



## Transcript

# Yemen's Future: The Road Towards Stability and Development

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### **Ginny Hill:**

Thank you very much for coming along this evening. I first started working with Chatham House on Yemen in 2007 and we were lucky to get 50 people coming to events then. It's fantastic that it's actually a bit crowded. The Yemen Forum was developed over the course of last year, with the intention of trying to raise awareness of the issues that the country faces at the moment. There has obviously been a lot of attention on counter-terrorism issues recently. As many of you will know, Yemen's challenges are much broader and the international community has an opportunity now to develop a long-term comprehensive framework.

The Forum will constitute a series of public meetings like this, a number of smaller roundtable events, which we hope to hold not just here in the UK but also in the region. We will be running a research programme and we'll also be holding a conference here. So I very much hope you'll continue to support the Forum and its work for the next two years.

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Thank you very much. To tell you the truth, I don't know what to say, because you've been reading for the last four weeks, bombarded with news from Yemen and analyses, some of them focussed, some less focussed, some portraying the truth, others distorting it. It makes life very difficult for me; because I'm sure whatever I say will raise questions in your mind. To whom do I belong? To those who say the truth or fabricate it? I promise you I'll tell the truth, because it is in the interests of Yemen to tell the truth.

Let me tell you another point. I've been to Canada and the United States and I am now in London. I met so many experts about Yemen and now I am convinced I am the only one who is not an expert on Yemen. So please excuse me, I am not an expert on Yemen. But I know maybe something of the ins and outs of Yemen. I don't have the time to read as many of you probably have, I do my best.

But the story of Yemen is simple, actually. It is a country with many problems, great challenges, expectations, and the world has been looking at Yemen for a long time, really. Everybody with his own perception of it. The history, archaeology, geography, the people, and probably one of the longest links between Yemen and the world was the UK, which occupied part of Yemen for over 130 years and has very close ties with North Yemen at that time before unification.

So the British, we say, know us better than the others. And I think this is probably the reason why His Excellency the Prime Minister surprised everybody with this call for a meeting about Yemen. He realised, we know it is an election year, but he realised as well that Yemen deserves the attention at this very critical moment, and that we hope the government and opposition in the UK will look at the challenges in Yemen in a bipartisan way.

Yemen has a population of 23 million. Do you know the location of Yemen? I remember when I first came to study in Edinburgh as a medical student and people were asking me where I came from, I would say Yemen, and they would say, 'where is that, in India?' Maybe I had an Indian look at that time before I got bald. Now I don't think I need to describe where Yemen is. Yemen is strategically placed closed to the GCC countries, on the other side of North Africa, and you know the story of the Horn of Africa. It controls one of the most important sea routes linking the East with the West, and therefore it has a very important strategic position.

Yemen's 23 million people have over 65 per cent of them under the age of 25, and about 50 per cent under the age of 18. Therefore you can understand, everybody before the age of 25 is a revolutionary. He becomes more so when he doesn't have a chance to a job, or he thinks he has no future. Those who are under 18 have the frustration of higher education, the outcome of that education. Therefore there are easy targets for radicalisation.

I think Mr Brown was very wise in the selection of the world 'countering radicalisation' and not 'terrorism'. We've been talking all along about terrorism, and I remember here in Chatham House some years ago I was saying we need a new approach to fight terrorism, because the way we are doing obviously is not successful, for a number of reasons, some of it probably security and intelligence, some also because we are not addressing issues of radicalisation.

Therefore we hope that this meeting which will take place tomorrow for a very short time, only two hours, and I don't think we should focus on the time - we can spend weeks without achieving the objectives as in the Copenhagen conference - but maybe in two hours we can achieve more since we see the response of the participants. From Europe, from the United States, and I am glad that Her Excellency the Minister of States from the US is flying to be in this conference and the Afghanistan conference the day after, in spite of the fact that President Obama is going to give his State of the Union Address on Wednesday. I think this signifies the importance of this meeting.

Why is Yemen in this difficult situation? Everybody I'm sure will answer that differently, but let me tell you my perception. We are in this shape, I think one part of it is the result of the unification of Yemen. When I say the unification, and the aftermath of unification - the civil war, because there was a separatist movement that wanted to re-divide Yemen - a long period of cessation of development aid to Yemen as a result of the first Gulf War, and it wasn't really until 2002 that things began to normalise in Yemen as far as development aid is concerned.

By the way, Yemen is at the bottom of the list of recipients of development aid. The per capita aid given to a Yemeni is about 50 per cent of the next lowest country. I don't want to answer why, but I think it reflects, there is some unfair treatment of Yemen in terms of development aid.

Since 2005, we've been responding to the other problem that probably is the cause of the situation. Reforming our system, whether it's political, whether it relates to corruption, whether it relates to human rights issues, whether it is the gender issues. For all these we established a national agenda of reforms. We developed it with our partners, the World Bank and the IMF.

And we moved forward in that. It's not all a failure story as some would put it. There is now a law against corruption; there is an agency to overlook corruption; there is an independent tendering committee, independent of the government to ensure that government scrutinises and this is the case.

This agenda unfortunately when it was formulated and accepted by the government, and they started implementing it, people thought that it will naturally be implemented by the government of Yemen, and they did not realise that every single item has an economic cost. You cannot reform the judiciary without a programme of training, without a better inspection of the courts, without raising the salaries of judges in order to hopefully make them less corruptible.

When we talked about the issues of the subsidies, which is agreeing the government budget, nobody would come and help on how Yemen can reform its fiscal and economic policies, at least transiently until the economy picks up. So we've been hearing a lot of advice. Very good advice. But the help in executing that advice did not come forth.

I would like to point here that donors are wary where their money goes and I think that's rightly so. But there are a number of donors who do not give their money to Yemen. They have their own development funds which will undertake to implement these projects. Our responsibility with them is just to agree on the number of projects and they will tender it and look after it.

The President, when he was in England in 2006 at the donors' conference stated that Yemen doesn't want a single dollar to be paid to the Yemeni government. What we want are projects - schools, roads, electricity, health centres, so everybody who would like to come and help, let him come and do it himself.

The third point of course relates to the political situation in Yemen. Since the last elections, we've been debating a number of important issues and reforms. Reform of the constitution and the form of government, reforms of election law to make it more fair and transparent, and we've been in constant debate with the opposition party, the alliance of six parties in order to agree on these changes. Unfortunately, opposition parties looked at these as means to intimidate the government rather than to co-operate, and to be part of the problem rather than the solution.

This is why at the end of a number of years of dialogue, we've had to postpone the elections for two years. This is as a result of the opposition parties' demand, and because constitutionally we could have run the elections, we were committed for their participation. And now after almost 10 months of the agreement which was signed in February last year, we cannot get the opposition parties to come to discuss and negotiate the changes in the constitution and the election laws. But we will persevere. I can assure you that the next election will take place on time, because we cannot afford to see our pride that is democracy being faltered by political scope.

The two other issues is the North: a healthy conflict or an insurgency? A healthy insurgency unfortunately is a fight for no obvious reason. They claimed they wanted development in their part of the country and that no other part of the country requires development. I come, by the way, from Al Bayda, one of government aids, which has the highest percentage of poverty in the country. Does this give me the right to carry on against the government for development? Or to use my members in parliament to press the government for development?

They want to practice their sect, they are Shia Muslims, by the way. We have Jews in Yemen practicing their faith, but we refuse a Muslim to practice his sect. They wanted to have a university to teach their religious sect, and there is a law which controls licensing for universities, you don't need to carry the gun for that. So as far as the Yemeni government is concerned, we've stopped the war five times in order to get them to express exactly what are their legitimate claims and grievances. I will not go into detail.

The secessionist movement in the south is basically the result of the economic situation. Whatever arguments people present, there has been an economic situation to a greater suffering to the southern people. There was a grievance about administering the southern government by various governors that we're appointing, but we resolved that by now electing the governors, and now all the governors in the southern areas are from the southern areas.

We believe that what we have instituted as part of the partnership in governance is to create the local governments and have people elected directly from their own department, as a process of reform, and to remove the grievances that were created in the past. I will stop here because I am sure I have overtaken my time and will be glad to answer any questions.

### **Tim Torlot:**

Chatham House set me one impossible task and one easy one, when they asked me last night to join the panel. The impossible task was to be short, and the easy one was not to upstage Abu Bakr al-Qirbi, who, for all his protestations of not being an expert on Yemen, clearly knows the country far better and has been involved for far longer than anyone else.

I thought I'd focus specifically in the five minutes that I've got on two meetings in London. One, the London donors' conference in 2006 and the second the specific meeting that is happening tomorrow.

The London conference in 2006 did some extraordinary things. First of all it brought together, probably for the first time, the friends of Yemen- Yemen's donors, potential and traditional. Important to the GCC countries, really for the first time, into Yemen's development and ended up with five billion dollar's worth of pledges, over 80 per cent from the new donors.

Yemen is massively under-funded in terms of development assistance, in fact it's less than half of the average of overseas development countries. But nonetheless, the numbers and conference gave real impetus to development assistance which pledged to help Yemen.

It also formed, I suspect, the spur towards some really important political, economic and legal reforms in the country. It's starting to tackled corruption but also important things, like Yemen signing up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the President standing down as head of the judiciary... and so the meeting was important in donor terms but had a political significance as well.

We've learned the lesson from London 2006 as well. There were lots of things that it didn't do, and that didn't happen afterwards. I think that's leading us to where we are tomorrow, the London meeting that we're hosting in the Foreign Office for two hours.

First of all, Abu Bakr was right, it did spur this national reform agenda. The problem is that it's massively ambitious. It covers almost every area of economic and social legislative reform that's needed in the country, which was far too much to try to tackle in five years, and actually things have been achieved that it hasn't done. It becomes almost impossible to manage as a document and a programme. There were far too many priorities, far too much that it was trying to tackle at the same time.

Second thing, it focussed largely on Yemen's development donors, but didn't broaden out into a much wider range of issues that Yemen needs to tackle and which are related.

Since then, the momentum has gone out of the reform in Yemen, and I think the international community is looking for greater impetus and programme, but I think the Yemeni people do as well. I think some of that - things do go on, reform has happened, but it's sort of submerged below the parapet and some of the frustrations that you see articulating themselves are a result of that feeling that things haven't really changed that much.

The development flows that were pledged in London have not materialised, or in small measure they have. The four billion plus that was pledged by the GCC has not made it to Yemen. That again is a huge challenge.

So what are trying to do tomorrow? We've only got two hours. So solving Yemen's problems will take about 90 minutes then we'll have half an hour for tea. I think one of the reasons it's been called the London meeting and not a conference is because actually we see it as the beginning of a process. We're not going to solve all the problems tomorrow, but what we need in place is something that carries on- not the month-long media fervour where we all focus on Yemen and then go away again, but we need to be working alongside the Yemeni government.

Actually it's the Yemeni government that's got to take the measures, but the international community with 24 of Yemen's best friends sitting around the table- clearly international support is important, both in terms of development assistance but also in terms of the moral support and the technical support and the support of the international forum, and that's very much what tomorrow is all about.

In two hours, what can we achieve? I think we do have a reasonably common understanding of the huge set of challenges- security, political, economic, social, cultural - that confronts the country. But I think what's important and what we're trying to do to understand those problems is actually to realise that they're all related.

You can't deal with the problems of terrorism and extremism without addressing some of the real economic issues that are the reasons for those- the fact that people don't have jobs; that 54 per cent of people under the age of 26 don't have employment; that the provision of services for all sorts of reasons is not consistent across the country; that people don't feel that their voices are necessarily heard, because the election has been postponed; that still relatively small percentage of the female population receives an education.

There is a real sense of grievance that leads to the process of radicalisation. The only way you can tackle the problems of the country is a genuinely comprehensive, broadly-based approach. That's why our assistance to the country, 90 per cent of the money that is sent to the country, is focussed on development assistance - the long-term support to the people of the country to allow them to receive good education, that leads them to jobs and community support, to take away some of the pressure on resources that comes from water shortages and mismanagement of water.

So the common perception of the challenges of the country, the sense that you don't solve these problems without doing it in a comprehensive, joined-up way, that needs some tough decisions as well. I think one of the things that the international community has been asking the government of Yemen to do is actually give us a sense of what your real priorities are. A real sense to win back the confidence of the people and indeed some of us, that we've got to sit down and say 'we're going to focus on the following five or even 10 areas'.

We warmly welcomed the announcement last year of the President's top 10 priorities initiative. We wouldn't necessarily have taken all 10 of them ourselves, but it was the first time any government of Yemen sat down and said 'these are the things we are going to focus on over the next two years'. The sense that the political impetus was there, we will support you in that.

And most importantly also, we've got a huge opportunity tomorrow with 24 foreign ministers or equivalents sitting down around the table to bring together the international community in a way that London didn't do, to define a process that makes us come together, to work together and continue long



after the media has lost its interest in the country, to help Yemen to tackle its problems. Thank you.

### **Question 1:**

Thank you for your time. I was just hoping you could help me understand the basic dynamics of private investment firms, particularly from the GCC, benefiting... your thoughts on that, non-aid related.

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Investment in Yemen was given priority in our government, reforms of private investments in the country, allowing them more freedom to transfer their earnings and profits. They don't need to have anymore a local partner in their projects. I suppose that Saudi Arabia probably is the one country that has a stake now in investment. Probably their total investment is over a billion dollars, in various sectors- the fish industry and others.

But there remains a problem with investment and security. What is now a major concern to investors is security. This is an issue that is a difficult thing for us in Yemen and hopefully we will address the issue in this meeting tomorrow and how Yemen's security can be strengthened through the support of our partners.

### **Question 2:**

A central issue, clearly, is Al Qaeda. To what extent has it penetrated Yemen, and to what extent does it represent a threat to the government?

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

The relation of Al Qaeda to Yemen or any other country is a very difficult question to answer. The Americans have on their list 550,000 suspects. Where are they? They are not all a part, but they are suspects. So every one of them could be a potential Al Qaeda operative. Where are they all?

They do not create a threat to the Yemen central government but they create a threat to the stability of Yemen and the issues that we talked about. They are now a factor in hindering our development programme. They are a factor in hindering investment in Yemen. And this is their most important ploy, really, to destabilise. It doesn't matter what happens after destabilisation because they do not really have an agenda for anything except destruction and destabilisation.

### **Question 3:**

My question is, do you think the failed attack on Detroit at Christmas and the rising of Yemen in the agenda of the media is actually a help or a hindrance in combating Al Qaeda?

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

No, I think this is a help, for sure, in the sense that it has raised the need for greater co-operation, especially in intelligence exchange. I think this was lacking in the past. For a long time, actually, we've been discussing the issue of exchange of intelligence information. Now, in Yemen, we have a number of foreign students because in Yemen in order to attract tourists and students to come and learn from Europe and United States, we insisted on visas issued at the airport of the country of origin so this is how they took advantage of that, and why we have now abandoned that policy.

I think the incident on Christmas was an incident that I hope will make our intelligence agencies look at their policies and the way that they deal with each other.

### **Tim Torlot:**

And obviously from our point of view, I think there had been a common misconception that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula had been focussed on Saudi Arabia, but had come south into Yemen. Perhaps we had been largely focussed on Saudi Arabia but the past year is evidence of that. At first you start to see the organisation being able to carry out very close to a successful attack outside, on a Western target in the heart of the United States. But also what's coming out as well, is the extent to which the radical clerics based in Yemen are having an impact on young Muslims outside Yemen.

### **Question 3:**

The British Ambassador quite rightly mentioned the importance of tying in the GCC in terms of Yemen. Your Excellency, if I could ask you, in that respect, could you comment on where we are in terms of efforts and mediation? In 2008 we had the initiative that seemed to be fairly reasonable, but some reports have suggested it was compromised by different perspectives by some members of the GCC. Can that be overcome, and is there an enthusiasm to return to the agreement of 2008?

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Well the conditions that the government has put really for treaties to declare a ceasefire are based on a Doha Agreement, except now one additional point was added after the movement into the Saudi territories that they also commit themselves to not expand their operations into Saudi Arabia.

The problem now is that the Saudis have accepted the five points and what we are now trying to get is to start on an implementation process because this is really what has resulted in the failure of all previous ceasefires, including the ceasefire after the Agreement, because at that time the main reason for abandonment of the agreement was the refusal to leave one of their fortifications on a mountain that was overlooking an airport.

We hope that their declaration yesterday as far as Saudi Arabia means their acceptance of the sixth point and therefore now it's a matter of implementing the five points that the government has put in our base in the agreement.

### **Question 4:**

Your Excellency, aid for Yemen seems to contain a potential contradiction. We have conditionality with Western donors pushing for really significant governance reforms on the one hand, and the other hand the need to draw effective rules of funding that are already pledged from the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia. Governance reforms can mean many things to many different people. But aid will be applied with a view to leveraging political space and driving accountability. In practice those are elements that might be challenging to some of the Gulf States. How will Yemen manage that situation without either worrying the neighbours or the Western trust?

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

I think the Gulf States within themselves have undergone a lot of reforms. When Yemen was united in 1990 and we declared that democracy was our path, there were concerns among the GCC countries. They thought that this is a model that may have its impact in their countries. I think now they feel that maybe their people are convinced that democracy isn't the right thing, after it's practiced in Yemen. They saw that democratisation and liberalisation has created headaches for the government and instability in the country.

It is this democracy in Yemen that... of course we have a multi-party system, we have elections, with every election you can imagine the headaches. Our traditional tribal leaders that used to dominate are now complaining. So it is a

headache. But there is no better alternative. Democracy is the best of the worst systems of the world. So this is our path, anyway.

I think what is more important is that it was also realised by the GCC countries that Yemen is an important factor for the stability of the region, after unification. It does not create a threat to any Gulf State. The border issue with Oman, Saudi Arabia has confirmed that Yemen intends to promote its relations with GCC countries.

The GCC countries now are in total the number one donors, because between them they contribute about 60 per cent of aid. There is a problem about execution and implementation, but we hope, again as Tim says, that we will look into these in future meetings that will come out of tomorrow's meeting.

Last point. I think I showed you that the relation between Yemen and all the GCC countries is at its best now.

#### **Tim Torlot:**

I think first of all, Yemen's system of democracy is not at all akin to the way the rest of the GCC runs itself, but I think there's an understanding in the GCC that Yemen's form of democracy is actually the only way forward in terms of stability, in the sense that it's a hugely diverse and disparate population, and stability is only going to come with a government that's able to deliver services in an inclusive and comprehensive way.

I think the much more centralised control of the government is much more difficult. It's not actually a practical way forward and the proposals for the decentralisation or devolution of the government into regional areas, which is not at all how the rest of the GCC works, is actually the way forward for Yemen.

I think also, in terms of aid delivery. Both of us, both sets of donors have really complimentary skills and potential and there is huge amounts of money and willingness to invest in the infrastructure of the state in the GCC, but none of the on-the-ground expertise, the technical implementing skills that traditional donors have. I think if you can bring that together in a coherent way, and that's not easy because we work in very different ways, and one of our aspirations for tomorrow is to try to make the two sets of donors work better together in the long-term interests of both.

### **Question 5:**

Following the Christmas Day incident, the world's media and the world's politicians are looking to London tomorrow and to Yemen to have some sort of result and some sort of unification on the issue. What's the one message that you would like to get across to the world and what's the one goal you'd like to see solved?

### **Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Thank you, that's a good question. But just to really, in addition to what Tim said about the Yemen population, the 23 million Yemenis are in 150,000 settlements. The Egyptians, with 80 million, are dispersed in less than half that many settlements. So you can imagine the enormity of the challenges the government faces and this is why decentralisation and local government has become our way of dealing with these issues.

What do we expect of tomorrow? I think what we want initially is just a commitment. A declaration by this group of governments that will meet, and this does not exclude others in the future, we want them to stress three issues. Their agreement to address the issues, the challenges of development in Yemen. The very important component of that is the implementation of the list of agenda of reforms, there are 10 points that now have given priority by the government.

I think we should focus on these 10 because we want a successful story and when we achieve success with some of these challenges, the wheel will start rolling and I am sure we will achieve greater success.

Second point of course is the issue of building Yemen's capabilities to fight radicalisation. This is part and parcel of the development programme, but it has another aspect to it, which deals with security, building Yemen's capabilities as far as its counter-terrorism and security units within the country.

And the third point, which I think is very important, is because there is unfortunately the political situation in Yemen and the way tomorrow's meeting is portrayed in the Arab world, that this is going to be a meeting to interfere in the internal affairs of Yemen and not to work with Yemen to meet the challenges it's facing. And therefore there should be a declaration that this meeting is to support Yemen unity and Yemen's stability.

**Tim Torlot:**

And if I'm allowed an aspiration, I think this is a meeting that brings extraordinary opportunity for Yemen as well. I think that's reflected in the fact that this is probably the highest powered political delegation of Yemen in a long time- two deputy prime ministers and the foreign ministers all arriving in London for a two hour meeting is pretty special. I think that's a reflection of the fact that there are real expectations for Yemen as well.

As I said in my presentation, I think there's a sense that the momentum has gone out of reform in Yemen a little bit. I think this is an opportunity for Yemen to prove to 24 foreign ministers and equivalent that they are genuinely committed to a reform process. I think the movement on economic reform, particularly, perhaps to some sort of IMF programme, would be a great step for it tomorrow.

**Question 6:**

My question is to Dr al-Qirbi. There was a great deal of applause for the effort of the Yemeni government to enter into the law with radical extremists, led by Judge al-Hitar who has become a minister. How do you read that now with hindsight, and in the light of the apprehension because of the fear of terrorism now?

And the other point I would like to address to Ambassador Torlot. You said that seven per cent of the Gulf aid came about. Can you tell me how much of the non-Gulf aid as well was paid to Yemen?

**Tim Torlot:**

Part of my answer is going to be that I don't know. The one bit that I can deal with is the UK's aid commitments to Yemen which we have been very good about implementing in full, so we've got a good story to tell so far. Clearly, the sums of money that we're talking about are considerably less than the GCC. Something like between 25 and 30 million pounds. It's a drop in the ocean compared to a billion dollars over five years that Saudi Arabia pledged. We have been successful and it will continue to increase over a 10 year commitment, an arrangement which we signed in 2007.

**Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Let me talk about the issue of the dialogue with extremists. As a matter of principle, anybody who adheres to terrorism and does not denounce it, there

is no object in having a direct conversation. What we're talking about is having a dialogue with those who are potential terrorists. We've initiated it in Yemen for the Arab-Afghan, the Yemenis who are in Afghanistan and return to Yemen after they finish the war in Afghanistan. They realise that they are returning to a country with the aftermath of a war, and they will be losing direction.

This is what happened to many of them, unfortunately, in other parts of the world. And this is why we initiated the dialogue process, succeeded with many, failed with some. So I think dialogue is really part of the rehabilitation process. Many countries looked into our experience. Saudi Arabia have now an extensive programme with tremendous facilities. And we will continue with the process of rehabilitation in Yemen.

Unfortunately our efforts to provide the funds to establish a centre for rehabilitation has not come forth and addressing really rehabilitation, we don't regard it as just a process of putting them back into a nice building and saying 'this is rehabilitation'. It has to be real rehabilitation with psychological, vocational, educational... so you re-illustrate the minds of those people who have been distorted in understanding Islam and what it teaches them.

#### **Question 7:**

My company has been working in Yemen investment for the last 14 years. My biggest concern has been that much of the Yemeni people, like the rest of the world, live in hope and nothing came really out of the 2006 meeting that can be seen on the ground. The most important thing that I hope will come out of tomorrow will be the investment, both from the top-down approach and definitely from the bottom. I would like to put a question to Tim, who has been working hard with us, I know. One of the biggest challenge we've had with the British investment is that DFID will refuse to work with British companies that are investing into Yemen, because it is politically incorrect. I would ask Tim to see whether he can change that.

#### **Tim Torlot:**

I don't recognise the assertion that DFID won't work with British companies. I think, on the contrary, that one of DFID's key programmes that was launched in the course of last year was one that is expressly designed for improving the environment that not just British companies but Yemeni business as well can flourish and grow. Looking at how microfinance works, the business environment- legislative and regulatory, which includes the regulatory

environment in which mining can take place for example. We're not alone in that. The World Bank has been working in this area as well. DFID is very focussed on the whole idea of livelihoods and long-term, a stronger economy where ordinary Yemenis have access to jobs.

If there are particular things that DFID or anything else could be helping out in the wastelands which is where your mine is, one of the more remote and inhospitable place in Yemen, then please talk to us. They don't do small projects directly, but what DFID does is put a huge amount of money into the Social Fund for Development, which does small-scale community-based projects and provides short-term and sometimes long-term employment for people in the villages as well.

**Dr Abu Bakr al-Qirbi:**

Let me, first of all, thank you all for your questions and I must say you've been very kind.

Secondly let me really say that we've been lucky in Yemen. We've had a number of ambassadors from Britain, and we have here the Ambassador also in Yemen, who worked diligently with the Yemeni government to help in confronting many of the challenges that they face and we face together, in Yemen and the region as a whole.

Thirdly, I would like you all to help with one important issue. Because many of our decisions, unfortunately, our reactions play into the hands of the terrorists. Their main objective is to disturb and destabilise and some of our government's decisions and reactions play into their hands. I hope you understand what I mean. Thank you very much.