



Saleh for Early Elections

Yemen's president has called for early presidential elections, a day after making yet another promise to sign a deal that would end his decades-long rule.

Speaking to supporters after Friday prayers in the capital, Sana'a, Ali Abdullah Saleh said that he wanted to hold an early election to end the country's political crisis, Al-Jazeera reported.

"We call for an early presidential election in a democratic way, in order to avoid bloodshed," Saleh told thousands of supporters.

It is unclear whether such an election would occur under a deal mediated by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC), or if Saleh was making an alternative proposal.

A day earlier, Saleh pledged that he would sign the PGCC deal on Sunday, a spokesman said, in a move that was greeted with caution by the opposition.

The opposition has accused the embattled leader of stalling. Saleh has previously rejected the agreement on two occasions, most recently 24 hours before his latest promise to sign.

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Saleh's reign continued on Friday, with thousands gathering in Sana'a and Taiz.

The United States, which considers Yemen a key ally in fighting Al-Qaeda, appears to have backed away from supporting Saleh, with Barack Obama, the US president, calling on him to stand down.

In a speech regarding US policy in the Arab world on Thursday, Obama referred directly to the situation in Yemen, saying: "President Saleh needs to follow through on his commitment to transfer power."

Ahmed Al-Sufi, Saleh's spokesman, said on Thursday that the Yemeni leader was ready to sign the agreement for the transfer of power during celebrations for Yemen National Day at the presidential palace in Sana'a, the capital.

Talks on defusing the crisis and arranging for Saleh to leave office appeared to have broken down on Wednesday, when Saleh refused to sign the PGCC-mediated deal that would allow for him to leave power in exchange for immunity from prosecution.

The refusal prompted Abdul-Latif Al-Zayani, the PGCC's chief, to leave the country. Al-Sufi says he will return to attend the newly scheduled signing on Sunday.

News in Brief

Hezbollah: US Sanctions On Syria Political

Hezbollah condemned on Thursday US sanctions against the Syrian government and President Bashar Assad described the measures as a political decision aimed at punishing Damascus for its support of the Palestinian people.

A statement released by Hezbollah said that the sanctions were an attempt to force Damascus to relinquish its support for resistance movements against Israel, The Daily Star reported.

The statement added that Hezbollah was confident that the Syrian people and its leadership will continue to support the Arab nation's just causes, particularly the Palestinian struggle.

The Syrian government accused Obama of meddling in its internal affairs. The US president on Thursday called for President Bashar Assad to lead his country to democracy or 'get out of the way'. It was his most direct warning to the leader of a nation embroiled in violence as the government cracks down on a popular uprising. Syria's official news agency said Friday Obama's speech amounted to "incitement". It accused Obama of interfering in Syria's internal affairs.

Rights groups say more than 850 people have died in the Syria unrest since it erupted in March.

Israeli Spy Expelled From Russia

An Israeli military attaché to Moscow who was expelled from Russia last week was carrying secret information when he was detained, Russia's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday.

According to AP, Vadim Leiderman was apprehended in Moscow on May 12, caught red-handed receiving classified information from a Russian citizen, the statement said. Leiderman was declared persona non grata and given 48 hours to leave the country, which he did, the statement said.

Israel's military, however, has rejected allegations that Leiderman was a spy, saying in a statement on Wednesday that the officer underwent a "thorough investigation" after he returned.

Gad Shimron, an intelligence expert and former field operative for the Mossad, told Israel's Channel 10 TV that based on the information he knows the odds of Leiderman being a spy are "extremely small".

AL Urges Action on Palestinian Statehood

Arab League chief Amr Moussa called on US President Barack Obama to follow through with his support for a Palestinian state based on Israel's 1967 borders.

Obama reaffirmed the US commitment to Israel's security on Thursday and called for a peace deal to result in two states, Israeli and Palestinian, sharing the border that existed before Israel

occupied the West Bank and East Beit-ul-Moqaddas in the 1967 Middle East war, Reuters reported.

"The Palestinian issue is at the heart of instability in the Middle East," Moussa said, calling on the United States to move in "the coming weeks and months towards establishing a Palestinian state based on 1967 borders and with East

Beit-ul-Moqaddas as its capital."

Obama's backing of the key Palestinian demand on the borders of a future state with Israel marks a policy shift but did not provide clear steps towards a peace deal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Obama's proposal would leave his state "undefensible".

"The interests of the United States are

interconnected with the deep transformations the region is witnessing," Moussa was quoted as saying, describing the change as an opportunity for the United States to adopt "new and balanced policies".

"There must be balance in talk about security of all parties, and not just focusing on the security of Israel without regard for the security of others," he added.

Interview

Part 1

Interview with Phillip F. Tourney, USS Liberty Survivor
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Introduction: During the 1967 Arab-Israel war, US Navy intelligence ship USS Liberty entered the Mediterranean Sea to gather information. The Israeli regime, which was dissatisfied with the presence of USS Liberty in the region, decided to attack the USS Liberty.

The Israeli forces attacked with full knowledge that this was an American ship and lied about it.

34 people were killed and more than 171 were wounded in the Israeli attack. Israeli regime insists that they mistakenly attacked the USS Liberty.

The survivors have been forbidden for some 44 years to tell their story under threat of imprisonment and/or death. One of the survivors, Phillip F. Tourney decided to tell the full story of the incident in a book titled 'What I Saw That Day'. Iran Daily conducted an interview with him which will be published in several parts.

Q: Greetings Mr. Tourney. We, at Iran Daily, thank you for giving us this great opportunity to present your side of the story of USS Liberty. When did you join the US Navy and USS Liberty and what was your motive?

Phillip Tourney-I joined the US Navy as a young man of only 17 years old. Technically I was not even an adult yet, but they had a thing back then where you could join at 17 with your parent's permission, so on my 17th birthday I went down and signed up. My reason for doing it was simple-I loved America. I loved America then and I love America now, just as much as I did the day I first set foot on that ill-fated ship.

Now, at the age of 64 however, I understand things better. Back then I loved America because I believed America could do no wrong. Now, I love America because I see that she can do wrong, and nowhere is this more obvious than in our Middle East policy. More than anything else I want to see America saved and freed from this terrible sickness that plagues her. This is the place my wife, children, and grandchildren call home, and if she--America--goes down, everyone and everything that I love will go down with her, as well as all my fellow Americans who stand to lose just as much. We need to become the sovereign United States of America again, and not the slave to another foreign power that yanks us around like a dog on a leash. The day that this foreign power--Israel--attacked my ship for 2 hours, butchered 34 of my friends, and then colluded with my government to cover it up, that was the day we ceased being a sovereign country and instead became a slave to someone else. As a very popular saying here in America goes, and as many in the Middle East living under oppressive systems would say today, "I love my country, but I hate my government."

The Forgotten Crisis



Q: Mr. Tourney, you have written a book titled 'What I Saw That Day'. On second page you have: "To my friends, the brave men, both living and dead, who served aboard the good ship USS Liberty ... Attacked by an ally, betrayed by their own government, forsaken by their country and forgotten in the hearts of their own fellow Americans, except those of us who were there that day and saw everything..." Very powerful statements indeed. What motivated you to pen this book 42 years later? We would like to know what you wish to achieve by writing this book.

PT--What I wished to achieve, no, let me rephrase that--What I INSIST upon achieving in writing this book along with my co-author Mark Glenn is what I said before--to see America saved and returned to her former place of goodness and greatness, both in the eyes of God and of my fellow man. Our founding fathers had a vision of what a good nation was supposed to be.

However, others who did not share the vision of our founding fathers had other plans, which we can plainly see taking place in the world today. Our sins as a nation are great, the suffering we have brought to millions of others did not have to be that way. We could have been a blessing upon mankind, but because of the poisonous influence of a small minority of people and the nation whose interests they serve--Israel--America was transformed from a blessing upon the world to a curse. It is my goal to reverse this magic spell and to have the goodness of America restored.

Q: Acclaimed author Gore Vidal has called your country 'The United States of Amnesia' when you say 'forgotten in the hearts of their fellow Americans', one of the questions that comes to one's mind is that, how does the press in the United States succeed in deviating the needle of the American people's compass away from its natural direction? How did American people come to forget about your story, your plight, in particular when one considers its severity?

PT--As brilliant a writer as Gore Vidal is, the fact is--there is no 'amnesia' on the part of the American people as far as the USS LIBERTY story goes for the simple reason that they know nothing about it and never did. They were never given the opportunity of hearing about it for the simple reason that Israel failed in sinking us. Had we sunk and Egypt blamed, as Israel had planned, then every American today would know about the LIBERTY. There would have been a national holiday instituted to commemorate the event. Outside of the LIBERTY survivors themselves and their families, there is only a relatively small handful of people who know about it, and Israel knows that it better remain this way or her days are numbered. If the American people ever found out what happened that day when Israel deliberately murdered 34 of us and would have finished all of us off were it not for the grace of God, the Jewish state would go the way of Hiroshima.

You use a very powerful image here, of the compass and the needle. What makes a compass so important is

that it is driven by forces of nature, namely the magnetic pull of the earth. People have compasses, both as individuals and nations. They know what is in their best interests, where they need to go and what they need to do. Unless someone gets in there and tampers with those forces of nature. Then, we see people--again, both as individuals and as nations--not acting in their best interests, and clearly this is what has happened to America. Now, our needle only points in one direction and that is towards Israel. All of our policies--both domestic or foreign, are geared towards benefiting the Zionist state, and even when it harms us. Perfect proof of this is what we are losing, both in blood and treasure, in fighting the wars on Israel's behalf. We have people losing their homes, fathers unable to feed their children--many of them US servicemen who have served or are serving--because of the massive amount of expenditure going for Israel's benefit. Are the American people up in arms about this? No. They continue to fork out everything they have down to the last penny and they won't realize what they have lost until it is gone and can't be brought back.

Q: All right let's get to the most important issue. Can you please talk about the run up to the actual attack?

PT--Absolutely--the run up to the actual attack is a clash of images. We had no idea what we were in for. We knew there was a war going on and we were all cheering for Israel and hoping she would beat the Arabs. Remember that we had all received a heavy dose of post-WWII propaganda about what the Jews of Europe had suffered through, so naturally we wanted to see them come out on top. We actually made small Israeli flags out of paper and had taped them in various parts of the ship in showing our solidarity with them.

We had requested an armed escort but had been denied. The official answer from Washington was that we were an American-flag ship and no one was going to pick a fight with us. Israeli planes had started surveilling us early, flying low and slow about twice an hour for about 6 hours. We thought they were coming to check on us and to let us know they were looking out for our safety, since we were a defenseless ship. Little did we know that what they were actually doing was photographing every square inch of the ship so that they could map out to the smallest detail how they were going to attack and murder us all in the most expedient and expeditious manner. Like any mafia hit, it had to be quick so that the perpetrators got away clean.

From where we were, 13 miles off the coast of the Sinai in international waters, we could see and hear the remnants of the war. Smoke, explosions, and, like I said, we all cheered because we figured that the Arabs were getting what was coming to them. Little did we know the real story.