As a result, continues al-Hazmi, they look for

ways and means to vent their emotions through either admiration or flirting with opposite sex, which is purely emotional.

"I think the solution for this," he says, "is educating families to enable them to deal with their children wisely and help them avoid falling prey to such relationships that are against Islamic law and are extrinsic to our culture".

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