



Written by [Christian Gomez](#) on February 7, 2011

Socialist Roots to Yemen's "Days of Rage"

On January 25, inspired by the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, opposition forces called on the Yemeni people to rise up against the government in what they have termed "[Days of Rage](#)," which so happens to be the same name given to a series of three-day demonstrations October 8 -11, 1969 in Chicago orchestrated by the Weatherman Underground faction of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).



Now, Yemen's leftist and other opposition elements have organized their own "Days of Rage" with the hope of overthrowing the government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has presided over the Republic of Yemen for 20 years — and an additional 12 years if one counts his years as President of the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen) since 1978.

Opposition to Saleh comes from all over Yemen society, including Islamists, local tribes, students, the poor, unemployed people, union workers, revolutionary leftists, and southern secessionists eager to restore a socialist republic.

Among the various groups in opposition are al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Islah Party (the Muslim Brotherhood in Yemen), Hizb ut-Tahrir (a pan-Islamist party that advocates for the establishment of a world Caliphate), the Nasserite Unionist People's Organisation, and the Yemen Socialist Party, which ruled as the one-party government of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen).

Although Saleh initially invited socialists into his cabinet in 1990 in order to placate the newly united South, he saw to it that they would be contained, prohibiting their ascension to power. Contention between Saleh and leftist forces from the South continued, resulting in a civil war, in which Saleh invited Bin Laden's al-Qaeda and other Afghani mujahedeen radical Islamists to come into the country to suppress insurrectionist socialists just as they supposedly had quelled communists and the Soviet Army in Afghanistan.

Although the Socialists' hold of power may have slightly diminished in the South, a new al-Qaeda threat has solidified. Despite their differences, both have a common enemy — President Saleh, whom they see as an agent of the West owing to his alliance with the United States in the War on Terror.

On January 27, 2011, thousands of protestors took to the streets in the capital city of Sana'a, as well as Ibb and Taiz, in what has been as described as one of "the biggest anti-government rallies Yemen has seen for a decade," according to [the Guardian](#).

"It's over Saleh, your time is up," students shouted from the gates of Sana'a University.



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A group of “15,000 students and activists wearing pink ties on their heads,” *the Guardian* reported, “formed a ‘human wall’ at Sana'a University, which has become a hub for the protests.”

One student, Rudhwan Masude, head of the student union at Sana'a University, explained, “We choose pink to represent the Jasmine revolution and to show that we do not want violence.” Students and other protesters were heard chanting, “Together we fight against poverty, corruption and injustice,” as they listened to “speeches delivered by opposition politicians from Yemen's Islamist, socialist and Nasserite parties.”

Another voice clamoring for change came from Ali Al Hossany, an employee at Yemen's Education Ministry, who told reporters: “I am here today to express that we need a change in the president, that we refuse corruption, and that we are against constitutional changes that will allow the president to be president for life.”

Under the banner of “change” and “democracy,” the socialists are using the widespread discontent to advance their agenda, and if history is any indicator of the future, then the possibility of a Socialist Yemen is a threat worthy of concern.

Yemeni Socialist Party

The Yemeni Socialist Party was founded in 1978 by Abdul Fattah Ismail, the leader of an anti-British national liberation group in the Aden Protectorate, and he eventually became President of South Yemen.

During the Cold War, South Yemen served as a vital strategic Soviet satellite, exporting fully trained left-wing terrorists. The capital port city of Aden was the main location for George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terror training camps.

In addition to the PFLP in South Yemen, the Palestinian Rejection Front operated its main advanced urban guerrilla warfare camp for terrorists from all over the world.

These various terrorist training facilities were the crown jewel for Soviet KGB-backed terror operations. Similar KGB-backed facilities were also located in North Korea at the time.

Many of those camps in South Yemen continued to produce and export terrorism even after the alleged fall of communism and the Soviet Union. Even now, despite there being a “pro-Western” government in power, it has been unable to control the lawless activities of southern secessionists, revolutionary socialists, and terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and Huthists.

Today, as Yemen is raddled by protest, socialist involvement also runs deep.

In pledging support to student demonstrations, Dr. Yasin Said Numan, the Secretary General of the Yemeni Socialist Party, said the following:

In front of the eastern section of Sana'a University rallied thousands of supporters in [a] great scene [that] had a deep significance when it comes to the willingness of the public to walk in the way of change and bearing responsibilities of the stakeholders out of it the first and last in this change.

Under the banner of “change” and “democracy,” socialists have taken advantage of the situation to call for an end to the Saleh government. “We want real democracy, in a peaceful way. And we are against the continuation of Saleh's authority,” said Ali Huraibi, a journalist and member of the Yemeni Socialist Party.



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Another factor in the current protests and civil unrest is the South Yemeni insurgency, which has been ongoing since 2009. Among the leaders of the insurgency are many socialists, including Yasin Said Numan — the Prime Minister of South Yemen from 1986 until unification in 1990 — and Ali Salem al-Baid — the General Secretary of the Yemeni Socialist Party from 1986 to 1994.

“The main leaders of the Southern Movement — Ali Salem al-Baid, who is in exile, and Hassan Baoum — freed by the authorities early this month — had called for Tuesday [January 25, 2011] to be a ‘day of rage’ to protest against the government in Sanaa,” the AFP [reported](#).

January 25, 2011, was also the same day as the start of protests in Egypt, in which [the Communist Party of Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood were heavily involved](#).

Ali Salem al-Baid’s “day of rage” would seem to have been successful considering President Saleh’s announcement that he would not seek reelection in 2013; however the Socialist Party is neither convinced nor satisfied.

According to the [Financial Times](#), Yasin Said Numan expressed the following suspicion: “I don’t believe [the government officials] are serious. They want only to absorb the prevailing political situation.”

The Socialist Party has also aligned itself with the Zaydi Huthist movement, a fundamentalist Shiite Zaydi Muslim terror group whose goal is to “establish an Islamic emirate in the country’s northwest based on the Shiite Zaydi faith,” according to the weekly news journal [Dhaka Courier](#).

The Huthists are similar to al-Qaeda in their advocacy of a purest radical Islam, viewing others who do not subscribe to their interpretation of Islam as infidels.

President Saleh has even accused Iran of using the Huthist movement as a proxy to stage terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia, which borders Yemen.

Socialist-Huthist collaboration has come in the form of the Joint Meeting Parties, a coalition composed of various opposition parties: the Islah Party, the Socialist Party, the Nasirite People’s Unionist Party, the Baath Party, the Union of People’s Forces, and the Al-Haq Party.

The JMP is led by Yasin Said Numan, who is also the Secretary-General of the Socialist Party. This coalition between Socialists, Islah (the Muslim Brotherhood), and the Huthists provides further evidence of an Islamo-Leninist connection, which is consistent with the Muslim Brotherhood’s collaboration with the Communist Party in Egypt.

On May 5, 2010, in an [interview](#) with the London-based Arabic international daily *Asharq Al-Awsat*, Numan was asked about the JMP’s coalition with the Huthists. He replied:

The Huthists were among the forces with which we established contact. We invited them to a national dialogue based on the principle that this country belongs to all, that wars do not solve problems, and that the true solution lies in a national dialogue among all the political forces, including the General People’s Congress. After the sixth war and after we in the Joint Meeting Parties announced the formation of a preparatory committee for national dialogue as a vision for national salvation, the Huthists responded to our call.

We dispatched a team to discuss the general aspects of cooperation on the issue of the national dialogue. We presented the Huthists with four points that all stress that wars do not solve problems, that talk about the rule of equality and justice, and that talk about a national dialogue to solve the crises in the country. This is the formula that we signed with the Huthists since the course that we should take is that toward comprehensive national dialogue.



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In the same interview, Numan admitted that “the Socialist Party are present in the Mobility movement,” adding, “but we are present through our political program. We consider our political program in which we believe as part of the political mobility to solve a problem within a national framework.”

On February 2, 2011, according to the Iraqi newspaper *Azzaman*, Numan was [reported](#) to have said that in Yemen “the system is no longer able to solve the problems of the country.”

If the system has failed to produce the results desired by the JMP and the Socialist Party, then this raises the question as to what the socialists will do next.

On January 13, 2011, Haidar Abu Bakr al-Attas — the President of South Yemen from 1986 until unification in 1990, then Prime Minister of the Yemen Arab Republic and a member of the Yemeni Socialist Party — gave a speech over the phone to a pro-Southern festival in which he stressed the need for unity amongst the different factions of the Southern Mobility Movement, which continues to advocate for an independent South Yemen and also opposes Saleh.

Whatever setbacks or lack of progress the socialists may face, they remain steadfastly united and committed to working with other opposition forces in the hopes of achieving the reforms they seek to see implemented.

In addition to expressing disappointment with the government, Numan also stressed that “Yemen needs to discuss the larger issues of the pledges of terrorism, failure of the economy and poverty in addition to standing before the nature of the political system.”

Considering South Yemen’s history of terrorist sponsorship and the Socialist Party’s current collaboration with the Huthists, it is ironic to hear the Socialist party concerned with terrorism, although terrorism is an ongoing problem in Yemen.

While extremist Islamic forces are entrenched in Yemen with the stated goal of establishing a theocratic regime based on Sharia law and ruled by a Caliphate, the truth is that such forces make up only a small fraction of the opposition forces. Considering Yemen’s history and the strength of the Socialist Party, Yemen is more likely to give rise to a socialist republic rather than a fundamentalist Islamic state such as Iran.

A socialist Yemen, either in the South or as a whole, does not necessarily mean that it would be void of terrorism or act as a launching pad for terrorism. As noted before, during the Cold War socialist South Yemen served as one of the main hubs for Soviet KGB-sponsored left-wing terrorism in the Middle East and around the world. Even now, the Socialist Party, through its participation in and leadership of the JMP, maintains ties with known terrorist organizations such as the Huthists and openly admits to participating with secessionist insurgents.

The government of President Saleh might not be perfect — such as promoting the philosophies of Jeffersonian republicanism — however, the alternative may be worse. There is no reason to believe that Yemen would cease to be a terrorist safe haven under socialist rule; thus it is important to be aware and recognize the possible threat posed by a socialist Yemen and the participation of the Yemeni Socialist Party in Yemen’s “Days of Rage.”

Photo of President Ali Abdullah Saleh: AP Images



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