Newsletter of the Friends of South Yemen **Issue 10 — 16th March - 15th April 2021**

A ROAD MAP FOR YEMEN

FOSY proposes a three-stage plan to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis

Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) is proposing a road map to end the war in Yemen, find a way out of the current political stalemate and offer a vision for the future.

FOSY is an independent, self-financed organization set up in London in June 2020. Its main aim is to provide information about Yemen in general and the South in particular to help resolve the current crisis. Since there is almost an absence of any useful information in the English language about Yemen our website (www.friendsofsouthyemen.org) is one of the only independent news websites about Yemen which developed as an information resource about the country. First and foremost we are working hard to bring an end to the war and find an equitable political solution for the whole of Yemen in which the rights of all Yemenis are respected.

Before presenting our three-stage plan we would like to draw attention to the following facts:

- The unification of the two regimes in 1990 failed to materialize for the benefit of Yemenis. Recent history and many grievances at all levels have revealed that the political class of Yemen has destroyed for now the dream of Yemeni unity, so dear to the hearts of the people. The Northern regime militarily invaded the South in 1994 and ruled Yemen through a dictatorship.
- The Houthis, supported by Iran, fought six wars against the ruling regime in Sanaa, took their opportunity militarily to overthrow this regime in 2015, deposing the legitimate government of President Abdrobo Mansoor Hadi and later assassinated ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh in 2017. Their attempt to invade the South was unsuccessful because the Southerners, with coalition backing, resisted the Houthis' invasion. The Southern territory is now almost completely free from Houthi domination.
- The Houthis overthrow of the legitimate government of Yemen has resulted in a six-year bloody war. The Houthis, a radical Zaidi Shia sect, now control 80 per cent of the North and for the past months have waged a fierce war and are attempting to take control of the rich province of Marib, and attempt to take control of the whole of the North with the aim of strengthening their negotiating hand in international talks. UNSC 2216 was passed in 2015 putting Yemen under Clause 7.
- The war has resulted in the world's worst humanitarian disaster with reportedly 233,000 dead mostly from "indirect causes" such as lack of food, health services and destroyed infrastructure. Nearly 50,000 people are already facing famine-like conditions and a further 5 million are only one step away. Eighty-five thousand children have lost their lives. The intensification of the war will lead to further loss of life.
- The war has also resulted in the displacement of nearly four million people.
- Additional disasters – mainly floods and the COVID pandemic – have also caused displacement and misery.
- At a recent UN donors' conference only $1.7 billion, less than half of the $3.85 billion requested, was pledged. As a consequence of the conflict, investors have taken their money out of Yemen to invest in other countries. Britain reduced its contribution by almost 50 per cent causing a public outcry in the UK.
- The economic consequences of the war are causing severe fuel, food and water shortages forcing people to turn to the black market where prices are up to two times higher than the official rate, all contributing to food prices that are climbing well out of reach for millions. Currency devaluation is also causing serious problems.

FOSY is calling for an immediate ceasefire and appealing to the international community to bring an end to the war and the continuing negative downward spiral which Yemenis find intolerable.

We hope the following three-stage road map to peace will lead to a solution acceptable to all sides in the conflict and an end to this brutal and pointless war.

Click here to read **FOSY's appeal** to the international community for assistance as COVID-19 cases increase significantly in Southern governorates.

Stage One (2021-2022)
Ending the war immediately and laying the foundations for peace

The first step must be the effective implementation of the Riyadh Agreement which resolved the conflict between the Internationally Recognized Government (IRG) and the Southern Transitional Council (STC) leading to the formation of the current power-sharing government. Despite our reservations about elements in this agreement it appears to be the only way forward available. It is critical that this government is given the opportunity to build trust between the two parties and ensure that the people in the liberated areas see some improvements in their living standards. Although it is fair to say that so far this government has failed to put forward a political and economic plan and improve people's lives.

FOSY Chairman Abdul Galil Shaif

- Peace talks held under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths should start immediately to build trust between the warring parties (the Houthis and the IRG/STC) to agree an immediate end to the war. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Iran, the USA, the UK and other states should engage in the talks supporting all sides to reach a peace settlement.
- Imposition of UN sanctions, especially on politicians and tribal leaders, who are making money out of the war and refuse to engage positively in peace talks. The threat of financial and travel sanctions against those Yemeni politicians would yield positive results in our opinion.
- Formation of an international body to support economic development in North and South Yemen with a move away from reliance on humanitarian assistance. The power sharing government should focus on the payment of salaries, the provision of essential services and the presentation of a united front to reach a peace settlement with the Houthis.
- Injection of funds into the Central Bank for development to be used under international supervision and strict accountability and transparency measures. The government should immediately administer and put measures in place to bring in income from oil, gas, fisheries, taxes and customs directly into the Central Bank to prevent corruption and strengthen the local currency.
- Talks, preferably under UN auspices, between all political groups in the South to achieve national reconciliation and agree on the way forward for the Southern region and future relations with the North. The head of the STC, Aidarus Al-Zubaidi, and President Hadi could play a leading role in this initiative.

Stage Two (2022-2025)
Transitional stage with a possible two region solution, one region in the North of Yemen and the other in the South of Yemen

Yemen could have two constitutionally recognized autonomous regions, the Northern region and the Southern region, each with its own parliament, political parties, elections, executive, ministries, legislative and judicial powers, budget, internal security forces and police. A central administration headed by President Hadi would be responsible for defence, foreign policy and the allocation of an equitable share of national revenue to the Northern and Southern regions.

- Two autonomous regions should be set up under UN auspices with a new constitution. There should also be a strengthening of the role and responsibilities of local government with minimum disruption to the current governorate structure. The governorates in the north will form the Northern autonomous region and the governorates in the south will form the Southern autonomous region. Elections to local governments must be held with international observers present.
- A focus on long-term development projects and investment is needed. Yemenis living abroad must be encouraged to return and invest in their country. Improving the security situation in the two regions of Yemen will encourage and attract investors to return to their country.
- Southerners should eventually hold a Southern conference evaluating the experience of two autonomous regions, successes and failures and building trust between all Southerners on the way forward. The Northern political elite can also initiate their own conference and evaluate their successes and failures and build trust among themselves too.
- The two regions must cooperate politically and economically to heal the scars of war and serve all their people under international scrutiny. They must also hold elections under the constitution so the people can chose their future leaders.

Stage Three (2025-2030)
Decision on the future of Yemen based on the evaluation of the two-region solution

Following the evaluation of the transitional stage of the two-region solution a watershed in Yemen's history should come, when the people themselves decide whether to continue with the two autonomous regions or opt for two independent states. FOSY proposes one referendum in the North and one in the South to determine the future of the two regions.

There is every possibility that the Southerners through their referendum will want to establish their own state. There is income from oil, gas, fisheries and taxes and a strategic location which can revive their economy. No money will be required from external sources if proper state functioning institutions are developed. A UN-organized referendum on the independence of the South is required to enable this state to be re-established. Two states living side by side is better than one state destroying itself. If the South choses independence close economic co-operation with the North would be required.

The alternative of the South voting for independence is a continuation of the two regions under central authority.

All past attempts to resolve the crisis have failed. The situation for the ordinary people of Yemen is desperate so a new initiative is desperately needed. We urge all interested parties and honest brokers to give our proposal their serious attention.

FOSY has produced a documentary on the case for Southern statehood.

Please visit our website, www.friendsofsouthyemen.org to view the video.

Southern Independence Group hosts Zoom conference on building an enduring peace in Yemen

Building an Enduring Peace in Yemen: the Southern Pathway to Peace, a recent Zoom conference organized by the Southern Independence Group, discussed the RAND Corporation's report and recommendations for ending the cycle of violence, failed peace talks, and broken promises which have plagued Yemen for the past six years. The Southern Transitional Council also presented an analysis of the situation in the country and Nadia Hafedh described the challenges faced by Yemeni women.

Dr Trevor Johnson, Associate Political Scientist at RAND, and Dr Daniel Egel, an economist at RAND authors of the report *Building an Enduring Peace in Yemen: lessons from five years of Rand research* summarised the findings of their report. Rand Corporation is an American research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous.

- They concluded that Yemen's civil war has its origins in political and economic grievances, which have been persistent challenges in Yemen's modern history. Local grievances have undermined peace efforts, driving the unravelling of the Saudi-led coalition and contributing to the failure of the United Nations-led peace process. These grievances shape the power of elites, who have the potential to help reconcile Yemen's divisions but are just as likely to play the role of spoiler, threatening the peace process.

Daniel Egel

The human costs of Yemen's civil war have been staggering, but a small but influential group of Yemenis has benefited from this simmering conflict These war "beneficiaries", a blend of Yemen's traditional elite and newcomers, have exploited the instability and foreign assistance of all types for economic and political gain. Understanding the winners and losers in the ongoing civil war is critical in designing effective and durable solutions.

Local actors—tribal sheiks, community leaders, and other notables—will likely be critical to sustaining the eventual peace agreement. Yemen's rich tradition of local, informal mediation has persisted throughout the conflict, with informal mediators both substituting for and complementing state authorities. Neither informal (via local actors) nor formal (via state authorities) mediation is sufficient on its own to sustain a peace agreement.

There are two possible pathways for peace efforts in Yemen. The first is to double down on current efforts that focus on national reconciliation. The second is to refocus international peacebuilding and state-building efforts on Yemen's southern and eastern governorates, at least in the near term.

The report recommends that:

- The international community should support Yemenis in developing a phased approach that provides for political resolution and economic stabilization while guaranteeing the security of citizens across Yemen's political and social strata. This phased approach should evolve from stabilization and relief in the near term to a transitional period of institution building in the medium term, culminating in democratic consolidation and sustained development over the long term.
- International actors must recognize that the pursuit of their own political, economic, and security interests cannot come at the expense of peace in Yemen.
- The international community must be willing to make an unprecedented commitment to peace in Yemen, establishing an international body that has both the mission and resources to oversee and support what will be a decades-long process of reconciliation, reconstruction, and redevelopment. Just as a transitional Yemeni government requires broad inclusion, so too should this body, providing a voice to different political actors from across Yemen.

Saleh Alnoud, a lawyer and political analyst who works closely with the Southern Transitional Council (STC), spoke about the neglect of the Southern issue. "There has been a deliberate move by all the elites in the north to try and minimise the southern issue and present it as an insignificant issue in where we are today," Alnoud said. "Had the southern issue been seen differently and used in a better way to reach an end to the Yemen crisis we would be in a different place today."

Saleh Alnoud

Alnoud went on to say that in the six years since the Houthis were ousted from Aden it has been the deliberate policy of the Yemen government, as announced clearly by the foreign minister, that any move towards developing the South or stabilizing the South would only result in a move towards separation. The separation of the South is being portrayed as evil in a way which is damaging, dangerous and has caused hardship to so many people.

Alnoud said that a move towards recognizing the South could be a way forward towards stabilization. "That is something that the Southerners would engage with constructively. The STC has been clear to point out that that is what they are advocating. But the STC has not advocated complete secession or complete separation at the moment. They have entered into the Riyadh Agreement which many Southerners see as a negative. The STC is a body which has been able to work constructively with the international community but it has not had the recognition that it deserves.

"In terms of the people's sentiment in the South once the people see real attention to the southern issue and to the needs of the Southern people it will be seen as a confidence building measure for the Southerners to begin to engage with other issues."

Nadia Hafedh, a researcher and community organizer with the South Yemeni Women's Forum, emphasized that women are playing a vital role in running their communities as war disrupts the family unit. "They are engaging in entrepreneurial activities, running households, providing

CHRONOLOGY

Mar 16: Dozens of protesters storm the presidential palace in Aden demanding payment of public sector salaries.
-Mehr News Agency reports Yemen has released documents showing the former Yemeni government's cooperation with the CIA.
-The UN calls for a probe into a fire that killed dozens of migrants at a holding facility in Sanaa after Human Rights Watch said it was started by the Houthis.
Mar 17: The war in Yemen is "back in full force," the UN Special Envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths says.
-The UN agency for migration says it moved 140 Ethiopian migrants stranded in Yemen back to their home country.
Mar 18: Yemeni troops capture 23 Houthi militia as fighting continues in Hajjah province.
-A Houthi spokesman says the Saudi-led blockade of Yemen must be lifted before a ceasefire agreement can be reached.
Mar 19: An air attack on an Aramco refinery in Riyadh by the Houthis causes a fire which was put out.
-The State Department's deputy spokesperson, Jalina Porter, condemns all Houthi drone and missile attacks against Saudi Arabia.
Mar 20: Occupancy in intensive care units in quarantine centres reaches maximum capacity in Yemen because of a sharp increase in the number of coronavirus cases in recent days, Yemen's health minister says.
-US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking puts forward a "fair" ceasefire proposal amid a build-up of international momentum behind peace efforts to find a solution to the conflict.
Mar 21: After losses in Marib, the Houthis sever communication lines between Sanaa and government regions .
-The Houthis admit that teargas canisters fired by guards caused a fire that killed 45 Ethiopian migrants at a detention centre earlier this month.
Mar 22: The Saudi coalition unleashes dozens of air strikes against Houthi military targets in North Yemen including the capital Sanaa and the port of Salif on the Red Sea coast.
Mar 23: The Houthis attack a Saudi airport with a drone, one day after the kingdom announces a ceasefire initiative aimed at ending the six-year war.
-Almost a quarter of the civilians who died in Yemen in the last three years were children Save the Children reports.
Mar 24: The Saudi-led coalition clears four fuel ships to dock at Yemen's Red Sea port of Hodeidah.
-Iran's ambassador to Sanaa dismisses Saudi Arabia's proposed ceasefire in Yemen as a front for perpetuating the war and occupation of the country.
-British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab calls on the leader of the Houthis

services, taking up leadership roles and forming women's groups and activists groups. Women have been killed on the frontlines in direct combat, they have been affected by mass starvation across the country trying to keep their children alive," Hafedh said.

"Since 2014 Human Rights Watch have documented many cases of the Houthis carrying out arbitrary and abusive detention and women have been included in this detention. Many people who have been released from detention have spoken of ill treatment and torture."

Nadia Hafedh

Hafedh emphasized that women from all sectors and social backgrounds need to be involved in the peace process and in rebuilding society. "Women have suffered from subjugation during the last few decades and are therefore largely not present in civil society. There has to be an active attempt to address that. Language barriers must be removed and class exclusion has to be rejected. Women must be able to state their needs without caveats which shut them out and ultimately keep them subjugated and silenced for decades both domestically and internationally."

Hafedh was critical of the UN which she believes has thus far have made insufficient efforts to involve Southern women in peace agreements. "Women's voices and the voice of the south have been missing from earlier attempts at coming to peace agreements and these agreements will never be successful when large parts of the population have been missing from the negotiating table. Women need to be able to speak on issues. There is a lot more will in southern society to involve women. The reason many women want to see a separate state in the south again is that they remember the significant presence of women in civil society in the independent south. Women had a lot of freedom and access to quality education and services. Women's rights have diminished significantly since unity in 1990 and no one has been vocal about correcting this. For 13 consecutive years Yemen has been ranked as the worst country in the world in the Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum.

"Women want a separate state for the same reason that others want it: for freedom from oppression and to develop a stronger state that provides for its citizens. Thus far the STC have been the only ones who have encouraged the involvement of women in their political structures and more broadly in society. They recently funded a sewing project in Aden and provided resources for women to sell garments so they can provide for their families.

"We want to see further involvement of women in political structures. We have seen some but we want to see more. This will lead to stronger institutions. It is not a luxury but a necessity. Women have been told that now is not the time for them to get involved. I disagree. Now is precisely the time to be having these conversations. If the change does not happen in the build up it will not magically manifest once the government is formed or a state is created. All parties to the conflict must do better in involving women. International bodies and other states have a role in demanding women's participation and making it a caveat of their involvement. In a war that has decimated much of the country and taken down the institutions of the state we have a real opportunity to centre women in the creation of new democratic and social processes," Hafedh said.

UN envoy calls for truce in Yemen during Ramadan

The UN's special envoy for Yemen urged the country's warring parties Tuesday to strive to ensure a "lasting and sustainable peace" during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"I call on the parties to silence the guns and allow Yemenis to observe the month in safety and dignity," Martin Griffiths said in a Ramadan message.

Griffiths wished Yemenis a "blessed and peaceful" Ramadan.

"I hope this holy month of reflection and compassion will provide an opportunity for all of us to come together, think of those who are suffering, and overcome our differences," he said.

Yemen has been beset by violence and chaos since 2014, when Houthis overran much of the country, including the capital, Sana'a. The crisis escalated in 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition launched a devastating air campaign aimed at rolling back Houthi territorial gains.

According to UN estimates, the conflict in Yemen has claimed the lives of at least 233,000 people, with millions more facing starvation and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Annual Report on Freedom of Expression in all parts of Yemen 2020 launched

The Yemen-based Media Freedoms Observatory in Yemen launched its annual report on *Freedom of Expression in Yemen in 2020*, which included a comprehensive monitoring of the status of media freedom in Yemen and the violations against media professionals and social media activists during the year.

The report was launched in a symposium in which a number of journalists who were subjected to violations during the past year acted as witnesses to the arbitrary acts practiced against journalists. At the opening of the seminar, in which dozens of journalists and jurists participated via zoom, Mustafa Nasr reviewed the multiple violations described in the report, which totalled 143, most prominent of which was the killing of three journalists, and the issuance of death sentences for 11 journalists during politically motivated trials that lacked the simplest legal rules and procedures.

Nasr added that the Observatory tried, through this report, to provide a comprehensive description of the state of media freedoms in Yemen, with a focus on the repercussions of the corona virus on journalistic work.

Journalist Hassan Anab – one of the five journalists who were released in the prisoner exchange with the government – also spoke about his kidnapping and the five and a half years he spent in Houthi prisons, where he was subjected to enforced disappearance and torture with eight of his colleagues who are still suffering from the effects of torture and are now receiving treatment.

Another Journalist, Hafsa Auba, was also subjected to extensive harassment. She was arrested in Aden airport and interrogated just because her passport showed that she was a journalist. She indicated that she was also subjected to harassment in the Houthi-controlled areas, but said it was difficult for her to speak out for fear of reprisals.

Journalist Muhammad Al-Yazidi, spoke about the situation of the press in Hadhramaut in light of the intransigence of the security authorities and the arrest of anyone who dares to criticize or disagree with them. He enumerated a number of violations he was subjected to, including persecution, threats and kidnapping of his sister in an attempt to pressure him to surrender himself, maintaining that he is still separated from his family and home. He further stressed that many journalists have been subjected to harassment and arrests, with their families forced to write pledges not to write again about the situation in the governorate.

The Media Freedom Observatory has issued a report on freedom of expression in Yemen, which highlighted 143 violations, including three cases of murder, 11 death sentences against journalists, 7 cases of kidnapping, 10 cases of injury, 11 arrests, 11 cases of assault, 15 cases of threats, and four cases of suspension from work. In addition, there were five cases of violation practiced against media institutions, plus 66 more violations.

The Houthi group topped the list of perpetrators of violations against journalists in Yemen, with 70 of the total cases recorded during the past year; 44 cases of violation committed by parties affiliated with the Yemeni government, 22 violations by unknown persons and three cases committed by parties affiliated with the militants of the Southern Transitional Council.

During the past year, the report said, 37 cases of violation were reported in Al-Jawf city, 30 cases in the capital city of Sana'a, 22 in the city of Taiz, and 17 in Aden. It added that 15 cases of violation were reported during the same year in the city of Hadramout, 10 in the city of Marib and three in Ibb governorate.

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to free a Briton Luke Symons from Cardiff held illegally for four years in a Yemeni prison. Symons has been accused of spying but has never been put on trial.

Mar 25: Mehr News Agency reports Saudi jets target residential areas in Sa'dah province.

-The number of malnourished children admitted to nutrition centres supported by Islamic Relief in Yemen has almost doubled in the past three months, as the crisis escalates as international governments cut vital humanitarian funding.

Mar 26: The Houthis claim attacks on Saudi Aramco installations in Ras Tanura, Rabigh, Yanbu and Jazan as well as a military base in Dammam near the company's headquarters.

-Saudi Arabia's permanent representative to the UN, Abdullah Al-Mouallimi, meets his counterparts from a number of UN Security Council member states to discuss the Kingdom's latest initiative to end the crisis in Yemen.

Mar 27: The Houthis have "provisionally" accept a Saudi initiative to end the war in Yemen, but are demanding unchecked flights from Sanaa airport to unlimited destinations before giving the peace plan their final approval.

-Doctor Without Borders (MSF) reports a "dramatic influx of critically ill COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalisation in Aden and many other parts of the country" and calls on humanitarian groups and international aid donors to "immediately" scale up activities and funding.

Mar 28: The Houthis deport the last of Yemen's Jews by sending 13 members of three different families away from their homes in Sanaa. All that remains from the several–thousand-year-old community are four seniors.

-The Houthis warn the Saudis they will continue painful missile strikes.

Mar 29: A coordinator working on the UN panel of experts on Yemen sends a five-page letter to the Security Council withdrawing claims that the Yemeni government was involved in corrupt operations.

-Yemen's Syndicate of Doctors and Pharmacists announces 74 doctors have died of COVID.

Mar 30: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Yemen's President Abdroba Mansour Hadi discuss Saudi Arabia's initiative to end the Yemeni crisis.

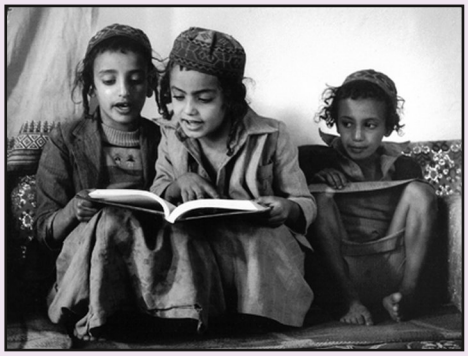
-UN experts say it's highly likely a deadly missile attack on Aden airport as the country's new government was arriving was carried out by the Houthis.

Mar 31: Yemen's internationally-recognized government accuses the Houthis of working closely with both al-Qaeda and ISIS to inflict terrorism on the Yemeni people in an intelligence report submitted to the UN Security Council.

-A total of 25 Houthi rebel positions

come under attack by the Saudi-led coalition.
Apr 1: Yemen receives the first batch of 360,000 doses of the COVID vaccine.
-The Houthis claim they targeted Riyadh with four armed drones, the latest reported attack in their stepped-up cross-border campaign against Saudi Arabia.
Apr 2: The US reiterates its support for Saudi Arabia defending its territory and facing down threats from the Houthis.
Apr 3: The Houthi's defense minister said the Houthis have a database of various targets inside Saudi Arabia, stressing that retaliatory attacks will continue as long as the Saudi-led military coalition continues pounding Yemen.
-A Yemeni journalist Hisham al-Baqiri is killed during clashes between government forces and the Houthis on the frontline in Taiz.
Apr 4: A child dies and four people are injured when a huge fire breaks out at a camp for internally displaced people in Marib.
-Pope Francis deplores the "deafening and scandalous silence" toward the crisis in Yemen.
-Over the last few years, tens of thousands of Yemenis living in insurgency-held areas are infected by pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) as health centres struggle with being deprived of key resources snatched away by Houthi militia leaders.
Apr 5: UN-brokered peace efforts to end the war in Yemen make no progress, with the Houthis and the government squabbling over key issues such as flights from Sanaa airport, halting military operations and airstrikes, and Hodeidah seaport revenues.
-The UN should clearly condemn the Houthis for their "racist" treatment of African refugees, the adviser to Yemen's president says.
Apr 6: A Houthi security official Sultan Zabin who has been sanctioned for torture, sexual violence, and cruel treatment of women dies from COVID-19.
-Airstrikes launched by the Saudi-led coalition destroy a Houthi missile depot in Marib.
Apr 7: The Houthis continue to target Aramco with drones and missiles.
-Iran confirms that its cargo vessel MV Saviz, anchored off Yemen in the Red Sea, has been attacked, sustaining "minor damage."
Apr 8: The Director of the National Mine Action Program Brigadier Ameen Al-Aqeeli says that the mines and improvised explosive devices planted by the Houthis during the years of war have killed more than 8,000 civilians, including children, women and the elderly.
-House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy confirms he has requested a classified briefing from the FBI and CIA over two Yemeni men on the FBI's terror watch list who were allegedly

Expulsion of Yemeni Jews adds to Houthi's scandalous catalogue of injustices



Three young Jewish boys studying, Al Hajar, Haydan, Yemen, 1983. The one in the centre is Lewi Faez, who was around 6 years old at the time. He arrived in Israel in 1992 at the age of 16, with his 14-year-old wife and an infant. (Pic: Myriam Tangi who photographed the last Jews in Yemen.)

"There is no place like Yemen. Not in America, not in Israel, it's just not the same. When the people of Yemen say, 'We don't want a single Jew here' I will go but until that day Yemen is my home and that is where I will stay."
Rabbi Yahya Youssef Musa Marhabi uttered those words in 2010. That fateful day came in late March 2021 for him and 12 other Jews: they were driven out by the Houthis who have taken control of the north of the country and whose slogan is "Convert or die". The rabbi's departure signals the end of a 3,000-year-old community. Just six Jews remain in war-torn Yemen: an old woman, her brother and three others in Amram province. One man, Levi Salem Marhab, is in prison Some reports say that the last Jews agreed to leave as a condition of Levi's release, but there is no guarantee that he will be freed.
Those expelled are from the Zindani, Habib and Marhabi families. The group refused an offer to go to Israel by way of the port city of Aden. The group, which had already

> Commenting on the expulsion The Chairman of Friends of South Yemen (FOSY), Abdul Galil Shaif Kasim said: "Racism and fascist intolerance was a horrible historical stain on Europe. It cannot and should not be allowed to raise its ugly face in Yemen. The Houthis must be compelled to make peace in Yemen and to end their intolerant anti-semitic rhetoric and racist practices against Yemeni Jews. Friends of South Yemen (FOSY) calls on the international community to take immediate steps and action to ensure that the Houthis immediately refrain from anti-semitic practices and respect the rights of the Jewish minority in all territories under their control. Jews have lived in Yemen for thousands of years and have enriched our culture and way of life and must be treated equally like any other citizens. The Jewish community is our community and have every right to practice their religion and culture without oppression or racism."

been forced out of their homes in the north of Yemen and their property stolen, wanted to resettle in the UAE, which has taken in three Jewish families from Yemen over the last year, but this was impossible for unspecified reasons. It is thought that some among the thirteen did want to go to Israel, but "an influential member" of the group was against the idea.
I would wager that the "influential member" was Rabbi Yahya Youssef. He has heard reports of scantily-clad women in Israel and fears that Yemenite Jews will not be able to cling to their traditional, pious way of life.
The scholar SD Goiten once described Yemen's Jews as the most Arab and Jewish of Jews. Rabbi Yahya has insisted that he is Arab before he is Jewish. He has bent over backwards to show his willingness to integrate into Muslim Yemen. He has tried to fight for Jews to have seats in Parliament, said that Jewish children should go to Muslim schools, and even said he believed in Muhammad as much as Moses.
Beleaguered Jews in Arab or Muslim countries have long expressed their hostility to Israel and loyalty to their countries of birth. Where has it got them in the long run? A one-way ticket out of the country. There are no communities left in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Libya or Algeria. In Iraq, a Jew died recently, bringing the number down to three.
According to legend, Jewish history in Yemen dates back to the time of King Solomon and the request of the Queen of Sheba to see Hebrew craftsmen settle in her country. Indeed, some historians identify Sheba with the ancient Kingdom of Saba in the southern Arabian Peninsula. In 1949-50, about 49,000 Yemeni Jews were brought to the nascent State of Israel on secret flights during Operation Magic Carpet. In 2017, there were approximately 50 Jews left in Yemen with most of them living in in a compound adjacent to the American Embassy in Sanaa.

• Blog by **Lyn Julius**, a journalist and co-founder of Harif, an association of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa in the UK. She is the author of *Uprooted: How 3,000 years of Jewish Civilisation in the Arab world vanished overnight*.

BOOK REVIEW:

The Wild Fox of Yemen: poems by Threa Almontaser

The Wild Fox of Yemen by Threa Almontaser, published by Grey Wolf Press, is a collection of poetry that gathers the reader up and into itself, and immerses them in the poet's world. The world of a first generation American/Yemeni trying to find her way in a country while her familial roots are across oceans in Yemen.

Yemen is currently being torn asunder by the power struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia and Sunni and Shia Islam. Her people are being starved to death and the country is in ruins. According to Doctors Without Borders it is one of the worst humanitarian disasters occurring in the world currently, yet nobody seems willing or able to do anything to prevent its continuation.

Threa Almontaser

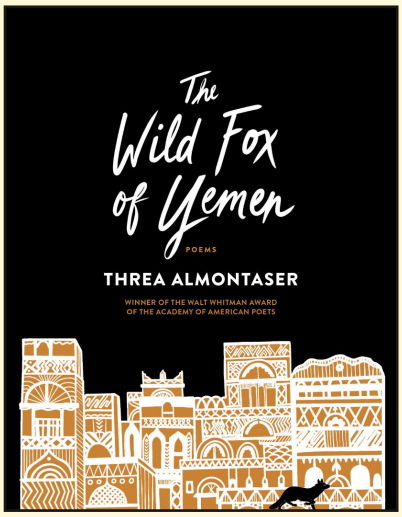
Almontaser navigates through the minefield of emotional turmoil; the trying to find her way in the US, the destruction of her parent's homeland and the roots of her culture, and the sense of helplessness that could be overwhelming; with brilliant honesty.

In her case, at least in reference to this collection of poetry, she honours the quote from the American poet E.E. Cummings: "Every artist's strictly illimitable country is herself. An artist who has played country false has committed suicide." Not only has she created her own illimitable country through her art – she is true to it with every word she writes.

Every immigrant child has to create their own illimitable country, one with a foot in two worlds. Almontaser has done a remarkable job of showing us how, while it can be incredibly difficult at times, it can also be a well spring of beauty and strength.

The works Almonstaser has created are replete with imagery inspired by Yemen. Whether the physical appearance of the country or its stories they all seep into the words. Grains of desert sand as grist to the mill of the harsh bustle and reality of life in the US.

To us, the sudden appearance of Arabic script amidst our familiar alphabet seems something exotic and different, a rare bloom in a prosaic garden. However to Almontaser it's her reality. Arabic and English are what help define her – make her distinct and a target.



For let's be real. In the last 20 years a brown skinned woman wearing a hijab and speaking Arabic, Urdu or Pashtan is a target. Being a certain shade of brown period marks you out for special attention at airport security.

In the poem *Home Security After 9/11* she brings this state of fear and uncertainty to life. Quotes from statute books defining consent – allowing the police in your house without a warrant and other supposed controls on police behaviour, are intermingled with nightmare images of the fears inspired by the constant security. "We are being abducted by [ ]/ I ask the low white light, Where will all the Muslims go? Blue men bustle me into their van, everything a slow lucent swing lashed stiff in this effigy."

Even in how the poems are laid out on the page Almontaser has created a statement. From the poem shaped like a goat who is butchered for a celebratory meal to the inclusion of lines in English laid out from right to left like Arabic script.

Imagine having to relearn the direction letters travel on a page? If you find it difficult to train your eye to follow a couple of stanzas of verse how must it be for people who have to make the transition on a permanent basis?

The Wild Fox of Yemen by Threa Almontaser is an amazing collection of poems which not only explore the reality of life in America, but introduces readers to the country of Yemen behind the bloodshed and horror. Almontaser has been true to her strictly illimitable country and isn't hesitant about showing it to us warts and all.

Reviewed by Richard Marcus

caught crossing the US-Mexico border two months apart this year.

Apr 9: Washington's efforts to end the war in Yemen will fail unless it gets tough with Houthi rebels and their Iranian backers, a top Yemeni military commander Brig Gen Tareq Saleh says.

Apr 10: Seventeen people are released as part of a prisoner exchange between Yemen's government forces and the STC.

Apr 10: Yemeni authorities reopened the country's third biggest airport after a halt of nearly five years. A domestic flight from the state carrier Yemen Airways (Yemenia) marked the reopening of the Riyan International Airport in the governorate of Hadhramaut.

-At least 53 pro-government forces and Houthi fighters are killed in the past 24 hours, as the battle for Yemen's oil-rich Marib region escalates.

Apr 11: A mass demonstration in Al-Mahfad district of Abyan demands the departure of the Saudi-led coalition forces, and denounces the economic collapse.

-Emirates Red Crescent sends 60 tonnes of food aid for the residents of Hadramawt.

Apr 12: Saudi Arabia closes its airports due to Houthi missile attacks.

-The UN Secretary General issues a positive statement about Oman's role in Yemen's peace process.

Apr 13: The United Nation Special Envoy on Yemen Martin Griffiths has reiterates calls for all parties involved in the war to come together and "seize the opportunity" for a diplomatic solution. He was speaking at a press conference as five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, Sweden, Kuwait, and the EU sat down for talks aimed at ending the drawn-out conflict.

-Oman's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Badr Al-Busaidi, receives a delegation from the Houthis.

Apr 14: Thirty two shipments of UAE weapons arrive at Aden port, local sources tell the Yemen Press Agency.

-The UN's special envoy for Yemen urges the country's warring parties to strive to ensure a "lasting and sustainable peace" during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

-The kidnapping of Yemeni model and actress nineteen-year-old Entisar Al-Hammadi by the Houthis sparks global outrage.

- Sa'dah, Al Bayda' and Al-Jawf provinces are the targets of airstrikes by the Arab coalition.

Apr 15: The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) describes Yemen as a "dangerous place for stranded migrants" and has called to help immigrants "return to their homes safely".

-The Houthis claim they used drones and missiles to attack oil installation and military targets in the southern Saudi city of Jazan, with a site belonging to state oil giant Aramco catching fire.