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Homelessness in Yemen on the rise

Poverty has pushed more and more people onto the streets as beggars or even as residents. Statistics confirm what locals in Sana'a are seeing: there are more poor people living on the streets.

By: Mahmoud Al-Matari
For the Yemen Times

After long hours working as a cleaning lady in a company, Asma, 18, continues her struggle to earn a living up until ten o'clock at night through begging. She stands for hours at street junctions appealing to the drivers to give her money which she will take home to her mother and younger siblings.

"I am the oldest child in my family, my father is mentally ill and cannot support us. This is why I have to be the breadwinner of my family," she said with tears in her eyes.

Like Asma, there are many Yemeni children who had been forced to abandon their childhood and take up the responsibility of taking care of their families.

A recent report from the Ministry of Social Affairs states that there are around three million children suffering from poverty in Yemen, about 700,000 of them forced to work,

beg and live on the streets in the last year.

The number increases as the rural-urban migration increases. When the rural residents do not find jobs in the cities, they land up begging or living in the streets.

Although Asma eventually returns to her home, there are many more children whose homes are the streets as the locals of Sana'a city are noticing.

"I have witnessed many more beggars at the roundabouts and in front of restaurants. The middle class in Yemen is disappearing, the rich are becoming richer, while the poor are becoming poorer," said Haitham Abdullah, a university student from Sana'a.

He added that the increased number of children and women in the streets are vulnerable to harm and learning bad habits on the streets.

The texture of Yemeni society is changing and becoming more fragmented according to social science specialist Najla Hizam. She said in years past Yemenis used to take more care of their vulnerable, but this is increasing poverty.

"Some girls who are forced to

live on the streets become victims of harsh circumstances and exploiting men. This results in more street children as the women become pregnant and cannot support a better life for them and their children," said Hizam.

The vicious cycle continues as she described the influence of street children on other beggars. This is not only true for women who live on the streets, but also for those who stay for long hours, even if they have a home to eventually go to.

"Fathers who use their daughters to beg for them in the streets eventually push their daughters to moral and social hazards," she said.

Not only does this new trend worry the locals in Sana'a, it has also alerted the government which has created a committee to investigate and deal with poverty on the streets.

The last statistics were from 2000, and now the committee, with funding from UNICEF and the Social Fund for Development, is carrying out a new survey to identify the spread of this issue.

Many of the children begging in the streets wear school uniforms. They either beg before or after their classes. Some of the older students like Asma, who is in the eleventh grade, study at home and go to school only for exams. However, because of deteriorating economic conditions



Whole families have become homeless because of deteriorating living conditions. Around half of Yemen's population is living below the poverty line and at least 40 percent of Yemen's able manpower is unemployed.

many of the children are eventually forced to drop out from school and either work or beg in the streets to support their families.

According to official reports from the Ministry of Education, only 31 percent of boys make it to high school as the national dropout rate post primary education exceeds 45 percent. For girls it is even lower as only 19.5 percent of girls make it to high school. The main reasons behind the drop outs include poverty and cultural barriers including the

parents' ignorance about the importance of education.

And while many better-off Yemeni children take education for granted, Asma still struggles to make ends meet. She is determined that her brothers and sisters do not share her fate. She works so hard to make sure that they get a proper education and have a better future than hers.

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Middle East on a growth path, IMF says

With oil prices climbing, the region's economies are rebounding – but not at their pre-recession pace

By: David Rosenberg
The Media Line

Economic growth is returning to the Middle East, but not quite at the pace of the go-go years of soaring oil prices and massive real estate development.

An International Monetary Fund report released Sunday estimated the combined economies of the region stretching from Morocco to Pakistan would expand by 4.2 percent this year, almost double the pace of 2009. They will grow even faster in 2011, with the region clocking an expansion of 4.8 percent.

"We expect most countries in the region to grow faster in 2010 and 2011 than in 2009," Masood Ahmed, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department, said in a press release.

Although the global financial crisis took down the region's highest flying economies, most of the Middle East weathered the worst economic contraction well. The world economies shrank 0.6 percent in 2009 as the impact of bad home loans in the U.S. reverberated through the world's financial markets. In the Middle East, economies continued to expand, albeit at a pokier 2.3 percent pace.

The Middle East's oil exporters will likely see economic growth pick up to 3.8 percent from 1.1 percent in 2009 as oil prices climb to an average of USD 76 a barrel, according to the Washington DC-based IMF. In 2011, the rate of growth will probably accelerate to 5 percent as oil prices average USD 79

a barrel. Still, that leaves the oil economies growing at a slower pace than in the pre-recession years.

Oil exporters remain too vulnerable to fluctuations in the global price of petroleum, which traded at USD 82.10 on Friday. While not all Middle East's big oil exporters are that heavily dependent on oil for economic output, they all rely on oil revenue for half or more of their government budgets.

For the Middle East's oil importers, the pick-up in growth will be less dramatic. GDP growth will reach 5 percent this year, a 0.4 percentage point improvement over 2009, before slowing to 4.4 percent in 2010, the IMF report said. Egyptian GDP growth will show steady improvement this year and next, although well below the pre-recession rates when growth exceeded 6.5 percent annually. Pakistan, reeling from the impact of floods last summer, will see economic growth slow considerably from previous forecasts.

The IMF report warned that as strong as the recovery has been for the region it is still not enough to provide jobs for the Middle East's large and growing population of young people. It estimated that half the population is under age 25 while the average jobless rate in 2008 was 11 percent. For the region to create enough jobs, its combined economy would have to grow 6.5 percent annually over a sustained period, something it has never managed to do.

"There is now a recovery happening in the emerging markets in the region," Ahmed said at a forum in Dubai. "But they are not growing fast enough to create the jobs they need."

The Middle East needs 18.5 million jobs over the next decade, about 7 million more than it will create if it keeps



Collage with symbols of the Middle East economy including the Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) headquarter, Palm Island Resort in Dubai-UAE and the Milad Tower in Iran.

to its previous rate of growth, the IMF said, admitting this was a "tall order."

For all its oil wealth, the Middle East lags behind the world's emerging economies. Since 1990, GDP has increased 55 percent for the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan, but the emerging

Asian economic powers have boosted their output by 200 percent in period, the IMF said. The region's governments can accelerate economic growth by paring back on government regulation and privatizing state-owned enterprises and liberalizing labor markets. The Middle

East also needs to redirect more of its trade from the slower-growth economies of Europe to burgeoning Asia, it said.

Inflation is also rearing up in some Middle East countries, the IMF warned. In Saudi Arabia it accelerated from 3.5 percent in October 2009 to 6.1 percent

last August. In Iran, consumer prices were moderating until recently – showing from 30 percent rise at the end of 2008 to a 7 percent a year ago. But they have since begun rising to a 10 percent annual rate in the first quarter of 2010, the IMF report said.

Press freedoms deteriorating in Arab world

New technologies and greater demand for freedoms fail to withstand growing crackdown by the region's government

By: Benjamin Peim
& Kalindi O'Brien
The Media Line

Even as the Internet and other technologies makes it easier for people to defy the censors, media freedom is under a growing assault in the Middle East – with three of the region's countries designated as places "not good to be a journalist," a new survey has found.

The 2010 World Press Freedom Index, which measures censorship and harassment of the media by governments, found that 15 of the region's countries had tightened the screws on journalists in the past year while six had eased up. Issued by the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RWB), the annual survey ranked 177 countries around the world.

"There has been some pretty significant deterioration in the Middle East," Tom Porteous, UK Director for Human Rights Watch (HRW), told The Media Line. "The situation currently [in the Middle East] is dire and journalists are being forced into exile or into prison."

Tunisia's rating dropped to 164 this year from 154. Press freedom in Yemen and Syria also deteriorated, according

to the report. Yemen dropped three places to 170, while Syria dropped eight to 173 and Iran fell to 175 – putting all three among the bottom 10 and places RWB termed places not good to be a journalist.

"Rwanda, Yemen and Syria have joined Burma and North Korea in the group of the world's most repressive countries towards journalists. This does not bode well for 2011," secretary-general Jean-François Julliard said in a statement.

Egypt improved its score, but the index was compiled before the Mubarak government's crackdown on media outlets ahead of elections November 28. Among other governments to improve media rights, the Palestinian Authority jumped xx place to Number 150, Iraq, Somalia, Saudi Arabia and Algeria rose in the rankings as well, although none of them scored high enough to even reach the top 100.

One way to address the problem is to upgrade journalists' skills and knowledge. For instance, The Hague's Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) invited 17 editors and journalists from Lebanese media outlets this week to learn about how the probe is being undertaken and the issues it is addressing. The STL is due to report its findings on the 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, an investigation that is subject to deep

controversy in Lebanon and concerns it might ignite violence.

"The idea was to provide the journalists with information about international criminal justice, and the special tribunal," said Olga Kavran, head of Outreach for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

But HRW's Porteous said the problem wasn't lack of training or knowledge but government repression.

"You have a number of eager and willing and talented journalists there. The problem is being able to exercise it," he said. "In some ways journalists in the Middle East are incredibly skilled in writing in a way of delivering criticism without getting into trouble, pushing the limits and testing the red line."

Justin Martin, a journalism professor at the American University of Cairo, said the lack of media freedom was rooted in closed societies.

"The Arab World has been stagnant on lots of civil liberties," he said. "You have a lot of creaky old regimes resistant to all kinds of change. Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait – all have had the same families ruling for decades."

Egypt's press has been pushing back against the forces that have been keeping a tight lid on dissenting views. After decades of state media control, privately owned broadsheet newspapers are now expressing opinions and

exposing issues the government would rather suppress or spin. Egyptians have access to blogs, Twitter feeds and satellite television – media channels that have an easier time avoiding government censorship.

The new broadsheets have increased the diversity of Egypt's media landscape, but the state still dominates in print. Government-run Al-Ahram circulates up to one million copies a day. By contrast, the entire independent press combined puts out less than 200,000 copies a day. This week, Egypt temporarily shut 12 satellite television channels for reasons ranging from insulting religions to broadcasting pornography.

Although Egypt's score improved to 127, rights groups say President Hosni Mubarak has reneged on a promise made in 2004 to abolish disproportionately harsh sentences for journalists who transgress the country's libel laws. Newspaper editors and journalists have been imprisoned on loosely defined defamation and conduct charges such as "insulting a head of state" or "endangering national interests."

"Basically, with the booming in the Internet, there are demands in countries for a wider debate," said Sarah Bouchetob, North Africa and Middle East Projects Officer for the International Federation of Journalists. "There is a crackdown, but the situation really



Picture of jailed Egyptian blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman.

varies from country to country. In general, we are not very happy with the developments."

Bouchetob stressed that it was important to look for nuance when evaluating press freedoms.

"There are two ways of looking at it," she said. "Which laws are on the books? And how are they enforced?"

Bouchetob pointed to the United Arab Emirates as a country with tough

laws that are not strictly enforced. Still, she sees many limits to press freedom in the region, especially when it comes to naming powerful people.

In most countries the unspoken rule is that politicians can't be targeted for criticism. In Egypt, says American University's Martin, criticizing the military is "usually not a good idea" while a criticism of the president "can land you in jail."

Car accidents kill over 24,000 in Yemen since 2000

By: Yahya Al-Dubaybi
For the Yemen Times

A recent report published by the Traffic Administration states that there have been 24,000 deaths and 175,000 wounded due to traffic accidents in Yemen since 2000 until April 2010.

The report, a copy of which was received by the Yemen Times, states that 91,000 of the wounded were seriously injured, with 19,000 of those ending up paralyzed. The economic cost of these accidents was almost YR 100 billion.

The accidents included collisions between cars and with motorbikes, accidents involving pedestrians, vehicles overturning, and collisions with obstacles. According to the report, driver

error contributed wholly or partly to about 85 percent of the reported crashes. Other contributing factors included bad roads, old vehicles and weather conditions.

Compared to the period 2000-2004, the number of accidents has increased in the past five years. The years 2005-2010 clocked up 72,494 accidents leading to 13,906 deaths and 93,405 wounded, 43,721 of whom were seriously injured. In the period from 2000-2004, there were 53,279 traffic accidents that led to 10,103 deaths and 64,547 wounded, 28,444 of whom were seriously injured.

Over the period covered by the report, most accidents involved collisions between cars, with motorbikes

and other obstacles – a total of 63,324 accidents. Pedestrian accidents came second with 43,731 incidents, with the remainder involving collisions with animals, vehicle fires, vehicles turning over and other types of accident.

During the last year, the number of accidents increased to 15,511, leading to 3,071 deaths, compared to 9,958 accidents in 2000. The causes of accidents last year were mainly from driving too fast, driver negligence, and violation of traffic rules by pedestrians.

Sana'a, the capital, tops the list of traffic accidents from 2000 to 2009, with 46,358 accidents, constituting 36.9 percent of all traffic accidents in Yemen. Sana'a also had the largest number of injuries with 34,689, consti-

tuting 22 percent of injuries resulting from traffic accidents in Yemen.

Hodeida topped the number of deaths from traffic accidents during the same period with 3,266 deaths – or 13.6 percent of traffic deaths in Yemen. Sana'a came second with 2,821 deaths from traffic accidents – or 11.7 percent of traffic deaths in Yemen. Raima governorate appeared to be the safest regarding traffic accidents with only 144 accidents leading to 68 deaths (0.3 percent of Yemen's total) and 256 wounded (0.2 percent of Yemen's total).

Since 2000, the number of vehicle documents being renewed was 1,578,671, and there were 1,347,351 licenses issued by the Traffic Administration from 1990 to 2009.

Yemen participated in Arab Traffic Week between May 4th-10th 2010, the theme of which was "For your safety, delay your calls". The festival contained many activities, lectures and picture galleries of tragic traffic accidents.

Traffic experts stressed that drivers should not use cell phones whilst driving as they can make the driver lose control of their vehicle, or lose focus and become involved in an accident. According to the experts, the chance of being involved in a car accident is five times higher when using a cell phone whilst driving. Using cell a phone whilst driving leads to serious dangers such driving at an inappropriate or irregular speed, not focusing on the road,

and having a slow response time. The response time of driving whilst on the phone is similar to that of driving under the influence.

The number of cars accidents per year in the Arab World is more than 1 million, leading to 26,000 deaths and over 250,000 wounded, with economic costs estimated at USD 25 billion. The World Health Organization considers that these numbers may increase 60 percent by 2020.

Traffic accidents are a major problem leading to serious human and economic costs. This issue requires collective work to deepen society's awareness about traffic rules and to save people from death and injury and decrease the economic costs of these accidents.

Eid in Yemen

By: Yemen Times Staff

The occasion of Eid is a chance to highlight the cultural, social and religious significance of the celebration, especially in Yemen.

Muslims celebrate two main events each year, namely Eftar and Arafat Eid. They are also called Al-Eid Al-Sagheer (small Eid) and Al-Eid Al-Kabeer (big Eid) respectively. Although each one has its own religious significance, they are celebrated by Yemenis, like all Islamic and Arab nations, with a sense of happiness as they carry out the numerous customs which mark the occasion.

A few days before Eid, families start shopping. During these days, markets are crowded as people scramble to buy items which are needed for the celebrations such as clothes, shoes, special types of sweets, cakes and gifts.

It is a custom for most people to wear new clothes for the occasion. Yemenis start buying new clothes for the family a couple of days before Eid, paying special attention to their children.

Children, in particular, understand nothing of the religious or social significance of Eid, but celebrate it by all means. For them, Eid means new clothes, sweets, gifts, toys and games. Aseel, a seven-year old, said: "When I hear that Eid is coming, the first thing

I think about is having new clothes for this occasion." For this child, thus, Eid is nothing more than receiving new clothes of which he feels proud, especially when he meets other children his age.

Fathers usually consider buying new clothes to be a duty not only for their own children, but also for the children of relatives, neighbors, friends and other poor people. It is in Eid that we think about the children of the poor. Yemenis provide unfortunate families with new clothes or money to go shopping for Eid. Adel, a father of eight children, said: "I cannot only buy clothes for my children when I know that some of my relatives, neighbors or friends cannot afford to provide for theirs."

Particularly on Eid day, the multicultural background of Yemenis is apparent through the various types of dress they wear. From ma'waz, fohah, qamis -all with or without jambia- to the different models of gulf thobes, formal suits or badlat and casual clothes, Yemenis' attire on Eid is varied. Unlike other countries such as Saudi Arabia where almost everybody wears the Arab thob, Yemenis do not follow a particular tradition in dressing. Sometimes, a Yemeni will wear a range of different outfits. Ali, a young Yemeni, said that "I like to wear thob on Eid day, but I also wear casual and, sometimes, for-

mal clothes." Such a variety of clothes reflects the cultural diversity to which Yemenis have been exposed to through interaction with foreigners in Yemen and abroad.

Another great custom in Eid is giving sweets to visitors and family members. Just before Eid, sweets, clothes, are sold in huge quantities. Ahmed Al-Sanani, owner of sweets shop, said: "I sell as many sweets in Eid as I sell in a whole year".

Children traditionally visit relatives, neighbors and friends as part of Salam Al-Eid, which means to shake hands and congratulate them on the occasion of the end of Ramadan. Nowadays, they are encouraged to do this for sweets and sometimes gifts or money, which is known as Asb Al-Eid in Sana'a and as Al-Uadah in cities like Taiz and Ibb.

Kamal, a Yemeni child, regarded the occasion as the best to collect sweets, gifts and money. Shy, he confesses that "Eid is the day on which I feel that people love and deal mercifully with us". Yemenis pay special attention to children in Eid, sometimes giving them money to buy games and toys.

Fahd, father of four children, stated: "I feel all children are my sons and daughters, and, although I am not rich, I try as much as possible to offer children of relatives, neighbors and friends whatever I can to make them happy."



During Eid, cakes and cookies are also baked at home for the family, for visitors or even to swap with friends and neighbors to evaluate each other's skill. Sweets, cakes and cookies are an essential part of Eid in Yemen, bringing families together on the occasion.

Eid is an occasion to visit relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances. These visits form a custom which is religiously and socially encouraged. Children visit the homes of relatives, neighbors and friends either alone or with an

elder brother or their father. Women also visit each other to exchange congratulations and discuss personal affairs. For them, Eid is a chance to see friends and relatives who live far away. Men's visits to each other take place either as quick social calls or as the more common qat chewing sessions.

It is distinctive of Yemeni custom that husbands visit their wives' home during Eid. A Yemeni usually takes his wife and children to visit his mother and father-in-law. The family typically

brings gifts to the grandparents and spends a day with them. Mohammed Ali, a married Yemeni, explained: "At least one day must be dedicated to visiting my wife's home, otherwise offence will be taken."

Other distinctively Yemeni practices during Eid include traveling around the country and attending weddings, but the most important have been highlighted here. These traditions have been transmitted from one generation to another as part of Yemeni cultural framework.

The beekeepers of Wadi Du'an

By: Eric Hansen
Saudi Aramco World

Standing in the midday sun, surrounded by towering sandstone cliffs, I gazed into a trough made from half of a battered oil drum. It was partly filled with sugar syrup, and on the syrup floated chunks of rubber-sandal soles and a few dead bees. Looking around for the beekeepers' camp, I wondered where they had moved now.

It was mid-November, and at this same spot 12 months earlier, I had eaten lunch with the beekeepers in their tent. But this year, the ilb, or buckthorn, trees had flowered earlier than I had expected, and the men had moved on with their tents and hives. My driver, Mohammed Al-Osabi, smoked a cigarette and chuckled to himself at my bewilderment. He had just spent two days driving me across 500 kilometers (300 miles) of desert to meet again with the beekeepers of Wadi Du'an.

Wadi Du'an is a remote, little-known valley in Yemen, just south of the Rub' al-Khali, the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia. Here, generations of beekeepers have been perfecting their craft for at least a millennium. They work hard, using labor-intensive techniques of managing bees. Combined with the dry climate and short flowering season of local plants, their efforts have helped to produce the most expensive and sought-after honey in the world. The most frequent customers come from Saudi Arabia, and in Wadi Du'an, a two-pound tin of the very best honey in the comb can command a price of USD 100 or more.

Wadi Du'an produces what specialists call a dry-land, monofloral, wild-flower honey, renowned for its unique buttery flavor, rich aroma and high viscosity—and for its medicinal qualities. The honey is thought to be the perfect medicine to help women regain their strength after childbirth. Elderly men maintain that a daily spoonful keeps them young, while young men believe that regular doses will help produce a male heir.

During this morning's drive, I had had plenty of time to mull all this over. A gravel track had taken us past storefronts selling the local honey, and farther out, in the villages, we met turbaned men sitting behind kick-wheels, fashioning mounds of slick clay into cylindrical beehives more than a meter tall.

One of the shopkeepers, Islam Ahmed Ba Dhib, had opened tins of honey to let us sample the three different types he had on hand that day. "There are many tests for purity," he said, "but none of them are certain, and, as with friendship, the honey business is based on trust."

The first type he showed us is known to merchants as bariyah, "the cream," a winter honey made from buckthorn (Ziziphus spina-christi) blossoms. The honey tin—25 centimeters (9") across, the same diameter as the terra-cotta hives—was filled with a double layer of

round comb. The heady floral fragrance was unlike any honey I had ever smelled, and the taste was a complex mixture of butter, wildflowers and mysterious, aromatic herbs. Bariyah is eaten mostly by wealthy men.

Next, he opened a tin of marbahey, a summer honey also called sa'if ("of the summer"), after the trees' flowering season. This, I was told, is a "hot" honey, thus good for such things as getting rid of intestinal worms, but to be avoided by pregnant woman, because it can cause miscarriage. Marbahey is usually eaten by dipping warm bread into a mixture of the honey and clarified butter, and sprinkling the mouthful with nigella seeds.

The third type of honey Ahmed Ba Dhib brought out is called mardjah, and it, he explained, is collected between the winter and summer seasons. It is produced when fewer flowers are in bloom and is thus one of the most expensive varieties. He confirmed the stories I had heard of merchants from Gulf countries flying into nearby Wadi Hadhramaut to buy honey from the wholesalers.

Before we left, Ahmed Ba Dhib had told me of a traditional Yemeni way to preserve meat in honey. "Cut up either sheep or goat meat and submerge it in honey for six months. You must be careful to use a ceramic or glass container," he cautioned. "It is a dish that rich people eat for breakfast or at weddings." He had also mentioned that tins of honey are sometimes given to a bride's family as a special wedding gift.

Standing by the oil drum in Wadi Du'an that hot afternoon, I wondered who had taught the beekeepers the cheap trick of using sugar syrup to increase the yield—and lower the quality—of the honey. Mohammed Al-Osabi, who had kept bees in his father's village, told me that the cut-up rubber thongs floating in the syrup served as platforms from which the bees could drink the syrup without falling in. He assured me that reputable buyers would avoid honey from beekeepers who ran such an operation.

Not far from where we stood, a band of wild baboons emerged from a nearby date grove. Gliding across the stony ground, they paused to glare at us and then, without hesitation, swarmed up the 90-meter (300-foot) cliff and disappeared from sight. Watching them, Al-Osabi noticed a single abandoned beekeeper's at the foot of the cliff. Walking closer, we came upon rows of several dozen terracotta hives, set on metal frames and wrapped in burlap and cardboard to protect them from the sun.

No one else was in sight, so we approached the hives on hands and knees to take a closer look. Unperturbed, small docile-looking bees with black and gray stripes flew in and out of the hives. I wondered about honey thieves, but then Al-Osabi cleared his throat and nudged me. The shimmering profile of a man materialized in the heat waves. His body gradually transformed itself into a recognizable shape, and then I heard the sound of his footsteps on the hot gravel.



Bee hives in Doan Vally of Hadramout. Each log hive costs about 1500 YR or about 7 USD, but a complete hive costs at least 6000 YR or 30 USD.

We stood up to greet him.

"You have some interest in bees?" he asked. He introduced himself as Omar Sa'eed Abdullah, honey producer and owner of the hives. He lit a scrap of burlap sacking and waved the smoke toward the entrance of a rectangular wooden hive before opening the back of the hive to reveal a section of golden comb. The metal legs of the hives were set in tins of motor oil to keep out ants. Hornets are another enemy of the bees, and Abdullah showed us a cleverly constructed screen trap, baited with poisoned fish and swarming with confused hornets. Gesturing to the overhead sun, he invited us to his home so that we could discuss beekeeping in comfort.

We sat on the carpeted living-room floor, kept cool by the thick walls of the four-story, mud-brick building. Shuttered windows with decorative lattice screens overlooked an expanse of date groves and, farther off, small dusty plots of farmland awaiting the seasonal rains. On a flat roof a satellite dish was perched. "CNN," my host announced proudly.

I asked him how long his family had been keeping bees.

"For generations," he said as he poured out cups of ginger coffee and offered a plate of fresh dates. "We used to keep the jabali [mountain] bee," he said. "I can still remember it from my childhood 30 years ago. It was reddish in color, but now it's gone. The new bee we use is from Ethiopia, from people who grow crops, but the problem is that this new bee [Apis yemenitica] is not as drought- and hunger-resistant as the wild mountain bee was."

When I asked him about bariyah, he told me that it was named after a particular star that appeared above the horizon at the time of year when this honey was produced. Honey seasons are calculated in accordance with the sidereal year, he explained, rather than the Muslim lunar calendar, because the latter doesn't keep step with the flowering cycle of melliferous plants.

Behind a heavy wooden door that

opened onto the sitting room, tins of honey were stacked waist deep. From this storeroom, Abdullah brought out a tin of buttery kharfi ("of the autumn"), a 100-percent-pure ilb honey selected from his private supply. This quality of honey is reserved for family, friends, and—as in my case—the arrival of an unexpected guest. Connoisseurs of Yemeni honey recognize a wide range of varieties within each growing region, and this tin contained a kilo of the finest honey from a special area of Wadi Du'an known as Jardan. We cut off small portions of the comb, and sat back to enjoy the sensation of thick honey melting in our mouths, revealing layer upon layer of delicate and unexpected flavors. I realized again that eating wild-flower honey from Wadi Du'an is an entirely different experience from eating commercial honey—just as the finest Belgian chocolate is different from supermarket brands.

According to Abdullah, the nomadic beekeepers had recently moved their camps to the south coast in order to set their hives near the late-flowering ilb trees in that region. Honey profits had motorized their migrations in recent years, and they transported the hives in four-wheel-drive vehicles today; years ago they would have used camels, moving only at night in order to allow the bees to work during the day. But now as then, the mostly landless beekeepers follow their established semi-nomadic migratory pattern, and their families stay behind in often remote villages, tending the fields. Abdullah too stays put: He inherited beekeeping rights to sufficient nearby land to make it unnecessary to shift his hives with the seasons, and prefers to produce a limited amount of high-quality honey from a specific region, hoping to command a premium price that way. This strategy, he said, has brought him individual buyers from as far away as Kuwait and Bahrain.

In addition to honey, the Du'an area is also famous for its bee sellers. In March, there is a market out on the main road, known as suq al-mib, the bee market.



This beekeeper in Doan Vally of Hadramout says that he does not use any veil, only smoke. He gets the smoke by burning a branch with a cloth on it, not by using a modern smoker.

There, swarms of bees are sold just prior to the spring season, along with hives, the only significant piece of equipment used by the beekeepers. A plastic-grid hair curler, with foam-rubber stoppers at either end, may be used as a miniature cage to transport the queen bee, and few people use protective clothing or honey extractors. Indeed, traditional beekeepers prefer to sell honey in the comb to attest to its purity, or simply squeeze the honey from broken combs into plastic water bottles. Bits of wax and the odd dead bee float into the neck of the bottle, offering another indication the honey was locally produced.

That night, Mohammed Al-Osabi and I camped on the edge of a volcanic plateau overlooking Wadi Du'an. A full moon illuminated the villages far below. Donkeys brayed, camels roared, and the headlights of lone vehicles lurched along distant tracks until well after midnight.

The following morning we drove north to the city of Shibam, where I met Said al-Sakoti, a dealer specializing in honey from Wadi Du'an. He explained that modern beekeeping techniques were being introduced in the area, and, looking at his shelves, it seemed that the Walter T. Kelley Company of Clarkson, Kentucky, had virtually cornered the market on beekeeping devices, ranging from wooden hives to sheet wax to bee drinking stations. Al-Sakoti admitted that the new methods of mass-producing honey, with modern, large-capacity hives set at the edge of cultivated fields, were rapidly changing traditional practices. Quantity was becoming more important than

quality, he said. The bees were being fed sugar syrups and cheap imported honey to increase yields. New customers from outside the area were less discriminating than the locals, he explained, and consequently more gullible. With their time more valuable, many beekeepers now preferred to drive their hives from place to place in order to produce honey year-round, rather than just during the short seasons, as before. "But, there will always be a market for the very best honey," al-Sakoti assured us.

I asked how the old-fashioned kind of honey could possibly maintain its high price in the face of inexpensive imported brands and now mass-produced local honey as well.

"Demand and limited supply is what drives up the price," he replied. "For the people who can afford it, there is no substitute for the flavor and taste of great honey, which is the result of the gathering skills of certain beekeepers. There are many ways to adulterate honey, but an expert judges it mainly from the aroma. The taste merely confirms what the nose tells you."

"And what is the best way to eat high-quality honey?" I asked.

"Sometimes with a spoon, but among friends I like to cut the comb like cake and eat it with my fingers. That is the very best way. And now," he said, "shall we see what the bees have brought us this year?" He smiled and reached for a nearby tin.

Eric Hansen is the author of Motoring With Mohammed: Journeys to Yemen and the Red Sea. He lives in California.

Politics frustrates US terror war in Yemen

With American airstrikes against Al-Qaeda targets off the table, Yemen's police and military have to wage the battle now. But their ability to operate is hampered by tribesmen who offer protection to the militants.

By: Hamza Hendawi
New Straits Times

For nearly a year, the United States has waged a war against Al-Qaeda in Yemen, largely in deep secrecy. But the militants appear unfazed, and the fragile government of this poor Arab nation is pushing back against American pressure to escalate the fight.

The regime of Yemen's longtime leader, President Ali Abdullah Saleh, is weak, dependent for its survival on the loyalty of unruly tribes and alliances with Muslim extremists. Yemeni authorities also fear too harsh a fight against Al-Qaeda will alienate a deeply conservative Muslim population where anti-American sentiment is widespread. As a result, the main Yemeni tactic is often to negotiate with tribes to try to persuade them to hand over fugitive

militants.

Al-Qaeda militants have been building up their presence for several years in Yemen, finding refuge with tribes in the remote mountain ranges where San'a has little control.

But they made a stunning show of their international reach in December, when they allegedly plotted a failed Christmas Day attempt to blow up a passenger jet over the United States.

The Obama administration branded Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula a global threat, and has dramatically stepped up its alliance with Saleh's regime to uproot it.

Washington is funnelling more than US\$150 million (RM465 million) in military assistance to Yemen this year for helicopters, planes and other equipment, along with a similar amount for humanitarian and development aid.

San'a says its troops are fanned out around the country, hunting for militants. Still, there's been little visible progress.

In recent weeks, Al-Qaeda gunmen have been bold enough to carry out assaults in the capital, San'a, including a failed ambush on a top British diplomat in her car.

The government touted as a major

success a fierce week-long siege last month by Yemeni troops against an Al-Qaeda force in the provincial town of Houta, but most of the militants escaped into nearby impenetrable mountains.

Days after that siege, the governor of the same province, Shabwa, narrowly escaped gunmen who ambushed his convoy. In nearby Abyan province, an Al-Qaeda campaign of assassinations that has killed dozens of police and army officers prompted authorities to ban motorcycles in urban areas to try to stop motorcycle-mounted gunmen.

Meanwhile, Al-Qaeda in Yemen's top leadership remains intact, issuing a web video last week threatening to cross into neighbouring Saudi Arabia to assassinate senior security officials.

And the hunt for Anwar al-Awlaki, a US-born radical Islamic ulama who Washington says has become a leader in the group, may have gone cold.

The governor of Shabwa province, where al-Awlaki is believed to be hiding in the mountains, said he hasn't been sighted in two months and casts doubt whether the cleric was still in the province.

American officials have been careful not to show any sign of friction.

"We believe that abilities of the Yemeni security system are constantly increasing," the State Department's No 3 diplomat, William Burns, said after meeting Saleh last week.

Still, Yemeni Foreign Minister Abu Bakr al-Qirbi recently brought one dispute out into the open, saying San'a had put a stop to American warplanes or drones carrying out strikes against Al-Qaeda targets, a tactic that Washington has relied on against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Pakistan.

Visible signs of the American counterterrorism campaign are few. Deep in the country of 23 million people, villagers report the round-the-clock sound of drones, presumed to be American craft watching militants.

Dozens of informers have been recruited, Yemeni security officials say. They also say the Yemenis submit to their US counterparts daily progress reports on efforts to track down al-Awlaki.

With US airstrikes off the table — and American officials saying there is no intention for US troops to fight on the ground — it is up to Yemen's police and military to wage the battle. But their ability to operate is deeply hampered.

Al-Qaeda fighters — estimated to number around 300 — have built up strongholds in the provinces of Shabwa, Abyan, Juf and Marib, regions of daunting mountain ranges where central authority has nearly no presence.

Yemen is the ancestral homeland of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

At least 70 per cent of Shabwa, for example, is a no-go area for security forces, leaving most under the control of armed tribesmen who offer protection to Al-Qaeda militants, Yemeni security officials say.

Yemen and Washington also disagree on how much of a real threat Al-Qaeda presents.

Yemeni lawmakers and tribal chiefs often maintain that the danger is a myth propagated by Washington to impose its control over the country — or by the San'a government to give it an excuse to strike its domestic enemies.

Yemen also faces an on-off Shia rebellion in the north and a separate secessionist movement in the south.

The US sees al-Awlaki as the most notorious English-speaking advocate of terrorism directed at America, with a dangerously strong appeal to Muslims in the West, and Washington has put him on a list of militants to kill or

capture.

US investigators say emails link him to the army psychiatrist accused of last year's killings at Fort Hood, Texas, and that he helped prepare Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, accused in the Christmas airline bombing attempt.

But in Yemen — al-Awlaki's ancestral land — only a few people have heard of him.

Those who have say they cannot understand what the fuss is all about. And if he is captured, he will not be extradited to the US because Yemen's constitution forbids it, Foreign Minister al-Qirbi has said.

The government is also reluctant to wage an all-out fight because of Saleh's alliances with militant groups, including jihadi veterans of the wars in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Chechnya and Iraq. He has let their influence grow as part of an elaborate divide-and-rule game that has helped him stay in power.

"The regime has, from the start, depended on a tripod of military, religious and tribal bases," said prominent analyst Abdel-Ghani al-Iryani.

"It continues to think to this day that it's in control of the situation, but I personally think they no longer can."

How can we fight terrorism in a failing state?

By: Corinne Graff
Good Politics

The media frenzy over who's to blame for allowing a bomber to hop on a flight with explosives sewn into his underwear isn't surprising. But it is distracting us from a much bigger question: What's the deal with Yemen?

The Christmas bomber—like the Fort Hood shooter before him—had links to militants there. Why, after spending billions of dollars on our "war on terror," is Al Qaeda still threatening the United States from safe havens in

Yemen?

It's not that we have ignored the country. Immediately after 9/11, the Bush Administration worked closely with Yemen on counterterrorism, yielding real results. Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih arrested scores of suspected terrorists, providing actionable intelligence to the United States.

We reciprocated by dispatching equipment and special operations units to support Yemeni forces. An unmanned CIA aircraft blew up a car in late 2002, killing suspected Al Qaeda operative and U.S.S. Cole attack mastermind Abu Ali al-Harithi. Terrorist activity subsided. Yemen was heralded

by many in Washington as a success story in the global struggle against violent extremism. Check please.

Sadly, those gains were short-lived. The reemergence of Al Qaeda in Yemen, which began in 2006, makes it patently clear that a strategy based only on the killing of militants is neither effective nor sustainable. But what can we do differently?

A Failing State

Yemen is a failing state. That term is used so often to describe places like Somalia and Afghanistan that it makes one's eyes glaze over, but it stands for an important idea. President Bush and

his administration ignored the consequences of state failure, and this blind spot has cost us dearly.

Consider Yemen's predicament. There is steep population growth. The country, located in the Arabian Desert, is running out of water (the groundwater source that supplies the capital of Sana and its 2 million inhabitants will be exhausted within 20 years). Ninety percent of the wheat and rice Yemen consumes is imported. Oil revenues finance the cost, but production is dwindling. Food shortages are dire, and climate change is sure to accelerate the water and food crises. Lastly, Yemen has one of the highest poverty rates in the world and 35 percent unemployment.

Then there's violence. A protracted conflict in Northern Yemen pits minority-Shiite rebels against the Sunni-dominated central government, leading Yemeni President Salih to recruit former Sunni jihadists to bolster his security forces. Militants reportedly staff the government bureaucracy, while shortages of equipment, training, and good intelligence hamper counterterrorism efforts. Outside the capital, militants have a free hand to use Yemeni territo-

ry as a launching pad for international attacks.

Social services are no better. The government spends a meager USD 11 per person on health, compared with USD 7,000 per capita in America. The very tribal leaders on whom the regime relies for its survival are willing to court extremists. As one tribal leader reports, "we don't hate our country. We hate our government. It doesn't take care of us."

Religious institutions have stepped in to fill the void, making real improvements in health and education. But foot-soldiers in the global jihad have been radicalized and recruited in Yemen's Islamic schools and mosques. It's not just the Fort Hood shooter and the Christmas bomber. It's also John Walker Lindh—better known as the "American Taliban"—and Osama bin Laden's former driver, a Yemeni who confessed that "working as a driver in bin Laden's motor pool paid better than driving a minibus."

It's Not Working

United States policy has yet to adapt to the realities of fighting extremism in a failing state. Since 2000, we have been

providing short-term security assistance to help intercept individual terrorists in Yemen. We have launched controversial aerial bombings. We promised to increase foreign assistance, only to withdraw it later. The more the government teeters on the brink, the more we demand, as though articulating an unrealistic desire will deliver a result.

This is not smart strategy. Yemen bears its share of the blame for the threats that are developing within its borders, but that will provide precious little comfort if it becomes a factory for violent extremism. If we want to take Al Qaeda down and keep them down, we need to build state capacity in Yemen through sustained economic assistance and good governance programs. They're ambitious objectives, especially in a failing state. But if the underwear bomber taught us anything, it's that the stakes warrant the effort.

Corinne Graff is a Truman National Security Project Fellow and a Fellow at the Brookings Institution, where she has just finished a co-edited book on fragile states titled *Confronting Poverty: Weak States and U.S. National Security*.

East and West: Partners in justice

By: Radhia Al-Mutawakel

In 2008, the American organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) reached out to me as a legal rights activist and asked me to help facilitate their mission in Yemen. They wanted to address human rights violations in Yemen, particularly the status of civilians displaced by the war in Yemen's northern Sa'ada district, where government forces have fought an armed group, known as the Huthi, since 2004.

Despite the fact that I am a legal rights activist, I fell into the trap of suspicion and stereotyping: I considered everything American to be part of a political conspiracy that really has nothing to do with people's rights and freedoms. It took a fair amount of thought and a persistent desire to improve the human rights situation in my country to overcome my suspicion. I decided, cautiously, to accept their offer. I began to work for them through the Yemeni organization Hewan (dialogue, in Arabic) on a trial basis.

It has now been about three years since I began working with HRW. I have watched this organization operate through its dedicated and meticulous researchers in Yemen. The results of their efforts were a number of reports, three of which addressed the bloody war in Sa'ada. They also successfully created public awareness in Yemen about a number of terms that were absent from Yemeni lexicon, such as "civilians", "displaced" and "enforced disappearance".

Through these reports, HRW man-

aged to pressure, professionally and with great care, the relevant foreign and local parties to stop human suffering and allow the release of prisoners, based on the framework of the Yemeni Constitution, and national and international law. One important report in 2008, "Disappearances and Arbitrary Arrests in the Armed Conflict with Huthi Rebels in Yemen", combined with the work of local Yemeni non-governmental organizations, led to the freeing of more than 50 detainees imprisoned illegally during the war in Sa'ada.

There is no doubt that without the interaction and outstanding performance by local civil society organizations working on human rights in Yemen, HRW would not have been able to perform its role. Indeed, Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of HRW, has said: "Yemen has some of the Arab world's most accomplished, independent and professional human rights activists."

My experience with HRW has helped me re-think the way that I look at the relationship between the East and the West, and made me think more deeply about the best way to build bridges between them. Coexistence can only take place through working jointly towards a life of respect, justice and fairness for all.

Certainly, culture and ideology play a role amongst the contradictions and tensions that sometimes mar relations between Muslims and the West. Accordingly, many groups focus on building bridges through literature, art, music and

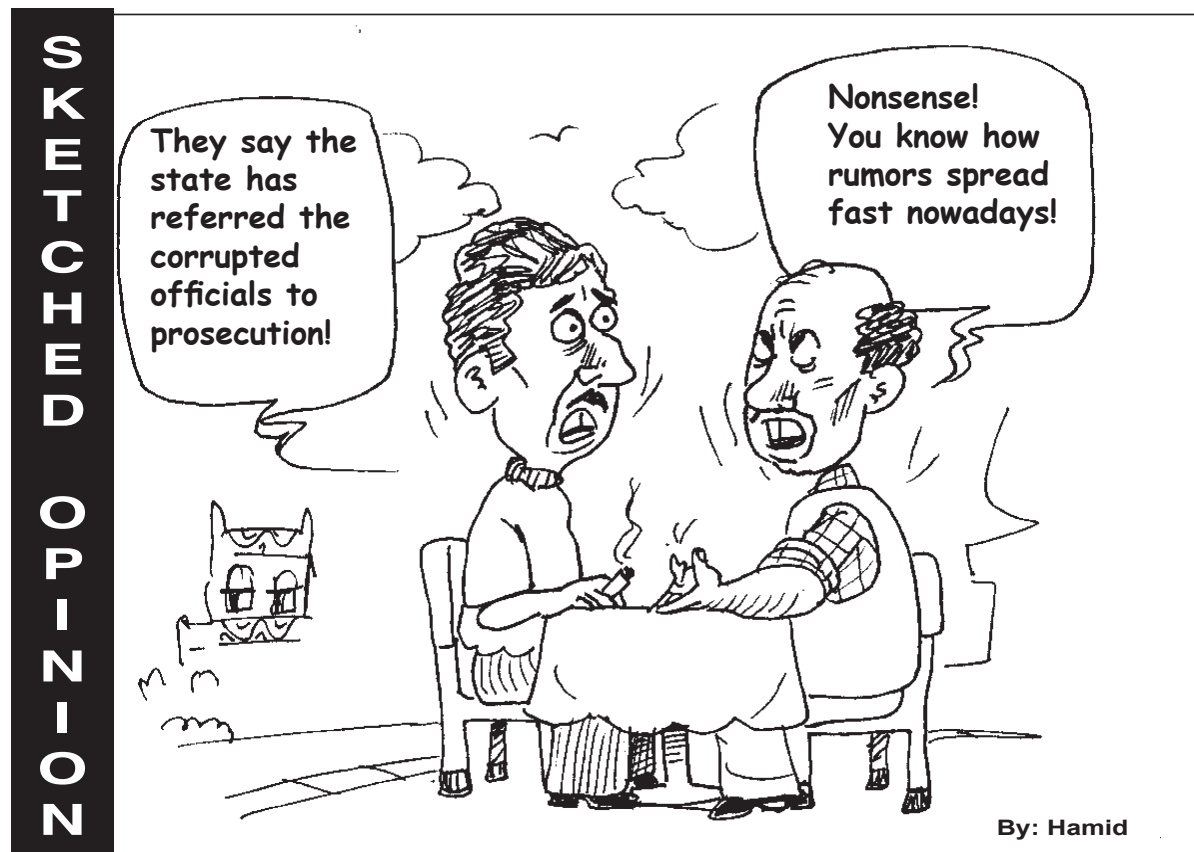
other intellectual and cultural means, which I respect. But we should not ignore the fact that we are attempting to build bridges between two communities whose relations have also been riddled with issues pertaining to rights, freedoms, security, justice and equality.

Ignoring this fact while attempting to build bridges of understanding between Muslims and the West will only create bridges that can collapse at any moment. In order for these bridge-building attempts to achieve their goal, Western and Muslim communities should work to find strong common ground. For instance, they should partner in the human rights field where they can together ensure justice and equality.

Right now, this is difficult to achieve at the government level, which is why nations aspiring for change should make use of civil society. My personal experience with human rights work in Yemen made me believe that civil society is the best way to create real change and to create solid common ground between communities in the Muslim world and the West.

Radhia Al-Mutawakel is a human rights activist and the Director of Hewan Organization for Democratic Development in Yemen. This article was written for the Common Ground News Service (CGNews).

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By: Hamid

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Another bad year for Middle East journalists?

By: Barry Neild
For CNN

By all accounts, it's been a bad month for journalism in the Middle East, with claims of arbitrary arrests, publications forced to close, threats made against TV station executives and bloggers jailed. Add to these the publication of a new global index on press freedoms which paints a very sorry picture of Middle Eastern countries -- and all-in-all it appears to have been a bad year.

"Actually, to be honest, this isn't a drastic change from previous years," says Soazig Dollet head of the Middle East and North Africa desk at campaign group Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF), which produces the index.

The Middle East countries aren't the only ones to score poorly in the RSF Press Freedom Index. This year the Paris-based group has highlighted concerns about a drop in standards in

some European Union nations.

And though Iran, Yemen and Syria languish near the foot of the table, they are joined by China, Cuba and Vietnam and still count themselves ahead of Turkmenistan, North Korea and Eritrea.

It seems that every time the region goes one step in the right direction it systematically goes back by two

But with only four of the 20 Middle Eastern states or territories listed placing in the top 100 (Lebanon is the highest at 78), and precious few signs of improvement on previous years, it appears that something is amiss.

"This classification is extremely bad for the countries of the region and only reveals a greater trend which is the lack of general freedoms and democracy in most countries," Middle East media analyst Hanni Yasser Khellef told CNN.

"It seems that every time the region goes one step in the right direction it systematically goes back by two."

Says Khellef many of the problems

arise from government control of the media, which is seen as the norm rather than the exception in the Middle East and points to broader, political issues.

"Most of these countries not only limit all sorts of political freedoms but they also firmly control opinion and leave absolutely no space to civil society," he says. "They also tightly control the internet."

He adds: "The main problem is that the regimes are totally incapable of opening up and liberalizing the media because they are so unpopular."

In its report, RSF highlights what it says are problems in Bahrain -- which has fallen from 119th place to 144th due to the "growing number of imprisonments and trials, notably against bloggers and netizens" in the name of fighting terrorism.

Bahrain insists it does not use government powers to silence opposition voices, and says it uses censorship is only to filter out pornography and websites that inflame sectarian tensions and incite unrest.

Kuwait, which has traditionally fared well in the RSF index, has also taken a dive from 60th to 87th place amid claims authorities have harshly treated a writer, Abdulqader al-Jassem, who has been arrested twice and detained over charges he attempted to overthrow the government.

Al-Jassem denies the charges saying he merely wrote articles criticizing the Kuwaiti prime minister and questioning Iran's influence in Kuwait.

In a separate case that is unlikely to improve the Gulf state's outlook, its prosecutors this month summoned several members of the Kuwaiti ruling family on charges of attacking a private satellite TV channel, Agence France-Presse reported. The agency says the family's lawyer has denied the charges.

Scope TV's studio building was set upon earlier this month by an angry mob after the station's director claimed on a talk show that the ruling family's ancestors had attempted to overthrow the government half a century earlier.

Authorities have pledged to bring to justice those behind the attack. Kuwaiti lawmakers, meanwhile, have variously condemned both the mob and the TV station for airing the comments that led to the incident.

There are other examples, including in Egypt, which despite showing some improvements, still sits at 127th on the RSF list.

Egyptian blogger Abdel Kareem Nabil Suleiman is currently serving a four-year sentence for "spreading information disruptive of public order and damaging to the country's reputation, incitement to hate Islam and defaming the president of the republic."

Egyptian authorities have not responded to CNN's requests for comments on the case.

Says Khellef, Egypt's low ranking is particularly disquieting because of its significance in the region. "Egypt is probably the worst in a sense as it has always been, historically, the center of Arab thought and home to some of the best editors and newspapers," he said.

But are allegations made by RSF and others unfair attempts to judge the region's attitudes towards press through western eyes? Perhaps, concedes RSF's Dollet, but this argument founders, she says, when considering international standards that most of these countries have pledged to uphold.

"On a daily basis I am told the press index is not fair because it does not take into consideration specifics of Middle Eastern countries," she said.

"It's true, but we don't take into consideration specifics of any countries in South America or Africa either. These are countries in the Middle East that ratify international conventions, declarations of the United Nations, and they engage themselves to respect these conventions."

There are, however, some positives, with both Israel and the Palestinian territories showing marked improvements. Adds Dollet: "Nothing is black and white, there is some good news."

Middle East public policy: going round in circles

The importance of the Middle East

By: Gwynne Dyer
Tehran Times

The media in the Middle East carry a lot of Middle Eastern stories, of course, but why do most of the other media in the world do the same? Asian media strike a better balance, but Western media, and any other media that basically follow the American news agenda, focus obsessively on the region. Between a third and a half of all foreign news stories in the Western print and broadcast media are usually about the Middle East.

Like fish that never notice the medium they swim in, people tend not to remark upon this familiar aspect of their media environment. I didn't really become aware of it myself until I flew into Canada a few years ago, got a

copy of the Globe and Mail, "Canada's National Newspaper," and found that every single story on the two pages of foreign news it offers was about the Middle East.

This is a phenomenon that cries out for an explanation, and it's not easy to find a credible one. It's certainly not oil, which is the lazy explanation. Oil is quite important in the global economy, and the Middle East has a large share of the market and an even bigger share of the reserves. But it's been 37 years since the oil-rich Arab states once refused to sell their oil, and they couldn't do that again.

Not WOULDNT, it's not a question of trust. COULDN'T, because it would cause far too much disruption in their own economies. The 1973 oil embargo took place at a time when most of the major Arab oil-exporting countries had

populations two or three times smaller than they are now, and when their people did not live in full-fledged consumer societies.

It's different now. The cash flow from oil exports pays not just for imported cars and plasma-screen TVs, but for the very food that the local people eat: most Arab oil-exporting states import half or more of the food they consume. They also have huge investments in the Western economies that an oil embargo would hurt. Another oil embargo isn't going to happen, and stories about oil belong on the business pages.

Well, then, how about the fact that the United States has invaded two Middle Eastern countries in the past ten years, and still has troops in both of them? Does that explain the obsessive focus on the Middle East?

No, because the obsession was there

before the invasions. In fact, the causation is probably the other way round: the exaggerated importance with which Americans already viewed the Middle East was almost certainly a contributory factor in the Bush administration's decisions to invade Afghanistan and Iraq.

The main factor in the Afghan decision, of course, was the foolish belief that invading Afghanistan would somehow help to suppress anti-American terrorism rather than stimulate more of it. Almost nobody in Washington seemed aware that they were falling into a trap laid for them by Osama bin Laden. The invasion of Iraq had more complex and even less rational motives, but was equally driven by the mistaken belief that this was a very important place.

The greater Middle East contains about ten percent of the world's population. The Arab world at its heart is only

five percent. The whole region accounts for only three percent of the global economy, and produces almost nothing of interest to the rest of the world except oil. So why does it dominate the international news agenda?

The Europeans play a role in this, because the media in the former imperial powers take a greater interest in their former colonies than in other countries of equal importance. But the American media really set the agenda, and their fascination with the Middle East requires a different explanation.

A large part of it is driven by the deep emotional investment in Israel that many Americans have. Israel is not viewed as just another foreign "country", to be weighed by its strategic and economic importance. It is seen as a special place, almost an American protectorate, and its foreign policy agenda (which is all

about the Middle East) largely sets the U.S. media agenda.

The other big factor is the lasting American obsession with Iran, which is as great as the obsession with Cuba. Both countries have successfully defied the United States, and that has been neither forgiven nor forgotten.

Combine the love for Israel and the hatred of Iran, and you have an explanation for the American media's obsession with the entire Middle Eastern region. Most media elsewhere, especially in the West, just follow suit. It's a huge distortion that leads to the neglect of much important news about the rest of the world, but at least the Middle East gives good value for money. The news it generates is unfailingly interesting.

Gwynne Dyer's latest book "Climate Wars" is distributed in most of the world by OneWorld

Cleveland Clinic creates new Middle Eastern focused hospital web site

Cleveland Clinic announced the launch of a unique international web site, focused on providing Middle Eastern visitors with streamlined access to information on diseases, conditions and treatment options. The site, clevelandclinic.org/middleeast, features an interchangeable Arabic/English option, enabling visitors to learn more about Cleveland Clinic's world-class care in their native language.

The new website utilizes Cleveland Clinic's existing internet platform with

a focus on providing health information on diseases and conditions that are prevalent in the Middle East region. The site also provides contact information, resources to make travel arrangements easier and an overview of services available through Cleveland Clinic's Global Patient Services office for international patients.

For patients and families, there are translated resources to help with making an appointment and coordinating a visit through Cleveland Clinic's Global Patient Services. There are also condition-specific guides to better under-

stand diagnosis and treatment including cardiovascular disease, women's health and epilepsy.

"For many years, Cleveland Clinic has had the privilege to treat and care for patients from all of the Middle East countries," said Bill Ruschhaupt, M.D., Chairman of Cleveland Clinic's Global Patient Services. "This website is just one way in which we are continuing to provide all of our patients, and prospective patients, the best experience possible."

The website has an expanded physician's directory, which provides com-

prehensive profile information about 1,800 doctors, including bios, languages spoken, awards/honors, diseases/conditions treated and more. Patients can select the best practitioner to meet their individual needs.

Cleveland Clinic, located in Cleveland, Ohio, is a not-for-profit multi-specialty academic medical center that integrates clinical and hospital care with research and education. Cleveland Clinic was founded in 1921 by four renowned physicians with a vision of providing outstanding patient care based upon the principles of coopera-

tion, compassion and innovation. U.S. News & World Report consistently names Cleveland Clinic as one of the nation's best hospitals in its annual "America's Best Hospitals" survey. About 2,000 full-time salaried physicians and researchers and 7,600 nurses at Cleveland Clinic represent more than 100 medical specialties and subspecialties. In addition to its main campus, Cleveland Clinic operates nine regional hospitals in Northeast Ohio, Cleveland Clinic Florida, the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas and Cleveland Clinic Canada. In 2008, there were

more than 4.2 million visits throughout the Cleveland Clinic health system and 165,000 hospital admissions. Patients came for treatment from every state and from more than 80 countries. Visit Cleveland Clinic at clevelandclinic.org.

The information contained in this communication was developed by Cleveland Clinic's Marketing Department.

For more information: clevelandclinic.org/media_relations

The importance of the Middle East

By: Andrew England
The Financial Times

As chief executives and government officials descended on a sprawling resort in Marrakech, the themes laid out for discussion at the annual World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa were designed to be forward looking: "Development Drivers," "Building the Future Middle Class" and "The Power of Desert Energy".

But for veterans of WEF summits, many of the topics that reverberated around the plenary sessions and debates merely represented more of the same - the failings of education systems, the need to address skills gaps among indigenous populations, improve governance and develop the private sector.

"We are still discussing the same issues but nobody is coming with solutions," said one Bahraini government official. "What we need is to share more success stories,

rather than repeating the same things."

It is not that all is doom and gloom in the region, with delegates at the Marrakech meeting cautiously optimistic about hopes of economic recovery in the wake of the downturn.

Most Arab states have emerged from the economic crisis in relatively good stead. And the region received a fillip from the International Monetary Fund at the beginning of the week when it forecast that the Arab Gulf states would grow at 4.5 percent this year compared to paltry growth of 0.4 percent in 2009. North African states, which include the host Morocco, are expected to grow by 5 percent, the IMF said.

Yet for all the talk of opportunities in the oil-rich region, the Arab world is still grappling with a raft of perennial challenges - not least how to better prepare a growing, young population for jobs in the private sector.

With more than 60 percent of the region's population aged below 25, it has become an increasingly pressing issue for

which there is no "magic wand," as one consultant put it.

Across the region, bloated and inefficient public sectors have been used as social security nets, while chief executives complain of being unable to find adequately qualified staff to grow their businesses.

There has been plenty of talk from governments about realising the need for change, from diversifying economies to revamping education systems.

But too often action fails to meet the rhetoric. And it is perhaps the fact that it is the same old issues that are still being thrashed around, without the debates moving substantially forward that the attendance at Marrakech was judged to be at a lower level than the 2009 forum in Jordan.

Indeed, one of the most interesting talking points in Marrakech was the absence of top-ranking Moroccan leaders, including King Mohammed VI and Abbas El Fassi, his prime minister who failed to show up for the opening session after apparently falling sick.

World's costliest car goes on sale in India

Business Recorder

The world's most expensive and fastest production car has gone on sale in India, with luxury manufacturer Bugatti making its debut in the land of rickshaws. The Bugatti Veyron 16.4 Grand Sport, which has a top speed of 407 kilometres (250 miles) an hour, went on display in a car dealership in the capital New Delhi on Thursday priced at 160 million rupees (USD 3.6 million).

Just 150 of the cars will be sold worldwide, though there will be few opportunities for the car to show its performance on India's potholed and notoriously congested roads. "India is the hub of luxury, the country of the erstwhile Maharajas, who were the true patrons of bespoke luxury," Bugatti executive Julius Kruta said in a statement, referring to India's former hereditary rulers.

"We have in the past received a heartening response from our valued customers and I think the launch of the Bugatti in India will truly delight our discerning

audience." A host of Western luxury car and motorbike manufacturers are targeting the Indian market where the fast-developing economy is minting new multi-millionaires every year.

Shortcomings in public infrastructure are a major constraint on growth, however, and the nation's road network often features poorly maintained single-lane routes outside highly congested urban areas. One of the country's best-known fast-car enthusiasts, superstar cricket batsman Sachin Tendulkar, beats the traffic by taking his Ferrari out in the early hours of the morning in his home town of Mumbai.

Iconic motorbike maker Harley-Davidson is the most recent major brand to bet



on India's elite and has invested in a glitzy showroom in New Delhi, which opened in July. India has a record 69 billionaires, with 17 new members added to the exclusive club this year, according to business magazine Forbes. But some 836 million Indians also live on less than 20 rupees (45 cents) a day, according to a government report, while Indian statistics on health, infant mortality, malnutrition and income are worse than those for sub-Saharan Africa.

What not to do about Yemen

By: David Isenberg
psaonline.org

Sometimes I wonder if Al-Qaeda sympathizers have infiltrated America's right wing.

Because ever since the news broke of the Christmas Day attempt by 23-year old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, who tried and failed to blow up a US airliner over Detroit using explosives he had smuggled past airport security in Amsterdam, Netherlands and had reportedly joined a Yemeni affiliate of Al-Qaeda which trained and equipped him with explosives and directed him to attack that plane headed for America, there have been calls for America to escalate American involvement in Yemen. People are now saying that broader and more clearly visible retaliatory military action must be taken.

As Glen Greenwald wrote in Salon: "Actually, if you count our occupation of Iraq, our twice-escalated war in Afghanistan, our rapidly escalating bombing campaigns in Pakistan and Yemen, and various forms of covert war involvement in Somalia, one could reasonably say that we're fighting five different wars in Muslim countries — or, to use the NYT's jargon, "five fronts" in the "Terror War" (Obama yesterday specifically mentioned Somalia and Yemen as places where, euphemistically, "we will continue to use every element of our national power"). Add to those five fronts the "crippling" sanctions on Iran many Democratic Party luminaries are now advocating, combined with the chest-busting threats from our Middle East client state that the next wars they fight against Muslims will be even "harsher" than the prior ones, and it's almost easier to count the Muslim countries we're not attacking or threatening than to count the ones we are. Yet this still isn't enough for America's right-wing super-warriors, who accuse the five-front-war-President of "an allergy to the concept of war."

Uh, excuse me, but earth calling the Republican Party and Fox News. What

exactly do you think the US has been doing in Yemen for the past several years? Sitting down and playing tidlywinks?

The US has been backing airstrikes against suspected Al-Qaeda members in Yemen for some time.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which claimed responsibility for the attempted attack on a US airliner bound for Detroit, is led by a Yemeni who was once a close aide to Osama bin Laden. The group formed in January 2009, when leader Naser Abdel Karim al-Wahishi announced a merger between operatives from Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

The group has been blamed for a series of attacks in Yemen, including an assault against the US embassy in Sanaa, and suicide bombings targeting South Korean visitors. Recently, the group indicated it was ready to take its fight beyond Yemen.

Reportedly, Abdulmutallab claims that he was one of many bombers being groomed by the Yemeni Al-Qaeda affiliate to attack American-bound aircraft. If this is true then is failed attempt is beneficial insofar as it helps the United States to focus on a real threat.

None of this is to say that the US should be complacent about the state of its domestic security. The, thankfully, failed, attempt has highlighted many deficiencies. Contrary to initial remarks, which, were subsequently recanted, by Janet Napolitano, the homeland security secretary, the system did not work. As she later noted, it "failed miserably." The suspect was allowed to fly to the United States on a valid visa without extra screening even though he was listed in a terrorism database, — thanks to this father who had taken the extraordinary step of warning American authorities on Nov. 19 about his son — bought a one-way ticket with cash and checked no luggage.

Clearly, there are still gaps in coordination between the State Department, the National Counterterrorism Center, and the Department of Homeland Security. To use the now familiar expression there are still numerous dots not

being connected.

Yet while the US certainly needs to assist the Yemen government in dismantling this group it is important to take steps that are appropriate and don't worsen the situation. Specialists believe the Al-Qaeda fighters number there in the low hundreds. For that you don't invade a country or launch a bombing campaign. We already did that in Iraq and, for a time, handed Al-Qaeda a recruiting windfall.

Yemen is a complicated country. As Rami G. Khouri wrote a few days ago:

"Yemen has transformed itself into a place where three different political or military contests are underway: the government vs. the Houthis, some secessionists in the south, and a growing Al-Qaeda network. Meanwhile the Saudi Arabian and American armed forces are directly engaged in warfare against two of them — Houthis and Al-Qaeda — and the Iranian government is increasingly weighing in on the side of the Houthis."

Here in one package, at the end of this year we have all the major tension points of the contemporary Middle East converging in a single time and place — Al-Qaeda vs. everyone in the world, Iran vs. Arabs, the United States vs. Al-Qaeda, Shiites vs. Sunnis, rich Arabs vs. poor Arabs, and the failing centralized modern Arab security state vs. its indigenous tendency to disintegrate into tribal or regional units.

The Yemen government is also fragile. Its interests and those of the US are not the same. The US now views Yemen through the prism of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). But Yemen is much more concerned with its own domestic unrest. While, thanks to financial assistance, and US pressure, its president, Ali Abdullah Saleh has allowed more strikes against AQAP he has done so under duress and against his better judgment. Being seen to cooperate too closely with the US will not do him no favors at all, but these are difficult times for him and he has to tread a fine line between appeasing the US and trying to hold the country together.

What you do is what we are already

doing. Have your intelligence agencies and military special operations teams help Yemen, provide intelligence, training and weapons and economic assistance.

Doing more than that risks worsening the situation. The recent US-sponsored airstrikes there serve as an example. They appear to have missed several of the targeted individuals and killed dozens of innocent people, including women and children — which inevitably inflames anti-western sentiment. Yemen does need outside help in dealing with Al-Qaeda but the less visible it is, the better.

As the Guardian noted recently:

"Whatever else is done, it's important to distinguish between measures that benefit Yemen and those that benefit the regime of its president, Ali Abdullah Saleh. The worst of all outcomes would be to be perceived as propping up Saleh at a time when his power is clearly ebbing away. Saleh, who rose through the army, has ruled northern Yemen since 1978 and both parts of the country since unification of north and south in 1990. He is now in his last presidential term and has to step down by 2013, when he will be 71, unless he changes the constitution — a move that is not impossible but in the present circumstances would probably cause uproar."

Former Vice president Dick Cheney claims that this incident and others goes to show that President Obama doesn't realize America is at war. I'd say that it is Cheney that is out of touch. When you fight a war both sides suffer losses. American has been remarkably lucky since the 9/11 attacks not to suffer another major attack on American soil. But that luck in unlikely to hold forever. Sooner or later an attack is going to be successful, even if American was devoting its resources to fulfilling the Cheney one percent doctrine, i.e. fighting a low probability, high impact attack.

Cheney might also want to remember that it is, at least in part, thanks to thanks to the Iraq war he championed that Al Qaeda has had a chance to regroup in Yemen.

Fueling the fire in Yemen

By: Jon Western
duckofminerva.blogspot.com

My friend, Stacey Philbrick Yadav, has just posted an interesting take on American policy in Yemen at Foreign Policy. She writes:

I've been traveling regularly to Yemen since 2004, conducting research on the relationship between Islamists and leftists in Yemen's opposition parties. Throughout this time, I have maintained correspondence with Yemeni journalists and political activists from a wide range of ideological positions. They are united in their concern about expanding US involvement in Yemen, understanding just how badly it is likely to turn out for them and their country.

In part, Yemeni reformers are wary because such assistance has already contributed to radicalization. The use of unmanned drones, for example, goes back to 2002 at least. The combination of the perceived infringement on Yemeni sovereignty and high civilian death tolls caused by drone strikes has unquestionably helped fuel anti-American sentiment. Now, my Yemeni sources worry the Saleh regime will use additional military funds to crack down on legitimate political dissent and pad its coffers, rather than fighting actual terrorists and providing desperately needed services and infrastructure.

The United States' interest in Yemen has clearly been piqued. But information and analysis lag far behind this interest. As a Yemeni official told me, "The guys in D.C. aren't creative"; they throw money at the problem rather than working to solve it. In Yemen, Saleh is part of the problem. Clear policy alter-

natives might not be available yet — but writing a blank check will certainly do nothing but fuel the radicalization the United States seeks to fight.

I think the last point is telling. We've now seen a lot of the "War on Terror" talking heads follow the headlines to the Yemen situation peddling their standard fare: more US military assistance and support. But the early reporting on Yemen in the past few weeks reveals how little the US seems to know about the country.

Mark Landler wrote a piece over the weekend in the NYTimes and added this:

In an overburdened State Department, there are only a handful of Yemen experts, compared with 30 people from nine government agencies who are assigned just to the administration's special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard C. Holbrooke.

Washington's limited insight into Yemen was on display Thursday, when the White House's chief counterterrorism adviser, John O. Brennan, expressed surprise that Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula was sophisticated enough to carry out a plot against an American jetliner. In fact, Mr. Brennan, a one-time CIA station chief in neighboring Saudi Arabia, is widely regarded as one of the administration's most knowledgeable officials about the country.

I'm sure we'll see more of the standard talking heads surface and repeat the last thing they heard on Yemen. For my money, I'll be waiting to read more from Stacey and from Gregory Johnsen and Brian O'Neill over at Waq Al-Waq. Stacey is a gifted scholar and Johnsen and O'Neill have been blogging on Yemen for the past couple of years and know the country and region well.

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باحثون عن وظيفة

عبدالله العشاري، الرخصة الدولية لقياده الحاسوب (KDL) و دبلوم لغة إنجليزية ودبلوم سكرتاريه في الحاسوب، شهادة (IT) في الصيانة وبرمجه الحاسوب وخبره لاتقل عن سنه في هندسه الحاسوب وتربيته وتصميم الشبكات. ٧١١٦٣٩٧٩٠

بكالوريوس محاسبه - إجاده المحادثه والكتابة بصوره جيده للغه الانجليزية. دبلوم سكرتاريه كمبيوتر - خبره ٧ سنوات محاسب. ٧٣٣٤٠٩٦٥٢

بكالوريوس لغه إنجليزية + دبلوم سكرتاريه في الكمبيوتر دبلوم تسويق. يرغب في العمل لدى شركه في مجال يتطلب اللغه الإنجليزية. ٧٧٧٠٠٤٢٠٧

بكالوريوس هندسه الاتصالات والالكترونيات، دبلوم في اللغه الإنجليزية (مستوى متقدم في اللغه) هناك العديد من شهادته خبره من يمن موبايل وشركه توتال النفطية. ٢٥٤٠١٤٠/٠١ أو ٧٧٠٨٥٥٧٣٧

بكالوريوس تجارة تخصص محاسبه دبلوم الدراسات العليا تخصص محاسبه- دبلوم اللغه الإنجليزية، خبره خمسة عشر سنه في المحاسبه والمرجع في العديد من الحركات التجارية والصناعيه حاصل على إجازة محاسب قانوني. ٧٣٥٥٨٧٨٧٦ أو ٧٧٧٧٧٥٢

علي هزاع الجنيدي، سوق معدات ثقيله وخفيغه، خبره مدتها ١٢ سنه، عملت لدى شركات نفطيه سابق معدات ثقيله لمدة ٨ سنوات (شبول) - بولكين - وايت - قاطرات وغيرها) يريد العمل لدى أي شركه أو في الخليج. ٧١٣٢٠٧٢٧٢

عبد الرحمن العامري - معلم كبير في الالمنيوم - خبره ١٠ سنوات، يريد العمل لدى أي شركه المنيوم أو في أحد دول الخليج، أجد اللغه الإنجليزية كتابته ونطقا. ٧٧٣٣٢٥٥٥٠

فلسطيني حاصل على بكالوريوس هندسة كمبيوتر عام ٩٧، مدير سابق لمعهد لغات، مراقب جوده لمصنع لحوم، يجيد اللغه الانجليزية والتسويق - لديه إقامه في اليمن يرغب بالعمل كمندوب مبيعات أو أي عمل

مناسب. ٧٣٥٦٩٤٤٣٩ هيب عبدالحبيب، بكالوريوس محاسبه، خبره ٧ سنوات في السجلات المحاسبه والأنظمة، دورات متعدده في الكمبيوتر. ٧٧٣٢٥٠٩٩٠، ٧٧٣٢٥٠٨٨٠

يجيد اللغه الإنجليزية، ويرغب في العمل كحارس أمن أو سكرتير. ٧١١١٤٧١٣٧

أمبر مهاري مولا - بكالوريوس ادارة أعمال (ماليزيا)، تقنية معلومات (ماليزيا)، عملت كمساعد اداري - دبي، اجادة اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. ٧٣٦٧٣٣٩٦٦

بكالوريوس محاسبه، مستوى جيد في المحادثة والكتابة بالغة الإنجليزية، وعده دورات في اللغه الإنجليزية، دبلوم سكرتارية وكمبيوتر، خبرة لمدة سبع سنوات كمحاسب مخازن (مراقب مخزون)، وثلاث سنوات خبرة كأمين مخازن. ٧٣٣٤٠٩٦٥٢

shawkiameen83@gmail.com عمرو محمد ناجي محمود، بكالوريوس تسويق وإنتاج إداري، حاصل على دبلوم سكرتارية في مجال

الحاسوب. حاصل على عدة دورات في التنمية البشرية لمنظفة (NODS). جيد في اللغة الإنجليزية، حاصل على عدة في عملية ترحيل الحسابات في النظام المحاسبي يمن سوفت. المقدرة على وضع دراسات ميدانية في الخطة التسويقية لاي منتج في سوق العمل. ٧٧٠٨٢٥٧٥٤ - ٧٣٦٢٣٦٩٦٠

وظائف شاغرة يعلن مسارات عن حاجته لسكرتيرتين بالمواصفات التالية: ثانوية عامة كاتل مؤهل، دبلوم سكرتارية، وكذلك عن حاجته لمسوقين وعلقات عامة وللمدرسي لغة إنجليزية. We're looking for teachers of English, ٥٠٠٢٢٢, ٧٧٧٢٥٢٥٧٧

تعلن مدارس الزهراء الحديثة عن حاجتها: مدرسين خريجي جامعات، سكرتيرة، وحارس مدرسة للتواصل: الأصبحي جولة الثقافة شارع ٢٢ مايو. ٦٢٠٦٩١ - ٧٧٧١٩٦٧٤٩ - ٧٣٣١٣٣١٤

يعلن معهد سكاي للغات والكمبيوتر الكائن في الحصة- الجراف عن حاجته لسكرتيرتين بالمواصفات التالية: ثانوية عامة خبرة في الحاسوب. ٧٧٧٢٥٠٣٢

لغات والكمبيوتر الكائن في الحصة- الجراف عن حاجته لسكرتيرتين بالمواصفات التالية: ثانوية عامة خبرة في الحاسوب. ٧٧٧٢٥٠٣٢

عقارات مبنى دورين مصلى على لبنتين وربع وثمان الموقع علع شارع المتفرع من شارع عشرين بين هائل والداثري. السعر المحدد ثمانين عشر مليون ريال يماني. ٧٧٧٩٦٠٩٢٥

شقه مفروشه جديده كائنه في ش الخمسين حده مكونه من ثلاث غرف وحمامين ومطبخ وصالة. حسن حمود ٧٧٧٤٤٨٦١٧

شقه مكونه من ثلاث غرف وحمامين ومطبخ غير مفروشه كائنه في عمائر بنك سباء الإسلامي الدور الأول. أبو علي ٧٣٣٦٤٦٧٢٠

فيلا للإيجار شارع الجزائر أمام المركز الليبي، دورين مكونه من ١٠ غرف ٤ حمامات، مطبخ، حوش ٥٥ لبنة غرفة مع الحمام للحارس مع منغذ خاص للخارج وثلاثه

بوابات على ٣ شوارع. ٣,٠٠٠ دولار قابل للتفاوض.

فيلا للإيجار بحي الأصبحي (فيلا مستقلة مع موقف سيارات) ثلاث غرف نوم - ديوان - صاليتين - مطبخ - حمامين - وموقف للسياره. ٧٧٧٢٦٠٢٥٢ (عبدالحمد)

أرضيه للبيع بمساحة سنه وثلاثون لبنة على شارعين جوار مركز صنعاء التجاري، الشارع الأول واجهه ٣٤ متر والواجهه الاخرى ٢٤٠ متر موقع تجاري ممتاز وسعر اللبنة الواحده خمسة مليون قابل للتفاوض. ٧٧٧٢٢٨٧٧٨

سيارات سوزوكي وفي سعر معقول. علي عيده الفيل. ٧٧١٥٣٣٨١٧

سيارات سوزوكي وفي سعر معقول. علي عيده الفيل. ٧٧١٥٣٣٨١٧

سيارات سوزوكي وفي سعر معقول. علي عيده الفيل. ٧٧١٥٣٣٨١٧

سيارات سوزوكي وفي سعر معقول. علي عيده الفيل. ٧٧١٥٣٣٨١٧

شركة النقل البري الدولي... وعبر مكاتبها... أن تصموكم... شركة النقل البري الدولي

صنعا، الادارة العامة، ٢٦١١٥٧ - ٤٨٠٤٣١ الفرع، الغيظة، ٠٥/٦١٠٠٣٩ - المكلا، ٠٥/٣٠٧٨٠٦٠٦ - سيئون، ٠٥/٤٠٨٣٤٢ - شبوة، (صق) ٠٥/٢٠٠٧٥٧

مفقودات أشياء أخرى خاص ١ أو ٢ مكشوف في حاله جيده ويفضل أن يكون ماركرته سوزوكي وفي سعر معقول. علي عيده الفيل. ٧٧١٥٣٣٨١٧

كوبون للإعلانات الشخصية (كل الاعلانات الشخصية بدون أي مقابل) بيع شراء إيجار إستئجار طلب وظيفة وظائف شاغرة غير ذلك

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شركات طيران طيران اليمنية السعودية الإماراتية الإثيوبية الألمانية (لوفتهانزا) التركية السعودية القطرية العربية للطيران طيران الخليج المصرية

مدارس روضة واحة الأطفال موبيل: ٧٣٤٥٢٢٢٥ موبيل: ٧٣٤٥٢٢٢٥ موبيل: ٧٣٤٥٢٢٢٥

فنادق فندق ميركيور صنعا فندق شمر فندق شيرتون فندق موفيميك فندق فرساي فندق سبأ فندق ريلكسان ان فندق لازوردي فندق تاج صيدة رزدينس

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مراكز تدريب وتعليم الكمبيوتر

مطاعم مطعم ومخازنة الشيباني (باسم محمد عبده الشيباني) تلفون: ١٠٠٥٧٣٦٢ - فاكس: ٩١٦٧٦٢

البنوك بنك اليم والخليج بنك التضامن الإسلامي البنك التجاري

تأجير سيارات نيوكارز لتأجير سيارات زاوية (Budget) يورب كار

مستشفيات مستشفى الثورة مستشفى الجمهوري مستشفى حدة الأهلي

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Important Numbers

الوزارات رئاسة الجمهورية رئاسة الوزراء وزارة الأشغال العامة والطرق

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The different faces of Yemen – past and present

Walking down the memory lane

By: Samira Ali BinDaair

As I was growing up outside of Yemen, in my early childhood days, I was filled with dreams of the homeland I had never seen. Tales of my grandfather's adventures in Hadhramout where he worked with Sultan Al-Gaihi fired my imagination. The stories were certainly more exotic than the childish fairy tales I read. Moreover it was more real to me since it was my grandfather rather than Jack and the Beanstalk. My grandfather died before I was born, and all I saw of him were pictures of an imposing face with his Yemeni turban and descriptions of a hefty man who had to bend his head before going into any doorway; typical of Yaffais. Like him many Yaffais had settled in Hadhramout and considered themselves to be Hadhramis for all practical purposes. All these stories came from my grandmother as she spoke lovingly of the husband she had wed as a young girl.

Her stories included the silk gowns and satin beddings that he had bought her while in another breath she would suddenly lament that all he had brought her from his trip to India was a 'maure' (stone Handmill). I would then look at her huge four poster bed with its picture of a peacock at the headstead and imagine all the glory of the old days as I saw the faraway look on her face guessing she was going into memory lane with her bitter sweet thoughts for company. I was her constant companion as she painted romantic pictures of poetry and songs notwithstanding the high mortality rates at the time which had made her lose a few of her children or the endless household chores and breadbaking at the mofa (stone oven).

An unfulfilled journey to homeland

From my late father I had a different version of this homeland that he impressed upon my mind would be our final destination sooner or later. It was as if through that process he vicariously lived the dream of the "Return of the Native" without ever having read Thomas Hardy. He was quite a charismatic personality who had friends from different nationalities. Despite this fact, Arab nationalism was very much a part of our household and I heard about Jamal Abdul Nasser long before I understood anything about politics.

"Saut al Arab" was my father's daily companion as he listened to the news. I remember asking my mother once who were those tall blue eyed Arabs who came to my father and were given assistance and she patiently explained to me that they were Palestinians but not until much later did I understand the whole issue of Palestine and what Arab nationalism had symbolized for my father then. Even today I can still recall the sounds that preceded "Huna saut al arab" and smell the wafts of sweet tobacco emanating from my father's pipe. Thus from my father I inherited my love for Yemen at a tender age not by his telling us anything about its topography or characteristics but by his constantly drumming into us the fact of our impending sojourn to the homeland. But time was not of the essence for it was not a timed plan of winding up our life in Africa but a declaration from the heart borne of nostalgia. Although he was a prominent and well respected businessman perhaps he longed to be involved in public affairs in his homeland and to be within the mainstream of Arab society at a very dramatic time in their modern history.

Two contrasting images

I had a very different version of Yemen from some of the conservative Hadhramis who refused to send their daughters to school and married them off at the first proposal producing several children when they were children themselves. I contrasted this with my father's joy when we did well at school and the fact that he never discriminated me from my brothers as he ceaselessly drummed into us the importance of education. Many years later I realized that my father had well known the difference between religion and bad social tradition that many Muslims today fail to do for he was a pious man who made sure that we were not only taught about religion but religious values formed an integral part of our upbringing, and from my father I learned a lot through example. Many girls in Yemen today are unfortunately deprived of their right to education and childhood.

I saw a different Arab world through the eyes of the one-sided history lessons in our English education and I could not associate the picture of a fat Omani Arab called Tipu Tib bin Sultan,

a wicked slave trader who held a whip in his hand with my father's Jamal AbdulNasser or the fact that the domestic workers were treated as family in our household. But Alex Hailey had not written his 'Roots' then although Kinta Kunte was all around me in that beautiful paradise of my childhood. Many years later Edward Saeed had helped me to understand this process of looking at ourselves through western eyes in what he called "orientalizing the orient" in his book 'Orientalism'. For I had read all the western literature at a young age but had never heard of the great Muslim scholars like Ibn Rush Ibn Tufail and AlJahid, nor read Najeeb Mahfooth Taha Hussein or Tayeb Saleh the later who aptly describes this predicament in his book 'Season of Migration to the North.' It wasn't until I went to university did my long journey in search of myself begin and this was definitely linked to my dream of Yemen directly and indirectly. People like me weren't so lucky like this generation as I see my children having a grounding in both from an early age in a more rounded exposure to both worlds.

Back to the roots

The return to Yemen came sooner than we expected in the last phases of British rule in South Yemen. Being young my brothers and I managed to adjust quickly to our new life and whereas I had enjoyed riding bicycles and climbing trees in Africa we found new forms of entertainment like riding gari gamal (camel carts) and others. Quite often when we went shopping in crater we were suddenly told to get to the floor as the bullets passed over our heads and while my mother looked worried, to us it seemed like a cowboy film. It was the exchange of fire between British soldiers and what they called "Snipers" and what the Yemenis called "freedom fighters" There were many checkpoints then especially at the "Aqaba" and the golden highlanders with their Scottish kilts and red caps were a common sight in those days.

As adolescents we were filled with nationalistic ideas of independence although I dare say without necessarily understanding the historical antecedents of British rule nor all the political implications of the struggle then. As soon as we went to Abyan beach in Khormaksar we became children again as we played with the waves collecting seashells and chasing the sea gulls forgetting all about revolution. Alas we had weaved dreams bigger than the half pennies in our pockets.

The convent school I went to in crater Aden was a completely different version of Yemen and I still remember the kind sister Serena who had taught me how to play the piano, contrasting with the life within my grandfather's cousin's stone house in sheikh Abdulla street in crater with its old fashioned structure. His wife would sit in the afternoon in her elaborate Dere and chew qat and smoke the Madaa (waterpipe). In those days it was shameful for young girls to chew qat or smoke in contrast to what is the case today where qat chewing has crossed the age barrier across the board. It was common practice for labourers after a long day toiling in the sun then to rent wooden beds with rope bases which I dare say were more durable than the elaborate modern concoctions which fall apart at the slight increase of weight. People slept on rooftops on hot summer days and no one ever entered anyone's home in those days of strong neighbourhood ties.

I remember looking forward to Abukhameer (a sweet pastry) every morning or Abuloz (peanut man) to whom we would lower a basket tied to a rope from our fourth floor apartment in Maalla and putting the money which he would take and place the peanuts accordingly. Abu ruti (bread man) was another example of simple shopping for whom my mother would leave money at our door and he would leave the bread in the basket. Amazing! Now one is afraid of leaving ones home for too long lest one returns to find it emptied of its contents. Yes life in Aden then was a strange mixture of simplicity of life and sophistication as products came to Aden port from all over the world. We would go to Tawahi and eat fish and chips British style and then go to Baba sikirim (ice cream man) and eat a very special and traditional ice cream made from the thick cream of fresh milk. Yet when we went to Bureika for picnics on the beach or to Sirra for makhbaza it seemed more like the Yemen I had always imagined.

Solace in books

Within the murals of Miswat Library, I found a sanctuary which took me away

from the mundane world into dreams of the world beyond Aden and Yemen; faraway lands that I could only read about. Life became hard in the early days of independence as the era of shortages began. The British had developed Aden as their base but the rest of the country was left as it was, excepting some parts of Hadhramout in the famous political euphemism of "non interference in internal affairs". With very little assistance from outside, an empty government treasury and a brain drain due to some malpractices on the part of revolutionaries, it became a different Yemen. However, it was my father's earlier encouragement that had kept me going and gave me the impetus to transcend the difficult circumstances long after he was gone. With my brother's support and encouragement, I continued to study out of school and work. Eventually I managed to get a scholarship and go to university. As I look back today, we certainly worked hard and capitalized on our experiences, all of us finally managing to accomplish in our different paths what we never dreamt of at the time. There is an Arabic saying: "The hit that does not kill you strengthens you". After my first degree I settled in the UAE where many members of my family had settled by then. When I first went to the UAE it was nothing but a lot of hot desert sands and although over the years it developed into the metropolis it is today my childhood dream of Yemen never left me.

When I came to Sana'a for the first time for a meeting of research centers for which I worked in Abudhabi, I had yet to see a different version of Yemen. The people at Markaz al Buhuth (Yemeni Research Center) headed by Dr. Abdulaziz Almakaleh and the late Ahmed Hussein Almarwani (whom I had already known from Abu Dhabi) were very hospitable and I felt a sense of warmth and a real sense of connection. Our trip to Hajjah and lunch thrown by the governor at Ghamdan hotel as well our trip to Shihara bridge within the backdrop of misty cool mountains completed the picture of an exotic paradise for me.

Here in Sana'a my husband met old school and university friends although he was not at first keen on the idea of returning to Yemen chasing an old childish dream. But I wanted my children to grow up with a strong sense of identity and belonging and I could see the potential in the future. As I looked at the plans of the house we were going to buy and the vast landscape of sand and nothing but sand I did have fleeting moments of doubt but I relentlessly pursued my dream of the return. Years later my husband was offered a job with what was then Yemen Hunt to be part of the team for establishing the Training Center and we finally returned and made a life for ourselves in this fascinating city.

A change of scenes

After the skyscrapers of the gulf, to me, Yemen with its rugged mountains and varied topography was a refreshing change. As I wandered through the old city, I felt I had come home at last, as I sniffed the different aroma of spices, and feasted my eyes on the different colors. Here I thought was where the dreams of centuries had been weaved and many hearts broken which needed mending with new dreams. Maybe my work in development programmes helped me to feel the kind of fulfillment I had never felt in all my years in the gulf. The early days of settling in a new environment was challenging but we eventually managed to find our place under the sun. Whatever we missed in the gulf was made up by our trips to the mountains where my children roamed freely in the wadis collecting fossils instead of the trips to burger king and the imaginary teddy bears and clowns who no longer made them laugh.

Our trips to Wadi Shaab to my husband's village also made them see a different reality from the fairy tale world of the emirates. There was no electricity there and to date has none, but we enjoyed seeing the stars which seemed to shine brighter as my father in law, a retired building contractor taught them the names of the different stars. As I watch my son spending hours on his computer on his favorite hobby, Astronomy, I remember those simple beginnings. I remember spending sleepless nights when my husband went to the village alone wondering whether he had reached safely or not since there was no means of communication in those days. Today I call my sister in law regularly on her cell phone which she charges on a car battery, necessity is the mother of invention. The first time I went to the village I was surprised to find a stack

of English books stored in my father in law's house. My husband then told me of his early struggle with the English language since he was at school.

He had gone to school in different places including Aden where his father worked and from where he had collected all those books. To him it was the gateway to the outside world and the mysterious west that he had only read about and longed to visit. Ironically the grass is always greener on the other side. His mother had laughingly told me how she had often threatened to burn his books in the mofa and how lazy my husband had been, always escaping from chores. The story was corroborated by my husband who told me how he had often escaped his mother's nagging by piling his books on his donkey and going to sit under the tree to read in the distant wadi until dusk.

A different Yemen

I remember the old days in Sana'a where friends used to meet more often and life was more enjoyable and yet simpler and we used to enjoy more barbecues and family picnics with relatives and now some of the warmth is lost with the expanding infrastructure and crowded streets. I still take comfort in shopping at the corner vegetable stall, and calling out to my little friend, "ya jinni" and he smilingly comes to the car and brings me the freshest of produce. With people like him I feel the human personal touch that is constantly being threatened with extinction in the modern world. Supermarkets are slowly becoming a nightmare where the cashier takes forever to calculate at the tolling machine as he puts in endless numbers (ironically technology is supposed to make things move faster) as I stand there frustrated and despite myself telling the cashier that in my grandmother's time, people calculated faster on their fingers.

I saw a different Yemen when I used to go to villages for project visits, where children are men and women before adolescence and all preconceptions of childhood held within development agencies become irrelevant. I saw images of aborted childhood in the fishing villages of Fukum, Bureika, Hodeida, which broke my heart and made me feel like a fool preaching armchair philosophy about going back to school within the backdrop of grinding poverty and the struggle for survival. I saw a different face of Yemen when I attended a workshop at Sheba hotel and while eating cookies talking about the dynamics of community mobilization and empowerment, feeling like the Pied Piper of Hamelin leading them to fish in the dead sea. I see poor folks in the villages offering their best to visitors in unrivalled hospitality while they have so little themselves, and yet others better off squandering money on a superficial form of hospitality within the ever expanding gap between the haves and the have-nots.

It's a jungle out there

I see Yemen slowly becoming a jungle of contradictions where people step on each others' toes to compete for scarce means and the irony is that civil servants are asking for tips for moving paper work while my little jinni refuses tips and with a great sense of pride says "Alhamdulillah I have enough". I see drivers going mad with their flashy cars who fight to get in first with no thought of right of way or right of others whereas in the

old days drivers were more courteous on the narrow streets before the advent of flyovers.

After all these years I am still trying to figure out which is the real Yemen, the Yemen which had captured the heart of travelers and orientalists and what was known as "Arabia Felix" in history books. Or the Yemen of the hikma (wisdom) and Iman (faith) or the qoranic version of the Sabeian kingdom of a prosperous land and an all forgiving Creator or the Holy Prophet's version of people with tender hearts and deep faith. There is an ancient saying: "He who rules Yemen rides on the back of the Lion". Yemen is one of the most complex countries in the region despite the simplicity of its people and the authenticity of its surroundings.

My children have grown up each following their different paths, alas! living and reliving my own childhood dream of and for Yemen. However, they see better than I ever did at their age, the gaping holes in their dreams despite their great love for Yemen. As I sit here writing and remembering the old days with the eyes of a woman who has seen life on both sides of the fence, full of nostalgia for the lost dreams of youth, I comfort myself with the thought that the present generation will make the changes. Society must move forward and progress, but perhaps we need to revise our criteria for measuring progress. Then I ask myself have we given them the tools for creating structural changes in Yemen? I sincerely hope I will not be left wondering until I go to my grave.

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