

Yemen: An indomitable people (part 1)

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Photo composition showing Yemeni fighters raising their machine guns next to the Yemen flag with the map of Yemen in the background. Photo: Al Mayadeen

In 2015, Yemen, a country unknown to many in the West, started a war in defense of its sovereignty that was being threatened by an interventionist alliance led by Saudi Arabia.

The Yemeni people had to pay for the lives of almost 400,000 of their children to maintain their independence. Many people have wondered how a country considered the poorest in Western Asia has been able to resist and defeat a coalition made up of some of the richest countries on the planet.

Although the conflict has continued for almost a decade, it appears to have reached a situation that could lead to its possible cessation. Although a tense situation and war conditions of different kinds remain, there has been a reduction in military actions in recent months. It is no longer a total war, but it is not a real peace either. Under the mediation of China, Saudi Arabia and Iran reconciled, paving the way for overcoming several conflicts in Western Asia and North Africa. Hopefully, Yemen is one of them.

Now, after the “Israeli” invasion of Gaza, Yemen, together with the Lebanese Hezbollah movement and other Arab and Muslim revolutionary forces, has taken an active role in the solidarity campaign with Palestine. Once again, Yemen has surprised everyone by making decisions that have not only a local impact but also a regional and global one. Once again, the world is wondering how this could have happened. In two installments, I am going to present some elements so that readers can get to know Yemen and learn about the historical struggle and the heroism of its people to understand the scope and dimension of the Yemeni decision to support, with all the resources at its disposal, the just struggle of the Palestinian people.

The Republic of Yemen is located in a strategic place, in a region where trade routes

connect Asia, eastern Africa, and the Mediterranean. Its territory, located on the coasts of the Arabian Sea and at the gates of the Red Sea, overlooks the Bab el Mandeb Strait, placing it in a privileged place on the globe, especially since the 20th century when, on the one hand, large deposits of oil and gas were discovered in the region, and on the other it became a mandatory passage for most of world trade between the West and the enormous economic growth and development of East Asia.

The ancient cities of the territory were part of the biblical kingdom of Sheba in ancient times. From that time began the struggle of the inhabitants of the current Yemeni territory for their liberation and independence, as they had to face the Roman Empire in the 1st century AD. The powerful Roman Empire was defeated in its attempt to dominate Yemen.

Unlike the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, Yemen had prodigious vegetation that provided great wealth to its population due to the great possibilities for consumption and trade it offered. Thus, the Greek mathematician Ptolemy named Yemen "Happy Arabia."

Over the course of history, the Yemenis had to fight with Jewish Himyarites, who persecuted the majority Christian population until the intervention of the Ethiopians in the 6th century. When Islam arrived in the region during the 7th century, it began to shape a culture that was based on the interweaving of varied cultural and scientific knowledge and would make great contributions to humanity.

However, for many centuries, Yemen remained outside the cultural and economic development established by Islam. It was in the 15th century when the territory of today's Yemen began to gain strategic value. In their desire for commercial expansion, the Europeans began the domination of territories throughout the world. The first Europeans to arrive in Yemen were the Portuguese, who dominated the country to control the sea route that allowed them to trade spices from Asia to

Europe through the Red Sea.

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire began occupying regions on the coast of the Red Sea, while the interior of the country and the southern coast remained independent, governed by the Zaydis. In 1634, the Ottomans were finally driven out of Yemen by the Zaydis. Soon after, the English made their appearance in the area, installing a post of the East India Company in the port of Moka on the Red Sea.

In the 19th century, the British expanded their presence by occupying the entire southwestern tip, settling in Aden, the best port in the region, in 1839. In 1872, the Turks were able to consolidate their dominance in the interior of Yemen, for which they settled *de facto* a hereditary monarchy in the name of a local imam. This division effectively split Yemen into two countries.

Around 1870, with the inauguration of the Suez Canal and the consolidation of Turkish rule over northern Yemen, Aden acquired new importance for British global strategy: it was the key to the Red Sea and, therefore, to the new canal.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Turkey and the United Kingdom marked a border between their territories, which became known as North Yemen and South Yemen, respectively.

During the First World War, Imam Yahya Mahmud al-Mutawwakil, who had already been the imam of the Zaydis since 1904, allied North Yemen with the Ottoman Empire. The defeat of the Turks allowed Yemen to regain its independence in November 1918. However, Great Britain, after recognizing the independence of Yemen in 1928, began a campaign to secure control of the entire south of the country, up to the border with Oman. By 1934, it controlled the territory and converted Aden into a protectorate, then, in 1937, into a colony. Once again, the Yemenis had to resort to armed struggle for independence. In 1940, the nationalist Free Yemen Movement emerged to fight against the control of the country by the

imams who had allied themselves with Great Britain.

The fighting took separate paths in the north and south. In 1962, the Yemen Arab Republic was created in the north, while in the south, the National Liberation Front, created in 1963, took Aden in 1967 and proclaimed independence, starting a socialist revolution.

South Yemen was renamed the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. It closed all British bases in 1969 and took control of banking, foreign trade, and the naval industry, and undertook land reform. In foreign policy, it maintained a close alliance with the Soviet Union. It also promoted an open anti-Zionist struggle and support for the Palestinian people.

In October 1978, at a congress that enjoyed considerable support from the population, the National Liberation Front founded the Yemen Socialist Party. In December, the first popular election since independence was held to appoint the 111 members of the People's Revolutionary Council.

From the first years of its existence, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen was subjected to constant hostility from Saudi Arabia, which aspired to control parts of the territory in which oil deposits had been discovered. Tensions were aggravated by the growing U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, in the north, the National Democratic Front (NDF), which brought together all the progressive forces in the country, was leading the armed struggle against Ali Abdullah Saleh, who became president in 1978. When the NDF was about to take power, Saudi Arabia plotted to divert the conflict into a war against the Democratic People's Republic of Yemen. The mediation of some Arab countries led to a ceasefire and an agreement by which negotiations for reunification, suspended since 1972, were resumed.

Finally, on May 22, 1990, the two republics united to form the Republic of Yemen, which established Sana'a, the former capital of the Yemen Arab Republic, as the political capital, while Aden (the former capital of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) was designated as the economic capital. In a joint session of the Legislative Assemblies of the two held in Aden, a Presidential Council led by General Ali Abdullah Saleh was elected. The unification of Yemen was not received well by Saudi Arabia. Consequently, the Saudis began a policy of supporting infighting and secession. In May 1994, secessionists proclaimed a Yemeni republic in the south of the country but were defeated by forces loyal to the government.

Between June and August 2004, a movement emerged that expressed the beliefs of a specific branch of Shiite-oriented Islam: the Zaydis, under the leadership of the cleric Hussein al-Houthi. Following his martyrdom in September of that year, the movement took the name Houthi, Huthi, or Ansarallah (supporters of God). The history of Zaydism is over a millennia old and it dates back to the mid-8th century. Zaydism is a branch of Islam that emphasizes the struggle for justice and human responsibility in achieving that justice. It believes that Muslims have an ethical and legal obligation by their religion to rise up and depose unjust leaders including unrighteous sultans and caliphs. This ideology, which was marginalized after losing power in 1962, formed the basis of Ansarallah's political and religious thought.

Ansarallah's fight against the pro-Western and pro-Saudi government of Ali Abdullah Saleh was long and bloody. They had to resort to arms on five occasions between 2006 and 2008 in defense of their territory in the north of the country until they began to expand their support base and the geographical space under their control. In 2009, Saleh formed an alliance with the Saudis to combat the growing Ansarallah Movement.

For Ansarallah, the fact that a country like Saudi Arabia with an extremely conservative Wahhabi current was present and interfered in the country's affairs

was seen as a threat to the sovereignty of the nation in general and particularly to their existence as a minority. From that moment on, their struggle, which had originally been strictly internal, became a confrontation against foreign intervention.

Although at first, the Ansarallah fighters suffered heavy defeats, including (as mentioned before) the fall of their top leader, they grew stronger over time. From 2011 onwards, under the leadership of al-Houthi's younger brother, Abdul Malik, the Ansarallah Movement began to claim significant victories and inflict significant setbacks on the enemy. The anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist rhetoric was strengthened by identifying Saudi Arabia as the dominant partner of the United States and "Israel" in the area.

The so-called "Arab Spring" had a special influence on the growth of support for Ansarallah in their fight against Saleh's repressive government. In Yemen, the political earthquake that shook a significant part of the Arab world had a much more organized response than in neighboring countries. Faced with the strength of the protests, Saleh fled the country and took refuge in Saudi Arabia, being replaced by his vice president, Abdo Rabu Mansur Hadi, who tried to bring order to the country by reaching an agreement with factions opposed to Saleh "to change everything without changing anything," leaving out the Ansarallah movement.

At the end of 2014, Ansarallah decided to begin the offensive to reclaim the capital, Sana'a. In this context, Saleh — surprisingly, in an attempt to regain power — established an alliance with Ansarallah to confront Hadi. Ansarallah, which had not supported the peace agreements signed by Hadi, allied themselves with their greatest enemy to take the capital. The Republican Guard, a force loyal to Saleh, favored the entry of Ansarallah into Sana'a. Hadi fled to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, from where he "runs" the territories not yet controlled by Ansarallah. In reality, Hadi is a puppet of the Saudi Wahhabi monarchy and its masters in Washington.

Once in power, the Ansarallah Movement formed a Revolutionary Committee to run

the country. They were forced to fight simultaneously with the terrorist forces of Al Qaeda, with Saudi Arabia that protects them, and a coalition of other Gulf countries. All these enemies were armed and supported by the West, primarily the U.S., Britain, and Germany.

Saleh considered that Ansarallah had not fulfilled the agreements that, according to him, meant that he had to assume power again, and with Saudi support, he turned against them. Following this betrayal, Ansarallah attacked Saleh's house, executing him on the spot.

From Riyadh, Hadi called for Saudi intervention in Yemen. To fulfill this request, the Saudi monarchy organized a coalition of Sunni countries to launch the Decisive Storm operation in 2015. This operation relied on air attacks against all populated areas of North Yemen and killed many thousands of people.

This action was planned as a definitive offensive to take control of the country and was followed by a second operation called Restore Hope which was focused more on diplomatic rapprochement. In reality, the war did not cease at any time; on the contrary, the alliance's land, air, and maritime actions were reinforced by a naval blockade that prevented the entry of international aid, plunging the country into the worst humanitarian crisis in world history until the current Zionist actions in Gaza were unleashed, both with explicit support from the United States.

Ansarallah, which had popular support and better knowledge of the terrain, began using guerrilla warfare tactics inspired—according to the movement—by the liberation struggle in Vietnam and the resistance movements in Latin America. The fighters of Ansarallah were incredibly effective against this invading army that lacked morale, discipline, and motivation for battle. The U.S.-led Saudi-UAE coalition soldiers, which included a very large contingent of mercenaries hired by private companies, have been unable to claim military victories.

Riyadh received heavy blows even in its own territory when Ansarallah's combative operations struck deep into Saudi territory through an advanced attack system using drones and long-range missiles that hit armed forces barracks, oil refineries, and critical infrastructure works at great distances across the border.

Source: [Al Mayadeen](#) Translation: [Orinoco Tribune](#)

