



Free *qat* handouts secure a high voter turnout in Yemen's elections

For Imam Yahya, one of Yemen's last kings, *qat* was a delight that he praised in poems. For his adversary, the revolutionary al-Zubayri, the plant was the "devil in the shape of a tree".

Still today the views on *qat* greatly diverge. For some, *qat* farming is the *perpetuum mobile* of Yemen's rural economy and *qat* chewing an age-old social pursuit that has helped to preserve Yemeni identity in a rapidly changing world. For others, *qat* is the main inhibitor of human and economic development in Yemen and is to blame for poverty and corruption, the depletion of Yemen's water resources and the country's sloppy approach to fighting Islamist terror.

While some believe that *qat* chewing was the very motor of Yemen's "Arab Spring", others hold it responsible for Yemen's muddled revolution with its high blood toll. In internet blogs even *al-Qaeda*, its affiliates, and sympathizers discuss the pros and cons of the drug, and a number of Yemeni suicide bombers have met their fate with *qat*-filled cheeks. A final decision of *al-Qaeda* on what stance to adopt towards the drug has seemingly been postponed. The Jihadists want to avoid alienating Yemen's population with a premature ban of the popular stimulant before having gained firm control over the country. *Al-Qaeda* has learned from the mistakes of its Islamist sister organization, the al-Shabab militia in war-torn Somalia.

With Yemen's 2011 "Youth Revolution", a decade of half-hearted *qat* policies and missed opportunities has come to an end – a decade, however, that has succeeded in lifting the veil of silence that was cast over *qat* in media and politics after President Ali Abdullah Salih came to power in 1978. This whitewash had been part of a ruling bargain between the Salih regime and the unruly tribes that had imparted highland Yemen several decades of relative stability and Salih a 33-year rule.

With the forecast depletion of Yemen's oil and gas reserves within the next decade, the economic importance of *qat* will further increase and will bring about an important shift in the balance of power from the central government towards the *qat* producing highland tribes. The challenge of addressing the *qat* problem is thus tremendous for Yemen's policy makers. While the transitional government is hesitant about its future *qat* course and anxious not to open a "war" on yet another front, Yemen's anti-*qat* activists have seized the current, favorable climate of change. Emboldened by Yemen's revolution and the ouster of President Salih they have recently launched a series of campaigns against the drug, dubbed a "revolution on one's self".

Politics of Qat

The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen

Peer Gatter



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Politics of Qat

The Role of a Drug in Ruling Yemen

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Front cover: A *qāt* merchant in the highland village
of al-Jabīn in Rayma governorate.

Back cover: Free *qāt* handouts secured a high voter turnout
in Yemen's first direct presidential elections in 1999.

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L. The Scent of Jasmine in the Land of *Qāt*⁷⁴⁷ or the Arab Revolution, Yemeni Style

When in mid January 2011, a popular uprising forced the Tunisian dictator Zayn al-‘Ābidīn bin ‘Alī into exile, hundreds of Yemenis also took to the streets, protesting against unemployment, corruption, and proposals of the government for constitutional amendments that would allow President Ṣāliḥ to run for office yet another time. With popular unrest spreading throughout the Arab world and emboldened by the dynamics of the uprising in Egypt, the Yemeni protest movement quickly gained momentum and grew in size. Initial demands of the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP)⁷⁴⁸ for a return to a ‘National Dialogue’ on political reforms that had been laid on ice in late 2010⁷⁴⁹ were soon superseded by calls for a removal of President Ṣāliḥ from office. Before long tens of thousands of Yemenis took to the streets in both the northern and southern governorates united by the call of “*Irḥal!*”, “*Leave!*”. Protesters chanted slogans such as “*Bin ‘Alī leaves after 20 years, for Yemen 30 years are enough*” or “*Yesterday Tunisia, today Egypt, tomorrow Yemen*”. They carried posters of Che Guevara, Ibrāhīm al-Ḥamdī or Jār Allāh ‘Umar⁷⁵⁰ and banners reading “*No to hereditary rule, no to the rule of one family, no to constitutional amendments*”.⁷⁵¹ When after the first climax of anti-government protests in Egypt, Yemen’s opposition called for an Egyptian-style “*Day of Rage*”, President Ṣāliḥ was fast to act. Following a major demonstration of over 16,000 protestors in Ṣan‘ā’ on January 27,⁷⁵² Ṣāliḥ addressed the nation in a televised speech, declaring that Yemen was neither Tunisia nor Egypt, but a democratic country and that he would be ready to pass on power at the end of his term in 2013 in the framework of Yemen’s constitution. He called upon the people to “*not cross the line*” and warned them of “*anarchy and personal loss*”.⁷⁵³ Many perceived this as a hidden threat.⁷⁵⁴

On February 2, a day ahead of the “*Day of Rage*”, Ṣāliḥ announced that he would neither run for reelection in 2013, nor would he pass power to his son Aḥmad.⁷⁵⁵ The Yemeni press had reported already on January 24 that Ṣāliḥ had spoken out against the passage of power within his family: “*Talking about hereditary rule is an impudent symphony, we are a republican and democratic system and we are against hereditary rule [...] of villages, of tribes, of power, of unity, of ministries, we are against hereditary rule.*”⁷⁵⁶ But Yemen’s opposition had little reason to believe this pledge. Already in 2006, Ṣāliḥ had announced that he would not run for the presidency again, but had in the following weeks paid thousands of have-nots with gifts of *qāt* and free meals to take to the streets to call for his return. Feigning reluctance, he accepted this call by the populace and took upon his shoulders the heavy burden of the presidency once again.

Demonstrations End When the *Qāt* Markets Open

Yemen’s “*Day of Rage*” brought some 20,000 to Ṣan‘ā’’s streets, but protests failed at least initially to develop the same dynamics as in Egypt where sit-ins on Cairo’s Liberation Square, the *Maydān al-Taḥrīr*, turned into over-night public festivals. Yemen’s uprising ended punctually at noon when the *qāt* markets opened. Newspapers around the world did not fail to note, that Yemen’s uprising may have a different fate than those in northern Africa, and that *qāt* may be to blame. On February 5, 2011, the headline of the *Arizona Daily Star* read: “*Addictive leaves take the starch out of popular uprising. Yemen protests lose momentum to khat-chewing*”. The *Washington Post* titled on the same day: “*In Yemen, everything stops for khat – including revolution*”. *Reuters* and the Israeli daily *Haaretz* assumed on February 10 that: “*Qat addiction may stem Yemen protests*”⁷⁵⁷ and on February 17, the *New York Times* characterized Yemen’s protest a stillbirth, titling: “*Qat got their tongues*”. The German *Spiegel Online* described the protest in their early phase:

“Just in time for lunch the ‘Day of Rage’ ends in Yemen’s capital Sana’a. The tens of thousands of demonstrators, who had a few minutes ago still been angrily, but peacefully calling for the removal of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, incumbent since 32 years, rush home through congested streets. The cries of “Down with Ali!” have died down. Also the counter-demonstration organized by the government [...] is dissolving. Young and old now cozy up to thick cushions on the floor and start to stuff qat leaves

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*into their cheeks. The afternoon also in these [troubled] times belongs to the mild drug. The revolution takes a break. No one here wants unrest and violence like in Egypt. This calm is also to the liking of the broad alliance of opposition parties that had called for the protest. Neither the Socialists nor the Islah party that is influenced by tribes and Islam can present a candidate with majority appeal for the Presidential palace. For too long Saleh has been in power and all too fragmented is the political landscape.*⁷³⁸

Even in online blogs the *qāt* factor in Yemen's revolution was vividly debated, but its influence on the progression of anti-government protests was questioned much more cautiously here than in the established media. Blogger Jacob Sullum posted a comment on *reason.com* entitled “*A drug so powerful it causes aggression and passivity*”:

“Reuters reports that anti-government protests in Yemen have been half-hearted compared to the revolt that brought down Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak, and it suggests an explanation: By noon the protesters quietly vanish. Many head straight from the streets to the souk, or market, to buy bags stuffed with qat [...]. The Yemen protesters' midday departures cast doubt on whether Yemenis are ready to mount a sustained revolt that would be needed to topple President Ali Abdullah Saleh from the leadership of the Arab world's poorest country [...]. This knock against qat might puzzle anyone who remembers the press coverage of Somalia's civil war in the early 1990s, when qat allegedly made young gunmen irritable, aggressive, and trigger-happy. Now Reuters claims the very same plant makes chewers directly across the Gulf of Aden passive, lazy, and listless. To reinforce this new story line, it calls qat (accurately) a 'mild' stimulant – which was not the impression left by the stories about Somalia's qat-crazed killers – [... that described] the plant (inaccurately) as a 'narcotic'.”⁷⁵⁹



Picture 346: The ‘Alī ‘Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ mosque in Ṣan‘ā’ is for many a symbol of nepotism and corruption of the old regime. “*The President said that he built it with his own private money and that Yemenis did not have to pay a riḡāl for it, but from where does he have these amounts of personal funds, was he not a poor farmer's son when he came to power?*”, one can hear people scold about the building.

Like Cairo, Ṣan‘ā’ also has its Liberation Square, the *Maydān al-Taḥrīr*, just outside the ancient old city gate Bāb al-Ṣabāḥ. After the events in Egypt it became a site of symbolic importance also for Yemeni opposition groups. But protest marches to the square were swiftly put down by the regime and demonstrators were hindered from occupying it. Aware of the square’s symbolic importance, the government was quick to fill the *Maydān al-Taḥrīr* with pro-government rallies. Ṣāliḥ supporters were conscribed in ministries and state schools and carted to the square in hundreds of busses and trucks. In the Ministry of Civil Service lists were distributed asking government employees to sign if they wanted to demonstrate for Ṣāliḥ. Naturally few dared to decline in fear of losing their positions.⁷⁶⁰ To limit the access to the square during the morning hours, car traffic was blocked from the streets around the *Taḥrīr* by barricades of barbed wire guarded by heavily armed soldiers. To halve the space that could potentially be used by demonstrators, on February 9th a women’s handicraft exhibition opened its doors on the square’s western side and in the eastern section a tent city hosting a large book fair was put up. Day by day also the number of tents erected to host Ṣāliḥ supporters grew. On February 14th, three large wedding tents of up to 50 meters length were installed. Here pro-government groups could hang out during the afternoons for *qāt* chewing and recover from morning rallies and their clashes with Ṣāliḥ critics. A day later, already 12 tents had sprung up, displacing the book fair and occupying even some side streets. On February 16th, the square was packed with 20 long tents, some hosting up to 800 government supporters, chewing here until late at night. Many of these tents had even colorful plastic *qamariyyas* to enhance the feeling of being in a cozy traditional *maḥraj*. The tents represented different tribes that had come to Ṣan‘ā’ in support of the regime. Large banners decorating the tent entrances gave witness of who had come out to lend the President a hand: The *Sons of Hamdān*, the *Citizens of Khawlān*, the *Families of Banī Hushaysh* or the *Tribes of al-Ḥayma al-Dākhiliyya and al-Khārijīyya*, each with a slogan for democracy or stability. The *Citizens of Jihāna District* gathered under the motto “*No to destruction and killing of innocent lives*” and the *Sons of Arḥab* were united by the call for “*Support to Destruct Terrorism*”. But there were also tents of imaginary organizations that had just emerged for giving proof of the wide support the Ṣāliḥ regime enjoyed within Yemen’s allegedly very pluralist political system. The *Yemeni Organization to Rise up Against Those Seeking Foreign Assistance Against Yemen*, was one of them. In its tent dirty have-nots and day-laborers gathered for a free lunch under the slogan “*Democracy is a Competition to Serve the Nation. No to Chaos and Destruction of Yemen!*” In the entrance of each tribal tent a shaykh would sit – chewing of course, surrounded by his bodyguards. He would hold uplifting speeches with a hoarse voice and swear in the crowd to unity or Ṣāliḥ-style democracy until *qāt* would take its toll (see picture 347 of Shaykh ‘Alī Muḥsin of Arḥab with members of his tribe). By 4 p.m. the congregations in most tents had come to a rest and silence reigned. The *sā’a sulaymaniyya* had commenced, the hour of King Solomon’s infinite wisdom. Those gathered would retreat to silent thoughts and fall into the lethargy produced by *qāt* leaves. At this time also the security personnel guarding Taḥrīr Square would chew. The barricades of barbed wire would be lifted on ‘Abd al-Mughnī Street, the great traffic axis leading past the square. “*Revolutions threaten Yemen only in the mornings, but never after lunch when our country’s true leader, qāt has taken control*”, a commanding officer said jokingly.⁷⁶¹ At nightfall drum music filled the tents and chewers formed circles around a few men performing *jambiyya* dances.

Qāt Payoffs to Reward Partisans

To recompense Ṣāliḥ’s supporters for their dedication, the regime served a free lunch of rice and chicken in the tents and provided bottled water and a bag of *Hamdānī qāt* for each. In addition, a daily subsidy of YR 2,000 (ca. US\$ 9.3) was handed out. On February 14, 2011, the fourth day of consecutive anti-Ṣāliḥ agitations, this allowance was raised to YR 3,000 – four times the average salary of a day laborer.⁷⁶² On some days the government seemed overwhelmed with the huge turnout of have-nots it had provoked with its free handouts of food and *qāt*. The author overheard a conversation between an official organizing the pro-government rallies and the angered shaykh of

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Pictures 347 & 348: Top: Shaykh ‘Alī Muḥsin of Arḥab (second from the right) chewing with fellow tribesmen at Tahrir Square in support of the regime. Bottom: Tents of Ṣāliḥ’s partisans fill Tahrir Square in February 2011.

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Banī Maṭar, Nājī Muḥammad al-Nihmī, who had come to Ṣan‘ā’ with some 60 tribesmen. “*It is now one o’clock and we have been waiting for our money and our qāt since noon*” the elderly shaykh shouted. “*If we will not receive it within the next hour, we will fight for the other side tomorrow.*”⁷⁶³ Rumors had it that also some anti-Ṣāliḥ protesters would join the camp of supporters in the afternoons to collect a meal and enjoy free *qāt*. It is estimated that in February 2012 alone the regime spent some US\$ 15 to 20 million in allowances for protesters at Taḥrīr Square, of which probably a third represented spending on *qāt*.⁷⁶⁴ In late January, Ṣāliḥ had already announced to increase the salary of civil servants and soldiers by 30-40%, representing a monthly raise of about YR 10,000 for average servicemen in order to preserve the loyalty among government ranks and the military (ca. US\$ 47/month). “*No small sum for a country where 40 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day*”, noted *Reuters*.⁷⁶⁵ In February, Ṣāliḥ made further pledges such as creating a fund to employ 25% of university graduates, exempting students of fees, reducing income taxes and adding half a million cases to social insurance.⁷⁶⁶ The opposition was also accused of using *qāt* as a means of mobilization and for manipulating public opinion against the regime. On February 22, 2011, the pro-government *Yemen Observer* reported that Ṣan‘ā’ citizens “*received at least YR 2000 each for participating in the demonstrations and sit-ins organized by the opposition Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) in front of Sana’a University [...]. They also get food and qat to make sure that they stay the whole day*”. Allegedly, even smaller *qāt* sellers joined the protesters since these subsidies represented more than what they could earn in a day by selling *qāt*. Other *qāt* dealers reported to the press that their sales had greatly increased in recent days as “*many more citizens now buy qat because they have money from the organizers of the demonstrations.*”⁷⁶⁷ In an April article Muḥammad al-Kibṣī of the *Yemen Observer* went even further, accusing the opposition of embezzlement to finance the protests:

*“One more suspicious issue is the financing of the protests. It is well known that the thousands of protesters that have been sitting in front of Sana’a University for the past two months are receiving free food and even qat. The question is who has been funding this for thousands of people? Only a well-organized body like the Islamic brothers (al-Islah) can fund such issues. Some media outlets have alleged that Hamid al-Ahmar is the one that provides funds for the protesters and he has said that he would pay the required funds for ensuring the success of the revolution. Also, it is well known that the Islamic brothers in Yemen are controlling the al-Aqsa fund that receives donations from many Yemenis across the country. Documents proved that the fund that is supposed to provide aid to Palestinians has never provided any aid. No one knows where these huge donations pour into [...].”*⁷⁶⁸

An observer of the protest movement qualified this as propaganda:

*“I’m not so sure that getting free lunches and qāt at ‘Change Square’ proves a conspiracy theory. The vast majority of protestors are camping out at their own expense and while some people may be getting donations from benevolent businessmen to stay at ‘Change Square’, the greater part is sacrificing a lot more than they are getting out of it [...]. There is a great atmosphere of sharing and cooperation [...]. We know two young brothers who take turns every week staying in a tent, because someone has to watch over the shop in their home town an hour outside Ṣan‘ā’ while the other volunteers at the protest camp. They would laugh at the idea of someone paying them to do this [...]. I know of women who are selling their gold jewelry to support their husbands in the protests. The last three Fridays the pro-democracy demonstrators have moved the Friday prayer from ‘Change Square’ over to the 60 Meter Road to have more space and to mobilize more people. If Ḥamīd al-Aḥmar or anyone else was going to pay all these people, up to 1.5 million of them, even 10 riyāls each he would be broke a hundred times over. Ṣāliḥ can barely manage to mobilize some twenty thousand supporters on Fridays while the daily anti-Ṣāliḥ marches easily reach the hundreds of thousands in many cities. Businessmen and companies are contributing discreetly to the revolution, albeit mostly through treating injured demonstrators at private hospitals. Government hospitals are refusing to treat the injured protestors [...].”*⁷⁶⁹

Also Qaḥṭān al-Aṣḥāhī, Policy Team Leader of the USAID’s Responsive Governance Project, doubted that it was *qāt* that attracted people to the protest rallies:

“The opposition parties do not have the financial means to hand out qāt to masses of people. Maybe to just a few as a compensation for their services. They are bringing eloquent people from all over the country as speakers in the rallies. Many of them are teachers. I met a group of about a hundred

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teachers mostly from Ta‘izz and Ibb in a cheap restaurant in Sūq al-‘Aṣīd, eating the poor man’s lunch ‘Aṣīd.⁷⁷⁰ They all had huge bundles of qāt under their arms that had been given to them by the organizers of the protests. As they had come as guests to Ṣan‘ā’ it is only natural that their hosts provided for them.⁷⁷¹

At Ṣan‘ā’ University, where the phalanx of the anti-Ṣāliḥ opposition had been demonstrating, after days of unsuccessful protests, self-critical undertones were also heard. The tenor of these voices was summed up – not without sarcasm – by Rashād ‘Abd al-Ghanī, a student speaker of the Faculty of Medicine:

“As long as qāt is more important to us than politics there cannot be any true revolution in Yemen. We are being instrumentalized far too easily by free gifts of qāt. But you shall see, when the day has come that qāt will disappear from our markets, a fierce revolution will break out all over the country! But I fear that its aim will not be democracy. It will rather be a distribution battle, a bloody war over the last bundles of qāt. And you shall also see, the new President will not be he who brings freedom and development to Yemen, but he who succeeds to bring back qāt into our cheeks.”⁷⁷²

Another protester joked: *“If Yemenis want to get rid of the President, they simply have to boycott the qāt markets for a week or two. Then the tribes will run dry of funds and come to Ṣan‘ā’ and chase Ṣāliḥ out of office.”⁷⁷³*

On internet blogs, sympathizers of the Youth Revolution called for overcoming *qāt*, *“It’s a little price to pay oh people of Yemen! Qat has robbed you as much as Ali [President Ṣāliḥ] has robbed you [...] We need to recognize that as long as Yemen continues to chew qat [...] there will not be any guts nor glory for it [...]!”⁷⁷⁴* But these were scattered voices that went unheard. The Iṣlāḥ party, representing the interests of many of the *qāt* producing highland tribes, plainly denied that *qāt* had anything to do with protests melting away at lunch time: *“It’s not the time for long protests yet. These protests were a message in the first stage. Later will come the long protests”*, Muḥammad al-Sa‘dī, the party’s undersecretary said.⁷⁷⁵ *Qāt* was defended and attributed an important role for mobilization. Activists pointed out that it served as a *“social lubricant”* that helps to fuel the movement against Ṣāliḥ: *“Sure we use Facebook like kids in other countries, but a lot of the protests that were organized, students planned at khat sessions. Khat has a positive role in political mobilization,”* 23-year old university student Fakhr al-‘Azab said.⁷⁷⁶

Cheap *Qāt* for De-Escalation in Southern Yemen

The violent riots that had befallen Yemen after raising fuel prices in 2005 had taught the government that de-escalation had to start in *qāt* markets. During the days of violent anti-government protests in February 2011, outside many of the capital’s bigger *qāt* markets military vehicles with heavy machine guns mounted on the truck beds had taken position.⁷⁷⁷ *Qāt* markets such as that of the Ḥadda and al-Ḥaṣaba neighborhoods with their large gatherings of *qāt* sellers and clients had in 2005 been the germ cell of anti-government agitation. From here protest marches and violence had spread throughout Ṣan‘ā’ (see chapter VIII. A). Thus when fighting between the government and tribes escalated in late May 2011 in Ṣan‘ā’, a number of *qāt* markets in locations considered to be of strategic importance were closed down (see below).

In Yemen’s south, an area having called during the past years ever more violently for secession, the government manipulated *qāt* prices and *qāt* supply in the hope this could help to keep people busy chewing and thus quiet. During February 2011, *qāt* prices dropped to an unprecedented low in Aden and the Ḥaḍramawt despite the winter season when *qāt* is usually scarce and expensive. Aden chewers reported that they had never seen *qāt* so plentiful in the markets, as in the days following the euphoria of overthrowing the Egyptian Mubārak regime.⁷⁷⁸ While in highland cities such as Ṣan‘ā’ or Ta‘izz it would be rather difficult to manipulate the price of *qāt* through government subsidies, as too many small agents and sellers are involved in its marketing, it is fairly easy to control the *qāt* flow to the

desert areas of Aden and Ḥaḍramawt. As *qāt* cannot be grown in these arid lowlands and since long-distance *qāt* transport is quite expensive, the trade is monopolized by comparatively few wholesalers originating from Yemen's highlands who can rather easily be induced by payoffs to manipulate the market (see chapter VIII. C). At least initially the plan seems to have worked. Even if the regime could not wholly prevent demonstrations in the south the turnout in February anti-government rallies was much lower than in demonstrations staged against unity during the preceding years. The initial protests were also described as much less violent than expected.⁷⁷⁹

Chewing for a New Era

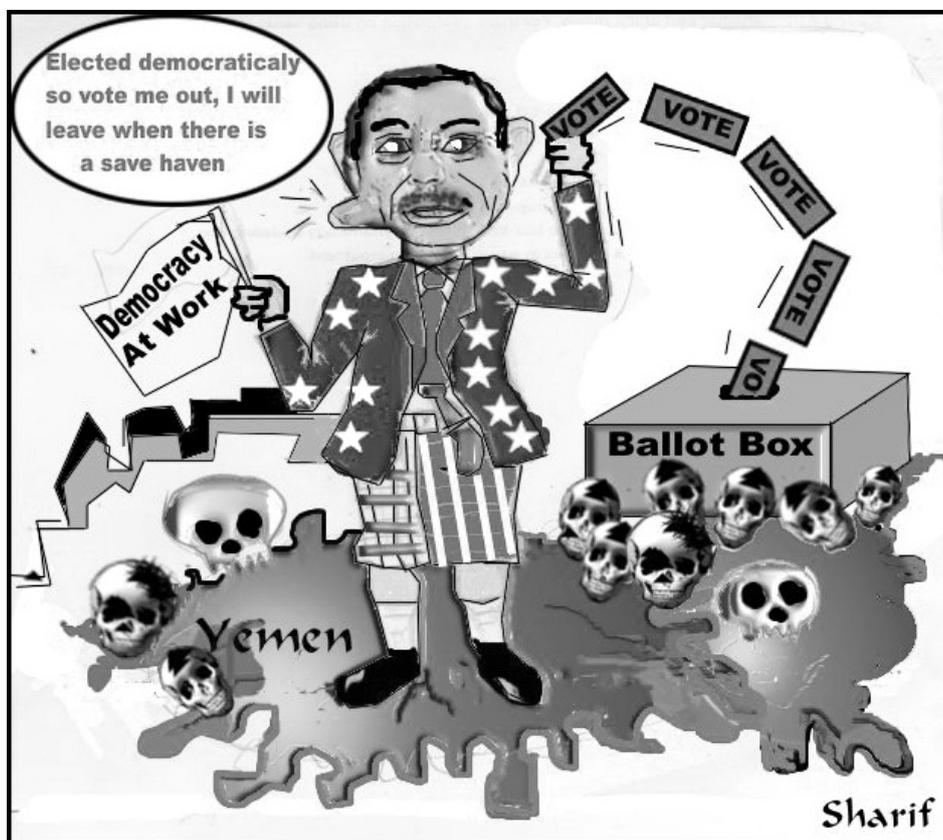
Qāt, which analysts had held in the initial phase of the protests responsible for stemming change, was soon to become the very motor for forming the new society that emerged in the discussions and minds of protesters. While in early February 2011 protests had still ended at noon as activists retreated to buy and chew *qāt*, by late February more and more people would remain camping at the protests sites and consume their *qāt* rations in the emerging tent city. As an anonymous observer commented, people also adjusted their chewing habits and were now “willing to go on 3-4 hour marches starting at 4 pm, with *qāt* in their mouths instead of being nailed to their seats”.⁷⁸⁰



Picture 349: The protesters' camp at “Change Square” in February 2011 with photos of ‘martyrs’ of the revolution. Before long a series of *qāt* markets emerged here.

New *qāt* markets burgeoned around Ṣan‘ā’ University, as demand for the leaves increased at this epicenter of the protests. *Qāt* had been relatively costly until mid-February due to the rising demand and the cold weather persisting in the preceding months that made irrigation in many highland areas risky due to frost. With rising temperatures and with many farmers wanting to capitalize on the protests, *qāt* prices collapsed in late February. By intensive irrigation of their *qāt* farms in the dry

plateau and basin areas of Nihm, Khawlān, Arḥab, Banī Ḥushaysh and Hamdān, farmers had inundated the Ṣan‘ā’ market with *qāt*, rapidly leading to an oversupply and bringing prices for a bag of medium quality *qaṭal* down from YR 2,000 in February to around YR 800 in March (from ca. US\$ 9.30 to \$3.70).⁷⁸¹



Picture 350: Anti-Ṣāliḥ collage circulating on the internet in June 2011. The president stands in puddles of blood at the ballot box with a *qāt* filled cheek, wearing a suit in the colors of the US flag. The caricature denounces America’s long silence and backing of the Ṣāliḥ regime.

Qāt chews also helped to forge new alliances in the anti-Ṣāliḥ camp as the agitation and communal chewing sessions soon brought together people from all walks of life and all areas of Yemen. By the end of February, the protesters who until then had represented for the most part the young urban population received reinforcements from the countryside, when several of Yemen’s major tribes joined the uprising. The protest camp at Ṣan‘ā’ University before long developed into a city within the city. An agglomeration of tents, extending for over six kilometers from the old university near Zubayrī Street along Ṣan‘ā’’s several lane Ring Road and into countless side streets past the new university as well as onto Cairo Street, from where it wound further west, reaching the 60 Meter Road. Reportedly, the tent city had a permanent population of around 100,000 that rose to 300,000 on weekends.⁷⁸² Its center was the intersection at the Ṣan‘ā’ University’s main gate quickly dubbed by the protesters *Maydān al-Taghyīr* (‘Change Square’) – a play of words as the name recalled the similar sounding *Maydān al-Taḥrīr* that had been monopolized by the pro-Ṣāliḥ camp. The camp at ‘Change Square’ in Ṣan‘ā’ was very much self-sufficient. It had restaurants, communal kitchens, schools, a legal council house, sanitary installations, children playgrounds, a hospital, and –

not to forget – its own *qāt* markets open 24 hours a day. In the tents, art exhibitions, political awareness seminars and skill-building workshops were held, concerts were given and charity campaigns organized. Many of the tents were equipped with television sets and a wi-fi network connected the protesters with the outside world.⁷⁸³ Soon an executive body was set up that represented the protesters politically and was in charge of administrative concerns in the camp, the ‘Coordinating Council of the Youth Revolution of Change’ (CCYRC). Each day protests against the regime were staged at the university gates, speeches held demanding the ouster of President Ṣāliḥ, and marches of a peaceful character organized that often ended in bloodshed as they came under the fire of snipers or encountered thugs in the pay of the regime, armed with clubs and knives. The genesis of a peaceful youth movement that had emerged in Yemen, a country bristling with weapons, fascinated foreign observers. It was the fearlessness and perseverance with which unarmed protesters marched day after day against machine guns, mortars and nerve gas⁷⁸⁴ that earned it world-wide respect and the young journalist and pro-democracy activist Tawakkul Karmān as its protagonist the Nobel Peace Prize. The Emirates-based *National* painted an idyllic picture of this brave new world:

*“The camp has thrown together Yemenis of all political colors, classes and tribes. Living side-by-side in difficult conditions and constantly attacked by forces loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, they have found ways to settle tribal feuds and other differences to rise above the ethnic, political and geographic fault lines that have existed for years between Yemenis. The carpeted tents have cinder-block walls to keep out rainwater, some have shade plants inside and out, running water from tanks and regular food supplies from political parties and benevolent businessmen. Power generators provide the tents with electricity, a necessity since city power comes on for only an hour or two every day. They gather for the five daily prayers at the university’s mosque complex, most of which has been turned into a hospital. In the early afternoon, many gather to chew qat, a mildly addictive stimulant, debating the future of their country after Mr. Saleh is gone. Many spend their evenings on the internet’s social networks, tweeting about the uprising or posting videos and photographs of the day’s events.”*⁷⁸⁵

It was in *qāt* sessions that tens of thousands of hopeful men and women – mostly in gender separated tents – developed a vision of a new republic. It was here that demands were formulated and that in hours-long debates a consensus for a Yemen after Ṣāliḥ was built with *qāt* as a bargaining tool.⁷⁸⁶ In April 2011, over 150 youth movements from around the country had elaborated in communal *qāt* sessions a document entitled “*Demands of the Revolution*”:

*“We affirm that we will continue our peaceful struggle in the squares until we achieve these demands [...]. The main demand is to dismiss President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his relatives from their leading positions. The subsequent formation of an interim Presidential Council that should be composed of five civilian members. They must be unanimously chosen and cannot be senior leaders from the former regime. The duties of this Council will include the day-to-day management of the country during the transitional period. Council Members will not be permitted to run as candidates for the posts of President of the Republic or Prime Minister until a full election cycle has passed...”*⁷⁸⁷

The activists further called for a new constitution and demanded the dissolution of Parliament, of the *Shūra* Council and of local councils. The regime rejected these demands as much as calls by the established opposition coalition, the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), for Ṣāliḥ to cede power to vice-president ‘Abdu Rabbuh Maṣṣūr Hādī. Yaḥyā al-Rā’ī, a leading official of Ṣāliḥ’s GPC denounced the JMP’s demands as illusionary and as having “*been drafted during a qat session*”.⁷⁸⁸ Protesters laughed at this comment: “*Of course they were! Has Yemeni politics ever been thought up anywhere but in qāt sessions?*” The majority of protesters in ‘Change Square’ rejected the JMP initiative as not far reaching enough. Also the accords elaborated by the Gulf Cooperation Council and supported by the West which were to grant Ṣāliḥ immunity from prosecution for any crimes if he left power were hotly debated and finally scrapped in the protesters’ *qāt* sessions.⁷⁸⁹ Despite ever larger crowds taking to the streets, Ṣāliḥ remained obstinate as became apparent in a speech of May 13:

“Let it be clear that the one who aims and seeks the power, it should be through the elections boxes, and not through killing innocent people, and cutting off roads, and messing with food, water, and fuel and all local economy assets that the Yemeni people are living from [...]. Although the JMP is playing

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*with fire, and is not a political party, but rather a party of troublemakers, we reiterate our call for them to meet and discuss [...] to engage into dialogue under any umbrella and any terms...*⁷⁹⁰

In posters displayed at Change Square and distributed over the internet this ‘ballot box’ theme invoked by President Ṣāliḥ became more and more frequent. As rising numbers of protesters fell victim to attacks by the regime’s forces, images of Ṣāliḥ standing in puddles of blood and on heaps of skulls at the ballot box were circulated, his cheek often swollen with *qāt* (see e.g. picture 350). Tents in Change Square were henceforth decorated with an ever growing number of portraits of men and women killed by the security forces. *Qāt* was always in the first row in the confrontations. Photos of protestors went around the world, having painted their faces in Yemen’s national colors like American Indians on the warpath – with dangerously bulging cheeks. In March 2011, *al-Jazeera* showed pictures of wounded activists with blood stained clothes and battered limbs, holding on tightly to *qāt* bags and sticking the bitter leaves into mouths contorted with pain.⁷⁹¹



Picture 351: Soldiers of General ‘Alī Muḥsin al-Aḥmar’s renegade First Armored Division chewing *qāt* at a checkpoint in al-Ḥaṣāba (July 2011).

The ongoing protests and increasing violence widened the rifts within the Sanḥān clan, the Ḥāshid tribal federation and the army which had for decades been the basis of power of the Ṣāliḥ regime. They had emerged over the past years not last as a result of the Ṣa‘da war and the question of President Ṣāliḥ’s succession (see chapter VIII. E). When on March 18th 53 protesters were killed by snipers, General ‘Alī Muḥsin al-Aḥmar, a Sanḥān kinsman of the president and Commander of the

First Armored Division revoked his support for Ṣāliḥ and vowed to henceforth protect the protesters.⁷⁹² His troops occupied a large area of northwestern Ṣan‘ā’, extending from the ‘Kentucky Junction’ on Zubayrī Street along the Ring Road and Hā’il Street north to Ṣan‘ā’ University and from there to Madhbāḥ, al-Imān University and to the Ṣan‘ā’ radio station. The de-facto split of the city in several spheres of influence with trenches being dug and barricades being erected in many neighborhoods had all the potential for escalation into full-fledged civil war. The prolonged unrest and the hardship suffered by many residents of the embattled areas had a profound influence on chewing habits. While some people chose to reduce their *qāt* consumption due to the financial strain the economic crisis had put on them, many who had not used *qāt* before the outbreak of hostilities or who had chewed only occasionally now took up the habit on a regular basis to better cope with the psychological pressures and the enormous emotional drain. Khaṭṭāb al-Ḥimyarī, media officer for the *al-Najāt Foundation for Fighting Qāt* said that as people resorted more and more “to *qat* to forget their problems and concerns”, the NGO had to stop all its activities. In vain the foundation had tried to raise awareness on the dangers of *qāt* during the first months of the uprising, but the protesters were not willing to listen or to take part in any campaigns as they “have a deep conviction that *qat* keeps protesters at the sit-ins and makes them more steadfast.”⁷⁹³ Qaḥṭān al-Aṣḥabī of USAID’s Responsive Governance Project observed that chewing had become an even more common social activity during the crisis:

*“Few were seen chewing solitary in these days of rage, neither on the opposition side, nor among Ṣāliḥ’s supporters. Even those indifferent of politics now took part in communal qāt chews to vividly discuss the protests and the wave of revolutions in the Arab world. Until the power cuts paralyzed the country this was often done in front of a TV, watching al-Jazeera news. With the electricity crisis as of March and the absence of TV news, chewing gatherings became even more important for the exchange of information. Everyone could contribute his part to these discussions about what he had heard or seen. Initially, even the heavy street fighting in the northern parts of Ṣan‘ā’ could not stop these get-togethers. In this situation in either political camp no one would have dared to question the use of qāt or to lobby against the crop. This would have been a killing issue for the political process.”*⁷⁹⁴

Tribesmen Take Control of Northern Ṣan‘ā’

In late February 2011, the leaders of the Ḥāshid and Bakil federations summoned tens of thousands of tribesmen in ‘Amrān to discuss the stance the tribes were to take towards the protests. They decided to join the revolution. One of the leaders of Ḥāshid, Shaykh Ḥusayn bin ‘Abd Allāh al-Aḥmar, son of the late Shaykh ‘Abd Allāh al-Aḥmar, declared his resignation from the GPC at the ‘Amrān gathering to protest against the regime’s violent repression of the protests: “I’m announcing my resignation from the ruling party, a party of corruption, and will be joining the revolution of the young people until this regime is toppled.”⁷⁹⁵ Many tribesmen poured into Ṣan‘ā’ in the following weeks to join the protests – a development not to the liking of all the urban activists, who feared their revolution could be ‘hijacked’ by al-Ḥashid and the tribes. When on May 22, Ṣāliḥ refused to sign a GCC brokered transition agreement heavy clashes broke out in Ṣan‘ā’ between tribal fighters loyal to Ṣādiq al-Aḥmar, paramount shaykh of Ḥāshid, and government troops. Large parts of the al-Ḥaṣaba neighborhood were devastated in the street fighting that ensued after President Ṣāliḥ ordered al-Aḥmar’s arrest. Mortar and artillery fire destroyed the palace of al-Aḥmar, the Yemēnia tower and parts of the Ministry of Water and Environment. Dozens of tribal fighters and government troops were killed, bringing the country to the brink of civil war.⁷⁹⁶ Shaykh al-Aḥmar’s men, supported by armored vehicles of the renegade First Armored Brigade were able to occupy the *Saba* news agency, the GPC headquarters, the Ministry of Interior, and the headquarters of Ṣan‘ā’’s water utilities.⁷⁹⁷

The government reacted by cutting the electricity and water supply of the al-Ḥaṣaba area and closed a number of major *qāt* markets across the city to avoid large gatherings that could be a threat to security. All markets in the neighborhoods around the Presidential Palace were closed, notably in the

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Saba‘in area, in al-Şāfiya, Bayt Mi‘yād, al-Aşbaḥī, Shumayla, and Ḥadda. Qaḥṭān al-Aşbaḥī reported on June 3rd by phone to the author:

“Qāt markets near other strategic locations have also been closed down, such as the Thawra market in -Ḥaṣaba that is located not far from on the Airport Road and the Ministries of Interior and Electricity. Since yesterday no one is allowed anymore to enter Şan‘ā’. Security forces are trying to seal off the city as Ḥāshid tribesmen attempt to enter the capital to come to the aid of Shaykh al-Aḥmar, who is attacked and besieged by troops loyal to President Şāliḥ. Also all qāt shipments were stopped and qāt on sale in the city was much reduced. Only qāt grown within the city limits such as Ḍulā‘ī from Shamlān and Wādī Żahr and a few other varieties were found. This is the first time ever that qāt is stopped from entering Şan‘ā’. Qāt prices went up immediately, especially as the regime bought much of the little qāt available in the city for its elite troops defending the presidential palace and other important locations. Already a few days ago qāt from the western regions such as al-Ḥayma and Ḥarāz had disappeared from the markets due to heavy fighting on the Şan‘ā’-al-Hudayda road between government troops and the al-Ḥayma tribes, who tried to enter the city in order to join the anti-Şāliḥ forces.”

http://www.alahmar.net/

الرئيسية اليوم الصور دليل المواقع بحث راسلنا

آخر الأخبار: مكت

اليمين الارض والانسان
القبيلة
الشيخ عبد الله
الشيخ صادق
الاخبار
المنتدى الإسيوعي
تقارير الزيارات
قالوا عنه
كتب وإصدارات
كلمات وخطابات
مقابلات صحفية
بعد رحيل الشيخ عبدالله

ذكرى رحيل الشيخ عبدالله
الذكرى الأولى
الذكرى الثانية
الذكرى الثالثة

الشيخ عبد الله بن حسين الأحمر رحمه الله في آخر صورة رسمية له في مايو 2007م وسط أنجاله الحشرة عن يمينه الشيخ صادق بن الشيخ حميد عن يساره الشيخ حمير بن الشيخ حسين ومن الخلف من اليسار همدان ، هاشم ، حاشد ، بكيل ، منجج ، فحطان

Picture 352: Website of the al-Aḥmar clan.

On the same day the presidential palace came under attack. The mosque in the highly secured compound in southern Şan‘ā’ was the target of a bombing, killing several government officials and severely wounding dozens of high ranking members of the regime, including the Prime Minister, his

deputy, the President of the *Shūra* Council, the Governor of Ṣan‘ā’ and ‘Alī ‘Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ himself. The President was much more seriously wounded than initially disclosed. With a shrapnel wound near his heart, a collapsed lung and burns on over 40% of his body he was flown to Saudi Arabia for treatment the following day under the cheers of protesters.⁷⁹⁸ Vice President ‘Abdu Rabbuh Maṣūr Hādī took over as acting commander in chief and president. Ṣāliḥ’s son, his nephew and his half-brother remained however in their strategic positions as heads of the Special Guard, the Political Security Organization and the air force. Ṣāliḥ would return to Yemen on September 23 after three months of treatment, destroying the hopes of many pro-democracy activists for change.

The Fuel Shortage and its Impact on the Economy and on *Qāt* Consumption

In March 2011, the oil pipeline linking the Mārib production sites with the Red Sea had been bombed, cutting the flow of crude oil exports by an estimated 125,000 barrels/day through the Ra’s ‘Īsā terminal near al-Ḥudayda. Consequently, several foreign petroleum companies had to suspend their operations. Also, the Aden refinery could no longer be supplied with crude oil, so it had to halt its gasoline and diesel production for the first time since the 1993 civil war.⁷⁹⁹ This led a serious fuel shortage across Yemen and put into motion a spiraling of prices and the emergence of a black market. In June, a liter of gasoline was sold for YR 500 as compared to a pre-crisis price of YR 75. At gas stations several kilometer long vehicle queues formed with drivers waiting for fuel for up to five days. In June, Saudi Arabia came to Yemen’s relief by granting the country three million barrels of crude oil that were delivered to the Aden refinery.⁸⁰⁰ Also power lines from the Mārib gas turbine to Ṣan‘ā’ suffered repeated attacks so that the power situation in the capital deteriorated with electricity coming on for as little as one or two hours a day. As the Mārib-Ṣan‘ā’ highway was cut by the unrest in Nihm district, deliveries of cooking gas also came to a halt. While the government accused tribes affiliated to al-Īslāḥ and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) of sabotage, the opposition accused the government of deliberately “torturing” the population with power cuts and shortages of fuel and cooking gas so that it would call for the return of President Ṣāliḥ and put pressure on the revolutionaries to end their rebellion.⁸⁰¹

The fuel and electricity crisis paralyzed most sectors of Yemen’s economy. Some 800 industrial plants – 75-80% of Yemen’s factories – had to suspend their work or operated at a much reduced capacity. Also many small businesses operated on the verge of collapse. They received their wares only erratically, could no longer cool them, had to sell them at exorbitant prices or had to shut their shops at nightfall due to the blackouts. By June 2011, an estimated 150,000 workers had lost their jobs and by October it was believed that unemployment had reached 60%.⁸⁰² The lack of electricity and medication also led to the breakdown of many healthcare services.⁸⁰³ In November 2011, the government reported that the 10-month political crisis had lost Yemen’s economy more than US\$ 10 billion. According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, imports dropped by 80% following the start of the fuel crisis with severe repercussions for Yemen as a country importing some 90% of its goods.⁸⁰⁴ Spreading insecurity, the deterioration of the riyal exchange rate as well as the increasing reluctance of exporters to dispatch wares on credit to a crisis country were to blame.

Furthermore, the agricultural sector was severely affected by the crisis. Many farmers lost their crops as they could not obtain diesel to run their pumps for irrigation or as they could no longer afford to buy the ever more expensive fuel. Farmers not owning wells and being dependent on water deliveries suffered as prices for trucked water (10 m³) increased from YR 1,200 in January 2011 to YR 10,000 by June that year. Consequently, some 90% of farmers in the al-Ḥudayda area reported in mid-2011 to have ceased farming activities.⁸⁰⁵ As the transport sector was badly affected by fuel bottlenecks and by frequent roadblocks, a much diminished availability of agricultural products in the markets and sharp price increases were the result. By October 2011, prices for potatoes and tomatoes had increased by 200% and 300%, respectively. Prices for wheat flour were up by 41% and rice and bread prices had increased by about 50%. Cooking gas cylinders – when indeed they could be found – were sold at 170% more than their official price.⁸⁰⁶ Even before the start of the ‘Youth Revolution’

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over a third of Yemen's population did not have enough to eat – as *IRIN* points out – but diminished access to water and food greatly exacerbated the nutritional situation. By mid-2011, 43% of households were reported to regularly skip meals to cope with escalating food prices. According to WFP many vulnerable families turned to *qāt* to stem hunger pains.⁸⁰⁷ Having carried out a survey in al-Hudayda governorate in July 2011, Oxfam reported that a fifth of respondents had lost their jobs since the start of the political upheaval and that 52% faced decreased incomes. 19% of families had to withdraw their children from school so that they could find work to support the family. 64% of households had resorted to skipping meals and 29% borrowed money to survive.⁸⁰⁸

With diesel prices escalating, many farmers of the highlands simply stopped irrigating crops of low or marginal profitability and shifted their resources entirely towards irrigating *qāt* that even during the crisis promised high returns. This further increased food insecurity in Yemen. While many rural communities could no longer secure their food and water needs or had to cope with contaminated water for drinking purposes, the high returns of *qāt* permitted farmers to purchase diesel on the black market and regularly irrigate their fields with clean groundwater. In the time of most severe fuel bottlenecks, *qāt* farmers also benefitted from the qualities of their 'wonder crop'. The drought resistance of *qāt* helped them overcome the diesel shortage, while farmers of vegetables or fruits lost their yields once they had to suspend irrigation. While the latter would have to wait for the next agricultural season to make any profits, *qāt* farmers could simply start irrigating their fields again, once they had secured fuel. Within a few weeks time they could produce marketable *qāt* leaves again. As the *Yemen Post* pointed out in an article entitled "*A nation subdued by qat*", "*qat producers managed to absorb the increased cost of diesel [...] because their margin of profit is so high*". Reducing their profits to some extent and not passing on increased production cost to consumers helped them to keep the market for *qāt* stable.⁸⁰⁹ Another factor that kept the *qāt* sector in balance was that many Yemenis were willing to reduce their food intake and subsist on bread and yoghurt for a time, but were not willing to cut down on *qāt*, as the *Yemen Post* notes:

*"With more people losing their jobs everyday nationwide as more businesses either closed down or downsized their operations, Yemenis had to face a serious cash flow problem. With no to little income per family, many families have been reported to go hungry by humanitarian organizations [...]. But if Yemenis did do with less, qat was not on the list of things to give up, quite the opposite in fact. In the most bizarre twist, Yemenis started to chew more, relying on qat to keep hunger and depression at bay. Qat became the nation's coping mechanism, a safe haven of sorts where poverty and the threats of war had no sway. And true, with about 50 YER a day, a Yemeni could afford a few hours of oblivion."*⁸¹⁰

Despite the precarious supply situation, the collapse of the public water and electricity supply and the deterioration of health and educational services, the daily supply of *qāt* remained ensured. The *qāt* supply was even kept up in the combat zones of Ṣan'ā' city. In the afternoons government snipers would reportedly leave their hideouts to gather at the markets to buy *qāt*.⁸¹¹ In April 2011, Qaḥṭān al-Aṣḥāḥī, a former Director of the Central Water Monitoring Unit (MAI), reported the following from Ṣan'ā':

*"Nothing is working here anymore, but qāt works fine. We have no vegetables left in the markets, but qāt is everywhere. We have no cooking gas, no petrol, restaurants are closed, the roads to some governorates are cut off, Ṣan'ā' is divided between conflicting parties, many agencies have stopped working, no traffic system. Everything is a mess with no hope of improving. But qāt markets are open and chewing has not decreased despite many people having lost their sources of income. Indeed the qāt business is going well these days, prices are cheaper than earlier, but many qāt sellers have reduced the size of qāt bundles. It seems easier for buyers to accept smaller bunches at the same price as before than bunches of the same size at higher prices. All qāt varieties are available, qāt even comes from 'Amrān and Ṣa'da with good low prices despite the fighting. Qāt is again going to Socotra Island without any control."*⁸¹²

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In August Volker Mantel of Media Design-Şan‘ā’ reported from the Yemeni capital:

*“Qāt prices have been quite stable during the past months in Şan‘ā’, even when the fuel crisis was at its worst. Prices have dropped in early August to as much as a third of the previous level as the rainy season has set in. While a bundle of good quality qāt was sold for YR 3,000 in July, it is now sold for YR 1,000. When we drove through Şan‘ā’ after ifţār yesterday, we saw scores of soldiers of all political camps sitting in the streets chewing. Also at the roadblocks where the hostile troops are facing each other everyone is chewing. There is shooting everywhere, but in qāt markets business is as usual. Qāt comes from all parts of the country, even from Arĥab where the government is now launching operations against the tribes. There is also qāt from Şa‘da, but its quality is low. Ĥawthī rebels walk freely in the city now, there are no more laws in Şan‘ā’.”*⁸¹³

A *Yemen Post* commentator summed up the country’s situation in October 2011: “As illogical as it might sound for many, qat is about the only thing that hasn’t changed in Yemen, in spite of the deaths, the political, economic, industrial, power, and employment crisis.”⁸¹⁴



Picture 353: With Şan‘ā’ being besieged by anti-Şāliĥ tribesmen in May and June 2011, *qāt* could no longer reach the city from beyond the security perimeter and was soon in short supply. Here a beleaguered *qāt* seller’s car at the southern gates of the capital in Sanĥān.

Revoluting Against *Qāt* and Other ‘Little Dictators’

In late 2011, the revolution went into a second phase. After having initially been directed against Şāliĥ and his 33-year rule, it now also targeted the “*little dictators*” – his wider entourage and his clients in what was dubbed the “parallel revolution”. In December 2011, low-ranking airmen went on a several month strike demanding the replacement of Major General Muĥammad Şāliĥ, half-brother of the ousted president (the general was replaced on April 7, 2012). At the same time protests were staged against General ‘Alī al-Şāĥīr, head of the Moral Guidance Authority of Yemen’s armed forces, whom

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soldiers accused of corruption. Also the *Saba* news agency was rocked by protests against its chairman Ṭāriq al-Shāmī, who served simultaneously as spokesperson of Ṣāliḥ's GPC. In the *Yemen TV Channel* a fist fight erupted in late December that routed out its director Ḥusayn BāSalīm, who had announced that those employees who had visited the protestors' camp at 'Change Square' would be fired.⁸¹⁵ On December 28, employees of the Political Security Organization denied their head of finance access to the PSO premises demanding his sacking due to allegations of corruption. Unrest in government institutions quickly spread to other large Yemeni cities. Also in al-Ḥudayda civil servants staged protests and demanded the replacement of the heads of the Traffic Department, the Electricity Company, the Naval Academy and the Oil Company, all of whom they accused of corruption.⁸¹⁶

In early January 2012, Yemeni activists decided that *qāt* should be ranked among the 'little dictators' and called for a "revolution on one's self". *Qāt*, they declared, was "as great a menace to Yemen's progress as decades of government corruption and misrule, and even harder to topple than Saleh".⁸¹⁷ On January 12, 2012, thousands of people followed the boycott campaign entitled "A Day Without *Qāt*". The event was kicked off a week earlier by Hind al-Iryānī through Twitter and Facebook.⁸¹⁸ Over social media channels the Lebanon-based blogger had voiced her belief that changing Yemen's *qāt* habit would be "a crucial step to achieving political change."⁸¹⁹ Initially, the campaign attracted foremost members of the Yemeni Diaspora living in Sweden and Great Britain, the United States or Canada. Via the internet they shared studies and articles on *qāt*, cartoons and news clips, and started to engage in a competition for designing awareness materials that could be displayed and distributed in a prospective street campaign. Among these was an artwork by Wijḍān al-Junayd entitled "Since I love Yemen and its land, I will stop chewing *qāt* for one day".

It depicted a jawbone in Yemen's national colors and in the country's shape. From the row of teeth spilled the water wasted by *qāt* farming. Another illustration by Fawzī Yaḥyā that was widely circulated on the internet recalled a pirate flag and was entitled "Say No to *Qāt*". Under a skull wearing a fine Yemeni turban two bunches of *qāt* twigs were arranged like crossbones (see pictures 448 & 449). When the campaign was endorsed by Yemen's Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakkul Karmān, the Yemeni news channel *Suhayl* (run by Shaykh Ḥamīd al-Aḥmar), and by Muḥammed Abū Luḥūm, a key opposition politician, the idea of a *qāt* boycott day gained ground in the protest camps of Ṣan'ā' and Ta'izz.⁸²⁰ According to some media even Vice-President 'Abdu Rabbuh Maṣṣūr Hādī, who would replace Ṣāliḥ as Yemen's president a month later, had lent his hand to the campaign.⁸²¹

On Thursday, January 12 – the start of the Yemeni weekend – and thus the main day of weekly chewing, activists of the Coordinating Council of the Youth Revolution of Change barred the access to the protest camps for *qāt* chewers. 'Change Square' of Ṣan'ā' and 'Freedom Square' of Ta'izz were decorated with the anti-*qāt* posters that had been produced by online campaigners. Leaflets and headbands with anti-*qāt* slogans were distributed. In Ta'izz, protesters visited *qāt* markets disseminating anti-*qāt* messages via loudspeaker to discourage customers from buying *qāt*. Anti-*qāt* activists collected diverse video testimonies from people following the boycott call and uploaded them on *youtube*. Many of the interviewed declared that they perceived *qāt* as dangerous to their country as dictatorship. One activist blamed outgoing President Ṣāliḥ for deliberately spreading the *qāt* culture to all areas of Yemen "to drive people away from politics". The introduction to the video clip outlined the creed of the young activists that is reminiscent of a constitution:

*We the people of Yemen have proven to the world that we are capable of change!
And we all know that the qāt plant is harming our way of life.
So we are calling to every Yemeni to stop chewing qāt for one day on January 12.
And we are telling the world, we the people of Yemen love our beloved country!
And we seek change!*⁸²²

The *Yemen Observer* wrote with enthusiasm that campaigners were "looking at bringing forward a new image for Yemen, brighter and full of hope, set on building a modern civil state".⁸²³ The campaign received media attention far beyond the Arab World, with print and online articles

appearing in South Africa and Canada. TV and radio documentations were aired in Germany and India.⁸²⁴ Beyond the protest squares and beyond the circles of Yemeni intellectuals the campaign had little real effect. Most *qāt* sellers interviewed on the boycott day across Ṣan‘ā’ declared they had not heard of the event and that their sales were normal. Only in the immediate vicinity of the protest camps, *qāt* merchants reported that their turnover was down by half.⁸²⁵



Picture 354: Facebook page of the “*Day Without Qāt*” campaign on January 12, 2012.

Anti-*qāt* activists were quite realistic about options of change, saying that it would be impossible to ban *qāt*. But they expressed the hope that consumption could be reduced citing as a good example the PDRY’s *qāt* law that had limited chewing to weekends. Wafā’ al-Walīdī, one of the initiators of the campaign in Ta‘izz, believed that the campaign against *qāt* “was launched at the perfect time. People who had given up on the prospect of change had their spirits lifted.”⁸²⁶ Indeed the campaign boosted the ego of anti-*qāt* activists, created new alliances and new forms of mobilization. The online documentation of the campaign was visited by tens of thousands of internet users within just a few days showing impressively how powerful new media can be utilized for awareness-raising. Yemen-born Hind al-Iryānī who had sparked the campaign from her Beirut domicile was astonished over the great resonance her online call had triggered: She believes the campaign was so successful because

many organizations that were against *qāt* seized the opportunity to relaunch the debate on *qāt* that had been silenced by the revolution:

*“I have never seen Yemenis talk about qat like they did during the campaign. I never planned for any campaign, but [now] we are trying to include a lesson about qat in school curriculums that talks about its negative impact on the economy, agriculture and health. We are hoping that the new minister in Yemen will listen to our request in light of the ongoing changes.”*⁸²⁷

Shortly after the boycott day the Yemeni *qāt* protester community set another ambitious target for action – April 12 was declared as a day to rally “*Towards Government Offices Without Qāt*”.⁸²⁸ Yemen’s new government endorsed the campaign, after the anti-*qāt* activists were seconded by the British Government and *al-Jazeera*. In mid-March 2012, Alan Duncan, the British Minister of International Development had visited Yemen and emphasized the need of a clear economic program supported by the IMF for a country with staggering poverty levels reaching 42%. In an interview with *Alarabiya TV*, Duncan declared that it was difficult to improve Yemen’s situation “*in light of the absence of economic planning*”, noting that the “*focus must shift from the cultivation of Qat to food crops*”.⁸²⁹ Only a week later well known *al-Jazeera* talk show host Fayṣal al-Qāsim, harshly criticized Yemenis for *qāt* chewing. His brusque confrontation of his Yemeni guests with the question “*how do you want to develop while you are under the narcotic effect of qat 24 hours a day*”, sparked anger in Yemen.⁸³⁰ Some days later ‘Alī al-‘Amrānī, Yemen’s new Minister of Information instructed various national media corporations by written order to cooperate with the “*Shabāb bi-lā Qāt Association*” in its April 12 campaign and agree on coverage, air time and broadcasting discussion sessions.⁸³¹

The government-run daily *al-Thawra* reported intensively on the campaign and its aims. In several articles it cited recent scientific studies on *qāt* and interviewed physicians, agronomists and economists on the hazards of *qāt*.⁸³² Many newspapers published drawings by Yemen’s leading cartoonists, such as ‘Adnān Muḥāqirī, ‘Iṣām Ṭalāl or Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, who had sharpened their pens against the drug.

The campaign entitled “*The Beginning of Change – Public Facilities Without Qāt*” centered on Yemen’s larger cities Ṣan‘ā’, Ibb, Ta‘izz, al-Ḥudayda and Aden where activists of youth organizations and anti-*qāt* NGOs distributed fliers, posters and brochures in government facilities to thousands of civil servants. In Ṣan‘ā’, employees of the Ministries of Information, Education, Electricity, Health and Agriculture were targeted as well as servicemen and employees in police stations, army barracks, post offices, public schools and hospitals. Awareness was also raised in *qāt* markets of Ṣan‘ā’ and Ta‘izz and *qāt* merchants willingly put up anti-*qāt* posters in their shops, not in the least concerned for their trade and not believing that the campaign could have a lasting effect.⁸³³ A Ṣan‘ā’ *qāt* dealer sitting under a campaign poster in his Baghdad Street sales booth told the press confidently: “*This green plant will never be affected by anything and it will remain in the Yemeni blood.*”⁸³⁴ Also this campaign was supported by Yemen’s Nobel Peace Prize winner Tawakkul Karmān, as well as the country’s former ambassador to the Arab League, ‘Abd al-Malik Maṣṣūr, and Dr. ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ashwal, Yemen’s Minister of Education. The latter promised that *qāt* awareness would henceforth be included in school curricula in Ṣan‘ā’ and soon also in Ta‘izz.⁸³⁵ ‘Umar Al-Ḥimyarī, a campaign member and Ṣan‘ā’ lawyer drafted a law banning *qāt* in government facilities hoping that this could increase pressure on the government to act on *qāt*.⁸³⁶ The campaign was concluded in Ṣan‘ā’’s Cultural Center, one of Yemen’s few large theater halls. Here a concert was given, theater plays presented, a children’s song contest held and a break dance performance by young musicians given.⁸³⁷ Also a number of *qāt* awareness films of the Social Fund for Development were shown, among them a film teaching good conduct for civil servants (see pictures 355 & 356).⁸³⁸ The campaign could be called a success, but its organizers were disappointed that none of the high ranking government representatives who had promised to come had attended the closing event.⁸³⁹

VIII. *Qāt*, Governance and Political Stability



Pictures 355 & 356: Numerous anti-*qāt* films were presented on April 12, 2012, the day of “*Public Facilities Without Qāt*”. Here scenes from a film showing bad and good conduct of civil servants. While the fellow in the lower scene is vividly working and has a well arranged archive, the fellow in the clip above is chewing *qāt*. He sits on a cushion below his empty desk amidst randomly scattered folders.

- ⁷²⁰ *Yemen Observer*, Dec. 15, 2010 (“*Yemen to host the second International Conference for the Arab Coffee*”) and *Yemen Observer*, Dec. 21, 2010 (“*Conference discusses plans to rebuild Yemen’s coffee industry*”).
- ⁷²¹ Personal communications with Shabbir Ezzi, Mar. 3, 2012 and *Yemen Observer*, Sep. 22, 2010 (*Yemen attempts to join International Coffee Organization*).
- ⁷²² See chapter VIII. I.
- ⁷²³ Personal communications with Salmān Rashīd, Ṣan‘ā’, Jan. 15, 2005.
- ⁷²⁴ Red for the bloodshed of martyrs and a revolutionary spirit, white for hope and a brighter future, and black for the country’s dark past.
- ⁷²⁵ *Hämäläinen* in his “*Jemen Handbuch*” (1989, p. 112) wrongly described the coffee tree in the 1 riyāl bill as being *qāt*.
- ⁷²⁶ Only one postal stamp issued in the PDRY on Dec. 20, 1989 for the Inter-Parliamentary Centenary (value 300 fils) depicting the coffee plant has come to the attention of the author.
- ⁷²⁷ Entitled “*Münz-Brief*” in German, this card that was postmarked on May 1, 1988 in Ṣan‘ā’ contains an original 1 riyāl coin and a stamp showing Bāb al-Yaman (25 Fils). The “*Münz-Brief*” for South Yemen, issued on Jan. 21, 1990, shows Aden port, the al-‘Aydārūs Mosque and a tribesman with a Mauser rifle.
- ⁷²⁸ Personal communications with ‘Abd Allāh Ṣāliḥ al-Asḥṭal, Yemen’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Ṣan‘ā’, Mar. 19, 2000 and with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ṭarmūm, Minister of Electricity, Ṣan‘ā’, Sept. 14, 2005.
- ⁷²⁹ Personal communications with ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ṭarmūm, then Vice Minister of Planning, April 3, 2000.
- ⁷³⁰ *The Guardian*, Mar. 6, 2006 (“*Chewing the qāt*”).
- ⁷³¹ Personal communications with Nājī Abū Ḥātim, World Bank Country Office, Ṣan‘ā’, June 29, 2008.
- ⁷³² *Varisco* 1986, p. 7-8.
- ⁷³³ *Mu’assasat al-‘afīf al-thaqāfiyya* 2003, p. 2305 f.
- ⁷³⁴ *Varisco* 1986, p. 10.
- ⁷³⁵ Personal communications under condition of anonymity. Ṣan‘ā’, May 18, 2005.
- ⁷³⁶ The original being *Al-imān yamān wa al-ḥikma yamāniyya* (Belief is Yemeni and so is wisdom).
- ⁷³⁷ *Humud et al.* 2002, p. 42.
- ⁷³⁸ *Browne* 1991, p. 464-465.
- ⁷³⁹ See also *Hes* 1970, *Litman et al.* 1986 and *Humud et al.* 2002, p. 41.
- ⁷⁴⁰ The hallucinatory *hagigat* pills (or also *hagiGAT*, a compound word of the Hebrew *hagiga* (celebration) and *qāt*) were prohibited in Israel in 2004 after the occurrence of several cases of poisoning attributed to this drug. The pills are said to contain the active ingredients cathinone, methcathinone, cathine, and amphetamines.
- ⁷⁴¹ *The Guardian*, June 15, 2008 (“*Conservatives will ban khat*”).
- ⁷⁴² *Baladī*, long *qāt* branches of arm’s length.
- ⁷⁴³ *Al-Shūra*, Apr. 7, 2002, p. 1 (“*Qāt na ‘nā’a*” [“*Mint-flavored qāt*”) by Yaḥyā al-Ḥaddī.
- ⁷⁴⁴ Personal communications with Walīda (*walīda* meaning simply “new born girl” or “girl”) in Ṣan‘ā’, Nov 3, 2004.
- ⁷⁴⁵ *Yemen Times*, May 1, 2008 (“*As government approves Socotra plants as national symbols*”).
- ⁷⁴⁶ *Aden Society for Struggling Against Qāt* 1997, p. 7.
- ⁷⁴⁷ Title of an *Economist* video feature of the protests dated Feb. 5, 2011
<http://www.economist.com/blogs/multimedia/2011/02/yemens_protests> (consulted Feb. 12, 2011).
- ⁷⁴⁸ A loose coalition of Yemen’s opposition made up principally of al-İslāḥ, Socialist, Nasserite, al-Ḥaqq, and the Ba‘ath Party.
- ⁷⁴⁹ See e.g. *Yemen Today Magazine*, Nov. 19, 2010 (“*National dialogue aims to address Yemen’s woes*”).
- ⁷⁵⁰ Al-Ḥamdī, former President of Yemen assassinated in 1977 and ‘Umar, Yemeni socialist leader, assassinated in 2002.
- ⁷⁵¹ See e.g. *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 3, 2011 (“*Yemen’s pro, anti government rallies end peacefully*”).
- ⁷⁵² *Reuters* via *The Irish Times*, Jan. 27, 2011 (“*Yemenis in anti-president protest*”).
- ⁷⁵³ Aired on Yemen’s national television at 7:20 p.m. local time.
- ⁷⁵⁴ Personal communications, Qaḥṭān Yaḥyā al-Aṣḥāḥī, Ṣan‘ā’, Feb. 17, 2011.
- ⁷⁵⁵ *BBC*, Feb. 3, 2011 (“*Yemen protests: 20,000 call for President Saleh to go*”).
- ⁷⁵⁶ *Yemen Observer*, Jan. 24, 2011 (“*Yemen is not like Tunisia, President Saleh*”).
- ⁷⁵⁷ *Reuters*, Feb. 10, 2011 (“*Qat addiction may stem Yemen protests*”) and *Haaretz*, Feb. 10, 2011 (“*Narcotic plant addiction may be stemming Yemen protests*”).
- ⁷⁵⁸ *Spiegel Online*, Feb. 3, 2011 (“*Tag des Zorns in Sanaa - Die Opposition hat Angst vorm Sturz des Regimes*”).
- ⁷⁵⁹ <http://reason.com/blog/2011/02/17/qat-so-powerful-it-causes-aggr> (dated Feb. 17, 2011, consulted Mar. 4, 2011).

- 760 Personal communications with government counterparts. See also *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 3, 2011 (“*Yemen's pro, anti government rallies end peacefully*”). Although many managed to call in sick, excuse themselves, or otherwise slip away unnoticed.
- 761 Personal communications, Ṣan‘ā’, Feb. 16, 2011.
- 762 Author’s interviews with Ṣāliḥ supporters at *Taḥrīr* Square, Feb. 11-16, 2011.
- 763 A Shaykh of Banī Maṭar despite his *laqab* “al-Nihmī”, *Taḥrīr* Square, Feb. 13, 2011.
- 764 Personal communications with campaign organizers and government counterparts, Ṣan‘ā’, Feb. 2011.
- 765 *Reuters*, Jan. 27, 2011 (“*Yemenis in anti-president protest*”).
- 766 *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 2011 (“*Qat got their tongues*”) and *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 3, 2011 (“*Yemen' pro, anti government rallies end peacefully*”).
- 767 *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 22, 2011 (“*Demonstrations in Yemen create businesses*”).
- 768 *Yemen Observer*, Apr. 12, 2011 (“*Who spoiled the new invention in Yemen?*”).
- 769 An observer speaking on condition of anonymity, May 11, 2011.
- 770 A stiff paste made from sorghum flour and water, eaten with meat broth, porridge, or honey and ghee.
- 771 Personal communications with Qaḥṭān Yaḥyā al-Aṣḥāḥī, Ṣan‘ā’, Apr. 3, 2011.
- 772 Personal communications at the protesters camp at Ṣan‘ā’ University gate (‘Change Square’), Feb. 15, 2011.
- 773 Personal communications with Qaḥṭān Yaḥyā al-Aṣḥāḥī, Ṣan‘ā’, Feb. 17, 2011.
- 774 <http://www.ye1.org/vb/showthread.php?t=563325> (consulted Apr. 12, 2011).
- 775 *Haaretz*, Feb. 10, 2011 (“*Narcotic plant addiction may be stemming Yemen protests*”).
- 776 *Haaretz*, Feb. 10, 2011.
- 777 This was observed in the large markets of Ḥadda, al-Ḥaṣaba, Shumayla and the Sūq ‘Ans.
- 778 Personal communications with demonstrators having come to Ṣan‘ā’ from Aden and al-Mukallā and with national staff of an international donor agency based in Aden, speaking on condition of anonymity, Ṣan‘ā’, Feb. 17, 2011.
- 779 *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 20, 2011 (“*Protests take a peaceful turn in Yemen*”).
- 780 Personal communications, April 24, 2011.
- 781 Personal communications with Qaḥṭān Yaḥyā al-Aṣḥāḥī, Mar. 11, 2011.
- 782 *The National* (Emirates), Oct. 25, 2011 (“*Islamists exerting increasing control at Yemen protest camp*”).
- 783 *Yemen Post*, Nov. 19, 2011 (“*Protesters in Yemen not losing hope*”) and *BBC News*, Apr. 14, 2011 (“*Yemen protesters show unity and determination*”).
- 784 See e.g. *Yemen Post*, Oct. 16, 2011 (“*Fresh clashes rock the capital, Sana'a*”).
- 785 *The National*, Oct. 25, 2011 (see above).
- 786 See e.g. *AP*, Nov. 16, 2011 (“*Change Square seeks to be genesis for a new Yemen*”) and *Yemen Post*, Oct. 4, 2011 (“*Yemen: A nation subdued by qat*”).
- 787 *Yemen Times*, April 28, 2011 (“*Young independent protesters plan escalation*”).
- 788 *Yemen Observer*, Apr. 6, 2011 (“*Yemen President forms national leadership committee*”).
- 789 *AP*, Nov. 16, 2011 (“*Change Square seeks to be genesis for a new Yemen*”).
- 790 Broadcast of his speech on the National Yemen TV Program, May 13, 2011.
- 791 *Al-Jazeera* news coverage on Yemen’s protests, Mar. 12, 2011.
- 792 *BBC News*, Apr. 14, 2011 (“*Yemen protesters show unity and determination*”).
- 793 *Yemen Times*, Jul. 3, 2011 (“*Qat consumption up or down?*”).
- 794 Personal communications, April 22, 2011.
- 795 *Spiegel Online*, Feb. 26, 2011 (“*Demonstration in Kairo - Ägyptens Militär entschuldigt sich bei Opposition*”) and *Yemen Observer*, Feb. 28, 2011 (“*Tribal leader backs street protests*”).
- 796 *AP*, May 26, 2011 (“*Yemen's president vows to resist 'failed state' as tribes press offensive against regime*”).
- 797 *Voice of America*, May 24, 2011 (“*Yemeni tribesmen take control of government buildings in Sana'a*”), *AFP*, May 24, 2011 (“*Escalating conflict pushes Yemen to the brink*”) and *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 31, 2011 (“*Clashes shatter Yemen truce, US slams killings*”).
- 798 *CNN*, June 8, 2011 (“*Witnesses: Tribal fighters take over major city in Yemen*”).
- 799 *Xinhua*, Oct. 7, 2011 (“*Yemen oil export pipeline blown up...*”) and *Reuters*, May 9, 2011 (“*Nexen output cut on Yemen*”). Despite being repaired and crude exports temporarily taken up again, the pipeline was blown up several more times during 2011.
- 800 *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, July 25, 2011 (“*Yemen Humanitarian Emergency Situation Report No. 5*”), *Yemen Observer*, June 30, 2011 (“*Prices skyrocket as fuel and power crisis soars across Yemen*”) and *Yemen Times*, June 23, 2011 (“*Yemen's economy teeters on collapse*”).
- 801 *Yemen Observer*, June 30, 2011 and *Yemen Times*, Sep. 12, 2011 (“*Confusion, desperation surround fuel and power shortages*”).

- 802 *Yemen Times*, June 23, 2011 (“*Yemen’s economy teeters on collapse*”) and *Yemen Times*, Aug. 11, 2011 (“*Yemen’s economy under risk*”).
- 803 *Yemen Post*, Tuesday, 26, July, 2011 (“*Civil unrest impacting severely on children’s wellbeing in Yemen*”).
- 804 *Bikyamasr Online*, Nov. 11, 2011 (“*Yemen’s economy report for 2011*”) <<http://bikyamasr.com/48058/yemens-economy-report-for-2011/>> (consulted Jan. 12, 2012).
- 805 *Oxfam* 2011, p. 7 and *Yemen Times*, June 23, 2011 (“*Yemen’s economy teeters on collapse*”).
- 806 *Yemen Observer*, Oct. 5, 2011 (“*Yemen employees starve, suffer skyrocket prices*”) and *Yemen Observer*, Oct. 14, 2011 (“*Prices of food, water and fuel threaten the lives of Yemenis*”).
- 807 *IRIN*, Nov. 1, 2011 (“*Yemen: Why malnutrition could get worse*”) and *Yemen Post*, July 26, 2011 (“*Civil unrest impacting severely on children’s wellbeing in Yemen*”).
- 808 *Oxfam* 2011, p. 7 and 8.
- 809 *Yemen Post*, Oct. 4, 2011 (“*Yemen: A nation subdued by qat*”).
- 810 *Yemen Post*, Oct. 4, 2011 (“*Yemen: A nation subdued by qat*”).
- 811 *AFP*, Dec. 1, 2011 (“*Tension grips Yemen capital despite Saleh sealing exit deal*”).
- 812 Personal communications by telephone, April 22, 2011.
- 813 Personal communications by telephone Aug. 21, 2011.
- 814 *Yemen Post*, Oct. 16, 2011 (“*Fresh clashes rock the capital, Sana’a*”).
- 815 From Yemeni friends the author heard the opposite: BāSalīm was more on the protest side, had resigned and/or was kicked out by the Ṣālīḥ regime, but was later reinstated by ‘Alī al-‘Amrānī, Minister of Information of the conciliation government
- 816 *Yemen Observer*, Dec. 29, 2011 (“*Protesters seek removing heads of Yemen institutions, transition government urges calm*”), *AP*, Mar. 19, 2012 (“*Thousands in Yemen air force end months-long mutiny after new president vows to oust commander*”) and *Yemen Observer*, Dec. 30, 2011 (“*Yemen military newspaper staff demand reformation*”).
- 817 *Deutschlandradio*, Jan. 14, 2012 (“*Boykott-Tag im Jemen gegen Volksdroge Qat*”).
- 818 <http://www.facebook.com/events/208322502588338/> (consulted Jan. 12, 2012).
- 819 *Toronto Star*, Jan. 12, 2012, (“*Yemen activists target popular narcotic: khat*”).
- 820 *The National* (Emirates), Jan. 13, 2012 (“*Yemen campaign urges ‘A Day without Qat’*”).
- 821 *Toronto Star*, Jan. 12, 2012.
- 822 <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/01/12/yemen-january-12-a-day-without-qat/> (consulted Jan. 14, 2012).
- 823 *Yemen Observer*, Jan. 17, 2012 (“*Campaign in Yemeni to revolt against qat*”).
- 824 E.g. *Deutschlandradio*, Jan. 14, 2012 (“*Boykott-Tag im Jemen gegen Volksdroge Qat*”) <<http://www.dradio.de/kulturnachrichten/2012011414/8/>> (consulted Jan. 15, 2012).
- 825 *Toronto Star*, Jan. 12, 2012, *The National*, Jan 13, 2012, and *Yemen Observer*, Jan. 17, 2012.
- 826 *The National*, Jan 13, 2012.
- 827 *The Arab Digest*, Jan. 16, 2012 (“*The Yemeni woman who brought change ... from her Beirut laptop!*”) <<http://www.thearabdigest.com/2012/01/yemeni-woman-who-brings-change-from-her.html>> (consulted Apr. 5, 2012).
- 828 *Gulfnews.com*, Apr. 2, 2012, (“*Saleh meddling must stop*”) <<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/columnists/saleh-meddling-must-stop-1.1002676>> (consulted Apr. 3, 2012).
- 829 *Jemen Magazine*, Mar. 18, 2012 (“*British Minister calls on Yemen to replace qat*”) <<http://www.yemag.com/news/british-minister-calls-on-yemen-to-replace-qat.html>> (consulted Mar. 19, 2012).
- 830 *Yemen Post*, Mar. 25, 2012 (“*Governmental institutions without qat campaign*”).
- 831 The order that was signed on Mar. 31 and dated April 1, was addressed to the General Media Corp., *Saba*, *al-Thawra*, *al-Jumhūriyya*, *14 October*, and *BāKathīr*.
- 832 *Al-Thawra* published several articles on April 11 and 12, e.g. *al-Thawra*, Apr. 11, 2012 (“*Ghadan yawm bi-lā qāt fī-l-mu’assasat al-ḥukumiyya*”) and Apr. 12, 2012 (“*Al-yawm ... bi-lā qāt*”).
- 833 See e.g. film clip: youtube.com/watch?v=Tvu3D0MYtzg&feature=related (consulted Apr. 14, 2012).
- 834 *Yemen Times*, Apr. 16, 2012 (“*Activists struggle to ban qat chewing in public facilities*”).
- 835 *Yemen Post*, Apr. 17, 2012 (“*Campaign of Yemen without qat continues in Yemen*”).
- 836 *CNN.com*, Apr. 12, 2012 (“*Let’s learn to go without qat, say Yemenis*”). See also *Yemen Post*, Apr. 12, 2011 (“*Yemen economy will improve after uprising - expect economists*”).
- 837 See e.g. film clip: youtube.com/watch?v=FvLPn8Ukeq8&feature=related (consulted Apr. 17, 2012).
- 838 See e.g. film clip: youtube.com/watch?v=1u2dAmGFpCY&feature=email (consulted Apr. 13, 2012).
- 839 *Yemen Times*, Apr. 16, 2012 (“*Activists struggle to ban qat chewing in public facilities*”).



Picture 357: A *qāt* harvesting crew in Hamdān. The *jambyya* hilt comes in handy to attach the small plastic bags filled with tender Hamdānī ‘*qaṭal*’ leaves.