

March 1, 2011

I'm writing because potential YCMES students and their parents are rightly concerned about the security situation in Sana'a, Yemen. Yemen is in the news because al-Qaeda is present in a few remote areas of the country and because there have been insurrections in the far north and south of the country.

News reports often create an image of a country on the verge of chaos. The media is in the business of highlighting and magnifying events. That's how they pay their bills. Inevitably their coverage creates a distorted picture. We all have experienced this. An event happens where we live and as seen on television, seems to engulf the community when we know only a few people are involved.

To put the news from Yemen in some context, YCMES is located between the Yemen Parliament and the Prime Minister's office. It is a well protected zone. I have been teaching at YCMES, pro bono, for the past month, during which there have been almost daily demonstrations for and against the government in a number of cities. In Sana'a demonstrations have been confined to two small areas of the city. These have been loud but generally non-violent. No demonstrations have occurred in the area of the college. Students are encouraged to avoid areas where clashes between opposing groups may occur.

The same may be said for other areas of the country. Under my direction and with approval of national police authorities a group of YCMES students traveled to historical sites and cities south and west of Sana'a. The trip was informative and tiring but otherwise uneventful. I have just returned from the southern city of Aden. Although there were anti government demonstrations, I easily avoided them.

My sense is that living in Yemen, and especially attending class at YCMES, is as safe as other places. If I didn't believe this I would not have come.



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