

# Doubts about president's health amid Yemen crisis

er. "What do we do? We need to start fresh thinking about how to overcome the crisis."

There are various proposals on the table, including the creation of a national unity government proposed by a bloc of Persian Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia. Before he was wounded in a bomb attack on the presidential palace a month ago, Saleh had agreed to the proposal but refused to sign it.

Now, with Saleh abroad and incapacitated, the biggest obstacle to a political transition may be his relatives who maintain powerful military positions, namely his son, Brig. Gen. Ahmed Ali Saleh, and his nephew, Brig. Gen. Yahya Saleh. The family holds that if they yielded power, they would be surrendering the country they have ruled for decades to their tribal and political enemies — namely the powerful Ahmar family and Maj. Gen. Ali Mohsin al-Ahmar, the military commander, no relation to the Ahmar family, who threw his support to the protest movement in March. This was days after government-allied snipers killed 52 protesters and shot over 100 others while soldiers belonging to Yahya Saleh's Central Security Forces stood and watched about three blocks away.

**ALSO:** About 50 Yemeni soldiers are missing after battling Islamic militants in the south of the country, a military official said Saturday. The soldiers have been missing since Thursday, following fierce clashes with the al-Qaida-linked group Ansar al-Sharia in the southern city of Zinjibar.

Women carry wood on their heads as a symbol of gas shortages at an event in Sanaa, Yemen, on Saturday.

HANI MOHAMMED / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



BY LAURA KASINOF  
The New York Times

SANAA, Yemen — A senior Yemeni official who has been briefed on the health of President Ali Abdullah Saleh said Saturday that the president would be unable to return to Yemen anytime soon and when he did he would probably be unable to perform his duties, throwing a new degree of uncertainty into Yemen's political standoff.

With the streets still full of thousands of protesters, and Yemen's economy in a deep tailspin, Saleh's relatives have insisted on keeping power and clinging to a narrow, militarily and politically, said Abdel Karim al-Bryani, a former prime minister and presidential adviser.

"We are in a stalemate situation, militarily and politically," said Abdel Karim al-Bryani, a former prime minister and presidential adviser.

As a result, Saleh's departure to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment has yet to pave the way for a transition, as the opposition, the United States and even some governing party members are pushing for, but instead prolonged a crisis that has seen radical Islamists extend their reach in the south and left Yemen, a nation of 23 million, struggling to survive.

laminist militants' seizing control. They also hew to the position the president will indeed return to his post. As a result, Saleh's departure to Saudi Arabia for medical treatment has yet to pave the way for a transition, as the opposition, the United States and even some governing party members are pushing for, but instead prolonged a crisis that has seen radical Islamists extend their reach in the south and left Yemen, a nation of 23 million, struggling to survive.