

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم و بر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

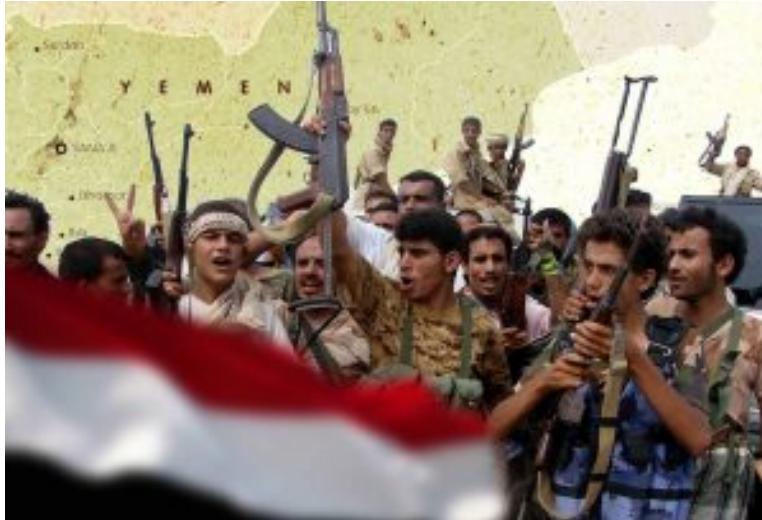
Sergio Rodriguez Gelfenstein
06.01.2024

Yemen: An indomitable people! (i)

Now, in the wake of Israel's invasion of Gaza, Yemen, along with the Lebanese Hezbollah movement and other Arab and Muslim revolutionary forces, have taken an active role in solidarity with Palestine. Once again, Yemen has surprised everyone by making decisions that not only have local, but also regional and global impact.



In 2015, Yemen, a country unknown to many in the West, launched 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 with the lives of almost 400,000 of their children to maintain their independence. Many people have wondered how it was possible for a country considered to be the poorest in West Asia to have been able to resist and defeat a coalition made up of some of the richest countries on the planet.



Yemen: an indomitable people

Although the conflict has dragged on for nearly a decade, it appears to have reached a situation that could lead to a possible cessation of the conflict. Although there is still a tense situation and different types of military actions, there has been a reduction in military actions in recent months. It is no longer an all-out war, but neither has peace come. Under Chinese mediation, Saudi Arabia and Iran reconciled, paving the way for the overcoming of several conflicts in West Asia and North Africa. Apparently, Yemen is one of them.

Now, in the wake of Israel's invasion of Gaza, Yemen, along with the Lebanese Hezbollah movement and other Arab and Muslim revolutionary forces, have taken an active role in solidarity with Palestine. Once again, Yemen has surprised everyone by making decisions that not only have local, but also regional and global impact. Once again, the world has wondered how this could have happened. In two installments, I will present some elements that will allow readers to get to know Yemen, to know about the historic struggle and heroism of its people in order to help 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.



Massive demonstrations in Yemen in support of the Palestinian cause

The Republic of Yemen is located in a strategic place on the planet, in a region of confluence of trade routes that connect Asia, East Africa and the Mediterranean. Its territory, located on the shores of the Arabian Sea and at the gates of the Red Sea, dominates the Strait of Bab el Mandeb, placing it in a privileged place on the globe, especially since the twentieth century when, on the one hand, large deposits of energy (oil and gas) were discovered in the region and on the other, considering the enormous economic growth and development of East Asia that made Yemen an obligatory passage for most of the world's trade.



Strait of Bab el Mandeb

The ancient cities of the territory were unified in ancient times in the biblical kingdom of Sheba. From that moment on, the struggle of the inhabitants of what is now Yemeni began for their liberation and independence, when they had to confront the Roman Empire in the first century of our era. Mighty Rome was defeated in its attempt at domination.

Unlike the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, present-day Yemen had a prodigious vegetation that provided great wealth to its population due to the great possibilities of consumption and trade that it offered. Thus, the Greek mathematician Ptolemy is credited with naming Yemen as *the "happy Arabia"*.



[The Yemen Spice Route: Happy Arabia?](#)

In the course of history, the Yemenis had to fight with Himyarites who persecuted the majority Christian population from their Jewish religion until the intervention of the Ethiopians in the sixth century. Islamism arrived in the region during the seventh century, beginning to shape a culture that was based on the interweaving of varied knowledge that made great contributions to humanity.

For many centuries, however, Yemen remained on the sidelines of the cultural and economic development established by Islam. It was in the 15th century that the territory of present-day Yemen began to gain strategic value. In their eagerness for commercial expansion, Europeans began dominating territories throughout the world. The first Europeans to arrive in the region were the Portuguese, who dominated the country in order to control the sea route that allowed them to trade species from Asia to Europe through the Red Sea.

In the 16th century, the Ottoman conquest began with the occupation of some places on the Red Sea coast, while the interior of the country and the southern coast remained

independent, ruled by an imam. Soon after, the English made their appearance in the area, setting up a post of the East India Company in the port of Moka on the Red Sea.



In the nineteenth century, the British expanded their presence by occupying the entire southwestern end, settling in 1839 in Aden, the best port in the region, at the same time that in 1872 the Turks managed to consolidate dominance in the interior of the country, for which they installed a de facto hereditary monarchy in the name of a local imam. This division effectively caused Yemen to split into two countries

By 1870, with the opening of the Suez Canal and the consolidation of Turkish rule over northern Yemen, Aden took on new importance for British global strategy: it was the key to the Red Sea and thus to the new canal.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Turkey and the United Kingdom marked a border between their territories, which were renamed North Yemen and South Yemen, respectively. In 1934 England secured control of the entire south of the country, up to the border with Oman.

During World War I, the Imam allied himself with the Ottoman Empire and remained loyal to it until the end of the war, when the defeat of the Turks allowed Yemen to regain its independence in November 1918. However, Britain, after recognising Yemen's independence, made Aden a protectorate and in 1937 a colony. Once again, Yemenis had to resort to armed struggle for independence. In 1940 the nationalist movement "*Free Yemen*" emerged to fight against the control of the country by the imams who had allied themselves with Britain.

The struggle went their separate ways in the north and in the south. In 1962 the Arab Republic of Yemen was created in the north, while in the south, the National Liberation Front, created in 1963, took Aden in 1967 and proclaimed independence, initiating a socialist revolution.

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

In October 1978, at a congress that had considerable public support, the National Liberation Front founded the Socialist Party of Yemen. 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, the country had to face the permanent hostility of Saudi Arabia, which aspired to control parts of the territory, precisely those in which oil deposits had been discovered. Tensions were heightened by the growing U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia.



Mural by Yemeni artist Murad Subay in Paris

Meanwhile, in the north, the National Democratic Front (NDF), which brought together all the progressive forces in the country, was waging an armed struggle against Ali Abdullah Saleh, who had come to power in 1978. When the NDF was about to take power, Saudi Arabia intrigued to divert the conflict into a war against the Democratic People's Republic

of Yemen. Mediation by some Arab countries led to a ceasefire and an agreement that resumed reunification negotiations, which had been suspended since 1972.

Finally, on 22 May 1990, the two republics were united to form the Republic of Yemen, which established that the political capital was Sana'a (former capital of the Yemen Arab Republic) and Aden (former capital of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen) was designated as the economic capital. At a joint session of the Legislative Assemblies of the two States held in Aden, a Presidential Council headed by General Ali Abdullah Saleh was elected. The unification of Yemen was not well received by Saudi Arabia, so it initiated a policy of support for secession. In May 1994, the 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 that expressed the beliefs of a specific branch of Shiite-oriented Islam emerged: the Zaidites, whose leader was the cleric Hussein al-Houthi. In his honor, after his death in combat in September of that year, the movement assumed the name of Houthis, Houthi or Ansarullah (supporters of God). Although this current is the expression of a minority in Yemen, its history is not recent, dating back to the middle of the eighth century. Zaidism is identified by the greater preparation of its members and [is associated with the struggle for justice and the defense of Muslim ethics](#). This ideology, added to the position of marginalization to which they were subjected after losing power in 1962, would come to form the substratum in which Houthi thought would develop in the future.



The Houthis' struggle against the pro-Western, pro-Saudi government of Ali Abdullah Saleh was long and bloody. They had to take up arms five times between 2006 and 2008 in defense of their territory in the north of the country until they began to expand their base of support and the geographical space under their control. In 2009, Saleh, trying to stop the Houthis, turned to Saudi Arabia's support.

For the Houthis, the fact that a country like Saudi Arabia, with an extremely conservative Wahhabi current, was present and meddling in the country's affairs was seen as a [threat to the sovereignty of the nation in general and theirs as a minority in particular](#). From that moment on, their struggle, which had a strictly internal character, was transformed into a confrontation against foreign intervention.

Although at first the Houthi fighters suffered heavy defeats, including (as said before) the fall of their top leader, they grew stronger over time and from 2011, under the new leadership of al-Houthi's younger brother, Abdul Malik, they began to deal major setbacks to the enemy. The anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist rhetoric was fortified by identifying [Saudi Arabia as an implementing partner of the U.S. and Israeli plans in the area](#).

The so-called "*Arab Spring*" had a particular influence on the growth of support for Houthi thought in its struggle against Saleh's repressive government. In Yemen, the earthquake that shook an important part of the Arab world had a much more organized response than in neighboring countries. Faced with the force of the protests, Saleh fled the country and took refuge in Saudi Arabia, being replaced by his vice-president, Abdo Rabbu Mansur Hadi, who tried to bring order to the country by reaching an agreement with anti-Saleh factions "*to change everything without changing anything*", leaving out the Houthi movement.

At the end of 2014, the Houthis decided to launch an offensive on the capital. In this context, Saleh – surprisingly in an attempt to regain power – established an alliance with the Houthis to confront Hadi. The Houthis, who had not supported Hadi's peace accords, allied themselves with their greatest enemy to take the capital. The Republican Guard, a force loyal to Saleh, favored the Houthis' entry into Sana'a. Hadi fled to Riyadh, the Saudi capital, from where he "*runs*" the territories not yet controlled by Ansarullah, acting in reality as a puppet of the Wahhabi monarchy.

Once in power, the Houthis formed a Revolutionary Committee to run the country. They were also forced to fight simultaneously with the terrorist forces of Al Qaeda and Saudi Arabia, which protects them.

Saleh felt that the Houthis had failed to abide by the agreements that he said meant he had to take power again and, with Saudi support, turned against them. When the betrayal was consummated, the Houthis attacked Saleh's house, killing him in action.

From Riyadh, Hadi called for Saudi intervention in Yemen. Faced with this request, the Saudi monarchy organized a coalition of [Sunni countries](#) to launch in 2015 the *operation "Decisive Storm"*, structured from air strikes on the main enclaves controlled by the Houthis that would result in [thousands of deaths](#)

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



The Houthis, making use of a wide margin of manoeuvre based on a greater and better knowledge of the terrain and wielding guerrilla warfare tactics inspired – according to them – by the liberation struggle in Vietnam and "*the resistance movements in Latin America*", demonstrated a great capacity to strike at an invading army without willingness or combat morale and lacking discipline and motivation for battle. Likewise, the wide range of coalition soldiers, which has included the participation of a very large contingent of mercenaries hired by private companies, has diminished the fighting capacity of the alliance led by Saudi Arabia

Riyadh received resounding blows even on its own territory, when Ansarullah's combat operations moved deep into Saudi geography through an advanced attack system based on drones and long-range missiles that reached armed forces barracks, oil refineries and critical infrastructure works at very far distances from the common border.

Sergio Rodríguez Gelfenstein for La Pluma, January 3, 2023

Edited by [Maria Piedad Ossaba](#)

La Pluma. net 04.01.2024