

# Election turnout surprises nation

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANAA, Feb. 22 — At a press conference held on the night of Yemen's early presidential election, Mohammed Al-Hakimi, chairman of the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum, said that voter turnout had far exceeded expectations.

In preparation for Election Day, the SCER had printed out 13 million ballot papers. Meanwhile, several polling centers ran out of ballots, indicating a turnout rate exceeding 70 per cent at such locations in northern governorates.

Although most polling centers remained open until at least 6 PM, polling centers in several southern governorates, including Aden and Al-Baidha, closed down soon after 1 PM for security reasons.

The most significant security incident included the killing of four men, security and staff of branch committees in Aden and Taiz. Other incidents were reported in Aden, Dhale'e, Mukalla and Lahj, where some ballot boxes were burnt and polling centers raided.

"It's the first time for us to participate in an election that Saleh is not a part of. It feels unreal," said Abdulmalik Al-Ja'abi, a voter from Sabeen.

At the same time, some older citizens still haven't comprehended this election's key difference. An old, illiterate woman in Sana'a was shocked not to see former president



The turnout rate on ballot boxes exceeded 70 percent according to the Supreme Election Committee.

Saleh's picture on the ballot paper. When she was told he wasn't running this time, she simply didn't understand and proceeded to leave — this according to voters at a polling center at Sho'ob, located near the Old City of Sana'a.

**Reporting mechanism**

Despite an attempt to use 260 com-

puters in urban centers, due to technical errors early on Election Day, the electoral process throughout the country was mostly conducted manually.

"There are places where there isn't even electricity," said Al-Hakimi. "This is why we have to do everything manually and wait for the official memos to be transported from

branch committees to the main committees in governorate centers to be counted before they arrive at the commission's headquarters."

He admitted that they already have preliminary results which were sent by fax and via text messages but that due to legal constraints these cannot be announced.

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# Negligence of the Southern issue threatens international security

By: Ali Saeed

ADEN, Feb 22 — Khaled Ba Madhaf, a leader and activist of Aden's Southern Movement ('Hirak') told the Yemen Times on Wednesday that the more the government in Sana'a and the international community neglects the southern cause, the greater the threat to national and international security they will present.

This statement, by the prominent southern politician, came after the Iranian Embassy in Sana'a on Mon-

day denied any interventions in Yemen by Iran.

The Embassy said in a press release that "The US Ambassador to Yemen, in a televised interview with Yemeni national TV, expressed his concern over what he called "the attempts by Iranians to exploit the current situation to destabilize Yemen."

"Iran's policy does not approve of the intervention in the affairs of Yemen or any other state, and builds its relations with states on the basis of mutual respect and interests,"

read the press release.

"Iran has increased its activities in Yemen and this may form more threats to Yemen's stability and security," Gerald Feierstein, the US Ambassador to Yemen, said in a televised conversation with Yemen TV on Monday, February 20.

Mohamed Abd Al-Sallam, chairman of the Abaad Center for Strategic Studies, said in a conversation with the Yemen Times that Iran began exercising its influence over Yemen after the US had begun to increase pressure on Iran. This

pressure included US economic sanctions on Iran's oil sales and Iran's Central Bank.

He explained that Yemen has been vulnerable to foreign and regional intervention - including the US, Iran and other nations - since the Yemeni state began to fail.

"The uprising in Syria and the attempt to remove Iran's from the region also compelled Iran to mobilize its distant allies in Bahrain, Yemen and the Horn of Africa," said Abd Al-Sallam.

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# Activists to put pressure on Hadi to release journalist

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

SANAA, Feb. 22 — Journalists and human rights activists have started planning to escalate efforts to free the imprisoned journalist Abdul-Elah Haidar Shayi', who has now been in jail for 18 months.

Shaya' was sentenced to five years in prison in January 2011, charged with "participating in an armed group and being a media man for Al-Qaeda."

Last week, Shayi' went on a hunger strike to protest his continued incarceration without receiving a fair trial. He was, however, compelled by relatives and activists to break the strike earlier this week.

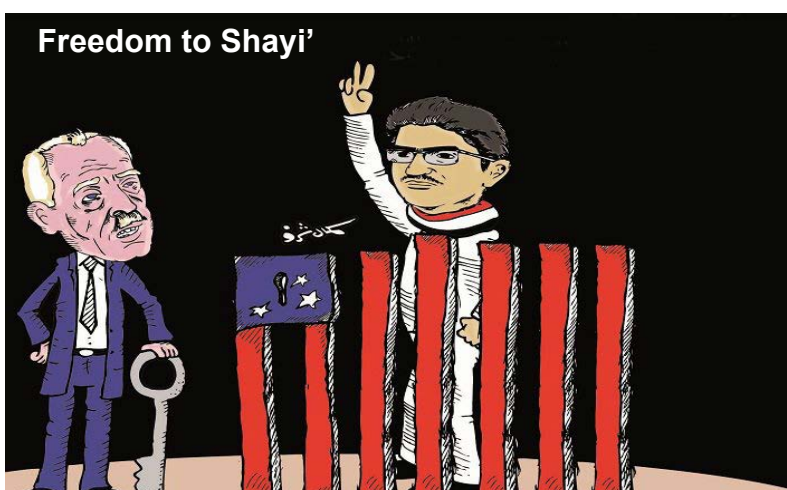
Abdul-Rahman Barman, a lawyer and human rights activist, told the Yemen Times that "Shayi's health is really deteriorating."

"He responded to our request to break his hunger strike after hearing our promise to escalate his issue starting next week," he said, indicating that Shayi' can't even stand well due to his ill health.

Barman said that journalists and human rights activists will put pressure on new president Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to release Shayi'.

"We're also going to hold protests in front of the American embassy because President Obama's phone call put a stop to the decision for his release," he said.

Barman and other human rights activists have repeatedly tried to



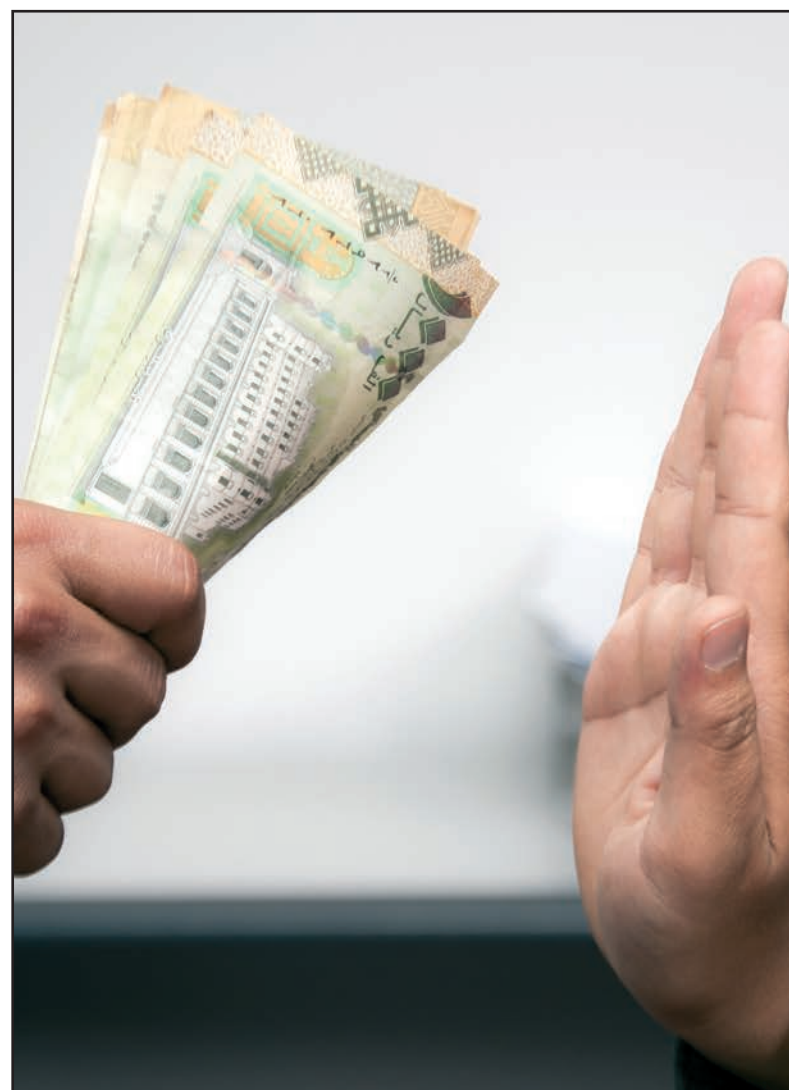
visit Shayi' in Sana'a's political security prison, but have been unable to, faced with refusals by the Political Security Administration.

Ghamdan Al-Yosefi, a prominent journalist and member of Yemen's Journalists Syndicate, told the Yemen Times that Hadi and the unity government should intervene on

Shayi's behalf.

"They should convey the idea to America that Shayi' is only a journalist and that he was carrying out his journalistic duties. They should tell America that he didn't incite people to violence or plan for terrorist attacks," he said.

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# Concerns over Hadi's ability to reconstruct military and security services

By: Mohamed Bin Sallam

SANA'A, Feb. 22 — There are conflicting reports about the ability of President Abdu Rabu Hadi to reconstruct the military and put an end to the ten-month division of Yemen's military. At the present moment, former President Saleh's relatives continue to run key military and security forces.

The GCC-mediated power transfer deal and its implementation mechanism stressed the importance of a reconstruction of Yemen's military and security services. Many Yemenis believe however that nothing short of a miracle would enable Hadi to meet such opposition demands.

As reported, Hadi plans to sack some of Saleh's relatives from their military and security positions - in particular, Saleh's half-brother and Air Force commander Mohammad Saleh Al-Ahmar, following an eruption of protests by officers and troops demanding his firing.

However, the fate of Saleh's nephews - Yahya Mohammad Abdullah Saleh, Staff General for Central Security, Amar Mohammad Abdullah Saleh, Deputy Chief for National Security and Tariq Mohammad Abdullah Saleh, Commander of the Special Forces - remains unknown.

Many sources expect that the resignations will include Ali Mohsen Saleh, Commander of the North-Western Region and the First Armored Division, who has frequently stated his willingness to resign in the event that Saleh exited power.

Another military source suggested that Hadi wouldn't dismiss

Ali Mohsen Saleh from his position unless the Gulf States and US applied pressure to discharge the man who was among the most important of Saleh's aides for over 32 years.

The source pointed out that among the decisions to be taken by Hadi will be whether to fire Director of the Office of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Ali Saleh Al-Ahmar and whether to replace Tariq Mohammad Abdullah Saleh with a new commander.

With regard to Saleh's oldest son, Brigadier General Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, who fills the post of commander of the Republican Guard, the most heavily-armed division in Yemen's military, military sources have ruled out Hadi's dismissal of him in the first months after the election, owing to pressure by Ahmed Saleh and the General People Congress party to maintain the Guard as a guarantee of protection for the former president.

Spokesman of the Military Commission Major General Ali Saeed Obaid told the media that the commission was preparing a plan to reconstruct the military, stressing that the commission - composed of pro and anti-Saleh officers - would begin to implement the plan after the early presidential elections were held, and stated that the reconstruction process would include all military divisions.

The Yemeni military suffers from a sharp division, since Major General Ali Mohsen Saleh defected in late March in the midst of protests demanding Saleh's ouster.

The military services protests extended to the Republican Guard - based in the south of Sana'a - when

dozens from the Fourth Brigade closed down southern entrances to the capital city and demanded the firing of the brigade's commander, Mohammad Al-Arar, and his general staff.

Meanwhile, dozens of officers and soldiers demanded the firing of the chief of Political Security (Intelligence), a figure who played an important role in negotiating settlements between Saleh and his military, tribal and political opponents last year.

In the coastal city of Hodeidah, hundreds of officers and soldiers demanded that Major General Rowais Abdullah Mujawar and his Staff General, Brigadier General Mohammad Farhan, be fired.

Defected military sources said that the protesting officers protested before the Marine Forces headquarters and prevented Mujawar from entering, and stressed that they would continue with their protests until he is fired.

Chairman of the state-run General Authority of Books, Publication and Distribution, Abdul-Bari Tahir said the matter of military reconstruction is no longer in the hands of President Hadi - or Saleh or the General People's Congress, for that matter - as they lack the ability to apply sufficient pressure to maneuver and successfully reconstruct the military.

"This is an international decision binding all parties, and it is more significant than any internal decision taken by any party" Tahir added. "It binds all parties who signed it, and on a national basis - not family or tribal - as UN envoy Jamal Benomar recently affirmed."



## Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi: Profile

Hadi was born in 1945, in Thukain village in Abyan, a southern Yemeni governorate where armed men known as Ansar Al-Shariah have controlled the area since late May 2011.

In 1970, when he was 25 years old, he joined the army for the south's People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. He was promoted to general in 1991 after the unification of Yemen.

He graduated in 1966 after receiving a military scholarship to study in Britain, where he also learned to speak English.

Then, in 1970, he received another military scholarship to study tanks in Egypt for six years. Hadi spent the following four years in Russia studying military commanding.

He occupied several military posts in the southern Yemen army until 1986, when he fled to Sana'a with Ali Nasser Mohamed, president of South Yemen at the time.

In May 1994, Saleh appointed

Hadi as Minister of Defense; in October of the same year he was appointed Vice President by republican decree.

On June 5, 2011, Saleh delegated presidential authority to Hadi while he received medical treatment after sustaining serious as a result of an assassination attempt on June 3.

After a long struggle between the traditional opposition parties and with the backing of the international community, Saleh finally signed the Gulf Cooperation Council deal on November 23, 2011, which stipulated the transfer of power to his deputy, Hadi.

The election is in line with this GCC plan to make Hadi Yemen's legal president for a transitional period of two years.

"This is just an exceptional task in a hard time in which the country must get itself out of a serious crisis... it is the only way for Yemen to avoid bloodshed," Hadi said during a meeting with political and social leaders in Sana'a.

# Sana'a's Street cleaners officially hired

By: Malak Shaher

SANA'A, Feb. 22 — After a number of unsuccessful efforts, the last two-week strike by Sana'a's street cleaners finally resulted in their demand for public employment being met.

The street cleaners started their strike on February 2, allowing the capital city's streets to accumulate two weeks' worth of garbage. According to Ibrahim Al-Surabi, Director of Waste Management at the Cleaning Fund Project, more than 10,000 tons of garbage piled up on Sana'a's streets.

According to street cleaner Naeema Ali, the government last week promised them that they would officially be hired on March 21, one month after Yemen's early presidential Election Day. Ali claimed the promise included the

hiring of 50,000 street cleaners, an increase in salaries, and Friday off from work.

She said that they were promised increased monthly salaries of no less than 30,000 rials.

Previously, street cleaners were paid at the end of each month according to the number of days worked. If they missed a day, 750 rials would be deducted from their wages.

## Environmental problem

According to Al-Surabi, the street cleaners presently face a huge burden in collecting the 10 thousand tons of garbage that accumulated during the two-week strike.

Al-Surabi said these days, following the conclusion of their strike, street cleaners are daily collecting 1,500 tons of garbage. On a normal



The government promised hiring cleaners next March.

day, they would collect a thousand tons of garbage from the municipality of Sana'a, Sana'a governorate, and Amran.

There is no recycling plan for garbage, save a few tons of paper and plastic collected by a recycling company.

"We have huge mountains of garbage in Al-Azraqeen outside Sana'a. The garbage covers an area of 3.5 kilometers, and reaches a height of 80 to 90 meters," said Al-Surabi. He said that they now plan to expand the garbage dump.

According to Abbas Al-Sharafi, head of the Cleaning Fund Administration's operational unit, the only way to minimize the space taken up by the garbage would be to condense it, thereby allowing extracted liquid to channel into the sewage system.

The garbage is then covered with

## The Latest Buzz

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

▶ A training course on armed conflict resolution at a tribal community level was concluded on Wednesday in Ibb governorate. The training, organized by Islamic Relief, ran for five days and targeted 30 participants from Al-Dhale governorate, enabling them to solve tribal and armed disputes in a peaceful manner.

▶ The Yemeni Parliament held an organizational meeting on Wednesday headed by speaker Yahya Al-Ra'ai after a discontinuation of several weeks. The meeting concluded that the parliament will recommence its usual sessions on Saturday after approving the agenda and agreeing on certain legal and monitoring issues.

▶ Yemen will participate in the Friends of Somalia conference, which will be conducted in London next Wednesday headed by the British Prime Minister David Cameron. The conference will include 40 governments and international NGOs. Minister of Foreign Affairs Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi said that Yemen has been an important supporter of peace in the Horn of Africa and that its participation in the London conference is crucial.

▶ The uprising has cost Yemen more than \$11 billion in material and financial losses. According to Minister of Trade and Industry, the economic losses reached 31 percent of Yemen's total GDP, which is around \$33 billion.

▶ A picture by photojournalist Fuad Al-Harazi showing an old toothless Yemeni lady smiling and raising her blue inked thumb after participating found wide appeal online and was recognized by Nashwan News website as the best photo of the elections.

▶ A video showing Ahmed Ali Saleh, son of the former president and head of the Republican Guards, voting for his father's replacement Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi was the most popular videos on of the Yemeni elections on YouTube. It received hundreds of hits within hours of being posted online.

a layer of sand to stop it from polluting the air.

"Condensing the garbage is, however, not the best way to dispose of the garbage. This method affects the environment in many detrimental ways, especially when liquid extracted from the garbage leaks from the sewage and into groundwater supplies," said Al-Sharafi.

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### Election turnout surprises nation

Provisions were made to include first-time voters. People had the ability to vote at any center provided they had an ID document, which facilitated voting for Yemenis living in Internally Displaced Persons camps, and allowed voters registered in particular centers to vote in others because of security or other concerns.

Several donor organizations provided financial or technical support for Yemen's elections.

The International Foundation for Electoral Systems repaired old metal voting booths and purchased 26,000 cardboard polling booths, 104,000 armbands for security, funded and managed a media center for journalists, bought information technology and communications equipment for the operations center and held public outreach activities.

"I think the election went very positively, and the election commission prepared the procedures in order to make it as inclusive as possible. Moreover, there were many campaigns and awareness events to promote the elections, launched not just by SCER but also by business communities, political parties and vice president Hadi himself," said Grant Kippen, IFES Party Chief in Yemen.

Kippen added that when he visited polling centers on election day, with ice cream and beverage vendors present, there was an atmosphere not just of duty but of festivity also. Security forces wore their identification badges, letting people know they were affiliated with the election.

The IFES team had also spoken to members of subcommittees, who communicated that the training they had received had been adequate, and that all needed materials had been available.

There were 583 international observers and 25,000 domestic observers present on Election Day, most from the Orsod popular campaign for monitoring of the election. The campaign reported that 92 percent of voting materials were available on time at the centers. It also reported that 56 percent of the voting started as scheduled, while 82 percent of voting booths were designed to allow votes to be cast in privacy.

As for violations, the majority (around 62 percent) of cited incidents involved failures to check voter IDs or names on voter lists, followed by campaigning inside election centers (people campaigning comprising 39 percent, and campaigning materials 22 percent, of such violations). The least-reported violation was voter intimidation (3 percent), with people encouraging voters to boycott the elections coming in at 10 percent

### Negligence of the Southern issue threatens international security

According to Abd Al-Sallam, "Iran is presently providing finances and military training to members of the Southern Movement to assist them in achieving secession from the north."

"Some members of the Southern Movement are being given military training in Beirut and Iran," he added.

Armed men from the Southern Movement in south Yemen used force as part of attempts to sabotage the consensus early presidential elections which took place on February 21. Ten people were reported dead in the south on Election Day.

Ba Madhaf said that Iran, in addition to other regional and international powers, have had interests in the area for a long time.

"But further negligence of

Southern grievances by the regime in Sana'a and the international community will make this Peaceful Southern Movement adopt dangerous measures," said Ba Madhaf.

He added that international efforts made in Yemen, including the GCC power transfer deal, have not paid any attention to the south's cause.

"The GCC initiative tackled the demand for change in the north, but it neglected the southern issue," he said.

### Activists to put pressure on Hadi to release journalist

Al-Yosefi said that Yemen's Journalists Syndicate and international and national human rights organizations have exerted considerable pressure to release Shayi'. He added, though, that American

pressure to keep Shayi' in prison had proven to be a stronger force.

"Unfortunately, Shayi' is a victim of a counter-terrorism policy that failed to differentiate between himself and Al-Qaeda members," he said.

Yemeni journalist Jamal Jubran said in a recent article that Shayi's guilt amounted to his exercising journalistic objectivity.

"He refused his part in a game held by a regime that doesn't respect its people," he said.

Jubran said that Shayi' is the only journalist who conducted interviews with Al-Qaeda leaders.

"When the regime asked him to spy on Al-Qaeda, he refused. This refusal cost him a lot," he added.

On August 2010, government forces stormed Shayi's home and arrested him under the pretext of involvement with Al-Qaeda. His arrest provoked the anger of journalists and human rights organizations.

# The Niqab: an endless argument

By: Marwa Najmaldin

“I felt the most sorrow about my niqab when I went to a studio to pick up photos from my graduation, but did not recognize myself. I could not pick my photo from the many veiled women,” Angham Al-Faqeeh, 30, told Yemen Times. “All the photos were similar and any could serve the purpose for graduation day.”

Al-Faqeeh does not believe in the niqab, but she wears it to avoid the abuse and insults she thinks she will get at university or on the streets.

“Despite the fact that there are many beautiful unveiled women, all of us women – whether wearing the niqab or not – are subjected to harassment,” she said. “As for Islam, the niqab was not required, just the hijab.”

Some argue that because the niqab turns all women into one black, unidentifiable, veiled form, depriving them of their personality.

Mariam Abdul-Malik explained that she abandoned the niqab after graduating from university and struggling to get a job.

Dr. Salah Al-Din Al-Jumae, a psychologist at the University of Sana'a explained that the niqab wearing is a Turkish cultural custom that Yemenis began imitating during the Turkish rule in the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries.

“The niqab forms chains around women and hinders her movement and freedom particularly at academic institutes and in the work place,” said Al-Jumae.

“Whenever illiteracy and ignorance spread in any nation, it increases the chains on women,” the professor added.

But Um Afnan Al-Qadasi, a housewife who advocates the niqab, argued that it is just liberal people who attempt to prevent Muslim women from wearing the Islamic garment.

“The niqab does not hinder women from getting any job she desires, for example, but some peoples' lack of morals or calls for ‘women's liberation’ make veiled women vulnerable to judgement.”

The conservative mother went on, “I refuse all models of current niqab, as they have become fashions and no longer serve their original purpose. The veil has given women more freedom and the ability to deal with others with more confidence, freedom and

decency.

“Decency associated with the niqab does not persecute women,” she added. “On the contrary, it gives women advantages and make them stronger.”

## Warding off temptation

Some people consider the niqab as a source of decency, a tool to ward off temptation and commit to religion, however others no longer see the niqab as decent, but as a temptation.

The faces of women wearing only the hijab are not as exciting as when they are covered with the niqab and only the eyes can be seen – especially when wearing the new styles designed to make eyes more charming and attractive, according to a clothes vendor

Fahmi Hamoud, who sells clothes in Sana'a, says that some women who wear the niqab add make-up to their eyes, making themselves more attractive, particularly when using kohl eyeliner.

## The niqab in mixed company

Niqab is very common in public schools since male teachers will often teach girls.

Jameel Jamal, an Arabic teacher who has been teaching girls for more than 25 years, said that making sure their niqab is in place is a big concern for girls.

“Before the teachers arrive, the girls spend a lot of time making sure their niqab is covering their face appropriately and teachers are forced to wait until they are comfortably covered,” he said.

However, he added that for young girls in school, the niqab is less about religion that misbehaving in class. “Most of the time they cover their faces so that teachers cannot identify those who talk or chew gum in class,” he explained.

“The use of the niqab during exams is on the rise as female students exploit their covering to speak to each other, and in some cases, they even use cell phones and earphones under the niqab,” Jamal added.

## A danger in the dark

Abdul-Azeez Al-Dubae, a taxi driver in the capital, said that fully veiled women simply blend into the dark.

“I am professional driver, but when I drive in dark streets, it is very hard to see women cloaked in black clothes from head to toe,” he said.



The niqab wearing is a Turkish cultural custom that Yemenis began imitating during the Turkish rule in the 16th, 17th and 19th centuries.

“Once, I ran over three veiled women in terrible accident because I couldn't see them in the dark, and many times I only just avoided other incidents,” added the taxi driver.

## Saudi Arabian fashions

“Niqabs are always upgraded and new models come out every three months, so women run out to get the new ones,” explained Mansour Al-Mikhlaifi, who works in niqab tailoring shop.

“New models are almost always inspired by those women coming to Yemen from neighboring Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia,” he added.

Abu Faisal, who owns a tailor's shop, told the Yemen Times that he started working in the industry in the 1950s. The niqab started to follow fashion after the 1990 Gulf crisis when thousands of Yemeni expatriates returned home – bringing with them new styles.

“The niqab was not originally a

Yemeni tradition,” he explained, “it was imported from outside.”

“Yemeni women used to wear the sitara, sharshaf or shidar. There was nothing called a niqab.”

## The niqab in Islam

Sheikh Saleh Al-Mikhlaifi, an Islamic cleric in Sana'a, said that in the past all Islamic schools agreed that while covering the face might be preferable, it is not a religious obligation.

Of late however, many scholars – particularly Saudi Islamic clerics – say that the uncovered face is the main thing and the first thing a man will be attracted to is a woman's face.

“Some people are saying nowadays that the niqab is just a social custom, but we should look at it as a religious practice and even those unveiled women must consider their hijab as something religious,” said Al-Mikhlaifi.

But not everyone agrees. Amina Ba Fadhl, a teacher in Sana'a,

added that the niqab is neither a traditional nor a religious requirement. “In the past, we did not see the niqab in our streets or schools. We only used to wear the hijab,” she said.

“The niqab is the result of a poor understanding of Islamic instructions,” she added. “In fact, commitment to religion was better in the past when there was no niqab.”

“In the past, we used to wear decent clothes, go to schools and jobs and sit beside our male colleagues without any fear or abuse, but now with the spread of the niqab and black garments, women are being subjected to more harassment by men,” explained Ba Fadhl.

Mohammad Nageeb, a tourist guide, agreed, saying, “the niqab is not beautiful – it is shameful, and it has nothing to do with religion.” He added that there was no justification for the niqab in Yemen.

“The niqab is not a social tradition. When we go to villages, where most Yemenis in urban areas came from, women there are unveiled and more decent yet more liberal. Their dresses are very simple and not always black,” Nageeb explained.

And while the niqab may have become popular in Yemen's conservative society, today's more liberal youth prefer to marry women who wear the hijab, not the niqab.

Ibraheem Mohammad, an engineering student, said, “The difference between those women who wear the niqab and those who wear only the hijab is that the latter are more self-confident – people know them and so their behavior becomes more calculated.”

“A veiled woman feels that nobody can identify her, so she does whatever she likes, but the unveiled woman feels if she does anything, she will be recognized easily,” he concluded.

# Yemenis voice appreciation for patrolmen

By: Marwa Najmaldeen

The institutional revolution that took place over the past few months affected both service-based companies but also within the security sector.

In early January, patrol police rebelled against their own leader because of the rampant corruption in their institution.

Patrolmen in Yemen were established in 2001, recruiting students from the Police School, and now number more than 800. Their task is to stop people from carrying weapons in public places, prevent crimes before they happen and work for the security of tourists.

“Although we work to prevent harassment in the crowded places and markets, citizens barely know about us because our uniforms are similar to those worn

by traffic police,” said Moneer Alobahi, a patrolman who graduated from the Police School.

He added that their main task is to strengthen the relationship between citizens and the police because people often have a poor opinion of policemen.

“Anyone can see the mistrust and the gap between citizens and the police so we try our best to ensure that we are at their service,” he added.

Patrolmen wear a light blue shirt and dark blue trousers, just like the traffic police. They also hold a pistol, electric detonator and a wireless communication device.

“We work to reduce any problems we come across so the policemen have less to deal with when they arrive,” Alobahi explained.

Citizens say that they really appreciate the work of the patrolmen and that they are desperate-

ly needed in Yemen's cities after a turbulent year.

“We want to feel safe wherever we go,” said Nermen Alareqe, a dentist.

She explained that even though she has a car, she still does not want to go out alone because with her clinic based in Al-Tahreer Square – which now has a reputation for harassment – she does not always feel safe.

“We all know what kind of people are in Al-Tahreer,” she said. “I think if there was more security around that the harassment would stop.”

Mustafa Alshamiri, owner of fabric shop in Jamal Street, one of Sana'a's most popular markets, echoed Alareqe's concerns. “Our markets are crowded with all kinds of people especially the bad ones who harass women,” he said, adding that sometimes women's bags are also stolen in the busy shopping area – and it is

often the patrol police who catch such criminals. “If we had more patrolmen in such places I am sure these problems would disappear.”

Commander of the Patrol police, lieutenant colonel Abdo Al-Jumae, told the Yemen Times “The patrol police are closer to the people on streets than any other security service.”

“We reduce the number of potential crimes in opposite to the regular police who does not exceed the police station and received letters,” he said.

He added that this kind of police is doing a humanitarian job including taking lost people to their homes and taking also clinically insane people to safer places.

“We have patrol policemen in Sana'a international airport, in gardens and parks and crowded streets and places as well as tunnels,” he said.



# The Yemen elections

Editorial  
Khaleejtimes.com

**Y**emeni Vice-President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi is to now officially replace outgoing President Ali Abdullah Saleh after elections on Tuesday.

Why this election-cum-referendum is important for the Yemenis is because it signifies an end to Saleh's three-decade rule. And for them, that in itself marks a historical event despite Saleh's remnants

retaining key government positions and controlling the powerful security institutions.

Hadi also enjoys the support of the opposition groups that had decided not to field any other candidate, at least at this juncture. Hadi's coming two-year term is also expected to usher in more polls, both parliamentary and presidential. So while the post-Saleh interim unity government rolls out another setup with transitional overtones, it will have the backing of the ballot. Reports from Yemen denote celebra-

tions and enthusiasm as eager voters fully participated in voting in a new chapter in the country's turbulent political arena.

For Yemen's new government under Hadi, the hard part will start now. Socio-economic problems like poverty, unemployment, and lack of essential resources like water and food are looming large in the background, as are the security challenges.

It is not only Al-Qaeda that remains a potent threat but also two particularly thorny internal issues

that continue to cast dark shadows on the country's stability. The continuing discord with the Houthi rebels and the secessionists in the South are real threats and must be dealt with through dialogue. It is something Hadi plans on doing on forming his new government.

Even so, the new Yemeni president will have to maintain a fine balancing act in keeping contentions at bay within his government. Yemen remains a fiercely tribal society where loyalties and differences dominate political relations.

A greater challenge may arise in the post-election scenario when the euphoria of Saleh's exit settles down. This pertains to accountability and punishment of the former president, his relatives and allies. Despite the immunity granted to Saleh on the basis of the Gulf Cooperation Council's deal, people have been demanding the trial of the former regime. Hadi will have to contend with that maturely and may have to replace the previous regime's figures with new ones in government.

It may be better to move on and rebuild a Yemen that has for the past year suffered greatly because of the violent political instability. This will require civilian efforts as well, the main component of that being patience. The new government cannot be expected to wield a magic wand that will resolve all the issues within months or even a couple of years. But this does offer a golden opportunity to the government to join hands with the people to make sincere, result-oriented efforts and rebuild a nation.

## The second Spring?

By: Mahir Ali  
Khaleejtimes.com

**“Y**emenis prepare to vote Saleh out of office” was The Guardian's slightly disconcerting headline over a news report about a somewhat fake election in a country that has experienced one of the least fruitful versions of the so-called Arab Spring.

After all, Ali Abdullah Saleh – now presumably under treatment in the United States for internal – or internalized – wounds that Saudi medical experts failed to heal, wasn't on the ballot. Nor, for that matter, were any of his rivals. In fact, there was only one person that voters could vote for: Saleh's vice-president and designated successor, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi.

What's more, his “popular endorsement” bore no relation to the turnout – even one vote would have

sufficed to confirm him as Saleh's successor. And the upholder of a status quo that may well prove untenable.

The story is different, but not entirely unrelated, to other supposed beneficiaries of the Arab Spring. Tunisians arguably had some cause to celebrate the first anniversary of an uprising that established a regional trend.

Egypt is another story. There, the authoritarian structure of the Hosni Mubarak regime remains intact, despite the former president's relegation to the infirmary and the defendant's dock, much to the relief of neighbors such as Israel and ex-sponsors of the status quo ante from Washington to Riyadh.

The much-feared Islamists, held up as bogeymen by Mubarak over the decades, haven't been reticent in seeking accommodation with the military hierarchy that is reluctant to let go of its political supremacy. But those who crowded Tahrir

Square wanted something more, and they indicated last month that they are reluctant to let go.

The same goes for Washington and Riyadh. A presidential election cannot indefinitely be postponed, however. Egypt's course in the months ahead will prove both crucial and fascinating. Not surprisingly, it has been compared with Pakistan, whose military is famed for its proclivity to maintain control of the reins of power.

It will, in all probability, continue to be a far cry from Libya, where Nato's intervention brought forth a change that has left some people scratching their heads, given that the replacement regime seems almost as prone to human rights abuses as the Gaddafi regime, with elections still a promise rather than a definite prospect.

The fact that regime change in Libya was preceded by a United Nations resolution that prompted Nato to intervene in the name of protect-

ing civilians inevitably played a role in the recent Russian and Chinese vetoes that pre-empted a Security Council condemnation of the Bashar Al-Assad administration.

The votes were, not surprisingly, much criticized – not least because the tally of deaths in Syria runs into the thousands, with much of the damage concentrated in Homs. The targeted city isn't all that far from Hama, were Assad's father, Hafez, perpetrated a notorious massacre some three decades ago, aimed chiefly at the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates.

At the beginning of the Libyan intervention a year ago, a moderately publicized comment from American military sources cited the apprehension that Muammar Gaddafi's opponents may include

elements associated with Al-Qaeda. That particular scenario has been replicated in the case of Syria, with reports suggesting Al-Qaeda in Iraq is keen on a fresh battlefield.

It is, therefore, hardly a revelation that neighboring Israel has resisted calls for regime change in Syria; it was also as upset as Saudi Arabia by its ally Mubarak's removal from the helm of affairs in Cairo.

The Arab League's foray into Syria was welcome – such organizations ought to be able to sort out regional issues as and when they arise – but faltered in terms of achievements, thereby damaging its credibility. Yet the Gulf Cooperation Council can hardly cry foul when Assad refuses to budge, given the political arrangement in member-states.

An international agreement on suspending arms supplies to Syria would undoubtedly be a step forward, provided it applies to all parties. Beyond that, if Assad refuses to come to his senses, some kind of intervention may indeed be of some assistance, providing it does not involve any of the powers that once controlled that part of the world.

One can only hope that Tunisia will take a turn for the better, that the Egyptian military will agree to its own relegation, that Libya will turn out all right, that Yemen will fall apart peacefully, if at all. As for Syria, its fate should ultimately be determined by Syrians, and them alone.

Mahir Ali is a former Assistant Editor of Khaleej Times.

## Drone attacks boost extremism

Editorial  
Gulf News

**D**espite numerous warnings, threats and protests, the US continues its missile attacks in Pakistan. The latest on Thursday killed the most senior Pakistani in Al-Qaeda, Badar Mansour. According to one estimate, more than 200 such missile attacks have been made since 2009 in Pakistan's tribal belt.

US President Barack Obama recently defended the use of un-

manned aircraft to kill Al-Qaeda operatives and other militants in Pakistan's tribal areas. In the process, he officially acknowledged the highly classified CIA drone program that US officials had refused to discuss in public until now.

Obama said the drone program was a “targeted, focused effort at people who are on a list of active terrorists”. But the fact remains that hundreds of civilians, including more than 60 children, have been killed in drone attacks since Obama took office.

The US cannot justify or brush aside the killing of innocent civilians on the pretext of targeting militants in another country.

Also, the attacks have been found to be counter-productive, promoting an extremist mood in the region. Unlawful and a blatant violation of the sovereignty of a country, the attacks have only provided fodder to the militants to attract more people to their ranks.

If the US is really keen on promoting peace in the region and talking to the Taliban, it must stop these attacks.

By: David Ignatius  
The Daily Star

**D**efense Secretary Leon Panetta has a lot on his mind these days, from cutting the defense budget to managing the drawdown of US forces in Afghanistan. But his biggest worry is the growing possibility that Israel will attack Iran militarily over the next few months.

Panetta believes there is a strong likelihood that Israel will strike Iran in April, May or June – before Iran enters what Israelis described as a “zone of immunity” to commence building a nuclear bomb. Very soon, the Israelis fear, the Iranians will have enough enriched uranium in deep underground facilities to make a weapon – and only the US could then stop them militarily.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't want to leave the fate of Israel dependent on American action, which would be triggered by intelligence that Iran is actually building a bomb, which it hasn't done yet.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak may have signaled the prospect of an Israeli attack soon when he asked last month to postpone a planned US-Israeli military exercise that would culminate in a live-fire phase in May. Barak apologized that Israel couldn't devote the resources to the annual exercise this spring.

President Barack Obama and Panetta are both said to have cautioned the Israelis that the US opposes an attack, believing that it would derail an increasingly successful international economic sanctions program and other non-

military efforts to stop Iran from crossing the threshold. But the White House hasn't yet decided precisely how the US would respond if the Israelis do attack.

The Obama administration is conducting intense discussions now about what an Israeli attack would mean for the US: whether Iran would target US ships in the region or try to close the Strait of Hormuz, and what effect the conflict and a likely spike in oil prices would have on the fragile global economy.

The Obama administration currently appears to favor a policy of staying out of the conflict, unless Iran hits US assets, which would trigger a strong US response.

This US policy – signaling that Israel is acting on its own – might open a breach like the one in 1956, when President Dwight Eisenhower condemned an Israeli-European attack on the Suez Canal. Complicating matters is the 2012 presidential election, where Republican candidates are clamoring for stronger US support of Israel.

Administration officials caution that Tehran shouldn't misunderstand: The US has a 60-year commitment to Israeli security, and if Israel's population centers were hit, the US could feel obligated to come to Israel's defense.

The Israelis are said to believe that a military strike could be limited and contained. The Israelis would bomb the uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz and other targets; an attack on the buried enrichment facility at Qom would be harder from the air. The Iranians would retaliate but Israelis doubt it would be an overwhelming barrage, with rockets from Hezbollah forces in Lebanon. One Israeli esti-

mate is that the Jewish state might have to absorb 500 casualties.

Israelis point to Syria's lack of response to an Israeli attack on a nuclear reactor there in 2007. The Iranians might show similar restraint, because of fear the regime would be endangered by all-out war. Some Israelis have also likened a strike on Iran to the 1976 hostage-rescue raid on Entebbe, which was followed by a change of regime in Uganda.

Israeli leaders are said to accept, and even welcome, the prospect of going it alone and demonstrating their resolve at a time when their security is undermined by the “Arab Spring”.

“You stay to the side, and let us do it,” one Israeli official is said to have advised the US. A “short-war” scenario assumes five days or so of limited Israeli strikes, followed by a UN-brokered cease-fire. The Israelis are said to recognize that damage to the nuclear program might be modest, requiring another strike in a few years.

US officials see two possible ways to dissuade the Israelis from such an attack: Tehran could finally open serious negotiations for a formula to verifiably guarantee that its nuclear program will remain a civilian one; or the US could step up its covert actions to degrade the program so much that Israelis would decide military action wasn't necessary.

US officials don't think that Netanyahu has made a final decision to attack, and they note that top Israeli intelligence officials remain skeptical of the project. But senior Americans doubt the Israelis are bluffing. They're worrying about the guns of spring – and the unintended consequences.

### SKETCHED OPINION

By Kamal Sharaf



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# Youth Talk

In this section we talk to young people about their concerns, hopes and dreams. Every week we hit the streets and share what young people have to say right here.

**This week's question:**

**Do you think that consensus candidate Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi can lead the two-year transitional period successfully?**

**Ali Al-Radaee, network engineer**

Field marshal Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi is an experienced man. He has not found the chance to prove himself during the past 15 years but now, after the election, he will get the chance to fulfill the demands of Yemen's civil society. However, as the saying goes "one hand cannot clap alone". If we work with him collectively and let bygones be bygones, my answer to this question will be definitely yes.

**Mohammed Al-Taam, 34, taxi driver**

Leadership of the country must be performed by all the state's institutions, not only the president. During Ali Abdullah Saleh's rule, everything was autocratically decided by him alone. Now we want change, so Hadi must prove that he can lead with the co-operation of his people.

He should let us depend on each other and lead the country together, not depending on just one person as the past. If he succeeds in this way his leadership for Yemen may extend for more than two years.

**Fadi Omar, 21, student, Taiz University**

I think that the consensus candidate Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi can lead the two-year transitional period successfully because he is the only character that all people will accept and our country has been suffering many years so we need him. Our past pains must be forgotten so we can make the best future for our beloved country.

**Gamal Abdulkarim Alghazaly, 30, computer engineer**

With faithful people, he can lead the two-year transitional period successfully.

**Khalid Al-karimi, 23**

To start with, I am not confident that Yemen will be trouble-free once Hadi takes the helm. However, I have unwavering hope that he will be capable of handling some of the problems my country faces. Why do I believe his post as the President of Yemen will be so important? First, both of opposition and GPC officials have shown him a warm welcome – including outgoing president Saleh. Second, his popularity is greater than anyone except Saleh. Third, he comes from a southern province. This could help curb the current tension with the separatists. Fourth, he has been the Vice President for several years so he is not new to such complicated responsibilities. Finally, his well-educated personality and experience will contribute to paving the way for him to stabilize the situation in Yemen, God willing.

**Redhwan Raweh, 27, English teacher**

In my opinion, Hadi can lead the transitional period successfully because local and international communities are behind him. In addition, he is not masterful and haughty like the outgoing president. He has good attributes that will attract Yemenis' hearts to vote. But all of these things are not enough unless we cooperate with him and the unity government. I am optimistic that this period will witness a quantum leap in different fields, especially security.

Moreover, the tense relationship between Yemen and some other countries, caused by the previous regime, will improve. I am completely convinced that while a few people feel scared, we should not fall prey to fears and anxieties, but give Hadi an opportunity to prove his worth and to sweep out corruption and corrupt officials as well.

**Abdulnasser Al-Abdali**

I think he will succeed in leading Yemen to a better future if he respects the law and the people, otherwise Hadi will undoubtedly fail. I really hope that he has already learned and benefitted from the mistakes committed by President Saleh and that he will correct them soon. Anyway, let's wait and see.

**Saber Naji Al-Odili, 25 English teacher**

Yes, I think Hadi can lead the transition; this new president will release Yemen from corruption and the grip of crisis. I put my trust in Allah and in Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi to lead my beloved country into safety and stability. I am sure he will be able to manage the two-year transitional period successfully and let us live as other people.

**Next week's question:**

**What will be your first demand for something to be changed or fixed once Abd Rabo Mansour Hadi takes over in office?**

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## Picture of the week



**A Houthi demonstration in Sa'ada on Friday calling for an election boycott. The Houthis in the north and the secessionist Southern Movement have the same position on the election.**  
Photo by: Houthi Media Office

## The revolution's success

By: Sultan Munassar

February 21 represents a day of victory for Yemen's people – a day that has a distinguished flavor, as it will be the result of the ongoing peaceful revolution that has prevailed all over the country.

The revolutionaries have not retaliated, even in the face of repeated attacks against Change Squares throughout Yemen, and despite the fact people have access to weapons. The opposition parties unified themselves years ago and stood by the revolution, also participating effectively.

There weren't any disputes regarding the formation of a reconciliation government, and Yemenis

proudly exhibited a great ease in using the Gulf initiative and its implementation mechanism to get the country out from its challenging situation.

Surprisingly, the world has had a unified view of the Yemeni Revolution. International Security Resolution no. 2014 came together as a result of unanimous support, and nations around the world have stood in support of Yemeni unity.

Yemenis are generally unified against wrongs and tyranny, and their demands should continue to be in harmony as they seek to achieve justice, equality and the building of state institutions.

The nation is in need of a transitional term to re-order its big house, work out a schedule in order to resolve all its accumulated disputes, and to agree on the for-

mation of a new political system.

We should be thankful that the uprising was peaceful; otherwise, the state would have completely collapsed. This is the reason why the international community was able to intervene smoothly and impose decisive resolutions. All praise and thanks to God that our country avoided an foreign military intervention

All objections and discouraging outlooks should be discarded for the sake of realizing the aims of our country. At the same time, Yemenis must have a real interest in actively participating in the upcoming elections. We require tranquility and stability if we are to improve our standard of living.

The Yemeni people are currently on the threshold of a great turning point in their lives and should not

waste such a great chance, that of going to the ballot boxes and voting. Let's actively participate in this great democratic event and make February 21 a decisive day in the new history of Yemen.

Let us make it a great day. Let us be decision-makers and hurry to the polls; let us make our children's dreams come true; let us overcome all our complicated crises; let us see the light of freedom, equality and true democracy; let us build our country ourselves; and let's stop the bloodshed, homelessness, corruption and political monopoly.

Let's forget all the trouble and vengeance and sectarian conflicts. Let's look for poor and injured people and offer them a hand, regardless of race or language – let's try to relieve their sufferings, solve their problems, and at least pro-

## February 21: a day of change

By: Naji Gazali

We Yemenis have seen a lot of bad days – but we are all Yemenis, and we are awaiting a day of change. This day will fortify our peaceful revolution and show the rest of the world that we are really a dignified and distinctive people when compared with other parts of the Arab world that have been liberated and tasted the joy of freedom.

Indeed, we were able to defeat

the stereotypes that haunted us throughout our peaceful revolution – the stereotype and the image that our "Mr Ex president" had painted and tried repeatedly to sell to us and the world: that we are a ticking timebomb ready to explode.

We proved to ourselves – before we proved him dead wrong – that we were unbroken by his provocations and that we will preserve our uniqueness and distinctiveness and let our minds guide our hearts in accord with the famous saying, that we are the people of wisdom. Indeed, it is a day of distinction because we can exhibit the characteristics that we possess. We decided from day

one that the revolution would be peaceful, and that we would stay the course despite all the killing, lies, rumors, propaganda and the deaf ear that the world lent us. We extricated the world's perceptions of us and made it to listen to who we really are; the world has been able to see who we truly are and has been allowed to see our revolution as the jewel of the Arab Spring.

The Nobel Peace Prize honor for Tawakul Karman came late, but when it arrived it came with a consensual recognition of our revolution by the free world.

Now that we have won the battle,

the question should be: will we win the war of change in Yemen and accomplish all the declared objectives and goals of our revolution?

Our revolution has been a success – internally, locally, and internationally. But the achievement of every goal and objective has not yet happened, so we must attain them progressively and without frustration or provocation.

Anyone who has lost interest in our peaceful revolution and who wants to disturb or distort this day should be aware that they are standing against what they earlier believed in and fought for; they must

## Words for every dreamer

By: Fatima Salem Ballaswud

We all have dreams that keep us awake through the starry, extended nights.

Undoubtedly, having ambitions is something great, but needless to say, achieving them is even greater! We have to realize that overcoming the obstacles in the road of success is never easy, but having said that, the moon is no lon-

ger so hard to reach. The strength, determination and passion inside any of us pushes us along life's track.

Your aims and goals need to be brought to fruition so keep in mind that every target is attainable if it's well planned.

Be confident like a candle, which shines optimism, because "when hope grows, miracles blossom". Your passion is an inner energy you can use to achieve your hopes – as much as a blind man is eager to see the colors of the universe.

Try to entangle yourself with people who share your aims and worries – they will be able to motivate you as well as understand any problems you come up against.

Believe in your abilities, and know that you can achieve beyond your expectations. Don't allow anyone to define who you are as long as you can define yourself. Don't pay attention to anything people say to discourage you – only you know what you can be and what you can do.

But be aware that failure is quite

possible, and no one ever learnt to walk without tripping and falling. Accept that failure is a possibility and give yourself a chance to learn from mistakes and grow wiser. Most importantly, even if you fail, don't question your capacities – you are not infallible.

Always remember that being the one who takes risks and sometimes fails is much better than being the one who lives safely without experiences. Everyone needs to remain positive and confident in the face of obstacles. You can achieve whatever you want as long

# Celebrating Yemen's female entrepreneurs



Athar Foundation takes a holistic approach to Yemen's needs.



The Women's Photo Studio serves to showcase and celebrate the work of female entrepreneurs.

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

For six days, eight entrepreneurial projects carried out by Yemeni women were on display at the Yemeni Day event at the Women's Photo Studio, which itself was started by women.

"The idea of Yemeni Day came about while I was talking with a friend about how we could create initiatives to show that we love Yemen despite the difficult situation we have been going through," said Khadija Al-Sarahi, general manager for the studio.

"We are proud of our traditions and we have faith that Yemen will again stand strong," she said.

The studio connected with eight women with income-generating projects and invited them to bring their products to sell at the studio. Around 600 visitors came to see and buy the products, which included handicrafts, painted glass, baked goods, traditional cloths and handbags.

"We wanted to support women who have small businesses and whose businesses have been not doing well because of Yemen's situation. We believe in the power of women's collective work," said Anwar Al-Sarahi, one of the studio's owners.

The event was planned in a way

that would make the environment friendly to women, and also included opportunities to take advantage of the photo studio itself. Customers had the opportunity to dress in traditional Yemeni clothes and have photos taken with distinctive Yemeni backdrops.

"I felt as if I was at home. The environment was so relaxing and encouraging," said Najla, one of the visitors.

The event was originally slated for only two days, but due to demand was extended for four more days.

#### Modern Traditions

After having lived in England, Suad Al-Amdarani returned to Yemen in 1997 and found herself surprised by the wealth of culture represented by traditional, bright-colored Yemeni clothes.

"At the time, I thought these clothes and colors were too gaudy for my taste and that they simply didn't suit me," she said.

It was when she fell in love with the Old City of Sana'a that she found inspiration for her project.

"The high buildings, swirling alleys, friendly and open-hearted people...the spirit is different there. And the colors and prints of traditional Yemeni fabric were perfect. They looked beautiful and unique," said Al-Amrani.

She started looking for traditional bags and clothes. But what she found at the market were typical designs and cuts of bad quality and with no pockets. So she decided to make her own bags and clothes.

"I love fashion and design. I always have a pen and notebook in my bag; whenever an idea comes, I draw it or write it down directly. Sometimes, in the middle of the night I wake up with an idea or design in my head. I can't sleep until I've jotted it down in my notebook. I think this habit has helped me a lot in my professional and personal lives – and of course in my hobby, which has been converted into a business," she said.

She started using her talent for design to create traditional Yemeni items with modern and practical twists. Hence the name of her project: "Modern Traditions."

Suad started by selling to a close circle of family and friends, who ended up fighting over her designs and demanding more. Her project was also a hit with foreigners and tourists. Through the Yemeni Day event, she had her first chance to directly market her products to the open public.

"I am still learning, but I am also having a lot of fun," she said.

#### Ola's Collection

Ola Abu Sharr is an activist and artist. She has many friends and has traveled both in and outside Yemen. In the past, before she or any of her friends traveled abroad, they would have difficulty finding Yemeni souvenirs to bring as gifts that would appeal to non-Yemeni tastes.

"I didn't like taking coffee, raisins or honey because it was boring and not everyone liked them," she said. "Also, they don't last long and I wanted to give people a present from Yemen which they could keep."

Some handicrafts were not of good quality or easy to wrap and carry. Coming across traditional Yemeni products that were in fact made in China was the final straw for Ola, pushing her to get into the business and figure out a solution herself.

"I love art and creative ideas. In 2009, I collected artwork from different Yemeni areas and by various artists. I then decided to explore this further and that is when my friends and I came up with the idea of drawing Yemeni scenery on ceramic plates of different sizes," she said.

In addition to the plates, which could be placed on stands and tables or hung on walls, she discovered ancient wooden window frames from Hadramout and agreed with carpenters there to make miniature versions of the exact same style.

Ola went on to make postcards shaped like the Old City of Sana'a's

Bab Al-Yemen, as well as for other landmarks.

It wasn't an easy or simple journey, but Ola learned a lot and is now ready to share her products and ideas with the world.

#### Spink

Spink was created two years ago by Aya Al-Tashi. Aya has a special talent in using beads and colored crystals to make accessories, something she has enjoyed doing almost all her life.

"I would always have beads or other materials in my bag, and my hands would automatically reach in and start working with them whenever I had time," she said.

Aya would always be found making accessories whenever she wasn't studying or spending quality time with family and friends. Aya's talent has been fed by her family's support. Knowing that she was creative with her hands, her family provided her with beads and other materials from Yemen and abroad.

"Completing work on a unique piece of jewelry gives me a great sense of accomplishment," she said. "I don't use any books or online tutorials for guidance; I simply follow the trial and error approach."

Aya finds it rewarding to see people enjoy and wear her products. Making people look and feel good is what she does best. At the Women Photo studio event, she sold her work to the public for the first time.

#### Athar Foundation

In December 2006, Athar was established as a non-governmental and nonprofit foundation. It contributes to the achievement of sustainable development through the adoption of positive values and principles within the framework of the Yemeni community. Athar also strives to achieve its developmental goals in the educational, health, economic, social and cultural spheres, and does so with the aim of improving the lives of Yemenis.

The Athar founders' holistic approach reflects its aim to address the real needs and requirements of Yemen's development process. Therefore, Athar believes in working to respond to Yemen's vast developmental needs by addressing social, cultural, health and educational obstacles. In the foundation's view, these factors are all interrelated.

The health situation of any target group is linked to educational and

economic situations. It can be assumed then that health problems likely have direct links with social traditions and practices.

The organization aspires to perform its objectives in a transparent and professional manner and works with partners to support communities.

#### Ibtihal Al-Hamdani collection

From the age of 17, Ibtihal Al-Hamdani used strings and tungsten to create handmade bridal accesso-

ries. Having decided that she would like to share her talent with others, she has begun to think about marketing her work commercially.

"There is a lack of understanding of this sort of work. People don't know how much hard work is put in, and can underestimate it," she said.

She would love to participate in more exhibitions and showcase her work not only in Yemen, but also to the wider world.



Modern Traditions combines fashion with practicality.



Ola's Collection was born of a desire new Yemeni souvenirs.

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If you would like to learn more about these products, contact the Women's Photo Studio at: [womenphotostudio@gmail.com](mailto:womenphotostudio@gmail.com)



## Love in a time of war

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

With the Arab Spring came a new lifestyle; people moved into tents and camped out across the Arab world. But as well as facing many difficulties, people gained new friends and neighbors and developed a new culture.

Yemen's conservative society traditionally keeps men and women separate – but last year's uprising brought the two genders together. Men and women lived together in Change and Freedom squares, allowing them to interact and get to know each other in an unprecedented way.

Among the changes that the Arab Spring brought to Yemen was a new way of falling in love. People started to think about their future partner, with politics continuing to play a big role. Many people required that any potential partner be a revolutionary or at least support the uprising.

As time passes, people will tell their heroic stories to the second generation, to their children and grandchildren, and eventually it will begin to sound more like a fairy

tale. "Once upon a time," they will say, "I was a revolutionary. But I did not know I would meet my destiny in Change Square," as Ayman Al-Sroroy puts it.

Al-Sroroy is an anti-regime protester in his twenties. He joined the revolution with thoughts only of ousting Ali Abdullah Saleh from office. He did not expect to have thoughts of marriage or love until at least 40 – however his destiny took him down a different path.

"I do not like the fact that I changed my life plans, which were all about getting a better job and travelling the world after being done with the revolution," he said, "but the only thing I never expected was to surrender my life to a girl and fall in love while I am still young."

Al-Sroroy said that when he first met his fiancé they argued a lot about the marches to Kentucky roundabout in September when around 300 people were killed, with many being shot by snipers. Back then he underestimated her opinions, he said, but after so many people were killed, he came to realize how wise she was in opposing the march in the first place, respecting her even more.

Farah Mohamed is another love



Some couples knew each other for a long time, but as if acting as a catalyst, only fell in love during the revolution.

story that grew in the revolution. Farah was not able to go to the

squares often, as her family worried about her. But the few times she managed to escape their attention and go, she met her match.

"I went to participate and never thought that I would find my future husband there. It really is really amazing how we met on one of the few days I managed to go," she said.

Farah said that the new mentality the square fostered in Yemeni men was one of the reasons she fell for someone there.

Balques Al-Lahabi, a well known human rights activist, is the newly bride of Dr. Abdul Ghani Al-Iyrani, a political analyst. Although both are known locally for their work, they fell in love during the revolution.

"I loved him in a very short time," said Al-Lahabi. "We are mature enough to not waste our time trying to know each other better [before marriage]." What matters most, she added, is the culture of partnership that was developed through the revolution; they have a common understanding of the uprising, common views and make

similar decisions.

"Abdul Ghani is already a civilized person – he is not pretending to be one – that is what I love most about him," she added.

### Breaking up

While Yemen has its share of love stories, there are also those who separated after their relationships were forced apart by differing political views.

Ahmed Al-Assad had been in love with a fellow university student for two years and they were planning to marry after graduation but when the revolution started they realized their views were just too different and cancelled their wedding plans.

"It was not just politics," he said. "People were killed for the revolution. Having an opposing opinion about anything else in life is not a problem but being anti-revolution is unacceptable. Her pro-regime political stance showed me that she does not care about people's lives or their suffering and I decided not to continue my relationship with her," explained Al-Assad.

### Newly discovered love

Some couples knew each other for a long time, but as if acting as a catalyst, only fell in love during the revolution. Some found themselves working more closely together, while others discovered a hidden part of their personality and fell in love unexpectedly.

Ahmed Adam was always engaged in volunteer work, which is where he first met the woman who would later become his fiancé.

"We knew each other for a year before the revolution," he explained. "I always liked her when I saw her pro-revolution stance I fell in love and my love for her grew day after day."

For Yemenis, the revolution didn't just change the country's politics, it also allowed men and women to interact in an unprecedented way; to share ideas, volunteer in the numerous civil society initiatives that cropped up through the uprising and to work together to build their new Yemen. So it was inevitable that many would discover not just likeminded people but also love in a revolution.

