

INSIDE



Gulf Star winner Fouad Abdel Wahed tells the Yemen Times more about his singing adventures, future plans and his plans to study further. Turn to Page 8 for more.

By: Ola Al-Shami

SANA'A, Dec 28 – A lack of trash collection by local authorities in various parts of Sana'a has angered residents who say their health is at risk because of mounting pollution.

In this investigation, the Yemen Times took to the city's streets to find out what the situation was like. One neighborhood in particular, Madhbah

Post Office, also known as 'Night District', has so much garbage that it is impossible for residents to pass through certain areas.

The Yemen Times witnessed a seven-

year-old girl carrying a bucket filled with garbage while her five-year-old brother walked next to her with a plastic bag, also filled with rubbish. They dumped the trash on an open garbage spot. The

(Continues on page 2)

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Drug smugglers arrested in Sana'a

By: Ayham Al-Otoom

SANA'A, Dec 28 – Republican Guards seized 37kg of hashish in four separate incidents at Nahm checkpoint in Sana'a governorate earlier this week.

Officials said that the seized hashish was from a coastal area in Yemen and was en route to the capital Sana'a. Drug smugglers intended to sell it to neighboring countries.

The Interior Ministry's Brigadier Khaled Al-Radhi, who heads up the ministry's authority for combating drugs, said that the way the drugs were hidden was new and special. He said that the authority planned to work alongside Yemen's anti-terrorist unit and other security units to host seminars and educational campaigns to inform citizens about drugs.

He also said that the media should continue playing a positive role in educating people and making them aware of Yemen's drug problem.

Al-Radhi said that it was easy to smuggle drugs through Yemen because of its important geographical position. The country was known as the gate to enter Gulf countries and its coastline stretched 2,500km. It was a transit station for neighboring countries.

Al-Radhi said that four drug smugglers were arrested and detained. He said that they were Yemeni nationals and will be interrogated before being taken to court.

Media reports have indicated that since the beginning of this year there have been seven court rulings with 14 persons convicted for drug smuggling. This included 11 Yemenis and three Saudi Arabians. The guilty faced a range of sentences, from the death penalty and 25 years in jail.

Tax Authority bans 800 businesses from trading

By: Malak Shafer

SANA'A, Dec.29 – Around 200 import and export traders have complained about regulations forcing them to pay taxes to the Tax Authority in the main cities, rather than paying them directly at the ports.

Travelling to tax offices takes time and effort, which is costly and hinders business, according to Mohammad Mohanna, deputy of the Chamber of Commerce.

Mohanna added that the shipments of the 200 traders have been confiscated at the ports and held since October. He advised other effected traders to send a letter to the head of parliament complaining about the added time that this technicality causes and state that taxes should be paid directly at the ports.

In addition to the 200 traders that have been banned from importing and exporting, the Tax Authority has also frozen the tax numbers of additional 600 traders who have not paid their taxes. The head of the Tax Authority said that this number might even increase if traders continue to delay in presenting their tax declarations and evade paying taxes.

In October the head of the parliament, Yahya Al-Ra'i, authorized a committee consisting of the Minister of Industry and Trade, the head of the Trade of Commerce Chambers Federation, the head of the Chamber of Commerce in Sana'a and the head of the Tax Authority, to investigate the issue, according to Mohanna.

Until businesses pay their taxes directly to the Tax Authority their tax numbers are frozen, therefore interrupting the flow of imports and exports. Mohanna argued the courts rather than the Tax Authority should determine if tax number are to be frozen.

Ahmad Ghaleb, head of the Tax Authority, told the Yemen Times that the law and rules are clear and that all traders should follow the same regulations regarding tax collection. He confirmed that the Tax Authority has the power to freezes tax numbers when businesses fail to pay.

"The law is clear and the technicality is imposed by the law. As soon as they pay the tax their tax number will be activated," Ghaleb explained.

"We are not against the law and it is our duty to pay the five percent tax," said Abdulla Al-Aqel, head of Al-Aqel Group for Cars and Spare Parts. "But, it is easier to pay the taxes when the goods

are in the port rather than waiting for the tax collector to come and collect the money."

Al-Aqel's cars and spare parts were confiscated two weeks ago in Aden and Hodeida as he did not pay the tax demanded by the Tax Authority.

Al-Aqel is one of 200 traders who has complained. He has now been banned from importing and exporting.

"We wanted to pay the tax directly at the ports because otherwise it takes us more time to compile the receipts and give it to the tax collector," explained Al-Aqel.

"We do not want to evade paying the taxes and we do not want to go against the law. The traders want to pay the taxes at the port to facilitate their work, instead of this longer process of paying the taxes," confirmed Mohanna.

Delaying tax payments affects development. Import and export duties account for 20 percent of the national budget.

According to the Tax Authority's statistics for 2009, money collected from tax payments constitute around 22 percent of the national budget and that any delay in making such payments may negatively affect development projects throughout the country.

Ghaleb, the head of the Tax Authority, said that the tax number is the connection between traders and the Tax Authority. Therefore, when they delay their payments their tax numbers should be deactivated until they pay. He added that the Tax Authority applies strict rules and will not excuse any



The Tax Authority building in Sana'a.

traders who attempt tax evasion.

The government implemented its new tax law in 2009 and has since imposed tough conditions on businessmen who delay paying their taxes. The new General Sales Tax law, for example, imposes a five percent duty on sales.

However, according to a study by Professor Mohammad Jubran from the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at Sana'a University, only about 40 percent of traders are even registered with the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Therefore, the total value of payments, currently being collected by the Tax Authority, are considerably less than the amount that should be being collected.

"They do free business, they do not have tax numbers at all and therefore do not pay taxes," said Jubran.

According to the tax law, when traders fail to present a tax declaration a delay penalty of two percent of the unpaid tax is imposed for each month of non-payment. Tax evasion can often involve a penalty worth up to 50 percent of sales.

The committee formed by the parliament is still to announce its final decision, currently scheduled for January 11 next year.

Nine ministers resign to stand in 2011 election

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

Sana'a, Dec. 29 – Nine government ministers presented their official resignations to The Council of Ministers on Tuesday, in order to prepare for parliamentary elections on April 27 next year.

The ruling General People's Congress (GPC) party and the government have started preparations for the election despite objections by the opposition parties. The president has welcomed external election monitors to observe the voting process.

Current election law does not allow the prime minister, his deputies, the ministers or their deputies, or heads of governmental authorities, to run for parliamentary election. Government members must leave their jobs at least three months before the opening of electoral nominations. The same law applies to governors, directors of the provinces, military leaders, security directors, executives at local councils, or any public employee in the administration.

The ministers who resigned this week were: Rashad Al-Alimi, Deputy Minister for Security Affairs, Sadeq Ameen Abu Rass, GPC Assistant General Secretary, Deputy Prime Minister for Internal Affairs, Yahya Al-Shuaibi, Minister of Civil Service and Insurance and Abdul-Rahman, Al-Akwa Minister of State, Mayor of Sana'a, Engineer Awadh Al-Soqatri, Minister of Electricity, Hamoud Ubad, Minister of Youth, Nabil Al-Faqih, Minister of Tourism, Mansour Al-Hawshabi, Minister of Agriculture, and Ahmed Al-kuhlani, Minister of State.

The multi-opposition party, Joint Meeting Parties (JMP), rejected the GPC preparation, on



This picture shows the minister's council where nine ministers resigned on Sunday. Their resignation was to ensure that they could participate in the April parliamentary election.

the grounds that electoral amendments previously agreed between the JMP and GPC have yet to be implemented.

"The JMP will study all the options to see if this can be challenged, but still political decisions are unpredictable, so we don't know what will happen," said Shawqi Al-Qadhi, MP for the opposition Islamic conservative party, Islah.

"The JMP is in favor of holding the elections on time, only if they are free, clean, and comprehensive and that was set out in the amendments, which we are still seeking to achieve," said Al-Qadhi,

"Comprehensive means elections must include all parts of Yemen and all Yemenis being able to participate, including the Houthis and Southern Movement members," explained Al-Qadhi.

Opposition MP accused of funding separatists

On Sunday Dec. 26, Mohammed Ghalib, Member of Parliament (MP) for the JMP, was arrested on claims that he offered funds to the Southern Movement of YR 10 million to thwart the 20 Gulf Cup tournament held in Aden. The accusa-

tion was based on an un-sourced statement allegedly made by Taher Tamah, a southern separatist fugitive and military commander wanted for murder, kidnap and acts of sabotage.

Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) member, Ghalib, told Al-Sahwa.net news website that "the state could have chosen a better accusation as it's well known I am against violence."

The YSP, in a statement on Sunday, accused the state of violating Ghalib's freedom and using his detention to threaten the JMP and force them into accepting the terms of next year's election.

"The ruling party's action is assaulting political life, rights and freedoms," said YSP member Ali Al-Sarari. "These are dangerous actions by the government. It wants to escalate confrontations with the socialist party, to put pressure on the JMP to accept the elections."

The JMP Student Sector released their own statement on Wednesday, calling for civil disobedience and demonstrations as a peaceful means to stop the ruling party from taking authority by force.

JMP's youth movement demanded the immediate release of all the political detainees including Ghalib. They also called on the authorities to arrest those who assaulted Al-Atwani, the opposition MP attacked earlier this month. The statement also insisted on a comprehensive national dialogue to halt decisions on the election, taken solely by the GPC.

"We don't accept negotiations now (over Ghalib), the ruling party have assaulted us," Al-Sarari told the Yemen Times. "They must apologize or we will conduct wide activities and protests across the country and on a political level."

In Brief

ADEN

Saleh criticizes statements over oil wealth, says production inadequate

President Ali Abdullah Saleh slammed on Monday those who make irresponsible statements about the country's oil wealth, such as saying that Yemen's oil production is inadequate and who ask where this income goes.

He was speaking at the closing of the 10th conference of navy and coast defence leaders in Aden. He also said that half of the daily oil production in Yemen goes to foreign companies exploring and producing oil in the country.

Saleh revealed that Yemen produces 370,000 barrels of oil a day but Yemen's share from that was only 50 percent. The rest was exported. He said that the country's oil wealth was "modest compared to expenditure". Despite this, Yemen still relies on oil revenues, he said.

Oil revenues are spent on defence weapons, basic services such as education, healthcare, water and infrastructure, and on more than a million and a half state employee's salaries, he said.

The president also said that the government couldn't depend on income taxes because not all citizens were paying this. He said that there should be stricter tax collection measures.

SA'ADA

Saada governor meets humanitarian organization representatives

Yemeni officials and the representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, UNHCR, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and Children Care Organization discussed on Tuesday aid and ways of development and reconstruction in Sa'ada governorate.

Sa'ada governor Taha Hajir and representatives of these organizations working in the governorate held these discussions. The meeting dealt with previous reports and what had been achieved in all fields.

The governor hailed the role of these organizations in reducing suffering among those affected and confirmed that they would work as a one team to participate in keeping peace and activating humanitarian activities. He said the government valued efforts of workers of all humanitarian organizations in the province.

IBB

Yemen in talks with ICRC, Red Crescent Society over health program

First under-secretary of Ibb governorate, Abdul Wahid Salah, held talks on Monday with charge d'affaires of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Red Crescent Society on future activities of the Community Health Program in Yemen.

During the meeting, they pointed out that the Community Health Program aimed to improve citizen's health. The program is being implemented by the Red Crescent Society and the ICRC in four provinces.

Salah noted efforts of the governorate's leadership that will provide health services for the targeted areas, pointing out that the local authority will provide all support to service teams during their work in Ibb governorate.

The ICRC representative pointed out that the Community Health Program will support health activities in the province through partnership with the local councils, and training and rehabilitation of health workers.

TAIZ

Taiz governor meets American diplomat

Taiz governor Hamoud al-Sufi met in here on Tuesday with American ambassador to Yemen, Gerald Feierstein.

The governor briefed the U.S. diplomat on the economic and investment activities and the investment opportunities available in different fields in the governorate.

In return, the American diplomat expressed his pleasure of visiting Taiz and being acquainted with its historical landmarks and development.

HODEIDAH

Over 3,000 tourists visit Kamaran Island

About 2,320 tourists have visited Kamaran Island in Hodeidah governorate this year, said secretary-general of the Local Council for Kamaran district, Mohammed al-Sageri, on Tuesday.

Al-Sageri said that about 50 percent of the visitors were tourists from different nationalities, especially from European Union States.

He said that Kamaran Island has witnessed unprecedented development in 2010, adding that a number of projects are to be implemented in tourist and investment areas by Yemeni private sector.

Several service projects are currently being carried out in areas of drinking water, electricity and tourism, al-Sageri said, expecting an increase in the tourist numbers in 2011.

Source: Saba News Agency

Continued from page 1

Sana'a risks infections as rubbish piles up

He admitted that residents should take more responsibility for their neighborhoods and said that they generally lacked environmental awareness. He said "even educated university graduates throw their garbage in the streets."

"We need the municipality to put a trash can next to every shop and people must put trash cans next to their homes," said Tawfiq. "This will help anyone who has garbage to put it in the can. Anyone who throws the garbage on the road must be punished."

Mona Abu Talib, a resident in the Old City, said that they also faced problems with trash.

"The municipality's cleaners do not come regularly to clean out streets so the garbage piles up near my house," she said.

Abu Talib said that foreigners also added to the Old City's pollution when they visited as tourists, or rent accommodation there. She said

that generally the streets in the Old City were clean because residents kept it that way.

Research by scientists has shown that air pollution, associated with fungal spores from garbage, pose a major environmental human health problem. According to scientists from the Department of Botany at the University of Nairobi, garbage accounts for the majority of fungal spores in air in urban areas, and, therefore, people, particularly those living close to heaps of garbage are exposed to very high concentrations of fungal spores. Their research linked respiratory infections and levels of airborne fungal spores.

Dr. Mohammed Mothana, coordinator of the local government's Environmental and Professional Health Department, said residents should take responsibility for their trash. He urged them to cover their trash cans to avert

air infection and diseases carried by rodents or insects.

"They should use trash cans properly. They should automatically cover their trash cans after they put rubbish inside it," he said.

Mothana said that the city's piles of trash had resulted in a host of infections.

"Trash that includes leftover food and drinks would attract mosquitoes and rodents to neighborhoods," he said.

The doctor explained that when residents burned garbage they also raised the possibility of infections spreading in the city.

"When trash is burned in the open, instead of enclosing it in a specific area, smoke spreads across many areas and causes air pollution too," said Mothana.

"Certain principles must be followed. The garbage must be burned in places away from

residential areas. The wind direction should also be considered as it should blow in the opposite direction of residential areas."

Fortunately not all of Sana'a faces the problem of piling rubbish and accompanying diseases. Huda Dhaba'an, a resident of the city's Madhbah district, said that residents in her neighborhood kept their streets clean – without waiting for the municipality.

"We cooperate in cleaning our district. Children and fathers from every house agree to clean the roads on specific day every week. Every family also cleans the front area of their house," she said.

Dhaba'an added that there was also a local trash collector who "comes regularly to our district and collects plastic materials to sell to a plastic recycling factory. This decreases the amount of garbage in the area," she said.

2010: A year of global Yemeni headlines

By: Mohammed Bin Sallam

SANA'A, Dec. 30 — The past year has been a headline-making one for Yemen as the country appears to be at the centre of the world's attention following a wide range of international media reports about its affairs on the political, economic and security front.

Arguments between the governing party and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) increased through the course of this year. The main issues of disagreement included the reform of the election law, the general direction of economic policies, the system of governance as well as corruption.

The opposition JMP demanded that all political forces have the opportunity to participate in national political debate. The JMP also demanded the release of all persons imprisoned in relation to the conflict in Sa'ada and the secessionist Southern Movement. And the opposition demanded that President Ali Abdullah Saleh give citizens the freedom to decide for themselves about Yemen's unity.

Mohamed Salem Basendwa, the former foreign minister and head of the National Dialogue Committee, stressed the importance of implement-



Journalist Abdulalah Haidar Shayi was arrested this year. In this file photo he appears behind bars at the Special Criminal Court for Security Affairs. Media freedom has been severely threatened in Yemen this year.

ing an emergency plan to help solve Yemen's crises and prevent the country from total collapse. In his words, this plan needs to provide the foundations of a political and social contract that ensures respect for citizen's rights and freedoms.

The plan must give justice to the southern issue as well as the Sa'ada conflict to be of any value, Basandoah stressed in his statement.

Fighting between government forces and allied tribes on the one side and the

Houthi on the other has cost a lot of lives this year. There's no end to the conflict in sight for 2011, unless the government takes serious action.

The Southern Movement has increased its social activities in the north to improve relations, so perhaps there is some hope for them in 2011.

This year also saw many terrorist attacks, most of which were carried out by Al-Qaeda. The attacks often targeted security personnel and many lives were lost during these operations.

In May this year the deputy governor of Marib, Jaber Al-Shabwani, was killed in an air strike along with four others. The deputy governor was negotiating, on behalf of the government, the surrender of Al-Qaeda member Mohammed Saeed bin Jaradan in Wadi Abida.

In response, Shabwani's Abeida tribesmen fought government security forces and attacked a major oil pipeline in Marib as well as cutting the lines of an electrical power station which serviced the capital. The tribe's attacks caused blackouts across Sana'a.

The freedom of the media was also limited in 2010. Many newspapers were prevented from publishing articles related to events in the south and several journalists were arrested. International organizations criticized the situation in Yemen and pointed to the risks for journalists in their daily work.

According to a political and economic expert, one of the reasons for the political crisis is the strong-handed approach of the government against the Houthi and the Southern Movement. This expert said that additional factors included power struggles and uncertainty about the future leadership. While President Saleh cannot run again

in the 2013 election, he can neither leave the post to his son.

The economy has also not looked sunny. In 2010, Yemen's oil production fell below that of previous years. While there is no longer a middle class in Yemen to speak of, poverty and unemployment are on the rise. Many people attribute these problems to corruption in the administrative system and the failure of the government to translate its words into action.

General goods prices rose by 11 percent in 2010 and are expected to rise again by 10 percent in the coming year. Experts attribute the negative economic development to the deteriorating political situation. Additional factors are the administrative corruption that has spiraled out of control, the weak productive sector, the decline of non-petroleum exports, as well as Yemen's complete dependency on petrol as the only source of income.

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One of this year's biggest stories has been the ongoing battle between the Southern Movement and the Yemeni government.

Opportunities

Funding available for efforts to safeguard journalists' rights

The Media Legal Defence Initiative (MLDI) is accepting proposals from organizations and groups who seek funding for legal assistance or litigation activities that safeguard or advance media freedom.

MLDI exists to help journalists and media outlets defend their rights. It provides financial assistance to pay legal fees, help to access free legal advice and take cases to international courts and supervisory bodies. MLDI also works to strengthen the capacity of lawyers to defend media rights by supporting education, networking, exchange of information and cooperation among legal professionals working to defend media freedom.

The Media Legal Defence Initiative exists to help journalists and media outlets defend their rights.

We do this by providing financial assistance to pay legal fees, helping to access free legal advice and taking on cases in international courts and supervisory bodies.

The Media Legal Defence Initiative also works to strengthen the capacity of lawyers to defend the rights of the media by supporting education, networking, exchange of information and cooperation opportunities for people working in the field.

Application form and guidelines are available at www.mediadefence.org. For questions, contact info@mediadefence.org, using the reference "December 2010 call for proposals."

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The Persephone Miel Fellowship for Crisis Reporting is intended to give non-native English speaking media professionals the opportunity to reach audiences beyond their home countries on critical under-reported issues. The fellowship, overseen by the Pulitzer Center in collaboration with Internews,

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Eligibility: The Persephone Miel fellowships are open to all journalists, writers, photographers, radio producers or filmmakers; staff journalists as well as free-lancers who are non-native English speaking media professionals seeking to report from their home country.

Selection: The fellowship recipient will be selected by the Pulitzer Center in consultation with Internews. Selection will be based on the strength of the proposed topic and the strength of the applicant's work as demonstrated in their work samples. We are looking for projects that explore systemic issues in the applicants' native countries and that provide an overarching thesis, rather than individual spot-reports from the field.

Deadline: February 1, 2011

How to apply: Applications should be sent to: mielfellowship@pulitzercenter.org

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Happy New Year

2011

The Management and Staff of OMV -Yemen Represented
by the General Manager
Mr. Norbert Groeschner
would like to extend their warmest congratulations to
H.E President Ali Abdullah Salah
President of the Republic of Yemen
and to the Yemeni people on the occasion of
the New Year 2011.
Wishing Yemen a prosperous future this year
and for many years to come
Many Happy Returns

تتقدم إدارة و موظفي شركة أو إم في - اليمن
ممثلة/ بالسيد نوربرت جروشنر -المدير العام
بأصدق عبارات التهاني إلى
فخامة الأخ/ علي عبدالله صالح رئيس الجمهورية
وإلى كافة أبناء الشعب اليمني الكريم بمناسبة حلول العام
الميلادي الجديد 2011 و اليمن حكومة و شعباً يتطلع لمستقبل
أفضل بما تحقّق في الاعوام الماضية من أنجازات تنمويّة
كل عام والجميع بخير

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Expression on wheels



This Taxi driver warns anyone who attempts to follow closely. "Don't play with me," reads the message on the rear window.

Story and photos by:
Ayham Al-Otoom

Yemenis are known for their outspoken nature. They usually have something to say about almost any topic even if they have no idea.

Whether it is college debates or qat sessions, the venue of expression itself does not matter.

Now there is an increasing trend in sharing opinions about the appearance of cars.

Sometimes it is about paintwork, but mostly it is about the messages

written on the rear windscreen. Many even compete with each other to invent ways of reflecting their personality, ideas, politics and sense of national belonging.

Although most of these cars belong to men, a few women have also started demonstrating their ideas on their cars. Although so far most women's expressions are limited to decorative pieces that can be removed.

Dr. Afaf Al-Haymi, a professor of sociology at Sana'a University, says that the trend of writing on and decorating cars is popular world-wide as a part of public culture.

"It allows people to express their

own ideas and beliefs, and becomes part of their extended personality," she said.

The phrases often indicate the cultural or economic level of the driver, and also their political views. She added that it is a very human way to express what a person feels inside and that is not at all harmful.

The Yemen Times has done a quick survey of these moving messages, and the reasons behind the messages from various drivers in Sana'a.

Taha, a bus driver, wrote on his bus "Masha'Allah" and "The Bird". He said he wrote the former to ward off the evil eye from himself and his bus, and the latter was his nickname among his friends.

Hassan displays "We give our life to protect the Prophet's name" on his car. He said he added it to show that we should all redeem the Prophet's name if it is defamed, and also for decoration. Abdullah, a taxi driver, has written on the glass of his window "Allah is the only God." He says this allows Allah to stay in his heart all the time as he drives and helps to prevent his car from being scratched. He also displays a commercial on his car for which he receives money.

Many people place advertisements for companies on their vehicles for money. Safwan, a distributor, puts the name of the bakery he works for on his Hilux and also the company motto: "The best production and quality." He says it is the best way of advertising for the bakery.

Others put messages promoting safety whilst driving. Abdullah displays the phrase "For your safety, delay your call" on his car. Maher also puts a message on his car asking other drivers to remember safety on the road.

For some, the messages display their personality. Ali has written "Don't play with me!" on his car. He says he likes to decorate his car to make it different from others, and that this particular phrase emphasizes that he is tough. Likewise, Hasan, a bus owner has written "Falcons don't play with birds" on his bus to say that he is a tough guy.

Some messages are more personal and speak of sadness. Saddam has written: "We stopped making friends because they are bad", "Enough with friends", and finally "Over my head" on his car windows. He says it expresses that he no longer has trust in friends or friendship, and that the last message is in memory of a dear friend who passed away. Sa'ad, a bus driver has simply



Multi-message sketching on this mini-bus. The owner seems to have been disappointed in life. Messages read: "They kick you when you are down," and "no true friendships any more."

written "Game Over" on his bus. He says it is to tell other bus drivers that he no longer cares about competing for stopping spots or passengers.

Nawaaf, an employee of a company, displays the flag of Yemen behind his car to show that there is no north or south, just one Yemen. It also displays his pride in being Yemeni and for the country hosting the Gulf Cup. Wasfi, from Iraq, has drawn the Iraqi flag on his car to support his country's team in the Gulf Cup and to remind him of

his homeland. He says it shows that Yemenis have the freedom to express their feelings. Yahya Humaid displays a picture of the President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to show that he belongs to Yemen and admires its president.

Abdulkareem, a policeman, says that some of the writing on cars, and especially on the mirrors, can block a driver's view and can cause accidents. He says that sometimes drivers are warned to remove especially large messages that inhibit their vision.



A private car owner clearly displays his political affiliation hanging the president's picture on the side window.



Proud to be Yemeni, with full colors. The traffic law does not allow for such coloration because it changes the car's appearance and hinders vision. However, during the unity celebrations many cars displayed their pride in Yemen and this car owner decided to keep it for the years to come.

Stories from Real Life

By: Nawal Zaid
For the Yemen Times

Abandoned women

Distance marriage

When Safa's husband got a job in Saudi Arabia, she was happy that their living conditions would improve. She was married to a teacher with a modest income and they could barely make ends meet.

Little did she know that his new job would mean the end of their marriage. Safa's husband illegally crossed into Saudi Arabia and Safa did not hear from him for weeks. Finally he called home saying that he had made it safely and that he had found the person who promised him a job as a shopkeeper in a fabrics shop.

The next call came a month later. He told Safa about his new life, but he did not give her a number where she could reach him.

He said he was not yet settled. The next call came three months later, and with time the calls became even less frequent.

Eid holiday came and went and years passed by with no news of the missing husband. His family feared something had gone wrong and contacted other relatives and the go-between who had secured him the job in the first place.

Through these channels news came that he was doing well and had moved on to a new job in another city. But he never called home.

It took Safa 17 years of waiting to realize that her husband would never come back. When he left, Safa was still a young bride without children. By now, her youth had almost faded and her dreams of having her own family had gone.

Safa filed for divorce and received a court order. Today it seems there is a prospective husband for her on the horizon. Since Safa is not so young and divorced, she has settled for the position of a second wife in the life of a married man with children.

Sometimes Safa wonders about her former husband and his life in Saudi Arabia. What she cannot understand is why he abandoned her for so many years.

A shadow of a husband

Nabila is 34 years old. She is a divorcee with a boy and a girl. She was a city girl from a well-off family, but then she married a man from rural Taiz, whose financial situation was not as good as she was used to.

After the wedding Nabila moved to the village and lived with her husband and his family. The different life style in Taiz was a shock for her. The traditions in the village differed greatly from those in the capital.

But what really affected her marriage was the laziness of Nabila's husband. He did not have a job and solely relied on revenues from his share of the family farm. All he did was chewing qat, watching TV and socializing with friends from the town.

Nabila's husband would spend more time outside the house than at home.

Sometimes the children would not see their father for days, because he would be sleeping when they went to school and they would already be in bed by the time he returned from his expeditions.

After ten years of marriage Nabila realized that she could not take it any longer and asked for a divorce. Her husband would not give in and became furious when she threatened to leave. He beat her and locked her up in the house for days.

Nabila managed to escape when her husband left the house to meet again with his friends. She took her children and returned to her parent's home in the city.

When he found out she had gone, he chased after her and burst into her family's house demanding her to return with him to the village. Nabila pleaded with him to divorce her but he would not hear of it. He decided that he would just keep her hanging like this, neither a free nor a married woman.

With the assistance of her family Nabila went to court and filed for divorce. Due to the bureaucracy it took two years until she finally succeeded.

Although Nabila is now a divorced woman in a society that frowns upon divorced women, she does not care. She is finally liberated from that awful husband, can take care of her children and lead her life the way she wants.

Lost years

Fatima Najeeb got engaged when she was still in primary school. Years went by, but her husband-to-be kept delaying the wedding. He claimed that he had a piece of land in another town and needed time to build a home. He visited Fatima regularly but always had to return to his home, which was supposed to become hers in the near future.

Fatima left school due to her engagement. Her fiancé did not want her to continue her education. He said he wanted a perfect housewife who can cook, bake, clean and take care of their children.

As the years passed by, Fatima started

to feel left out. Her sisters and friends were getting married or completing their education and she was still on stand-by. Every time her family would ask her about her husband-to-be, she would say that he was building their home in Hodeida and once it would be ready, he would come to Sana'a and hold their wedding.

Gradually his excuses seemed more and more absurd and Fatima's father went to investigate the reasons for the delay. In Hodeida he discovered that his future son-in-law had no land, no house and not even a steady job.

After spending years of her life waiting for this husband, Fatima decided to break off the engagement and to pick up her education where she had left it. She is now 29 and by far the oldest girl in her school, but she does not care. She says she has wasted so much time already that being older than her teacher is not going to deter her from trying to catch up with life.

As for her ex-fiancé, he is probably searching for another naive woman he can get engaged to and then deceive.

What if Yemen is the first country to run out of water?

By: Krista Mahr
Time

Experts cited by CNN say Yemen could be the first nation to completely run out of water in a few years, a prospect that does not bode well for its young population of 24 million that is expected to double in 20 years, or anyone worried about the rising influence (and ability to get bombs on planes) of an al Qaeda branch in one of the Middle East's poorest nations. In Sana'a, which could be the world's first capital city to go dry, the population is growing at a rate of 7% per year as people flee from the parched outer reaches of the country. Part of the problem is qat, an addictive plant like chewed by about 75% of men in Yemen that takes a whole lot of water to grow. In places where vineyards used to be, farmers now are growing the more lucrative qat, which uses five times the amount of water as grapes but can be harvested and sold relatively quickly after it's planted.

Farmers' ambition to better their lot is more than understandable in a nation where five million people — over a fifth of the population — go hungry each day. And though Yemen's qat

farmers are estimated to now be using some 40% of the nation's domestic water supply, they are hardly the only actors in this looming crisis. Yemen's water table is falling about 6.6 feet per year, yet the central government has been ineffective at managing the piecemeal drilling of water wells (the government itself estimates an astonishing 99% of water extraction in Yemen is unlicensed) or regulating water management in more farflung parts of the country. Instead, as Sana'a gets more and more water migrants, authorities have discussed relocating the capital to the coast where they might be better able to take advantage of desalination as other Middle Eastern countries have.

The water shortage is also a global problem, because, like Somalia across the Gulf of Aden, where desertification has been linked with that country's ongoing conflict, fights and desperation over water in Yemen would be exactly the kind of destabilizing factor that insurgents will need to continue to strengthen their base in remote areas far from the halls of power. As the water crisis has gotten worse, observers have noted that the government has concentrated its efforts to manage water resources in urban centers where

it has (and wants to keep) political support, and many of the outlying areas not receiving help have been overlooked before.

As Christopher Boucek of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, wrote in testimony to Congress in February: "The failure to establish local water corporations in several governorates that historically have not received much support or social services from the central government has raised fear that a resurgent al Qaeda may seek refuge there."

Boucek goes on to list what could possibly be done, including stopping government subsidies and public purchases of qat, and constructing a better legal system to deal with the nation's increasingly scarce resource. "If such measures are not taken in the near term," he writes, "more dramatic steps will be required in the future, such as stopping rural populations from moving to overcrowded cities, and, more drastically, relocating population centers from the center of the country to the coasts." In other words, the government will be forced to create a lot more unhappy citizens. And that would make insurgents that find recruits in disgruntled communities very happy indeed.

The great pretender

StrategyWorld.com

The Shia rebels in the north are now fighting among themselves over who shall lead the fight against the government. There is growing unrest because of the seemingly endless war with the government. This has caused a lot of disruption to lives, and there are factions proposing different solutions (make peace or continue fighting.) In the south, demonstrations continue. Last weekend, separatist rebels kidnapped seven soldiers (and later released them) to protest the death sentence for a southern tribesman accused of carrying out a bombing attack.

Tribal politics is a curse in Yemen, creating political and personal divisions that make it very difficult for a central government to do much more than deal with foreigners and act as an occasional arbitrator for tribal disputes. There are other problems, as it's easy to rent tribal leaders with gifts. These payments can't really be called bribes, because they are part of the traditional customs of exchanging gifts. For example, the Saudi Arabian king (not the country of Saudi Arabia) gives cash and favors to the leadership of most Yemeni tribes.

The Yemeni government has long protested this practice, but the Saudis refuse to back off, because what they get back from the tribes is information. The Saudis rarely ask the tribal leaders to do much more than be on good terms with the House of Saud. There's a dark side to this, as for decades, Saudi charities have also built mosques and supported conservative clerics to run them and teach the kids to be hard core Moslems. This led to al Qaeda, among other things (like too many religion majors in Arab colleges, and not enough business, engineering or medical majors).

The Saudi gifts have come in handy in providing some good information about the size and intentions of al Qaeda factions. Not precise enough info for a missile attack, but a general picture of what is going on. The Yemeni tribal leaders don't want to lose their Saudi gifts, but don't want to incur the murderous wrath of the al Qaeda who live in their neighborhood. Yemen is, in many ways, a perfect place for al Qaeda to hide out. The place is full of heavily armed tribes that keep police or soldiers out. Plus, the gun culture makes it easy for al Qaeda men to go about heavily armed. The large number of Islamic conservatives among the tribes makes

it easier for al Qaeda to obtain some local allies. But the tribes prevent Yemen from being a country. Yemen can only pretend it is a nation.

Meanwhile, the Saudi king is angry with his generals, because last year the Saudi military, with all its expensive weapons and technology, took three months to clear out a much smaller force of Yemeni Shia rebels from the border area. The problem, of course, is the corruption and lack of accountability in the Saudi (and most Arab) militaries. The governments involved tend to look the other way as they go on, despite the fact that these bad practices will result in poor performance is you actually ask the military to fight.

December 15, 2010: In the capital, a Jordanian al Qaeda member was caught after a bomb went off (without injuring anyone.) The target was foreign tourists. Further south, in Abyan province, al Qaeda ambushed a military patrol and killed five soldiers using a roadside bomb.

December 12, 2010: For the second time in the last three months, al Qaeda attacked a senior intelligence officer. While the October attack killed an intel colonel, the one today, using a roadside bomb, failed.

Focus on the Yemen that doesn't listen to Awlaki

By: Alice Hackman
The Daily Star

The British media's focus on a young British Muslim woman who stabbed a British member of Parliament last month once again shines a gloomy spotlight on Yemen. According to The Guardian, Roshonara Choudhry, a 21-year-old student who stabbed the politician for supporting the war in Iraq, told the police: "I've been listening to lectures by Anwar al-Awlaki ... He's an Islamic scholar. He lives in Yemen."

As media concentrate on Awlaki's online sermons, his role in the launch of Al-Qaeda's new magazine, and the Yemeni government's ongoing battle against Al-Qaeda, the real Yemen has been drowned out. Yet it is this narrative — that of the vast majority of the population, not of a few hundred militants — that holds the key to better understanding, breaking stereotypes and perhaps ultimately less extremism.

Inside a coffee shop, near King's Cross station in central London, British-born Yemeni Abubakr al-Shamahi, 21, sips his hot chocolate and talks passionately about his home country. Not once does he talk about extremism. Instead, he talks of corruption and his fear that donors' money is not properly spent on long-term development; he laughs at Yemeni parents' matchmaking; and he raves about the beauty of the old city of Sanaa. No one he knows has been influenced at all by the radical sermons of Awlaki.

This is the real Yemen. It is not Awlaki's falsified narrative of a West-hating, militant-training Yemen. It is a country

of over 22 million people — over 70 percent of whom are under the age of 25 — struggling for development and the privilege to join the World Trade Organization. On Facebook, this is what the English-speaking youth in Yemen are telling the world. A Yemeni-Canadian, Issmat Alakhali, 32, attracted over 4,500 users to his page, "I know someone in Yemen and he/she is not a terrorist!" which he launched in January. More recently, Atiaf A., another young Yemeni, started a video project called "I'm Yemeni, I'm not a terrorist."

And yet, in an interview last May, Awlaki said that he enjoyed free movement among the tribes of Yemen because "the people of Yemen hate Americans." That is not true. Most young Yemenis learn English because, apart from it being the international language of business, they also dream of emigrating to the United States or Europe to study or to work.

For the average young Yemeni, daily grievances are far more important than politics. Graduates hope to find a job. Young men struggle to accumulate enough jobs to be able to get married. New couples battle with price hikes. Nearly half of the population lives on less than \$2 a day and social development indicators — such as child malnutrition, maternal mortality and educational attainment — remain extremely poor, according to the United Nations World Food Program.

In the north of the country, hundreds of thousands of Yemenis have been displaced by six rounds of war between the government and the Houthis rebels. In the south, a growing secessionist movement threatens the unity of the country, while each month thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and economic mi-

grants arrive on the coast from the Horn of Africa. Nationwide, the next generation will struggle for water to drink as the country's population continues to increase and its already depleted aquifers run dry.

Instead of focusing always on Al-Qaeda, international media should highlight the efforts of youth-led initiatives such as Resonate! Yemen, Me for My Country, Ayoon Shabab (Arabic for "youth's eyes") and the Yemeni Children's Parliament to tackle some of the country's other issues. They should profile social entrepreneurs like Hayat al-Hibshi who set up the Assada Women's Association to help girls from marginalized poor communities go to school.

Media should also highlight the positive exchanges between the Muslim communities of Yemen and the United Kingdom, such as the British-Somali charity that helped to set up a day care center for young refugee mothers in Sana'a earlier this year.

More media focus on positive community-led change in Yemen, instead of terrorism, would counter negative stereotypes of both Yemenis and Muslims in the West. The effect would be more respect for Muslims in the West, less feelings of alienation or anger among their children and, perhaps, less reason to listen to a radical preacher in the first place.

Alice Hackman recently returned to London after two years as a reporter and features editor for The Yemen Times in Sanaa, Yemen. THE DAILY STAR publishes this commentary in collaboration with the Common Ground News Service (www.commongroundnews.org).

Wikileaks part 2: Yemen's Al-Qaeda policy

By: Matt Bigge

Much has been said in the past week about the potentially troubling diplomatic relations which will result from Wikileaks' leaked State Department cables, but despite all the attention given to the Arab world's rhetorical hatred of Iran, Qaddafi's Ukrainian nurse and Russia's Batman and Robin, the Yemen cables in particular could affect US national security more tangibly than any others. A recent series of foiled terror plots on US soil originating in Yemen have reinvigorated debate over Obama's terrorism policy toward al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). And while the leaked cable only confirms what we already knew about Yemen, including its eagerness for US aid (even if it is to be used in ways it was not intended) and the presence of US air strikes against al-Qaeda, how will the public release of these cables affect the United States, Yemen, their relationship and transnational actors who also have a stake in the region?

Middle Eastern governments have always tried to walk a fine line by cooperating with the US behind the scenes to avoid public backlash and Yemen is no exception. The most damning (and oft-quoted) element of the Yemen cables is President Saleh's "We'll continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours" in reassurance to General Patreaux that Yemen is serious about helping the United States monitor and weed out AQAP. However, oth-

er parts of the cable confirm that Saleh may have other priorities on his mind such as nearly doubling US foreign assistance to the country and as American Ambassador to Yemen Stephen Seche implies, bolstering the Yemeni military: "Raising a topic that he would manage to insert into almost every item of discussion during the hour and half-long meeting, Saleh requested that the U.S. provide the ROYG with 12 armed helicopters. Possessing such helicopters would allow the ROYG to take the lead in future CT operations, 'ease' the use of fighter jets and cruise missiles against terrorist targets, and allow Yemeni Special Operations Forces to capture terrorist suspects and identify victims following strikes..." "We won't use the helicopters in Sa'ada, I promise. Only against al-Qaeda," [Saleh continued].

While Saleh gives the impression that he holds the same concerns as the United States, Yemen's characteristic misuse of US military aid and "catch and release" terrorist policies reaffirm that Saleh has different priorities. Former Ambassador to Yemen William Rugh argues that "[Saleh's] priority, however, is not al-Qaeda but dealing with discontent in the south; the bloody, ongoing rebellion in the north [Sa'ada]; and the complex array of tribal and local interests that threaten his leadership. Yemen's sagging economy only galvanizes Saleh's critics. At Washington's insistence, al-Qaeda is on Saleh's list of priorities but he has other existential concerns that trump counterterrorism cooperation with the United States."

However, with the release of confidential reports, Al-Qaeda may pose more of a threat to Saleh than he originally envisioned as public knowledge of US-Yemeni military cooperation may radicalize Yemenis against their president. Gregory Johnson, an expert on Yemen from Princeton University postulates just this, stating that "in some of the tribal areas where al-Qaida is really attempting to recruit people, having something like this where the president and his ministers are on the record talking about lying and deceiving parliament and the Yemeni public, I think it will have traction. Al-Qaida will be able to use it in the months to come." If regime security is Saleh's main concern, then somewhat ironically, he has been emboldening his opposition all along.

Whether news of the leaks and Saleh's comments reach the Yemeni public remains to be seen, but there is no doubt that AQAP will use the leaks to further their own agenda. In the 1990s, Rugh argues that "Saleh calculated that strong action against al-Qaeda and its tribal allies might strengthen his domestic opponents and feared that open cooperation with the United States would validate al-Qaeda's narrative that Saleh was an anti-Muslim American puppet." This same fear exists today and presents a deterrent to full collaboration with the US, however with al-Qaeda armed with the newly leaked knowledge and poised to act, the Yemeni government, which denies the reports, may find that fighting al-Qaeda is actually in its best interest and that of its most powerful ally.

SKETCHED OPINION

By: Hamid



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Xinhua/Zhang Chunhui

NEW YORK, Dec. 27, 2010 — Passengers wait at the LaGuardia Airport as snow falls in New York, the United States, Dec. 26, 2010. New York City airports canceled more than 1,000 flights on Sunday as a snow blizzard made its way through the east coast.



Xinhua/Rouelle Umali

MANILA, Dec. 24, 2010 Xinhua-- Residents retrieve a refrigerator from their burnt houses near Muntinlupa City, south of Manila, the Philippines, Dec. 24, 2010 after a fire hit the residential area overnight. The fire razed around 500 houses, leaving 2,000 families homeless a day before Christmas.



Xinhua

GAZA, Dec. 27, 2010 — Orphan Palestinian children take part in a rally marking the 2nd anniversary of the Israeli war on Gaza, in Gaza City, Dec. 27, 2010.



Xinhua/Li Mingfang

BEIJING, Dec. 26, 2010 — A model walks during a fashion show in Beijing, capital of China, Dec. 26, 2010. The Sunday fashion show featured the concept of designer Zhang Zhongxiang's Tang-suits which are made from puckered fabric.



Xinhua/Torres

KARACHI, 2010 — A Pakistani anti-narcotics official holds packets of drugs seized in southern Pakistani city of Karachi on Dec. 28, 2010. Pakistani anti-narcotic force seized 190 kg of drugs in Karachi in a massive operation on Tuesday.



Xinhua/Wang Qingpin

ROME, Dec. 27, 2010 — Italian firemen wait in front of the Greek Embassy in Rome, after the defusion of a package bomb found at the embassy on Dec. 27, 2010.



Xinhua/Gabriel Patrascu

BUCHAREST, Dec. 26, 2010 — People take part in the ritual of "The Bear", a tradition of more than 2,000 years that is believed to bring abundance, health and power, in the Crangasi neighborhood of Bucharest, capital of Romania, Dec. 26, 2010.

Yemen Association for Reproductive Health (YARH) Executive Director, Sanaa

YARH is a nongovernmental organization working in the field of family planning and sexual and reproductive health. YARH is member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). IPPF is the strongest global voice safeguarding sexual and reproductive health and rights for people everywhere and has Member Associations (MAs) in more than 150 countries worldwide.

As Executive Director you will play a critical role in the development of YARH. You will coordinate the activities related to programs implementation, capacity building, financial management, governance and research and evaluation, the development of innovative initiatives on Yemen's reproductive health needs. You will establish and develop excellent working relationships with stakeholders and build strategic alliances.

You must have a relevant graduate degree with at least 5 years' relevant experience. You will have a keen grasp of reproductive health issues. Sound cultural and political sensitivity along with high level communication and leadership skills are essential. You must also have analytical and time management skills.

Fluent English and Arabic and excellent written communication skills are essential, together with strong project development and grant management experience.

Please send CVs to both of the following addresses:

1. Yemen Association for Reproductive Health
Email: yarh.yemen@gmail.com
2. IPPF- Arab World Regional Office:
Email: jobs@ippf.org.tn

Closing date: 5th of January 2011

We regret that only shortlisted candidates will be acknowledged.

YARH is an equal opportunities employer.

Yemen Association for Reproductive Health (YARH) Program Director, Sanaa

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As Program Director you will play a critical role in the development of YARH as a whole. You will lead a team of project officers and be responsible of projects implementation, monitoring and evaluation as well as capacity building of YARH program staff. You will also be responsible of the development of innovative initiatives and projects on Yemeni reproductive health needs.

You must have a relevant graduate degree with a least 5 years experience in the field of social development and/or reproductive health with at least three years in a managerial position/post.

You must have analytical and time management skills with high level of communication and leadership skills.

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The story of the Yemeni singer who made headlines

Fouad Abd-Alwahed, first place winner of the Gulf singing contest

Fouad Abd-Alwahed is a young Yemeni singer, who at just 23, made headlines this month by winning first place in the “Najm Al-Khaleej” (Gulf Star) regional singing competition.

An imitation of American Idol, Najm Al-Khaleej broadcast on Dubai Satellite Channel is a hit show for many Arabs keen on following the music industry.

On December 19, Abd-Alwahed was voted the winner by viewers from around the world in the final episode of a 12 week heated competition in Beirut. In an exclusive interview with the Yemen Times Fouad talked about his past, present and hopes for the future.

Interview by Raghda Gamal

Tens of fans lined up at Sana'a International Airport after midnight on Tuesday last week. They had gathered with flowers and banners to welcome the hero of the day who had just put Yemen in the news for a positive reason.

“I was dumbfounded. It was awesome to see the huge crowd cheering with my name. During the competition we were not allowed to use the phone or the internet so that we do not persuade people to vote for us. So I really did not expect it but it was a delightful surprise,” said a grinning Fouad.

To him this is the most valuable award he could ever hope to get, “people’s love,” he said. And for this he would walk miles if needed, “losing people’s love is what I fear the most.”

The next day upon arriving to Yemen, he was also rushed to meet the president. He felt honored and humbled that the President knew about him and took his time to congratulate him.

He then promised that he would sing

for Yemen and it’s heritage wherever he goes.

This he had already begun during the Najm Al-Khaleej competition where he rejuvenated the Yemeni style of singing. “This rich heritage of Yemeni music deserves to reach all Arab countries,” he explained.

However, his decision to stick to the Yemeni style of singing was more of a gamble in the beginning. He was afraid that by brining something new to the stage he could be rejected. Moreover, the program’s management advised him not to focus on the Yemeni style of singing. While he took on board this advise and diversified his singing techniques to include Gulf and Egyptian styles he still remained loyal to his own country’s music.

Eventually his gamble paid off and the audience loved it and they voted him the winner of the competition.

“Every time I sang a new Yemeni song, I was amazed to discover that my colleagues had learned my songs and started singing them too,” said Fouad with a smile.

In promoting Yemen’s singing heri-

tage, however, he denounced another cultural habit: Qat chewing. Before he travelled to Beirut for the show Fouad used to chew occasionally. Now he knows better. “In order to protect my voice I am completely giving up qat, despite the many social pressures I know that I will face.”

His advised Yemeni youth to utilize their time fruitfully instead of wasting hours chewing qat. “Qat only gives a bad image of Yemen. Yemenis must think about their country and stop promoting this bad habit,” said Fouad with resolve.

The beginning

Since the first grade, Fouad knew he wanted to sing. His Arabic teacher was the first to notice his beautiful voice. He remembers when she insisted that he sing the alphabet song for the class.

“I was very hungry that day and did not want to sing. When she insisted I hit her. She became angry and kicked me out of class,” said Fouad, fondly remembering his early years.

Perhaps he should have welcomed his Arabic teacher’s gestures because later he had difficulty convincing his family that he wanted to sing.

“I come from a traditional family who could not accept that a man would want to take up singing as a profession. It was awkward for me to visit my larger family in the village,” he said.

His friends helped him survive the criticism and get him through these hard times. They encouraged him to go forward and display his talent in several national and international competitions.

Yet in the end it took the president’s approval of him as a

singer before his family relented and accepted his talent, even if partially.

“After I won the “Prize of the President of the Republic” and won first place at the “Singing to Beijing” Festival my family acknowledged that I have talent,” said Fouad referring to his first place in the 2007 national singing award and his first

himself at the end of the day as a university student. He does enjoy the limelight but his priority right now is to complete his bachelor’s degree.

Throughout his singing career, Fouad has encountered some views that regard singing and music as a forbidden act in Islam.

“These people do not realize that art can deliver

place in the 2008 international competition.

However, this acceptance came with a catch. Fouad was not to use his talent like many Yemeni singers to perform in weddings and parties. He was to only sing in festivals and official events.

His singing adventures affected the continuity of his university education which he had to put on hold for some time. He also changed his specialization from English literature to business administration and this lost him a year. Now he is a freshman in the College of Commerce at Taiz University.

A life changing experience

It was only when he won first place in the Najm Al-Khaleej competition that his family and larger tribe accepted and even took pride in his talent. Now his father praises him in family gatherings and shows off his talent.

“In fact, before this the sheikhs and elders of my hometown would look down on me and not have give me much attention. Now they all are calling me to congratulate me on this winning. After giving me a tough time about who I am, they now thing it is a great thing,” remembered Fouad rather bitterly.

He knows that this experience will open doors for him, perhaps even to a greater degree than already established singers in Yemen who have been around for years. Yet he does realize that while he is making headlines to

day, he could be old news tomorrow.

“Any artist should work to reinvent him or herself and always provide his audience with something new. Only this way will a performer maintain his fans, and this is what I intend to do,” said Fouad with confidence.

Fouad acknowledges that the competition was tough and that at times he wondered if he could make it. One of the challenges he faced was his choice

strong messages. The issue is how to use this art to spread and promote the right causes,” said Fouad.

He acknowledged that there are some examples of music that are rather destructive or

have no meaning.

“But it is important for all people to broaden their view and see art from a larger perspective, the way it deserves to be seen,” he iterated.

According to the rules of the Najm Al-Khaleej competition, Dubai TV facilitates Fouad’s singing career for at least three years and therefore any singing contracts will go through them.



YT Photo by Youssef Kamaldeen



Fouad give thanks to God in prayer when announced as winner of Najm Al-Khaleej competition.

of songs. He said that he owed it to the Najm Al-Khaleej singing coach Hussein Esiri who told him to love what he does and be passionate about it.

But even though he made headlines locally and regionally, Fouad sees

His next step is to become a star across the Arab world beyond just the Gulf.

No matter which Arab country his work takes him to, Fouad insists that Yemen will always be his home.

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Yemenis desperately need good oral hygiene

She is one of the examples when beauty and brains come together. Dr. Rania Al-Gunaid fluently speaks three languages: Arabic, English and Turkish and is one of the best known dentists in Yemen.

After graduating from Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey, Dr Al-Gunaid pursued specialized courses in dentistry. She is one of the few dentists in Yemen qualified to perform tooth implantations.

Dr. Al-Gunaid opened her private dentistry clinic in her family's hospital, which she helps to manage. She has been working as a dentist since 2001 and has hardly had a free moment since. The specialist also works in a public facility of the Ministry of Health.

This is what she has to say about her work and dentistry in Yemen.



Interview by Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Every day Dr Al-Gunaid sees dozens of patients, whether during the day at the government dental clinic or in the evening in her private hospital. Apart from very few exceptions, most of them suffer from problems that could have been prevented with adequate oral hygiene.

"There are dental problems caused by certain diseases such as diabetes, but for the most part they are due to lack of care," said Dr. Al-Gunaid.

In her work with patients she discovered that there is a misconception among many Yemenis that milk teeth are not

Dr. Al-Gunaid criticized that there is little attention to children's teeth. Parents hardly ever consider the bad effects of sweets on their children's teeth and care little about tooth brushing.

"Parents tend to ignore the first signs of tooth decay and only bother when the child is screaming in pain," said Dr. Al-Gunaid. "Then I am faced with rotten teeth or abscesses that require root canal treatment or removing the tooth altogether."

Another frequent problem is that patients do not want to pay much for their health. According to Dr. Al-Gunaid, many patients would rather go for the cheaper option even if it is less effective.

"The irony is that it all could have been avoided by regular brushing and flossing," she said, waving her hands in desperation.

Qat, qat and more qat

Since most Yemenis, and especially men chew qat, it is not surprising that this habit has caused many dental problems. The most urgent one according to Dr. Al-Gunaid is the recession of the gum until it exposes the root of the tooth. Another frequent problem is bone resorption, which happens when large cells called osteoclasts break down the bone. This process happens when because of recession, the teeth are disconnected from the alveolar bone, which is the part of the jaw bone that anchors the teeth in the mouth.

Al-Gunaid explains that this often happens to Yemenis who chew qat for long hours.

"Not only does it affect the gum and alveolar bone, it also affects the inside of cheeks and causes the mucosa to change from a

healthy pink to a whitish color. Also the cheek muscles become loose and you can notice when the regular qat chewer blows his cheeks that the one used for chewing is larger than the other," explained the dentist.

She has come across patients who simultaneously chew qat on both sides. When she argues with them, they do not take her seriously. In fact, she says, they seem proud of their addiction and do not realize that it could lead to their death by cancer or other diseases.

Dr Al-Gunaid is sad to see even young men and boys chewing qat. They are sometimes as young as 13 years old, but already addicted to the bad habit.

"You find men in their early twenties already suffering from gum infections. Some infections are so bad you can see the roots of their teeth because of gum recession. I feel sad having to remove a completely healthy tooth just because there is no gum tissue to support it," she said.

Yet the most unnerving problem Dr. Rania Al-Gunaid faces is the bad oral hygiene of most Yemenis.

"Sometimes they don't even rinse their mouths before coming to see the dentist. When I talk to them about this they say I am a doctor and I should tolerate patients."

She narrates a particular incident that stuck in her mind: "A man with a bulged cheek entered the clinic. The bulge was not caused by a tooth ache but by a chewed lump of qat leaves. I asked the man to let the patient in, but then he said: I am the patient! When I scolded him as to how he expected me to treat his teeth while he was chewing qat, he bizarrely replied: But the pain is on the other side!"

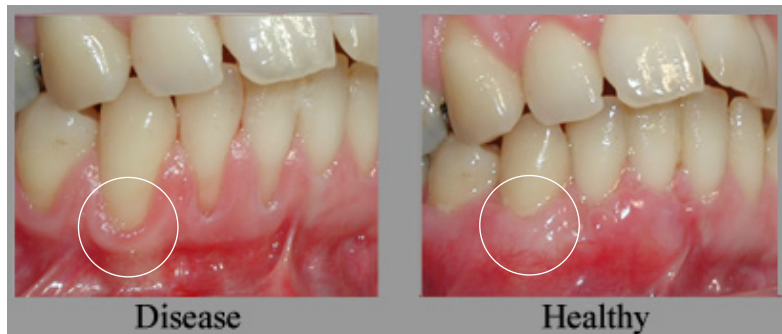
Can't get numb

Patients coming from rural areas surprisingly have much healthier teeth than those in the city despite the fact that the most rural Yemenis do not have a clue about

just would not take orders from a woman," she remembered. "I would tell them: It is your unfortunate luck that you have a woman as your manager."

But today she does not have many problems with her staff, other than the routine issues or those chronic to any business in Yemen.

"Like in any other business in this country you have to endure the Yemenis' lack of commitment and respect for time. You have to keep chasing people and make sure they are doing what they should. Other than that, I don't have any problems," the dentist explained confidently.



Infected and eroded gum from frequent qat chewing.

A natural healthy gum.

dental care, according to Dr. Al-Gunaid.

The reason might be a healthier diet with fewer preservatives, Dr. Al-Gunaid explained. Preservatives that are used in all canned or processed foods, especially soda, are very harmful, as their acidity weakens the dental enamel layer and render the tooth fragile.

One of Dr. Al-Gunaid's challenges with regular qat chewers is local anesthesia, as they usually need a higher dose than patients leading a healthier life. Interestingly she found that people who regularly drink camel milk similarly fail to respond to local sedatives.

"Qat addiction and camel milk alert the nervous system and it becomes very difficult to numb the tooth nerves for the operation," she explained.

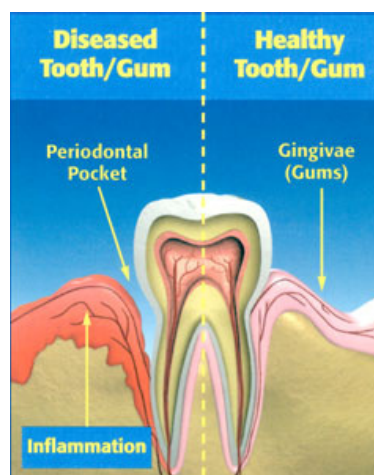
Anesthesia can be problematic if the patient has other health problems such as hypertension or heart disease. Pregnant women should also avoid sedatives. Dr. Al-Gunaid therefore advises women who intend to get pregnant to have their teeth checked before the pregnancy.

"If really required, we can do minor dental procedures during the fourth, fifth and sixth months of pregnancy as an exception," she explained.

A tough manager

Dr. Al-Gunaid has also managerial responsibilities in her family's hospital. When her father and brother are out of the country, she has to run the entire hospital. Studying abroad helped her develop a strong personality, but so did her responsibilities both as a female doctor and a woman boss.

"In the early days I clashed with some of the men working in our hospital. They



The most challenging issue for Dr. Al-Gunaid are her patients. She spends a lot of her time and energy to explain how one should take care of one's teeth.

"I have a dental model and I keep demonstrating how to correctly brush teeth. I sometimes floss my teeth in front of my patients to show them how it is done. But most of the time they don't take it seriously," she said with a sigh.

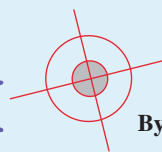
Dr. Al-Gunaid stressed that Yemen needs better awareness about dental health care. "Dental hygiene in Yemen is a nightmare," she said. "We need to educate our people in schools and through the media. So much could have been prevented, only with greater awareness."

If there is one thing Yemenis should do to protect their teeth, it is giving up qat and brushing their teeth at least twice a day, advised Dr. Al-Gunaid.



"We came all the way from Turkey when we heard there is a dentist who graduated from Hacettepe University," joked Turkish businessmen Osman Gulacti and Ilyas Albayrak who work in Yemen and are regular patients of the clinic.

HEALTH WATCH



By: Dr. Siva



This weekly column disseminates health information to readers in Yemen and beyond. Dr. Siva currently works at Aden Refinery Company Hospital. Lifestyle diseases and cancer prevention are his special interests. Complementary medicine and naturopathy are his passions.

Causes of Memory Loss That AREN'T Alzheimer's

Some of you may think of Alzheimer's disease when memory loss or a memory lapse darkens your day. After all, Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are constantly in the headlines. Of course, memory loss is one of the warning signs of Alzheimer's. However, many other situations can also produce this worrisome symptom.

The following conditions are other common causes of memory loss:

Chronic stress

Rahim has chronic tension and anxiety because of work and family problems. He consults me frequently for disruption of sleep. His wife says that Rahim is inattentive and forgetful.

Rahim's problems set in a series of biochemical changes in his body. Cortisol is an emergency hormone in the brain that mobilizes energy and alertness. Rahim's stressful situations lead to an excess of these substances that are intended for emergency use only. As a result, his brain actually loses existing cells and has trouble forming new brain cells. This creates problems with his cognitive thinking, especially with regard to retaining new information. Further, stress and sleep deprivations impair Rahim's memory.



Depression

Ashwaq lost her husband and son in a road traffic accident two years ago. She went into irreparable depression. Because of depression, her body secretes only low levels of serotonin (a neurotransmitter connected to the arousal system). She often dwells on sad events of the past, and has a lack of attention to the present. She has short-term memory lapses. In addition, Ashwaq's concentration and focus are affected, impairing the ability to properly store new memories. Ashwaq came to us at this stage and she was promptly treated for depression. Her memory problems which were initially mistaken for dementia totally disappeared.

Medications

Salem suffers from schizophrenia (a mental disease) for which he is put on heavy doses of sedatives, anti-anxiety drugs. Some of these drugs interfere with the ability of brain cells to communicate. Sometimes this effect is produced by dangerous interactions between two different drugs. Salem, whose memory was excellent at one time, struggles now to remember the names of his colleagues. He attributes his memory loss to his medications and is thinking of stopping them.

Malfunctioning thyroid

Arwah has thyroid deficiency (hypothyroidism). She has gained weight recently, has fatigue, lethargy, scaly skin and hair fall, irregular menstrual cycle, sensitivity to cold, and muscle cramps. She was once a great cook. Her children complain that she has difficulties in remembering common issues. Even simple matters have to be explained to her several times to make her understand. Now, she can't even make a cup of good coffee. Her husband criticizes that the coffee she makes is too sweet; Arwah adds sugar several times in her coffee forgetting that she's already put a spoonful.

Thyroid hormone regulates metabolism (bio chemical activity) in our body. In hypothyroidism, the entire body, including the brain, is affected when metabolism runs too slowly. Cognitive problems are often an early warning sign of thyroid issues. Researchers are also investigating a possible connection, among women, between Alzheimer's and too high (hyperthyroidism) or too low (hypothyroidism) amounts of the thyroid hormone.

Pregnancy or menopause

Smita is a brilliant doctor. After she became pregnant with her second child, she feels that she is not able to remember the names of some common drugs in day to day practice and telephone numbers. She had noticed the same problem during her last pregnancy. As Smita is a doctor, she knows that her estrogen is the culprit.

Estrogen levels change at key points in a woman's reproductive life. This can affect other brain chemicals estrogen interacts with. Hence, the so-called "fuzzy brain" of pregnancy and the "brain drain" of perimenopause. A 2010 study at the University of Bradford in England found that maternal memory problems are the worst from the second trimester through three months postpartum, though not all women are affected.

What's more, women tend to be distracted by other intense symptoms during these periods (from excitement and nausea in pregnancy to menopausal hot flashes). Distraction adds to forgetfulness because information is not attended to, and therefore never stored. Depression coinciding with pregnancy or menopause may also have a role in memory problems.

Excessive drinking

Suresh is a heavy drinker and cannot be without drinking every day. He trips and falls frequently and injures himself. He is sloppy and sluggish in his work. Of late, Suresh has become very absent minded. It's become common for Suresh to either misplace his car keys or wallet in the office and spend a long time searching for them. His friends say that he even leaves his office room open and goes home.

Heavy drinking doesn't just damage the liver and kidneys. Imaging studies have shown proof of brain impairment, too. Shrinkage is worst in the frontal lobe, which governs higher intellectual functions, although other structures are also affected -- including those involved in memory. Long-term excessive drinking can cause a form of alcohol-induced dementia.

Head injury

Fahim had a head injury during work. Following this he was unconscious. He underwent a brain surgery and recovered. However, his memory is not as sharp as before. His boss hesitates to give him any responsibility because he has observed that Fahim has become very forgetful after this injury.

It's little surprise that, although the brain is protected by a thick skull, brain tissue is vulnerable to trauma. Head injuries can result in memory loss.

Normal aging

Abdulla is seventy years old and is a regular visitor to my clinic. His wife always accompanies him to the hospital. Abdulla talks about the same complaint again and again and asks me every time after taking the prescription from me, which way to go to the pharmacy. His wife grumbles that she only has to administer his medicines amidst her household chores or otherwise he ends up taking the medicines for the second time. Abdulla's memory lapses do not mean that something's gone wrong. The brain starts its gradual decline as early as early 30s. By the late 40s and early 50s, most people begin to question themselves "now why did I come into this room?" and have occasional trouble remembering names of new acquaintances or items on shopping lists. Occasional forgetfulness does tend to increase as we get older.

(To be continued)

Story and moral

One day, a patient was rushed to the clinic after losing three of his front teeth in an accident. He managed to bring two of them with him. Dr. Al-Gunaid quickly sent off the patient's relatives to search for the third missing tooth. When it was found, she managed to re-implant all three teeth and restored the patient's smile.

Word of advice from Dr. Al-Gunaid: "If a tooth falls out in an accident, store it in saliva or in milk to keep it alive and allow it to be restored in the mouth."



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NEXT EDITION

Yemen Times Person of the Year 2010

An American woman peeks behind Yemen's veil

By: Felice Friedson
The Media Line

To Americans, Yemen is synonymous with Al-Qa'ida and terrorism. As an American journalist covering the Middle East, I had to responsibly check and double-check with colleagues, reporters, Americans stationed there before deciding to fly to Sana'a to see a country many know little about. I went to learn.

Yemen – bordering wealthy Saudi Arabia and Oman – is one of the Middle East's poorest countries, but beautiful and remarkable in an ancient way. Brownish houses framed with white etching and glorious, arched stained-glass windows line paved streets set among mountainous terrain.

Vast discrepancies between the rich and poor; the souk in the old city seen against a backdrop of dusk, created more the feeling of stepping onto a movie set (perhaps Arabian Nights?), filled with costumed men draped in robes, each with his requisite jimbuya – the ever present Yemeni sword worn in the belt.

Women in jebabs, the full black gowns, all with hejabs, headscarves – some beautifully adorned and some black – and many with the black veil, the neqab, which antagonizes many Westerners.

I was set on de-mystifying the woman in the veil.

So, throughout the several days I spent in Sana'a, the capital, everywhere I went I spoke with women: young, old, poor, rich, married to one man, sister to other wives, even divorced (yes, women can divorce and even initiate a divorce in Yemen).

Covering a coffee conference promoting Arabica Naturals, there were many women – farmers, businesswomen and students – who were present. But it was the young university students, 28 and 29 years old, attending the University of Sana'a, who changed my perception of the veil. Not married at 15, as is the stereotype, these young women may be veiled, but are the rising stars of Yemen. They want careers, marriage to one man and to improve the status of women in their country. A law raising the marriageable age for Yemeni girl to 18 is awaiting approvals.

Tradition, which has such a deep stronghold on society, has kept these women masked: afraid to push the envelope “too quickly.” It's a small community, and it was made clear that everyone knows each other.

All I could see were the eyes. All covered in black. I watched the women sitting on benches set against a green-fabric-covered walled fence, each bench adorned with a big, round Pepsi logo, eating Ken-

tucky Fried Chicken and Baskin Robbins ice cream (Yemen has modern shopping malls, too).

It was simultaneously surreal and real. There were women smoking pipes and working on computers; drinking coffee at the local coffee-house owned by a lovely couple from Wisconsin who had relocated.

The tugging sides of Yemen, the ancient rituals and long tribal histories juxtaposed against modern and Western society today are the daily struggles these women face.

I was invited to a private Qat session, where women come together (as do men, separately) and chew this narcotic-like plant that is Yemen's biggest cash crop. Unfortunately, this plant is the social-connect of the country. It also causes physical damage to agriculture as it sucks dry the water needed for the coffee plants.

Everywhere, people are seen walking



Professional Yemeni photographer in Best Photo studio. Albeit veiled, some Yemeni women managed to break the stereotype.

around with a telltale lump protruding from beneath their cheeks, upsetting his or her facial symmetry. Since imbibing liquor is prohibited by Islam, the Qat sessions are the place to “let it all hang out.” Many come – some chew, some don't. Let the record show this reporter did not.

I entered the blue door of the home of one of Yemen's most outspoken and prominent media personalities. Dogs inside and outside the home dispelled another belief about Muslim society. This powerbroker covered her head, but dressed in colorful street clothes, right down to her attractive sandals and polished toe nails. This woman has publicly taken on the prime minister on issues of corruption, and is known for “breaking the glass ceiling.” Today, her passion is encouraging education and bringing women in media together.

I sat in the salon with low benches around the room, food around the floor and fascinating conversation filling the air. One by one, a woman would enter and disrobe, revealing fashionable, modern Western clothing.

The charming young photographer, who had accompanied me all day, was now dressed in a sleeveless sweater, miniskirt and a head of beautiful black curls that had been hidden from view during the many hours we had spent working together.

The Yemeni model had cleavage exposed and explained that she “had to try modeling to show I can be a Yemeni woman and do it.” Today, she works for an NGO.

The young Czech woman who worked on the Island of Socotra – an impoverished island, often without electricity – was present as well as the daughter of a diplomat close to the prime minister; a journalist whose husband doesn't want her writing (“too many people will know you, but maybe you can write a book”) and the most interesting of all: a woman in charge of the mosque. She came from a strong, in-bred radical background. Having fled to Yemen from Kuwait, she re-examined her life, intent on moderation. She, too, removed the naqab, and shared thoughts about women and their status in Yemen. She said she can accomplish more behind the veil.

Yemen's future for women began in that room.

They turned to me in terms of the media's role and vented their frustration that the “whole story – the good and the bad of Yemen – the truth” is not being told. I turned to them and said, “You have the collective power to change the next generation. Look how far each of you has gone in the last decade. Together, imagine what you can do in the future.”

There are more women than men in universities in Yemen. And slowly, women are occupying government positions. I interviewed a university professor who owns her own businesses and employs men. “It's tough, but it's changing,” she said.

I tried to compare these women to pre-suffrage in America in the early part of the 20th century. It's difficult to envision it in 2010, but that's where Americans need to try to place themselves in the shoes of these women and behind the veil.

Americans want to see their version of freedom and democracy be accepted overnight by Middle Eastern nations – an objective seen as unrealistic and unjust by the locals.

Look at the woman photographer who cannot photograph everywhere: she took her veil off and both her husband and fa-

ther respect her for it. The woman journalist, who makes half the meager wages of her male counterpart, wants to learn and wants Western training in order to teach journalism to other women. Although in

her 40s, she has never married because she “doesn't want to be subservient to any man.”

And then there's a remarkable woman who is editor-in-chief of a local newspa-

per – rare in the Middle East – who I have known for years and whom I truly admire and now, have finally met. She is the sort of bold woman willing to do what it takes to break the glass ceiling.

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