

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

YEMEN IN CRISIS: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

(ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

Doha, Qatar

Wednesday, February 17, 2016

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING

706 Duke Street, Suite 100

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

PARTICIPANTS:

IBRAHIM FRAIHAT, Moderator
Senior Foreign Policy Fellow
The Brookings Institution

RAJEH BADI
Government Spokesman and Advisor to the
Prime Minister of Yemen

RAFAT AL-AKHALI
Former Minister of Youth and Sports in Yemen
Nonresident Fellow, Atlantic Council

IONA CRAIG
Yemen Correspondent, *The Times of London*
Freelance Broadcast and Print Journalist

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. FRAIHAT: The language will be in Arabic today, so we are flexible on the language, so we tried to see the preferences of the audience and the speakers. Today, we will have Arab language. We will have translation, of course. Please use your translation if you need translation to English.

Welcome to this event organized by Brookings Doha Center about the situation in Yemen. I would like to thank everyone for coming here and for being interested in this country that means a lot for all of us. This country, Yemen, of which we are very much proud of with a peaceful revolution in 2011, the 11th of February, and on this occasion, I would like to remind you of the peaceful Yemen revolution that took place in February 2011.

The fifth anniversary is this week. It has kept and maintained its peaceful march for two years despite many oppressive actions against the revolutionary people, and from the different -- despite the oppression that was exercised on the

DOHA-2016/02/17

people on the streets about their wisdom had the upper hand, and we had always said wisdom is always there on all occasions, not only the beginning of the revolution.

Yemen is a dear country for all in this region of the world, and it means a lot for everybody. That is why everybody is interested in the Yemen situation, and we pray to God that Yemen will overcome its present crisis, and we will once again see the emergence of the Yemen wisdom.

We are honored by your presence today in this symposium about the situation in Yemen and about the future vision of Yemen, where things are going. I am honored to be hosting three experts, politicians, generalists, and in fact, scholars in the Yemen issues, to discuss Yemen and its situation and the crisis there.

I am happy to extend my thanks to all of them, the three of them, for coming here to be part of the Yemen public audience who are interested in this topic, and also I would like to draw your attention to

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

the media is covering this event, so we would like to thank them.

We will speak in the beginning by giving 7 to 10 minutes to each panelist to give us their visions and their evaluation of the present situation and where things are going, and to have a future look at Yemen's situation.

We usually focus on the constructive side, we don't criticize for the sake of criticism, no. We focus on solutions, on positive things, on how one can go forward to find positive solutions for the crisis.

This is the line of thought that we always adhere to, and that's why I wish we should try to find solutions, to find a future vision that will help us to find a solution to these crises, and today, of course, we are focusing on the Yemen crisis.

I would like to begin with His Excellency, the former Minister of Youth and Sports in Yemen, Mr. Rafat Al-Akhali, who will give us an idea about his vision for Yemen and the Yemen situation.

Mr. Rafat Al-Akhali was Minister of Youth

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

and Sports in Yemen, and he is at the present time a nonresident fellow at the Rafik Hariri Center for Middle East of the Atlantic Council in Washington, and he is a consultant to organizations, international organizations, that are interested in the development, reconstruction, including IBM and other international organizations that focus on development and construction.

Rafat, please tell us what is your vision, how do you see the future of Yemen?

MR. AL-AKHALI: Thank you, Dr. Fraihat, thank you for hosting us. It is difficult and painful these days to speak about Yemen because it's a very complicated matter. Maybe we should first remember all those who were killed in this war and to pray for the recovery of the injured people.

I would like to begin by a phrase that was pronounced by a youth Yemeni in an interview. They asked him about the future and how he saw the future. His answer was which future are we talking about? There's no future, there's no hope.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

This is the phrase that he repeated, there's no hope. He summarized what millions of Yemen youth think who do not see in front of them any prospect of a solution.

You just said this month is the fifth anniversary of the peaceful revolution of the Yemen people. Maybe it is useful to see what changes took place since 2011 to today. It's important to follow the general discourse that is the public narrative that is in our society.

In the beginning, the terminology was full of changes, justice, equal citizenship, that was the terminology that was used, positive and optimistic, because one felt very positive about the future at the time.

Now, there was a big change. The terminology used nowadays in the public narrative is polarizing -- that is to say there is a lot of sectorism in the region, a lot of extremism, and a lot of pessimism and frustration. This is the terminology that is controlling and overshadowing all

the public discourse narrative.

Today, there are those that are still alive or injured, displaced people, or one of the one million people who need urgent help, who urgently need food, medicine, health care. Nowadays, you must live while you see that your future is collapsing in front of your own eyes. You live without having any hopes, any ideas about the future.

This is where it is dangerous, it is dangerous to lose hope because when we reach this point of no future, no hope, many of the young people have only two choices, either waiting to die in their own houses, or to go meet death in another place and face it.

For millions of Yemen youth, this is the only choice they have, in fact. They don't have any other way out. Everybody who had a job lost their job. Anyone whose father had a job, the father lost the job. The economy has completely collapsed.

I remember a letter I received about two weeks ago from one of these young people that I had

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

helped about a year and a half ago to get a job. He sent me a letter thanking me. He said he's still at his work. He said if I hadn't had this job, I would have joined one of the fighting groups. Nobody nowadays has any opportunity to work. One of the fighting groups had asked him to join.

The question that was raised in the beginning of this session was what is the prospects of this crisis in Yemen and what can be done. Maybe the question should be what can be done, until the world comes to an end, until the hostilities come to an end, what can be done to keep just a little bit of hope within the youth that they might have a future. How can we make sure there is a minimum of economy until this crisis is over and the military decide to put an end to this.

That's why I think we have a big responsibility to focus on creating job opportunities, even temporary-wise, focusing on positive narrative that keeps people attached to life, attached to the future.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

We also have the responsibility for finding for businessmen in Yemen and the capital some hope because today, almost all of the Yemeni businesses have left the country and are sending their money out, and they are investing in Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and in the African Continent, Kenya. The Yemeni investments are all there.

How can we make sure at least to have a minimum, a desire for these businessmen to stay in the country or to come back if they will not be compensated for the losses they had and they are not part of the future. If we do not do this, if the Yemen investors don't come back to their country, foreigners won't come also.

I think focusing on these initiatives and opportunities is what can be done today. In fact, yesterday I was talking about this in another symposium about the job opportunity creation, and they gave a simple example about some farmers who had to mortgage their personal weapons in return for irrigation equipment. That was a simple program that

was implemented, and give them two choices, they can continue planting and agriculture by giving up their weapons.

These are hopeful examples, and people can continue to a normal life. We must focus on such examples. Unfortunately, one doesn't focus on them.

What I wish is that we should all work one way or another to change the narrative so it becomes more focused on the future and not looking back to the past. A narrative that gives some basic hope for the people, and people must know there is a plan for post the crisis, but if we keep thinking with the mentality of war and the conflict and the disasters taking place in the world, I don't think that will lead to anything positive in the future.

My recommendation is how can we all focus on the economy and maintaining the hope for the youth. Thank you very much.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much indeed for reminding us of hope and the future of Yemen. I think talking about these aspects is very important for our

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

future vision, so that the Yemeni's won't be pushed further away from hope and away from the future.

At least this is emblematic of perhaps a better future, a prosperous future. We ought not to turn a blind eye on the optimistic view to overcome this stage.

We will move now to Iona Craig, a journalist. She's an expert, gloves on expert. She knows Yemen closely, and she is very close to the Yemeni situation. She's been there since 2010 and before then she went also to Yemen, and we are honored to have her here because we have talked about her expertise, her writing's, essays, in plenty of journals, the Los Angeles Times, U.S. Today, as well as Time Magazine.

Indeed, she's a household name. I think she's Irish or British.

Thank you for your participation. I would like to allude to the fact that Iona is a lecturer at City University London.

Thank you. Please, the floor is yours. Ten

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

minutes, please.

MS. CRAIG: Thank you very much for holding this event today, particularly in the English speaking media. Unfortunately, Yemen is one of the most under reported conflicts at the moment, which means the voice of the civilians on the ground is not really getting heard, and also the more important discussions of what the future holds are rarely happening, so thank you.

I have spent about five months on the ground in Yemen since the war began. As already mentioned, I was living there before. I don't like to think of myself as a Yemen expert, a specialist maybe, because I think the more you get to know Yemen sometimes even the more confusing it can be.

From what I have seen on the ground, I reported from both sides of the front line. I crossed the fighting lines more than half a dozen times last year. I probably have, I hope, a better perspective from both parts or many parts of the conflict now.

It is absolutely clear that the biggest

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

losers in all of this are the civilian population of Yemen, not just from the humanitarian perspective, but this conflict is tearing the society apart. You now have conflicts that have been brought to the very local level for very personal reasons a lot of the time. It is tearing families apart as well.

I think this is one of the saddest things that I have seen over the last year, how really the very fabric of the Yemeni society is being undermined, and even neighbors who have trusted each other and been friends for many decades are now enemies.

I, therefore, find it very hard to be optimistic about the future in the sense of bringing an end to this conflict any time soon, from what I've seen on the ground.

The prices to have that happen is equally very important because this conflict has become so fractured. Now, you're dealing with multiple groups on the ground that are all fighting for very different reasons. I think with the media narrative, it is very easy to push people into one side of the pro-VCs or

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

the anti-VCs, but just because you're fighting on side doesn't actually mean you're supporting the aims and goals of the side you are fighting along.

Therefore, when it comes to political negotiations or a way to end this conflict, I see that it has to be a much more inclusive process. It has to include more of the fractions that are actually fighting on the ground, not just the big players and the political elite. Otherwise, it is not going to work.

If everybody at a more senior level is able to reach some kind of agreements on just a cease fire, let's say, that's never going to take place on the ground if you're not communicating with and dealing with all the different fractions involved.

Of course, the longer the conflict goes on, the more and more fractured it is going to become. The more and more difficult, therefore, it is to get it to end.

I think the other issue is because of my lack of optimism, perhaps, it's very hard to see when

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

this conflict will come to an end or come to a close, but the more important thing in the meantime is the humanitarian situation.

As mentioned, the civilians are suffering massively in the middle of all this. As you said at the beginning, it's not about putting blame on one side or the other. This is a war. There is no good side in all of this.

But my concern is obviously having seen it on the ground is the use of food as a weapon really, the restriction of access to humanitarian aid and food supplies. I was in Aden during the siege. I was in Ta'izz during the siege. I have also seen the impacts of the blockades on the entire country as well.

It was very good to hear actually yesterday the U.N. declaring that this new process is due to start now, authorization, by an independent body, to try and restart commercial imports into Yemen. This is incredibly important. It's going back to what you were just saying now about trying to put some life blood into the economy but also trying to provide food

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

for the Yemeni's.

Aid agencies, the U.N. agencies, cannot feed 25 million people, and Yemen relies on those commercial imports. It's a step in the right direction, and I really hope for the sake of Yemen on the ground that it does mean commercial imports can restart again on a regular basis in order to make it easier for the civilian population.

I find it very sort of heartbreaking to see what is happening to Yemen right now, and it makes it very difficult to see even from that commercial aspect how things can change most immediately. There has been a huge amount of destruction across the country, both as a result of infrastructure damage as well as from the fighting just on the ground.

The longer this goes on, the more the population is going to suffer. We already know now more than 2.5 million people have been displaced by the conflict. All of those figures for those who are dying, those who have been displaced, are going to continue to rise the longer this conflict goes on.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

I really hope today perhaps we have an opportunity to tease out some of the more practical options of what happens next. I don't think certainly any Yemeni's that I've spoken to on the ground are optimistic about this conflict ending any time soon, and therefore, I think to somehow ease the pressure on the civilian population, there has to be a real focus on the humanitarian side, because whatever happens in the war, the humanitarian aspect has to be central to anything that happens.

There has been an aspect of using, whether it be food or other humanitarian aid, as some sort of bargaining chip in the political process. I know friends at the U.N. who are very concerned about this, and I would have a concern about that as well. Using the lifting of a siege or lifting of a blockade as a goodwill measure in the political process is entirely wrong. The food supply should not be a politicized element in the conflict.

I really hope that now, as I said the U.N. made this announcement yesterday, that the commercial

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

imports may have a chance of regiming into Yemen and it will help everybody.

I think as time goes on, the fractioning with the society will become less and less. Again, I'm sorry to be so pessimistic. We have seen from the fallout of 2011 now looking back, the problems that arise with a non-inclusive process, and I think now this is an opportunity to perhaps learn from some of the mistakes that have been made in the past and to try to create a more inclusive process going forward with all the different fractions that are now involved in Yemen.

I have to say some of the youth and young people that I have met both in Ta'izz and Aden, and also in Sana'a, are trying to keep going despite what is happening on the ground. Particularly in Aden during the siege there, I spent some time with a group of young doctors who were recent university graduates, many of them women.

A lot had left because of the conflict and because of the level of fighting in the city. There

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

was a complete lack of senior medical staff, surgeons and doctors in the city at that time, and these young graduates who were not getting paid, they were in their mid-20s, were determined to keep going, to keep trying to provide health care to the local population who were in dire need at the time, and they did it at a huge amount of risk to their own lives.

There are large parts of society who are prepared to keep going and to keep trying despite the events on the ground pushing back and going against them, and to take huge amounts of risk in order to do so.

Just going back to what has already been said, I think it's really crucial to try to support those groups at a local level, whether it be doctors in the case I'm talking about, or other civil society members, to try to support them during this time of war is incredibly important to try to build on the optimism and build on what is basically the youth population who are trying to support now a severely collapsing health system.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Iona, for this intervention. You have focused indeed on the humanitarian issue and humanitarian aid access, especially when we see the humanitarian side is deteriorating.

You have focused as well on the inclusive process, inclusivity of what takes place and the efforts that might fall into that.

Thank you very much. We will move now to brother Rajeh Badi. He will be presenting his view, perhaps the mechanisms of having an exit strategy, and how he sees the future. Brother Rajeh does represent the Yemen Government. He's the spokesperson of the government, and he is the advisor for the Yemeni Prime Minister since 2012.

Rajeh is the head of the unit of measuring the public opinion since 2007. He is also a member of the International Journalists Association.

We are happy to listen to the official assessment perhaps as a spokesperson and advisor. Please, the floor is yours.

DOHA-2016/02/17

MR. BADI: Good evening, I am very glad to be amongst you to talk about Yemen. However, I would say the title has to do with what's to be done. I think before answering this question, we need to answer another question, what has brought us here in the first place.

I just wanted to brief you about this part, and then we can talk about what's to be done during this catastrophic era, and I will provide you with some numbers that are accurate vis-à-vis the situation in Yemen.

It is the fifth anniversary of the revolution, and I would like to say that indeed since the beginning, it was a peaceful process. They attempted to lure everybody to the violence, and indeed, wanted a fight. The rule was postponed from 2011. It was postponed until 2015.

In 2011, there was a balance of power, and a division, a societal one and a military one. We had a division in the military. Some forces leaned towards Saleh and others leaned toward the revolution. This

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

balance of power has led to the fact that everybody agreed for Saleh to step down, and in return, Saleh would have immunity.

Indeed, we had a transitional period, 10 countries supported such a transition, the Gulf states as well as the P-5, and this transition period was smooth. We had in place a governmental national accord. Saleh had half of it and then we had the National Dialogue Conference with the U.N. participation and an envoy that was there.

As a matter of fact, Yemen staved off the problems especially going into war. When the National Dialogue Conference ended, we had drafted a new constitution. Unfortunately, there were some intersecting interests, the Ali Abdullah Saleh interest or agenda, as well as the Houthis.

As you know, Houthis are ideologues, they think they have a divine right to rule Yemen. Indeed, Saleh met with the Houthis. Six wars were waged against each other. The Houthis moved and conquered Amran, the suburbs of Sana'a, and they controlled --

actually, it was a coup.

On the 21st of September 2014, there was a coup when the Houthis conquered Sana'a and imposed on the President to have another government in place, and there was a peaceful partnership accord that was signed at that time.

The government's work stalled within the first 60 days, then the President resigned, the Premier resigned, the President was under house arrest, and that was known as a full pledged coup. The Houthis had a constitutional declaration.

A committee was formed away from the permission of the President. They dissolved the parliament. Indeed, it was a full pledged coup.

The President escaped to Aden, and then the Houthis bombarded his palace in Aden, and this is a brief of what took place in Yemen. I just wanted to describe the situation in Yemen. It wasn't to do with a civil war on par with Lebanon. It had to do with the balances of power and the disintegration of power, and it was a coup. That is clear.

The Premier was toppled. The parliament was dissolved, and the arms were used for military gains.

We delved into the National Dialogue Conference and the Houthis participated in the National Dialogue Conference, as I said. It was facilitated by the United Nations as well as the 10 other countries. The Houthis agreed to the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference. Indeed, these outcomes tackled all the prickly issues at the time.

The Houthis did not like the outcomes perhaps later on and they resorted to the arms in order to have a say politically in Yemen.

This is a brief description of what brought us to this stage because somebody had led a military coup, and exploited the political process in the country at a time that the country was just putting its first steps on the right track.

At the time everybody was saying that maybe Yemen will be a new experience that is different from the Arab country experiences, but the usage of guns and weapons by the Houthis and Saleh led to the

undermining of that.

After all that happened and the control of the Houthis in Sana'a and their attempts to control the other provinces such as Hudaydah, Aden, they invaded all the provinces.

The President of the Republic asked his brothers from Saudi Arabia to intervene to save the legitimacy of the country and from being controlled by a specific group that has arms and other groups, and that is why the Arab Coalition was created and some reserve was created.

I will give you some statistics, official ones, about the military and economic situation that resulted from the Houthis coup against the Yemen Government. I will give you some quick numbers.

The general revenues of the state decreased by 45.5 percent in 2015 compared to 2014 before the Houthis entered. The revenues of gas and petroleum also decreased by more than 52 percent in 2015. There was a deficit in the budget that increased from \$117 million to \$309 billion compared to the year before.

DOHA-2016/02/17

The reserves in the Central Bank of Foreign Currency decreased in 2015 since 2014 to its lower levels, \$1.6 billion.

Six million Yemeni's are now under the threshold of poverty, and this is not acceptable.

We are now on the political track, what can be done. In Yemen, there is a coup d'état, and there are decisions from the national community about rejecting this coup d'état, speaking about political settlement. It is only postponement of the conflict to another round to be even fiercer and tougher. If we want really to save Yemen, the international community must implement the international resolutions.

Speaking about any political settlement that guarantees to one side to achieve what they wanted but to impose by weapons means (Inaudible) party that has military power can impose their will, this is accepting a new sort of (Inaudible) that of the jungle. They should not be able to impose their will, just as was the case in Iraq. We have a group of

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

people that have weapons and they control all the military camps of the state, and they have a sort of divine right to rule the country, the Houthis.

That's why I think if we really want to achieve peace and save Yemen from what it's suffering from, we must all push for implementation of the Council resolutions. Thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much. I want to thank the panelists for focusing on the future and development aspects. This is interesting for all of us and interesting for the Yemeni people also at the present time because they want to have an idea about what the situation is and what the future will be like.

Now, I will ask the panelists and try to cover the aspects that need to be clarified in a greater way. I'll begin with a question to Mr. Rajah Badi. He was the last one to speak about this crisis. My question, what kind of political solution for the present crisis in Yemen, how long this situation will continue in Yemen, is there a vision, what is this

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

vision? You are the government. You are part of the decision makers on the official Yemeni side.

Should we wait or count on -- are we going to see military decisive action in the near future? Are we going to see some political talks that put an end to the crisis? How long will the crisis continue? What do you want to tell us about what to expect from the political aspects in this crisis?

Also related to this, you are in Aden now, and Aden has been under control for a long time, how are you able to have sort of a base that will lead a development and reconstruction process in the future. What have you achieved so far in reconstruction of Aden, and what do you think about the political future and settlement resolution?

MR. BADI: As for the political settlement, I think we as a government -- the war was imposed on us. We did not want to have this war at all. That's why the state could have avoided any conflicts with the Houthis until they (Inaudible). The state had always wanted to have some agreements with the Houthis

but they did not want any settlement or any agreement.

In Yemen, there are some bases that all Yemeni's agree with. We have the outcomes of the National Dialogue, and even the Houthis themselves took part actively in this dialogue and its outcomes.

We have resolutions accepted by Yemeni's and others. These were the bases that might be the bases for any solution, but any solution in the hands of the Houthis will mean it is an useless solution and will not lead to a political process in Yemen.

The process that is being done now, the pressure on us now to cease fire, is only false talk and untrue talk because they want an even harsher and stronger war.

They are not serious really. They are not serious in wanting peace and achieving peace. They used to have settlements and cease fire's, but then the Houthis would regain and recommence the fighting.

The problem is that one side, one political side has the weapons. The Houthis now have a lot of weapons and weaponry. They have taken all the weapons

DOHA-2016/02/17

of the Army, the National Army of Yemen. All this weaponry that was accumulated for 50 years is now under the hands of the Houthis because they have confiscated it and ceased it. They want to impose their vision by use of these weapons.

If the Houthis are not disarmed, if they are not back to where they were, that is to say a political organization, not a military one, there will be no peace in Yemen because the Houthis have the weapons -- the weapons should be in the hands of the state and the government, not any political party.

That's why the government went to the negotiations and led to an agreement on Geneva 3 on the 14th of January, but we were surprised by a new position by the Houthis of rejecting the resumption of negotiations, so they don't want really a political solution because the Houthis have some demands that are different from that of Saleh. They want to rule over Yemen as Saleh has some personal ambitions for himself and family in the future.

I think the differences between Saleh and

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

the Houthis is about their political demands, and this is part of the complication and the complexity of the present situation, and this was in fact announced publicly by al-Houthi where he said he was ready to fight until doomsday.

MR. FRAIHAT: I know some are interested in what goes on in Aden, and the presence of ISIS in Aden, as well as the corridor. Would you please talk about the presence of ISIS in Aden? Have you noticed their movements? Did they emerge at the expense of al-Qaeda?

We knew the non-state actors that moved in Yemen were confined to a corridor in the Arabian Peninsula, but nowadays, we have noticed there is an ISIS presence in Aden. What is your comment, please? Do you think the clout of ISIS is burgeoning, and how do you link it with the reconstruction of Aden?

MR. AL-AKHALI: First and foremost, I need to emphasize the fact that when Aden was liberated, it was nearly destructed. The destruction that befell Aden is unimaginable. No one can explain in words

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

unless he or she were present on the ground because there was revengeful acts that took place, especially the Houthis wanted revenge, especially the Aden area and Ta'izz, on the part of the former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, because he had issues with Ta'izz, Ta'izz was the platform of the revolution, and Aden was the backbone of the southern movement. Some think they should have autonomy and so forth.

We as a national government, we said frankly when we went to Aden that the state declares to the Yemeni's that we cannot build because the government's coffers are empty. We called for an international conference to reconstruct Yemen, and now with the cooperation of the King of Saudi Arabia, other Gulf countries, there are some arrangements to launch an international conference.

What we need actually simply speaking is Yemen needs 60 to \$65 billion, and we are talking about a government based in Aden, and to be transparent, we don't have \$1,000, if you could imagine. We are penniless basically. We are broke.

DOHA-2016/02/17

What kind of future is that for Yemen if our coffers are empty. The international community ought to help Yemen.

What took place in Aden and the ISIS question, after liberating Aden, the government was not capable of providing services because of the non-existence of money.

As you know, ISIS emerged and what took place in Yemen was linked to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, and these were leaders. The first emergence of ISIS, Aden was occupied by the Houthis. When it was occupied by the Houthis, ISIS was not there, despite the fact that the Houthis declared that they wanted to fight ISIS, and ISIS declared they are fighting the Houthis because the Houthis are Shia, and they are the enemy from within.

ISIS was on the front lines when the Houthis were there. However, when we liberated, ISIS indeed targeted the headquarters of the government, and it was a huge explosion. Everyone was about to perish.

We discovered that there were different ISIS

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

and different al-Qaeda in Yemen. If I were to be frank, I would say that there are plenty of actors that have political will but they work under the umbrella of ISIS.

MR. FRAIHAT: The humanitarian situation is very difficult now, and you saw many things. When we talk about the humanitarian crisis, probably the thing that comes to my mind and probably to many, the first thing that comes to mind is (Inaudible). The humanitarian crisis has reached unprecedented levels. Under siege, we are bombarded constantly. The crisis has gone on for so long. What is going on there?

Why isn't there a solution to that humanitarian crisis in Ta'izz, and what is happening, because we know the United Nations tried to channel some of the humanitarian assistance in order to deliver humanitarian assistance to Ta'izz, but the situation has not changed.

What can you talk about? What can you tell us about this? Also, and I'm certainly asking too many questions, but also as to the international

DOHA-2016/02/17

community, you write for USA Today, Times, you have a strong presence internationally.

We don't see any international action or talks even about Yemen. What is going on with the international community when we talk about Yemen? What is happening?

MS. CRAIG: There has obviously been a siege of the city, but similar to what happened in Aden before, it's like a trickle effect. Some food or supplies are able to get in. The majority of those are smuggled in. We now know that's happened by the donkey tracks, for example, going through the mountains, or people are able to smuggle things just in small quantities.

From what I understand, the situation has gotten slightly better than January. There have been some aid officially allowed in. Those are very intermittent. This is not a regular supply, whether it be medical supplies or humanitarian aid.

As I mentioned before, it is being used as a weapon, the food, medical, humanitarian aid, and again

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

as we saw in January, it was unfortunately being used as a confidence building measure as part of the political tools, which I think is a major issue and shouldn't be happening really.

As far as the fighting is concerned in Ta'izz, when I was in Ta'izz in September and I crossed into the center of the city and I spoke to the Deputy Governor, he said actually we don't want the coalition to come and help us. They can give us weapons. We don't want their troops coming in to help us now.

I think that situation has probably changed as it has gone on for longer and longer. They do want more support and have had more support. Yes, there has been no major gains or losses by either side. Overnight, one side will gain 150 meters and the next day they will lose it again. It's relentless. For the people who are living there, it's unending.

The style of fighting was quite different. There wouldn't be any fighting during the day largely, and maybe they would start fighting at 5:00 in the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

afternoon and fight until the morning. Whereas, in Aden, it was much more brutal and ruthless and was continuous. As already mentioned, the destruction in Aden was quite shocking and unbelievable when I went there.

Yes, I think the humanitarian organizations have obviously been trying to keep pushing, trying to get aid in as much as possible and as regular as possible, but there are 200,000 people now stuck in Ta'izz who don't have regular access to water, food, and medical care.

Even the family I stayed with, they couldn't remember the last time they washed, for example, because of the water issue. They have to go outside the center of the town to territory that's under the control of the Houthis in order to be able to get water, and then a lot of times they have to try to smuggle it back or they can't bring it back at all.

It's just day to day living. Literally just getting water and food is a struggle, not to mention the need for basic medical care and of course, adding

DOHA-2016/02/17

on to that you have a conflict and you have injured people and casualties who also need emergency health care.

Yes, there was an attempt last year to negotiate a deal at a local level between the Houthis/Saleh forces on one side. Unfortunately, that didn't really take hold. I think it is an indication that those kinds of negotiations can go on but again as already mentioned, it becomes more difficult to get all those fractions together and agree on a cease fire even if it is to let the humanitarian stuff in.

Yes, the conflict in Ta'izz has been going on for many, many months. It hasn't really improved, although there is some indication that perhaps more supplies are able to get through in the last month anyway. It's not clear how long that might continue.

On the recovery front, it has been very frustrating as a journalist, the lack of interest. It has been incredibly difficult for international journalists in particular and local journalists as well to operate in Yemen at the moment. It's very

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

difficult for people outside the country to get in.

I had to go in by boat on two occasions. I was stopped from going in, and then I was unable to leave as well, and ended up staying two months longer than I wanted to.

Yes, it's very difficult access-wise for the international media to get in, and of course, that does drive the conversation, whether we like it or not. If politicians, whether it be in Washington, in Europe, or in London, are reading about this conflict on a regular basis in the national newspapers or hearing about it on the television, then it generates and pushes the political conversation as well. It's just not happening.

There are very few regular media reporting in the English speaking press on the ground, and that unfortunately has long been the case in Yemen anyway. The international community have also taken a side in this conflict as well, so that tends to drive the narrative on one side or the other as well.

Yes, for me as a journalist, I would like to

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

say getting better access is obviously important. Often the reasons for not giving us access is for your own safety, but I think most of us are old enough and mature enough as are our media organizations to make that decision for ourselves.

Yes, again, we are there to give a voice to the civilians, I hope, and to get their voices heard by the rest of the world, and it's incredibly important that you do that. Most people, certainly in the English speaking world, have very little idea of what's going on in Yemen, and the dire situation, particularly on the humanitarian level, and how important it is to try and find some sort of political solution to the whole conflict.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Iona. We need further illustrations. Indeed, we don't listen much. However, let me ask, Rafat, where is Iran in what takes place? Perhaps it is the elephant in the room. We heard there is an alliance between the Houthis and the Iranians, is that true? Where is Iran in all this?

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

MR. AL-AKHALI: I do think the Iranian role up to this moment is a negative one vis-à-vis Yemen by and large, and we don't see any positive movements from Iran regarding Yemen.

Thus, I think we cannot allow a role for Iran to be played in the future. There are some people who talk about a settlement that ought to be linked with the Saudi Arabia understanding, however, Iran has nothing to do with Yemen. It is too far, and we cannot give her this role in the future.

I think this door ought to be shut down, ought to be closed. However, you posed an important question that relates to humanitarian aid and the reconstruction efforts in Aden and in different areas.

There is a very important point that relates to coordination, the coordination between the donors. As you know, in Yemen we have a problem of coordination between the OECD donors and the Gulf donors. In Yemen, we have two groups, the challenge that we faced earlier has been emphasized now because of the lack of the government and institutions.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

Today, we have two groups, the Gulf group, represented by Qatar, Kuwait, the UA, and the KSA, as well as some coordination efforts, as well as different NGOs and donors from the West. There is a weakness in the coordination efforts, and there is a gap.

I hope they would work in unison, but I think the lack of coordination led to the lack of the humanitarian aid, and the lack of having a joint vision for reconstruction. If you don't have such mechanisms and such visions, then it will fall flat. Specialists ought to have a say and there needs to be a bridge of the gap between the two blocks.

MR. FRAIHAT: As a matter of fact, I would like to thank you in particular for touching upon international development, and you are an advisor in this domain. I understand this is a stumbling block in the reconstruction efforts, and all across the world actually.

I do remember this was a stumbling block in Afghanistan in terms of the stability efforts. We had

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

plenty of programs in Afghanistan, and one of the most important problems that we encountered was to do with coordinating such efforts.

This is a challenge that is continuous, that is there time and time again when it comes to reconstruction, and Yemen is not an exemption in this regard.

I think if we get to the stage whereby we could be adept at coordinating these efforts, to a great extent this will result in a solution. Here, also to remind myself and the others of the reconstruction theme that took place after the signing of the Gulf initiative and the commitment of the international group.

The conference held at that time talked about contributions or pledges to the tune of \$7 billion for reconstructing Yemen or starting the process of reconstruction. We do hear now and we have heard from Mr. Bade, the spokesperson of the government, Rajeh, he said that the government's coffers don't even have \$1,000. The pledges that were

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

earmarked were not there. They did not fall into Yemen. Ten percent only reached Yemen from the total amount. We are surprised why things are as they are.

I think alluding to this fact is very important. We need to -- yes, please? Yes, we need to focus on this aspect. We have had experience since 2011 up until 2015.

I call it transition 2.0 because we had transition 1.0. We need to drive the lessons we have learned. All the discussions that we are talking about are similar to the 2011 discussions. I'm not talking about politics. I'm talking about economy and the rest of it, reconstruction efforts, development, and the role of the donors and coordination.

We need to learn from our mistakes and we need to build the transition 2.0. Otherwise, our efforts will be futile.

Transition 2.0 will perhaps throw the floor open. We hope we won't end up having transition 3.0.

I would like to thank the panelists and open the floor for questions and answers.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I thank the panelists. (Inaudible) are the same who support those who are against legitimacy in Egypt. This is a real tragedy that has become a comedy. If I speak about Egypt, people would congratulate you. Aden will not work because what is happening will not be allowed and (Inaudible).

QUESTIONER: I would like to thank the panelists for the valuable information. I would like to ask what you think about the economic situation in the country. Is there an agreement with the state, the Houthis, and even al-Qaeda, about the incomes and solution of salaries, this agreement could develop and reach a political understanding between the Houthis and al-Qaeda. What about other countries such as Saudi Arabia, what do they think about this agreement?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I want to ask a question for each one of you. I am optimistic there will be an end to this war and I am asking about a transitional period. What do you see about work in Yemen, draw a line as we as Yemeni's (Inaudible)

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

rebuilding our country and how can we stop any foreign intervention in our affairs? Accept support but with some limits.

My question to Rafat, you focused on employing the youth to give them back hope. Can you elaborate on how you could do such a thing, for example, how can we bring back hope to the people while the war is going on? It has not stopped.

As to my question to Iona, you view your role as an instrument for the voices on the ground and what they are suffering from, and you elaborated on that very well. Can you also speak of what you have seen while you were there in terms of how the people despite all this struggling and suffering have also strived to repair as much as possible their social fabric that is tearing, as you explained.

Thank you.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much.

MR. AL-AKHALI: Thank you. I thank the Brookings Center for organizing this very important event, and I thank the panelists, all of them for the

information they have provided us with.

From listening from the beginning up to now, people speaking about development, reconstruction, humanitarian aid, et cetera, but we can't have development with the war going on. One cannot have reconstruction while the war is going on because it will destroy anything. There won't be any reconstruction or development or political authority (Inaudible) cannot achieve a good coherent society.

The presidency is shaken, losing its balance, it cannot give any initiative in development nor in stopping of the war or international cooperation, and in my opinion, I never heard from the Yemeni presidency any position (Inaudible).

We are now speaking about the countries that are helping Yemen such as GCC countries. These people also have international pressures, and for the first time we see that these international pressures on these countries is to stop the fighting in Yemen, where these same countries are helping with the war in Syria and Iraq without anyone stopping them.

(Inaudible).

I say to the panelists thank you for the efforts you have made, but the real questions were not tackled. What is the project for the Yemeni presidency to manage or run this conflict? Thank you very much.

Mr. Rajeh, there is a question to you. What is your project? Where are we heading? Why don't you go back to Aden? What is the solution, what is the vision?

MR. BADI: Thank you. Going back to Aden, I would say most are in Aden despite the difficult situation Aden is suffering from. We have a government that has no resources at all. As for reconstruction, we have done a lot of work with GCC countries for organizing an international conference for reconstruction of the country, and on the first visit we made to Aden, there was still some pockets where the Houthis were still fighting.

Clearly, this government will not be able to build or reconstruct Aden. The war in Yemen is a

fierce one. There is a lot of destruction. The government has no revenues, and the government of Yemen depends on (Inaudible).

The Yemeni state has no revenues, official revenues, so we do what we must do with the help of the GCC countries. They are the main supporters. We are going into a political world and military world. That is why the situation is very difficult. There is a vision for reconstruction. (Inaudible)

I'm not saying the presidency or the government in Yemen are doing what they should do. No. The conditions that are imposed on them, this is a government (Inaudible) the situation in Yemen at the present time is something unprecedented for any government.

What we are betting on is our brothers in the GCC countries, and I think they have learned their lesson. When they presented the Gulf initiative, it was our hope to save Yemen. We are a poor country in a rich environment. (Inaudible)

The initiative was signed, and just handed

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

over to the United Nations. Part of what we have, what we have come to now, the Gulf initiative was not followed up by the people that developed it. That is why we think now there is a change in the relations between Yemen and the GCC countries. We always hear from the commanders and leaders of GCC countries that Yemen will not be left or abandoned because it is in the heart of the Gulf, and we would frankly say we are a country with no resources and we need help to reconstruct our country.

MS. CRAIG: You have already answered it really, but yes, I think we are optimistic, to sit here and talk about reconstruction when there is no end in sight of this current conflict. It's sort of Alice in Wonderland.

I think certainly what has been shown to us is that both sides are still pushing for a military end to this. The political discussions are secondary to that motive. So, what does that mean? What is going to happen now? It could be many months if not years, if you're really being pessimistic about it.

Yes, we are a long way from reaching the end of this conflict, I think. I think you have to be realistic about what is going to happen now, and that is why I tried to push on this humanitarian aspect because really if the war ends in two months or in two years or in 10 years, the humanitarian situation has to be faced and it has to be dealt with. The rest of it is going to take a long, long time to even reach the point where you are really doing active rebuilding, infrastructure-wise or anything else.

Yes, it has happened to a point in Aden, but I think it is a long way off before that is happening in the rest of the country at this stage.

A question about the social fabric, it's one of the most depressing parts of seeing that happening in Yemen, there have been attempts, particularly by the youth, to challenge those divisions that are being created in society, whether that is through artists, through workshops. Of course, that is a very fringed element of society where that is happening.

It's really hard to try to save that social

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/02/17

fabric while the conflict continues. The more it goes on, the more it is going to be broken and shredded. Certainly from what I have seen, the youth realize the urgency of trying not only to prevent that from happening but trying to repair what has already happened.

They are very much in the minority, and of course, that is not only happening in the cities and urban areas, the majority of the Yemeni population are rural, and that is where a lot of the fighting is going on, in sort of tribal areas.

You have tribal groups that are trying to be persuaded to join one side or the other, and again, that tears at the social fabric when you're dealing particularly, I think, with international forces.

It's something I have spoken about before, but Yemeni's know, and as foreigners, we always see it quite comically, the way the northerner's fight in Yemen, you can have tribes fighting for many days, weeks, months, or even years historically, and a lot of people die. They realize the consequences of

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

fighting and a lot of time it is about the appearance of war.

When you bring international forces into that, that is not how they work. You don't go by those gentleman rules of engagement that the northern Yemeni tribes have. That is what really rips the social fabric, I think, in Yemen now, the way the fighting is happening on the ground that really tears families and villages and towns apart. I think it is a massive challenge. I don't know how you are going to prevent that from happening. I really do not know the answer to that question, I'm afraid.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Iona.

MR. AL-AKHALI: I know time is tight. However, for clarification purposes, I do not think anyone is optimistic but perhaps we need to be realistic to a certain extent. This is reality and we can't change it. We don't know when it will end.

We have two options. Either we say nothing to the public, we say we can't do anything, no options, and the other option is to have alternatives

that are possible, talking about development, real estate projects, and economic plans. We are not talking about these issues. We are talking about the economy in the shadow of the war.

There are some things that might be done. I'll go back to the first question, what kind of issues can be settled and what to do. There are some channels that we can utilize. There are some internal capabilities. Some government agencies or NGOs that are local, they have proved that they are capable of doing something.

In April of 2011 until August, Yemen was far away from any foreign intervention, and all the NGOs left Yemen at that time, and we had no aid whatsoever, no pledges. However, the Yemeni's coped with what took place in that period, the private sector, the youngsters, the activists, resorted to certain solutions that are still there up to this moment. We want to support these efforts to find solutions in order to revitalize the hope.

The other issue, after the war has ended, we

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

can't think then what kind of plans are in place, if we are able to think now and have plans in place, then we can put them on paper. When the war ends, then we can put them into reality.

I personally understand this, indeed. I think this is a very important point, especially that civil wars sometimes take a long time. In many countries, the civil war lasted 20-25 years. In light of this situation, it's possible that we find encouragement. We need some parallel solutions and settlements that might help.

The focus should not be only on the economic side but also on the political side, but I think integration might lead to good results.

MR. FRAIHAT: The last one or two questions, we promised these two people. If you have questions because we need to put an end to the session.

QUESTIONER: My question is to Dr. Rajeh (Inaudible). In order to find jobs for the youth, which is actually difficult because of the war, and in order for the businessmen again to come back in the

DOHA-2016/02/17

country, which is impossible right now, and also the fighting factions to stop, we need to make them less angry, and also not to waste the Yemeni's power, and as Mr. Rafat said before, that is the only thing they do have.

MR. FRAIHAT: The question?

QUESTIONER: It's important to the question. I'm sorry. The Houthis, they did not comply with the external agreements. My question now is it doesn't seem very effective for the Yemeni Government to ask the external people, the external countries, who interfere militarily, intervene in the Yemen conflict, isn't it better to ask them to stop intervening?

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you very much.

MR. BADI: I have two points. First, this is a project of the intellectual and Yemeni businessmen, this is for the future, for the period of the post-war, and not for right now. That is why I say when the presidency has a project or the Yemeni President has a project, they should begin with this, if and when the war comes to an end.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

The other point, you spoke of Iran. All the indications say that Iran does not have a finger or two in Yemen, but has the whole arm and both legs in Yemen. The channel is there and one cannot overlook it.

Certainly the Gulf people, weapons, money, coming to Yemen is not denied by anyone, and the best proof is the ship that was captured two days ago, and the other one that was captured in the Arab sea.

We see there is a political/military/financial presence (Inaudible) released from the prisons by the Houthis later on, Iranians.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you. Last question to end with. QUESTIONER: I begin my question, after the war, after the war has come to an end, what is the vision for the businessmen to come and their capital to come back to Yemen?

More important than that, what would be the form of the state that will be there after the war. What kind of settlement might be bring Yemen to safety

DOHA-2016/02/17

and stability. What is the vision regarding the war criminals who have launched this war, how will they be dealt with, whether Houthis or not.

There are more topics deeper than just investments, there are other issues to discuss. I would say Iran has a big role in achieving settlement for this crisis, but has never entered the war, and has stood with the GCC countries. The GCC countries have their own position. Being accused that we deal with Iran, I think this is a big exaggeration, and we must know that Iran is one of the GCC countries. We cooperate with GCC countries. To say they have a role in supporting one side or the other is not true.

Last simple question, who are we fighting? Are we fighting the Houthis or Ali Abdullah Saleh? Are the Houthis so strong, has it been exaggerated? They are just a small group. Are they so powerful really? What is the legitimacy of the state to have such a small group as the Houthis to control the whole state?

Thank you.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

MR. FRAIHAT: There are plenty of questions, and indeed, this discussion is very important and this adds to its importance. I would like to add to the question. Don't you fear that if God forbid the war perpetuates, don't you think that the Yemen will be divided with different borders if the war still goes on?

I know the time is nearly up. Please, could you answer straight to the point.

SPEAKER: I would like to answer the last question, who do we fight in Yemen. We fight the Houthis and Saleh. Saleh had a counter revolution against the youngsters who toppled him. The Houthis had a counter revolution of the September revolution that toppled the family in 1962.

We do not fight individuals. There are indeed individuals but they have the government's capability. I'm talking about 52 brigades that are under the control of Saleh and they are facing the National Army, facing the coalition forces. It has nothing to do with individuals.

The capabilities of the government was kept by Ali Abdullah Saleh and the Houthis joined in.

The arms that were in the possession of the Army were handed over to the Houthis by Saleh. The National Army is liberating Yemen. This is one point.

The other point, what comes after the war. We have negotiated with the Houthis at the national conference, and we had the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and we had a constitution in place. The constitution committee resided for three months to finish the draft. When we handed it over, the first draft, the Houthis and Saleh had toppled the table.

We had a project. We had a constitution. We wanted a referendum, and we have an outcome of the National Dialogue, so we cannot think of the status quo. The Houthis and Saleh were able to pull the Yemeni's to war again.

MS. CRAIG: As a journalist, we look for evidence, or I try to anyway. You can never make a claim about something being certain unless you have

DOHA-2016/02/17

that evidence.

As far as Iranian involvement in Yemen is concerned, for four years while I was living there, it was all about trying to find that evidence. The two boats that were caught trying to smuggle weapons supposedly from Iran to the Houthis, first, we were never allowed access to try to independently verify it, but also my thinking is if you're the Iranian state and your one boat gets caught, you don't give the second boat the same name when it comes up into Yemeni waters and expect it not to get caught.

That is not to say the Iranians aren't involved, but the evidence has been severely lacking. From my own understanding, I've met people who have taken visits to Tehran over the years for political conferences, et cetera. Militarily, I think we are certainly looking maybe at advisors -- sorry, military tactics against the Houthis/Saleh forces, but there is a severe lack of evidence of the whole arm, as you put it, involvement of Iran in Yemen. That doesn't mean that they don't have a hand or skin in the game, as we

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

would say.

Iran, they have very little input probably. They can play or they can say things like they now have control of the Yemeni capital even if they don't because it's a political win for them.

Yes, I think generally I would say for the Iranian involvement, they have had to put in very little , I think.

MR. FRAIHAT: Thank you, Iona.

I do agree, any Iranian role is a negative one, and I said there was not a positive position. I think Iran won't have a role in the future, and we cannot allow it. We can't allow the consultations with Iranians when it comes to the outcomes.

It is very difficult to have plans in place with the difficult circumstances and changes. If we look at the scenario planning, it is not easy to bring back the investments. We need to have studies in place to understand what took place, what were the challenges, the loopholes, the shortcoming's, and we need to learn the lessons as I said.

In conclusion, on a positive note, I would like to say that Yemen, regardless of what took place this year or the year before, talking about a civilization that is deep rooted, regardless of what takes place, we need to look at the civilization related nuances, Yemen will be there, and regardless of what took place, this civilization will still be there. We need perhaps to look at the peacock rather than looking at his feet.

On this positive note, we need perhaps to see the Arab world revived again, perhaps Yemen will come back to our region with its splendor, with the hope that it will be stable and developed, and we hope Yemen will represent our civilization and will provide goodness.

With this positive note, we will conclude this session. I have to remind you that the second session is in cooperation with the Gulf Center of Studies. Let's move geographically from Yemen to Washington. The second discussion will be on the issue of the elections and impact of the elections of

the countries.

Thank you very much, and this session is
adjourned. (Applause)

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of
Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2016

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190