

REBEL COURT SENTENCES YEMEN JOURNALIST TO DEATH

SANAA: A Yemeni court in the rebel-held capital has sentenced a veteran journalist to death on charges of spying for neighboring Saudi Arabia, the press union and rebel media said yesterday. Since March 2015, oil-rich Saudi Arabia has been leading a deadly military intervention against the rebels and their allies in the kingdom's impoverished neighbor.

Yahya al-Jubaihi, 61, was convicted of establishing "contact with a foreign state" and providing Saudi diplomats in Sanaa with "reports that posed harm to Yemen militarily, politically and economically," the rebel-controlled Saba news agency reported. Prosecutors alleged that Jubaihi had been receiving a monthly salary of 4,500 Saudi riyals (\$1,200) from Riyadh since 2010, four years before the rebels overran the capital, Saba added.

The Yemeni press union condemned the "arbitrary" sentence, accusing the rebels of "targeting the freedom of the press." It said Jubaihi was a "veteran journalist with a long record of professional work across Yemen." He was seized from his home on September 6, it added. The rebels and their allies-renegade troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh-have controlled all government institutions in Sanaa since they overran the capital in September 2014.

Rival bodies loyal to internationally recognized president Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi operate out of second city Aden or from exile in Saudi Arabia. The Aden-based information ministry said Jubaihi's trial was a "farce" and accused the rebels of looking to "settle political accounts... through a politicized judiciary." Jubaihi wrote regular columns in Saudi

dailies Okaz and Al-Madina, as well as in Yemeni newspapers. He served at the government's press department in the 1990s and 2000s when Saleh was president and Hadi was his deputy.

Press watchdogs and human rights groups have been deeply critical of the rebels' treatment of journalists as the conflict in the Arabian peninsula country has escalated over the past two years. In December, journalist Mohammed al-Absi, 35, died suddenly after publishing reports about alleged corruption. His family and human rights groups said a post-mortem found he had been poisoned. Eight reporters were killed in Yemen last year, according to the International Federation of Journalists. That made the country the fourth deadliest for journalists after Iraq, Afghanistan and Mexico, the watchdog added. —AFP



BARTELLA, Iraq: In this photo, American medical volunteers attend to a civilian casualty of the battle to retake Mosul from Islamic State militants, at the Samaritan's Purse field hospital, in Bartella, Iraq. — AP

CLINIC OUTSIDE MOSUL TREATS THOSE WITH GRAVEST INJURIES

BARTELLA, Iraq: A boy and a woman are delivered to the gates of the clinic by an Iraqi ambulance, bandaged and in pain. They arrive without names, ages and with only the sketchiest details of what had happened to them. Apparently shot by accident outside their house in western Mosul, where fighting continues between Iraqi forces and Islamic State group militants, U.S. medics working in a state-of-the-art field clinic here could only assume they were mother and son.

Situated on the outskirts of Mosul, the facility was set up last December by Samaritan's Purse, a Christian aid organization based in Boone, North Carolina. Its volunteer doctors receive those with the gravest injuries from the field clinics inside or at the very edge of Mosul, where casualties are initially treated. "At home, it's not nearly as critical as this," said Medical Services Director Shelly Kelly, from Mustang, Oklahoma.

Kelly, who is on her second assignment in Iraq, said it took some effort to explain to her family why her new place of work was located behind blast walls. In the end they gave her their support, however. "My parents actually watch my kids and wash my laundry when I'm not there, and make meals for my husband, so it's all good," said the mother of four. Kelly completed several overseas assignments for Samaritan's Purse before coming to this war-torn Middle Eastern nation.

US staff typically come for rotations of four to eight weeks, often using their vacation time to serve. "It's really an easy choice," said Kelly, saying the rewards are much bigger than what a beach vacation could bring. Adrian Curnow, a pediatric surgeon from Boise, Idaho, just started his assignment - his first foreign mission - three days ago. He said he was surprised at the severity of the injuries he was encountering. Preparing to operate on the wounded boy, he faced an issue common to all underage patients: Where are the parents and who will give consent to the operation? In the confusion of war, the answers are not easily found. Curnow managed to speak to the woman and she told him, just before slipping into unconsciousness, that she was not, in fact, the boy's mother. Following US procedure, he decided to go ahead after consulting a colleague and the patients were moved into the operating room. Both patients had already been operated on at the field clinic they were sent from. —AP

DIVIDED NATIONALISTS HOLD KEY FOR ERDOGAN IN TURKEY VOTE

ALPARSLAN TURKES STILL REMAINS ICON FOR NATIONALISTS

ANKARA: To mark the 20th anniversary this month of the death of Alparslan Turkes, the founder of modern Turkish nationalism, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited his grave in Ankara and offered up prayers. Turkes, who founded the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) in 1969 and remained its chairman until his death in 1997, is still an icon for nationalists known simply as the "basbug" (chieftain).

The visit to the grave of Turkes, the spokesman of the 1960 military coup that led to the hanging of Erdogan's political idol, former premier Adnan Menderes, may seem surprising and even contradictory. The MHP is a party in opposition to Erdogan's Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party (AKP) with, in theory, a starkly different ideology. But it has become an unlikely ally in Erdogan's quest for a presidential system to enhance his powers. Nationalist votes will be crucial in ensuring a 'Yes' vote in the referendum on Sunday on the constitution.

Number one Grey Wolf

The task is complicated by a split in the MHP between those following its enigmatic leader Devlet Bahceli who has led the party since Turkes' death and backs the new system-and an influential dissident faction which does not. The votes of nationalists are crucial for the executive presidential system to be approved, said Samim Akgonul, researcher at the French National Centre for Scientific Research.

In another act of stunning political symbolism, Prime Minister Binali Yildirim astonished observers by making the special hand sign of the Grey Wolves-the radical wing of the MHP with a reputation for street violence-in a speech in Ankara. "Erdogan must convince the nationalists that he is the first of the Grey Wolves," Akgonul said. Bahceli's backing of the executive presidency has caused the schism within the MHP, with several members of the party, including lawmakers, dismissed for failing to toe the 'Yes' line.

The top dissident member leading the 'No' wing of the nationalists is former

MHP leadership candidate, Meral Aksener, who was also a former interior minister in the 1990s. A capable orator who sports a henna tattoo of the Turkish flag on the inside of her hand, Aksener has been holding rallies nationwide with the slogan: "80 million times no" referring to the country's population.

this referendum passes, the losers will be the nationalists and the MHP," Okutan added.

Nationalism will be stronger

The deputy chairman of the MHP, Mehmet Gunal, dismissed such arguments as claims made up by bitter ex-



ORDU, Turkey: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan addresses his supporters during a referendum rally in Black Sea city of Ordu, Turkey, yesterday. — AP

Nationalists must say no

MHP supporter Omer Cakiroglu said at an Aksener rally in Istanbul that the party's grassroots were not supporting the changes to the constitution, despite what the top brass had agreed. "I cannot believe that a nationalist would not say 'No,'" the 55-year-old told AFP, adding he was there in support of the 'No' campaign rather than Aksener. Another prominent dissident MHP figure is the dynamic Sinan Ogan, who was ejected from the party last month.

"Over 90 percent of nationalists will say no," Ogan said in an interview in Ankara, after clashes hit one of his rallies on March 26. Former MHP lawmaker Nuri Okutan-dismissed at the same time as Ogan-said that if a 'Yes' vote was agreed the party would end up losing all significance as an opposition force. "If

members. "Now they are trying to make a fuss because they have been kicked out," Gunal said. "Nationalism will be stronger, the Nationalist Movement Party will be stronger." "As a 48-year-old party, the MHP has always been here, it is the ideological base of Turkish nationalists, their political representative." Burak Bilgehan Ozpek, associate professor of international relations at Ankara's TOBB University, said a 'Yes' vote would mean the end of the opposition within the MHP. Some have suggested that with the office of the prime minister to be extinguished under the new system, Bahceli could become a vice president. "Bahceli on this issue will have every kind of legal, political and bureaucratic support," Ozpek said. "In the event of a 'Yes', Aksener especially will have to found a new party and start from scratch," he added. —AFP