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**Dear readers,**  
 Kindly note, due to the Eid Holiday, the Yemen Times issue no. 1198 will be available in bookshops on Tuesday Sept. 29 instead of Monday Sept. 28.

## Zabid remains at risk

By: Ismail Al-Ghabiri and Amel Al-Ariqi

In 1993, UNESCO put the city of Zabid on its World Heritage List. In 2000, Zabid was put on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to a state of poor upkeep and conservation.

The Yemeni government established a committee to take measures and restore the city after UNESCO put it in the sites in danger list. However, after a new assessment by UNESCO in June 2009, the city remains in danger and Yemen has its last chance to restore the city before it is taken off the world heritage list all together.

"Yemen is serious about keeping Zabid on the World Heritage List," said Minister of Culture Mohammed Al-Maflahi.

Zabid is a town with an urban population of around 23,000 located on Yemen's western coastal plain. The town is named after the nearby Wadi Zabid and is one of the oldest towns in the country.

Zabid was the capital of Yemen from the 13th to the 15th century. It was a city of great importance to the Arab and Muslim world for many centuries because of its excellent Islamic university, one of the centers of Islamic education in the Arab world during that time.

"Today the city is in decline and in a very poor state of conservation," stated a report from UNESCO. "A mission of experts has observed serious deterioration in the city's heritage. Around 40 percent of the city's houses have been replaced by concrete buildings, and other houses and the ancient souq are in a state of deterioration."

The Yemeni government had asked for Zabid to be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger to facilitate its preservation.

By nominating Zabid to be placed on this list, the government expressed its hope to increase public awareness, both nationally and internationally, of the importance of preserving this site of value which continues to be a living cultural heritage site.

In its session in June 2009 to determine the state of Zabid, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee noted that progress that has been made since 2007 in generating political support and commitment to the conservation of Zabid.

There has also been an increase in resources for the General Organization for the Preservation of



Zabid was the capital of Yemen from the 13th to the 15th century. It was a city of great importance to the Arab and Muslim world for many centuries because of its excellent Islamic university, one of the centers of Islamic education in the Arab world during that time.

Historic Cities in Yemen (GOPHCY), supplemented by the socio-economic development project of the German Technical Assistance (GTZ), the Yemeni government and the Social Fund for Development (SFD).

However, it also pointed to the many difficult challenges that remain. These included defining violations and putting in place an adequate legal framework, developing a conservation plan, allowing GOPHCY staff to have a clear mandate to deal with violations and construction permits, and support for their work.

The committee also stated that, notwithstanding capacity building in construction skills, further support and training is needed in traditional materials and techniques.

The committee urged Yemen to continue to give optimum support to the regeneration and conservation of Zabid.

### Efforts to rescue the city

In 2007, the cabinet issued a decree obliging concerned authorities to assume their obligations in preserving Zabid. Allocations were earmarked.

Hodeida governor Ahmed Salem Al-Jabli said that UNESCO was about to cross Zabid completely off of its World Heritage List, something that necessitated government intervention to allocate required funds to preserve the city.

However, the global economic crisis affected the national economy and the budget was reduced by 50 percent, with directly impact on Zabid projects.

"Nevertheless," Salem said, "we will endeavor to preserve the city with our available resources."

He pointed out the problem of the

scarcity of traditional materials and the demand for cement bricks because of their availability and relative inexpensiveness.

The General Secretary of the National Committee of Education, Culture and Sciences (NCECS) Mohammed Abdul-Bari Al-Kadasi said that locals should not be deprived of utilities "because we don't want Zabid to be a ghost city deserted by its people."

He went on to say that UNESCO asks for Zabid to be preserved as a city with an ancient history and that locals should be enlightened about the necessity of its preservation.

Al-Maflahi said that the Historical Cities Preservation Authority (HCPA) office in Zabid should carry out annual awareness raising campaigns to educate citizens about the significance of Zabid as a historical city.

These campaigns should focus on the vitality of preserving its architectural features and constructional planning as well as the importance of removing all disfigurements. The campaigns could be carried out in association with the GTZ and the local authority.

Al-Maflahi emphasized that the law to conserve historical cities has already been drafted and will soon be referred to the Cabinet.

He also described his ministry's recent efforts:

1. An amount of YR 500,000 was allocated as a monthly operating expenditure for the HCPA office in Zabid.
2. Plans and designs for the expansion of Zabid city were followed up on and handed to

concerned authorities in the city.

3. Violations are starting to be counted.
4. The HCPA Zabid branch was provided with required technical and administrative staff.
5. The attorney general was requested to provide Zabid prosecution capabilities through an officer whose specific job it is to look into cases of violations in city.

As for ongoing and future missions, the minister said that they would be as follows:

1. A comprehensive survey is being conducted regarding the revival of traditional handicrafts in Zabid. The survey is similar to the one carried out in the Old City of Sana'a in cooperation with Social Development Fund and the historical city development program of the GTZ.
2. A joint brick furnace project is being conducted with the local authority and the GTZ. The ministry will support brick manufacturing with YR 300,000 per month.
3. The ministry will offer YR 5 million as support for extending and supervising power cables financed by the SDF.

Mohammed Haza, general director of mosques at the Ministry of Guidance

and Religious Endowments, said that a comprehensive survey was conducted of endowment properties such as residential building, shops, squares and public spaces in Zabid and the surrounding countryside.

He confirmed that construction in or next to historical and religious buildings, including schools, was stopped.

"A plan was prepared to restore and repair 92 schools and rehabilitate the city's old marketplace," said Haza. "The ministry has appropriated YR 50 million this year for the restoration and maintenance of five mosques. Fifty percent of the endowments will also go to shops in the old marketplace in cooperation with GTZ and the HCPA in Zabid."

The director of the heritage unit at the SDF Abdullah Al-Delimi said that the fund supports the Zabid preservation project with an endowment of USD 10 million in the following fields:

1. Paving streets with stones.
2. Purchasing and supplying power cables for USD 1.5 million. A first batch has already been contracted for USD 500,000.
3. Promoting traditional handicrafts.
4. Restoring and repairing historical and archeological landmarks.
5. Supporting the GTZ historical cities preservation project.
6. Cement brick mills will be moved out of the city and some of them

will be replaced with clay brick furnaces.

Director of the GTZ historical cities preservation project Omer Al-Halji said that the project offers 50 percent of support to the houses that have no violations. The other 50 percent is providing by the governmental bodies like Ministry of culture.

He insisted that locals should cooperate by using only traditional materials without cement, and that baked bricks are available through furnaces around the city.

Al-Halji added that there is an intention to deal with violations such as random construction, and the matter will be handled methodically according to available resources. Demolishing a building will only be for violations that are in the public domain and endowments properties.

Providing water and electricity to such houses is equivalent to consent to such violations. Al-Halji suggested that such services be granted to those who violate these preservation laws, only after preservation plans are drawn up.

UNESCO requested that Yemen submit a progress report to the World Heritage Center by Feb. 1, 2010 for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session later on that year. Until this session, Zabid will remain on the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger.

## Efforts to restore Zabid

1. There are projects under construction provided by the SDF for USD 15 million to fund an electricity network, support GTZ Historical Cities Preservation Project, and restore schools and religious and historical landmarks. YR 128 was allocated for street pavement.
2. The Ministry of Public Works is building and paving streets in and around Zabid for YR 280 million.
3. Zabid public works office is also paving the streets of the city for USD 430,000.
4. The Electricity and Water Corporation is extending the cables bought by the SDF for USD 1.5 million. The corporation will provide YR 70 million for electric converters and other works by 2010.
5. The HCDF will provide YR 5 million for extending cables for the first phase, while the second phase will be funded by the electricity corporation.
6. HCDF provided YR 500,000 a month as an operating budget for the Zabid HCPA starting July 2008 and YR 300,000 a month subsidizing baked bricks starting July 2009.
7. Work is underway in cooperation with the GTZ to prepare a plan for the reservation of Zabid.
8. The Ministry of Endowments has proportioned YR 50 million for the restoration of five mosques and 33 shops in its 2009 budget. Work will start soon.
9. The GTZ has provided 40 to 50 percent of support for the restoration of historical houses and shops in the old market. The organization also published brochures of the city, supported NGOs, as well as founded a center that specializes in restoring arabesques and ancient engravings, and a tailoring workshop. It also trained builders on repairing and restoring houses, conducted studies on restoring ancient mosques and held a handicraft exhibition in Zabid.
10. The Zabid HCPA office was provided with five engineers, 20 clerks and a lawyer in addition to computers and electricity generators.

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# Doing Business 2010: Middle East-North Africa sets business regulatory reform pace

By: World Bank Group

The Middle East and North Africa picked up the pace of business regulatory reform faster than any other region in a year of global financial uncertainty, according to a new report by IFC and the World Bank.

Doing Business 2010: Reforming through Difficult Times finds that between June 2008 and May 2009, 17 of 19 economies in the region passed regulatory reforms to create opportunity for domestic entrepreneurs. The report is the seventh in an annual series.

Yemen—the world's fastest reformer last year for starting a business—continued to ease business start-up procedures. It also enhanced access to credit information, and expedited trade through a new electronic document submission system.

The Republic of Yemen improved access to credit information by removing the minimum threshold for loans included in the database of the public credit registry and guaranteeing the right of borrowers to view their own credit

reports. Business start-up was simplified by eliminating the requirement to obtain a bank account certificate to register a company. Implementation of risk-based inspection and installation of an electronic data interchange (EDI) system have reduced the time required to clear goods at customs.

**Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Getting credit (information), Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 99**

Egypt moved up to 106 from 116 among 183 economies worldwide in the overall ease of doing business ranking. Among the world's 10 most active reformers for the fourth time, Egypt made business start-up less costly, expedited the construction permit process, expanded the information available from the private credit bureau, and created commercial courts to speed up contract dispute settlements.

Saudi Arabia rose to 13 from 15 on the ease of doing business—making it the highest-ranked economy in the region—by establishing a one-stop center for business registration and a faster process for construction permits.

"Economies in the Middle East and North Africa are reforming at an impressive rate, and in sustained and comprehensive ways that highlight insights gained from other reformers," said Dahlia Khalifa, an author of the report. "Governments are paying attention to the quality of business regulation to make their economies more competitive and encourage entrepreneurs. This is always important, but especially during these difficult times."

The United Arab Emirates moved up to 33 from 47 on the ease of doing business and became one of the world's 10 most active reformers for the first time by eliminating the minimum capital requirement for business start-ups and simplifying registration.

Jordan made it easier to start a business and pay taxes, extended the construction permit one-stop shop to medium-size projects, lowered property transfer taxes, implemented major court reforms, and sped up trade.

Algeria improved its construction permit administration and lowered the cost of transferring property, cut business taxes, and made courts more efficient. A

private credit bureau opened in Morocco, and Tunisia strengthened investor protections and eased trade rules.

The top 10 global reformers include two from the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt: the United Arab Emirates and Rwanda. Others include Liberia, Colombia, Tajikistan, Moldova, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Belarus. Colombia and Egypt have been top global reformers in four of the past seven years.

A record 131 economies around the globe reformed business regulation in 2008/09, according to the IFC-World Bank Doing Business 2010 report.

That is more than 70 percent of the 183 economies covered by the report—the largest share in any year since the annual report was first published in 2004. And this progress came against the backdrop of a global economic crisis.

Doing Business 2010: Reforming through Difficult Times recorded 287 reforms between June 2008 and May

2009, up 20 percent from the previous year. Reformers around the world focused on making it easier to start and operate businesses, strengthening property rights, and improving commercial dispute resolution and bankruptcy procedures.

"Business regulation can affect how well small and midsize firms cope with the crisis and seize opportunities when recovery begins," said Penelope Brook, Acting Vice President for Financial and Private Sector Development for the World Bank Group. "The quality of business regulation helps determine how easy it is to reorganize troubled firms to help them survive difficult times, to rebuild when demand rebounds, and to get new businesses started."

Singapore, a consistent reformer, is the top-ranked economy on the ease of doing business for the fourth year in a row, with New Zealand as runner-up. But most of the action occurred in developing economies. Two-thirds of the reforms recorded in the report were in low- and lower-middle-income economies. For the first time a Sub-Saharan African economy, Rwanda, is

the world's top reformer of business regulation, making it easier to start businesses, register property, protect investors, trade across borders, and access credit.

Reformers were particularly active in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa. This year, there were 4 new reformers among the top 10: Liberia, the United Arab Emirates, Tajikistan and Moldova. Others include Rwanda, Egypt, Belarus, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Colombia. Colombia and Egypt have been top global reformers in four of the past seven years.

Doing Business analyzes regulations that apply to an economy's businesses during their life cycles, including start-up and operations, trading across borders, paying taxes, and closing a business. Doing Business does not measure all aspects of the business environment that matter to firms and investors. For example, it does not measure security, macroeconomic stability, corruption, skill level, or the strength of financial systems.

## Fact Sheet— Summary of Reforms in the Middle East and North Africa

**Algeria** introduced regulations to better administer the construction permit process and ensure the safe, timely completion of construction projects. Contract enforcement was improved with a new code of civil procedures that reduces time and eliminates procedures. The courts are being fully computerized, including with an electronic case register and case management software. The corporate income tax rate was cut from 25 percent to 19 percent for tourism, construction and public works, and production of goods. Finally, property registration has been made easier and less costly by reducing the notary fee by 0.39 percent of the property's value and eliminating the capital gains tax.

**Areas of Reform:** Dealing with construction permits, Enforcing contracts, Paying taxes, Registering property **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 136**

**Bahrain** consolidated preliminary approvals for building permits in a one-stop shop and reduced the time required to obtain a building permit.

**Area of Reform:** Dealing with construction permits **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 20**

**Djibouti** eased the tax burden on businesses by introducing a 7 percent value added tax on the supply of goods and services, replacing the consumption tax.

**Area of Reform: Paying taxes**  
**Rank in Doing Business 2010: 163**

**The Arab Republic of Egypt**, a for-

mer global leading reformer and a regional leading reformer in 2008/09, continued to make it easier to deal with construction permits by issuing executive articles for the 2008 construction law and eliminating most preapprovals for construction permits. Contract enforcement was expedited with the creation of commercial courts. Access to credit information has expanded with the addition of retailers to the database of the private credit bureau. Finally, company start-up was eased by the removal of the minimum capital requirement.

**Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Dealing with construction permits, Getting credit (information), Enforcing contracts **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 106**

In the **Islamic Republic of Iran** the process for dealing with construction permits was quickened with the introduction of e-service offices in Tehran, streamlining the process for obtaining location approvals, construction permits, and building completion certificates. In addition, the time needed to obtain water and electricity connections fell substantially. The tax burden on businesses was eased by converting the sales tax into a value added tax. Business start-up was simplified with the adoption of an electronic registration system. Trade times were shortened by the installation of scanners at the port of Shahid Rajaei and the reorganization of customs clearance offices to separate inspections of special goods (chemicals, petroleum) from those of general goods. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Dealing with construction permits, Paying taxes, Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 137**

In **Iraq** no major reform was recorded.

**Rank in Doing Business 2010: 153**

**Israel** cut the corporate income tax rate from 29 percent to 27 percent. **Area of Reform:** Paying taxes **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 29**

**Jordan** eased the process for dealing with construction permits by extending the services of the one-stop shop in Greater Amman to medium-size commercial construction projects. Contract enforcement was improved by setting up special commercial courts and equipping them with computer-aided case management systems. In addition, a higher threshold for the lower conciliation court is expected to result in better distribution of cases. Taxpayers for businesses was eased with the introduction of an online filing and payment system and a simplification of form filing. Transfer fees for registering property were cut from 10 percent to 7.5 percent of a property's value. Business start-up was eased by offering a single reception service for company registration at the company registrar. Trade was made more efficient by implementing a risk-based inspection regime of post-destination clearance for preapproved traders as well as by reducing to 30 percent the share of containers subject to physical inspection. In addition, implementation of new software allowing online submissions of customs declarations has reduced customs clearance times by two days for exporters and three days for importers.

**Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Dealing with construction permits, Registering property, Paying taxes, Enforcing contracts, Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 100**

**Kuwait** established a law enabling restructuring of companies facing financial difficulty or insolvency. Improvements to customs administration procedures and staff training have helped shorten the time required to clear goods for import and export. **Areas of Reform:** Closing a business, Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 61**

**Lebanon** made it easier to pay taxes by removing the requirement that permission be obtained to use accelerated depreciation and by introducing electronic payments. Business start-up was simplified by improving the company book stamping process. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Paying taxes **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 108**

**Morocco** strengthened access to credit with a new private credit bureau that began operating in March 2009. **Area of Reform:** Getting credit (information) **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 128**

**Oman** simplified business start-up by introducing an online name registry and enabling payment with a prepaid card. A new tax law will modernize the tax regime and simplify procedures. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Paying taxes **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 65**

**In Qatar** no major reform was recorded. **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 39**

**Saudi Arabia** expedited the process for dealing with construction permits by introducing a one-day permit procedure, enabling builders to obtain a temporary building permit allowing them to begin construction after one day and a final

building permit after one week. Business start-up was eased with the creation of a one-stop office at the Ministry of Commerce that merged registration procedures and simplified publication requirements. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Dealing with construction permits **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 13**

The Syrian Arab Republic eased business start-up by lowering the paid-in minimum capital requirement and allowing online access to standardized incorporation forms. **Area of Reform:** Starting a business **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 143**

**Tunisia** raised the total tax rate for businesses by 3.7 percentage points, through an increase in social security taxes of 0.6 percentage point and an increase of 3.1 percentage points for abandoning accelerated depreciation. Introduction of electronic filing may shorten tax payment compliance times and will affect payments. Expansion of the country's electronic single window will allow Tunisian traders to quickly file all documents required to clear their cargo online, and the system has reduced processing delays by two days. Furthermore, Tunisia strengthened investor protections by requiring greater corporate disclosure. **Areas of Reform:** Protecting investors, Paying taxes (making it more difficult), Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 69**

The United Arab Emirates shortened the time for delivering building permits by improving its online system for processing applications. Business start-up was eased by simplifying the documents needed for registration, abolishing the minimum capital requirement, and

removing the requirement that proof of deposit of capital be shown for registration. Greater capacity at the container terminal, elimination of the terminal handling receipt as a required document, and an increase in trade finance products have improved trade processes. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Dealing with construction permits, Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 33**

**The West Bank and Gaza's** contract enforcement has sped up as new judges have been recruited, appointed, and trained. Courts now have enforcement judges in charge of execution and possess computerized case management software. Property registration was expedited through a major project to computerize records at the land registry. Starting a business became more costly because of an increase in the minimum capital requirement. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business (making it more difficult), Registering property, Enforcing contracts **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 139**

**The Republic of Yemen** improved access to credit information by removing the minimum threshold for loans included in the database of the public credit registry and guaranteeing the right of borrowers to view their own credit reports. Business start-up was simplified by eliminating the requirement to obtain a bank account certificate to register a company. Implementation of a risk-based inspection and installation of an electronic data interchange (EDI) system have reduced the time required to clear goods at customs. **Areas of Reform:** Starting a business, Getting credit (information), Trading across borders **Rank in Doing Business 2010: 99**

## Egypt: Lessons from the labor movement

Since the beginning of the last century, the Egyptian Labor Movement had close relations with leftist movements in the country. After the first Egyptian Communist Party was established along with the General Labor Union in 1921, the al-Wafd governing party issued a law criminalizing communism, banning the Communist Party and dissolved the Union. After remaining dormant for some time, Egyptian labor movements came back to life – though they still remain marginal when it comes to the media.

By: Omar Said (translated from the original Arabic)  
MENASSAT

Despite this law, the organizational bond between the left and the labor movement continued, with the establishment of more than 400 labor syndicates in different Egyptian cities. It wasn't until the events of July 1952 that both were dissolved. During the revolution of 1952, Mostafa Khamis and Abdul Rahman Al-Baqri were executed on the accusation of leading the workers' strike in Kfar al-Douwar. Around the same time, communist militant Shahid Attiah al-Shafii was executed. It wasn't long after that that the prisons were filled with workers and communists.

**From reform to dependency**  
Throughout the history of Egyptian politics, leftist and labor movements pros-

pered and regressed alike. But the 1990s triggered a long period of latency after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the beginning of structural adjustment programs in Egypt, which led to temporary economic prosperity.

Adel Zakaria, an activist in the Syndicate and Labor Services Center (SLSC) said, "One of the major reasons for the regression of the labor movement in the mid-1990s until 2005 was the theoretical divisions in the leftist movement and its dispersion. This doesn't mean that the reactivation of the labor movement now is due to the activity of the leftist currents alone. The leftist movement has taken diverse steps to revive the labor movement, but most of them failed."

The leftist movement have joined the General Union for Labor Syndicates in Egypt, which is affiliated with the ruling party, and hence, many leaders in the Leftist Assembly Party took on leadership positions in the union.

Zakaria, however, says that this hasn't

affect the labor movement, but was an intentional fusion as a result of the corruption in the organization of the General Labor Union.

In fact, when it comes to the appearance of the current labor movement and its opposition to the neo-liberal policies in Egypt, leftist leaders in the labor union were walking another line. Here, came the cry of Abdul Rahman Kheir, the leader of the Assembly Party and the head of the general syndicate of workers in the military industry, before President Hosni Mubarrak on Labor Day 2008, when he praised the President's economic plans and stressed the unity of workers, as he says, concerning the regime's policies. "We are Egyptian workers and we are not traitors," he ended his speech by saying.

**The workers' strike: the return to life**  
In the same year, reports for the Labor and Syndicate Observatory and the Children of the Earth Center for Human Rights revealed that the number of workers' complaints exceeded 800 in one year. A study by the Socialist Studies Center (SSC) revealed that during a nine month period (the period between the two strikes of Ghazel al-Mahallah), 647,133,637 working hours passed with no production, due to workers' strikes.

When the leftists in the labor union expressed their stance regarding the economic and social policies of the government, other leftist movements tried to connect with the labor movement – but from another side. Some labor movements established by activists and leftist parties appeared on the Egyptian political scene and tried to cooperate with the labor movement.

Mostafa al-Basoui, member of the SSC thinks that the birth of movements such as Workers for Change, Workers Solidarity Committee and the Preparatory Committee for Workers was an essential step in building communication bridges between the leftist and labor movements.

One of these major actions took place on February 17, 2008 when 15,000 workers from Gazal al-Mahallah company and Workers for Change demanded that minimum wage be raised to about 215 USD. They continued to pressure the government until June 6, 2008, when security forces banned the strike after violent confrontations and many casualties.

**Media, yes but...**

The leftist movements in Egypt succeeded in issuing non-periodical publications, including the most common "al-



Ishtiraki" (The Socialist) by the SSC, and "Kalam Sanayiah" (Industrial Talks) by the SLSC. These publications provide news of the syndicates, which al-Basoui says give the workers confidence and strength.

He adds that the importance of these publications is that they try to collect the minor demands of the workers under a set of essential united demands, such as raising the minimum wage, or establishing independent syndicates or even putting an end to privatization in Egypt.

These demands influenced other workers mainly Gazal al-Mahallah

(24,000 workers), the real estate taxes sector (55,000 workers) and Halwan for Steel (15,000 workers). At the same time factory publications aim to communicate between the different sections of a company. The workers used them on numerous occasions to announce their strikes and explain their aims to the workers and the government.

The last chance for the Egyptian left wing is to maintain the continuous labor strikes in Egypt. Zakaria concludes, "The left should learn unity, and only then can the labor movements give them lessons that only they can implement."



# Combating sexual harassment, one book at a time

Following shocking statistics on sexual harassment in Egypt presented in a recent report by a local women's rights group, different groups as well as the national authorities have launched initiatives to battle the issue. The latest trend appears to be books

By: Alexandra Sandels  
MENASSAT

**E**gypt has gained notoriety for being one of the worst harassment places in the Arab world, yet few efforts to deal with the issue have been undertaken by the government in the past. It wasn't until the Cairo-based women's rights group, Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR), issued a report last year describing sexual harassment in Egypt as a "social cancer" and calling on the government to introduce a law that criminalizes sexual harassment, that the authorities started taking notice.

The highly publicized 2008 report presented some rather shocking statistics on street harassment in Egyptian cities, claiming that 83 percent of all Egyptian women have been exposed to sexual harassment and 98 percent of all foreign women. Observing Islamic dress code, argued the report, is no deterrent.

Nahed Shehata, Program Manager at ECWR told MENASSAT that the center has been campaigning over the past five years to raise awareness of sexual harassment among Egyptian society through various measures, including public awareness campaigns and programs.

She believes her organization's campaigning on the issue has helped to bring noticeable change in the mindsets of many Egyptians, as well as in the streets.

"Before, many young men thought sexual harassment was only rape. The woman often thought she was the reason for the harassment. She blamed herself. The culture of society has

changed," said Shehata.

Of high importance, continues Shehata, is the notion that the government has started to recognize that there is a problem of sexual harassment in Egypt. Up until ECWR's report, the national authorities largely denied claims that sexual harassment was taking place in the country.

In a notorious 2006 incident in downtown Cairo, a number of Egyptian bloggers filmed a mob of young men attacking a group of women, tearing their clothes off. But little attention was paid to the incident by the Egyptian authorities, who brushed the incident under the carpet.

## "Sexual Harassment: Causes and Solutions"

Three years later, following ECWR's groundbreaking report and the landmark sentencing of a man to jail time for sexually harassing a woman in a Cairo street, it seems that the authorities are finally moving on the subject.

One pioneering initiative is the distribution of a government-issued informational booklet among imams at 50,000 mosques across Egypt.

The booklet, entitled "Sexual Harassment: Causes and Solutions," is a self-publication by Egypt's Ministry of Endowments and aims to explain and address the issue of sexual harassment from a religious perspective.

The booklet reportedly presents five different causes for sexual harassment, including psychological emptiness and low religious practicing. Solutions in the booklet include, "greater adherence to religious and family issues and better law enforcement."



"When the imams realize that sexual harassment is a social hazard, and they understand the reasons behind it, then they start spreading the message," Salem Geleil, Egypt's Deputy Minister of Endowments and the booklet's editor told TIME Magazine. "Egyptians are very religious ... So when you approach a cause from a religious point of view, the response is very strong."

While "welcoming the initiative" from the ministry, Shehata remains skeptical of what she believes are a number of shortcomings in the pamphlet.

For example, Shehata is not happy over the notion that the pamphlet—just like a number of previous campaigns on sexual harassment—seeks to place blame on the victim of harassment in certain instances.

The Ministry's book, she says, stipulates that the girl should dress

properly in order to avoid harassment. That, in Shehata's opinion does not hold, since a woman's way of dressing does not make a difference to harassers.

"You can wear a short-sleeved t-shirt or a long-sleeved shirt. Or a full-face veil. It does not make a difference to the harasser," she sighed. "But overall, it [the booklet] is a good initiative. The government is realizing that there is a problem."

## "Very Important"

ECWR itself has taken quite a different path than the authorities in its quest to raise social awareness of sexual harassment among Egyptian society. Withstanding the religious angle, the centers latest initiative is an informative children's games booklet called "Very Important" and an accompanying animated film that teaches children about the dangers of

sexual harassment and how they can protect themselves from it. It teaches children to be trustful of others while being careful and aware.

"This book teaches the children about the differences between a bad look and a good look, between a good way of talking and a bad way of talking," said Shehata.

Readers of "Very Important" follow the central character Salma in her everyday activities, through her daily interactions with her family and her experiences walking on the streets outside the family home.

Shehata believes it is of utter importance to start educating young children about societal issues at an early age.

But unfortunately, Egyptian schools currently offer very little education on sexual harassment. Shehata hopes this will change in the coming years.

## "People must know it is haram"

What then are the solutions to sexual harassment, in Shehata's opinion?

First, she says, there must be a law that criminalizes sexual harassment. ECWR has already submitted a legislative draft proposal to the Egyptian Parliament for review.

Secondly, she believes there should be a special division within law enforcement that handles complaints of sexual harassment. And the complaints should be taken seriously. Because over the past years, several reports have surfaced about Egyptian police officers refusing to fill out reports on alleged harassers and taking complaints from harassment victims.

But perhaps most importantly is changing the way Egyptian society thinks about sexual harassment.

"People must know that it is 'haram,'" Shehata concluded.

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## The Yemeni crisis and the elite's question of ethics

By: Dr. Hamdan Dammaj

Day by day, the question of ethics looms large in the social and political life in Yemen. It is an old new question that attains more urgency whenever we are faced with a very shapeless present and inconspicuous future. The talk about the future of the Yemeni nation and the lack of contemporary ethics becomes an unavoidable must when we examine the daily ethical malpractices of the cultured and educated elite, especially the ones who, like it or not, have become the icons of the modernist progressive project, or what remains of it, in Yemen.

This article criticizes the ethical discrepancies and intellectual corruption practiced by the elite, being a socially responsible segment if not the first to hold accountable, along with the corrupt authority, for Yemen's deterioration.

Contradictions are galore. For instance, how could one possibly understand the double standard of a known national revolutionist, who exhibited great feats within the national movement, and who is considered a pillar in the anti-corruption activism, when he encourages his son to falsify his scores, and commit bribery to get faked documents for the sake of obtaining an undeserved scholarship

or job opportunity?

How could one possibly admire a great poet, who versified memorable poems about the freedom and liberation of the Yemeni woman when he forces his daughters to wear the veil and conventionally marries them off against their wills? Not only that, he has started to beat his first wife at this age, complaining that she is unable to understand him. Meanwhile, he boasts, before his peers, about his second young wife, telling them a host of profane jokes about his "escapades." Shouldn't we wonder why a large audience gives him ovation listening to the creative works of his while he is chewing poetic lines in defense of women? Little wonder that perhaps many people in the same audience beat their wives too!

The list is never-ending. How could one rationalize the position of a prominent legalist and academician whose solemn photo comes on the frontpages of the Opposition's newspapers, claiming to defend public liberties, and the rights of the citizenry to combat the corrupt State and statesmen, when he consents to have his name inserted into financial sheets to get payments for things he did not do? More outrageous, how could one understand his position when he evokes his legal powers to defend a big businessman against certain State officials with whom the said businessman had a dispute over their commission in a suspicious deal?!

How does that seasoned journalist syndicate figure and famous writer feel when he deceives his colleagues and gets financial entitlements before they do, and, with an enviable dexterity, ensures a seat among a delegation participating in a high-profile conference in a neighboring country, at the expense of another colleague?!

Consider also the position of a national, intellectual, respectable personality famous for being uncompromising with the authority and who was incarcerated more than once due to his unshakable principles, when he accepts the invitation to a "recognition ceremony" held on his honor by a rogue, sectarian unpatriotic association. What raises eyebrows further is that he kept warning others of its dangers, calling to fight its destructive enterprise, and vehemently slashing at the frequenters of its sinister functions.

How about this renown modernist thinker who endlessly speaks on equality and theorizes about globalism and the need for bridging the divides among peoples when we find him unable to hide his vicious localism against the tribesmen and north highlanders!!

How could we justify the actions of a famous modernist whose name has been associated with civility and the civilized federal society when he calls, at critical times, for advocating a heavyweight radical tribal leader who

is against the authority and any manifestation of the civil society? Ironically enough, he warns against any smart maneuver to split the "new civil opposition"?

The above points are just a few instances of the "regular irregularities" of the so-called elite of contemporary Yemen. It is regrettable that such incongruities are becoming something normal in our society where they and their doers are most welcome.

If there are earnest efforts to have a developed Yemen, we have to face these contradictions up as ferociously as we stand against governmental corruption and the overall disorder we experience. The question of ethics should be underscored, given priority and tabled for discussion by the elite in order to relevantly take positive and firm stands with no need to lavish compliments on each other or exploit the hard conditions of the people and the mismanagement in Yemen's government which only fosters the political agenda of certain forces and figures.

The intellectual educated community, who read this article, is the first one to "take credit" for these discrepancies and their involvement therein. Should they fail to measure up to their duty, be it known that we, without pointing fingers at the elite, will have an impoverished country heading towards disasters and destruction.



By: Khaled Fattah

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## Yemen's Bermuda Triangle: Terrorists, rebels and separatists

By: Khaled Fattah

In the 21st Century, a triangle of threats has been pulling the united Yemeni state towards being reported missing. The triangle, made up of terrorists, rebels and separatists, has been producing local magnetic anomalies that are destabilizing national and regional security. It is the absence of a responsive and well-equipped state, which is capable of patrolling, or even observing, its territories, and the consolidation of stagnant patronage-based politics that have contributed significantly in erecting the triangle.

A view on the latest clashes with the Zaydi rebels in Sa'ada, following more than five years of intermittent fighting, reveals how these clashes are producing a destructive magnetic field of sectarianism. In itself, sectarianism is not the source of destruction. Instead, it is the rejection of the concept of sects as a part of Yemen's diversity within the framework of one religion, one nation-state, one flag and one central government.

Sectarianism becomes problematic when it turns into an abused political ideology that aims to damage or cancel national identity. It becomes problematic when it is reflected into the public sphere in the form of tension, hatred and armed conflict. The turmoil in Iraq and Lebanon illustrates the powerful harming effect of sectarianism in the Middle East. But why is sectarianism surfacing in Yemen, where Zaydis and Sunnis have been coexisting for centuries? The answer is not difficult to find. It is the absence of public institutions which represent local interests, and the weakness of formal expressions of statehood, which push people to organize themselves around still vibrant alternatives such as sect, kinship, tribe and region.

In united Yemen, public bureaucracy, legislature, and the judiciary continue to exist as little more than cosmetic artifacts, and the formal expressions of statehood remain eroded. As a result, fiscal support of the masses for the state remains insignificant, and disillusionment with state institutions continues to grow in a deep and widespread manner.

Another view on the current events that are taking place on the high, lower and coastal lands of Yemen reveals the degree of tragedy in Yemen's socio-economic and political transformations. Yemen, for instance, has been transformed from being two peripheral Arab political entities - which had to unite in order to find an exit from their heavy economic and political burdens - into one peripheral entity unable to find an exit from much heavier burdens and uncertainties. Such burdens and uncertainties are making the Yemeni state being increasingly on the defensive, and its sovereignty seriously challenged.

The triangle of terrorists, rebels and separatists will remain solid as long as Yemen's central government lacks the capacity to respond to demands for basic social services, and for national and human security. It will remain as long as there is exclusion, a gap in legitimacy and state weakness. Strong central states are more legitimate in the eyes of citizens than weak central states. Strengthening the capacity of Yemen's state institutions is, therefore, essential if the international community and the people of Yemen would like to see a central government that is preoccupied not with terrorists, rebels and separatists, but with economic and human development.

*Khaled Fattah is an academic researcher and political analyst.*

## Ceasing war in Sa'ada without eliminating its cause is merely the start of a new war

Courtesy of Al-Wasat

Uncertainty may be the one element unanimously agreed upon by all when it comes to the Sa'ada issue, from its first to its sixth war.

People are still confused by two allegations. The first is that Al-Houthi says his men's seizure of districts and their government facilities is done out of self-defense and their

right to practice their religious culture, at the foremost of which is their wretched motto: death to America-death to Israel.

The second claim is that of the government's, whose media is still floundering and hurling contradictory accusations against the Houthis. One of the main accusations is that the Houthis are attempting to bring Yemen back to an Imamate and are leading a coup against the republican system.

None of these accusations were indicated in the prosecution memorandum for the arrest of 55 people, including Badruddin Al-Houthi and his son, Abdul Malik. Here, most of the charges were criminal.

Sa'ada's plague is that it's the historical center of Zaidism. It also borders a Wahhabi kingdom and is an extension of the eastern area of Saudi Arabia, which is mostly Shiite.

Such an overlap was not to be missed by Iran in its everlasting quest

to find a footstep in every country as a means to enable it to play a role in determining the future of the Middle East as a whole. Sadly enough, it is the Arab regimes and their haughty dealing with their own people and minorities that has facilitated such infiltration. This is especially true in Yemen, where the government uses Sa'ada as a bargaining chip with other countries on the outside and influential powers within.

Until the sixth war, the Houthis have not obtained recognition from the Zaidi authorities, who have preferred to keep silent on the matter. As a matter of fact, they have never been content with Hussein Badruddin's handouts that contained his lectures. These handouts are supposedly the intellectual reference on which the Houthis base their thoughts and their demands to be allowed to practice and publicize their faith.

The intellectual issue is the excluded element that has never been discussed. The puzzle that should be noticed is that the Zaidi doctrine leaders need to have their say about the Houthis, especially since their thoughts have been consolidated through Hussein's pamphlets.

It is the people of Sa'ada who are paying the price of this insane war. As for the Houthi militants, they take refuge from rockets and mortar shells in the tunnels they dug and in caves. They wage guerrilla warfare against soldiers who are mostly new recruits and are not armed with faith that makes their death a religious and national duty, which is one of the weak spots that increases the losses of government forces.

Invitations by both sides for peace seem to be only perfunctory. The

intervention of political parties has come too late, while the opinions of religious scholars remain a puzzling enigma. They have absented themselves from this issue, while they usually wail and lament less important matters than bloodshed and threaten all with a bad end and all the excruciating pain of a never-ending inferno.

Where is the scholars' say these days? They were not ashamed to speak out when they were led by Sheikh Abdul Majid Al-Zandani. At that time, they called for the Sa'ada war to be settled by force, while President Saleh replied in favor of settling for peace. That was a slap that discredited their integrity and credibility.

The positives of Sa'ada, if any, are

that they exposed the people who used to be associated with holiness and generals who kept lying about their brigades' capabilities and preparedness. It revealed the true nature of some tribal chiefs, whose tribes are warmongers. It also revealed the inefficiency of the state as well that of the opposition press, and how Yemen is intended to be a battlefield for foreign powers. This is due to the country's neediness and internal deteriorating conditions that the authority could not and cannot deal with.

Therefore, any peace that is intended for the sake of truce and for buying time will only lead to preparation for a fiercer and more ruinous war. Unless causes that have led to these confrontations are discussed, Sa'ada will never enjoy real stability.



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# Hidden graves of disappeared

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Every sane person is aware of the terrible situation in Jammu Kashmir due to the unabated persecution of its natives by Indian armed forces of different hues. The persecution includes disappearances, fake encounters, killings, rapes, molestations, frisking, arrests, detentions, intolerable torture and vilification of the other regardless of age and gender.

In hundreds of cases it has been proved that disappeared persons were killed in custody and buried in and around concentration camps or thrown into river waters. Some years ago, the army vacated a camp in Bandipora. After the evacuation, people of the area unearthed human skeletons in and around that camp. This sensational news was carried by all the local press.

The same is true about other concentration camps in Jammu Kashmir. Just last year, hundreds of graves were identified in the Bigsara forests of Lolab valley in Kupwara district, Chehal Bimyar and Kitchema in the Uri area in the Baramullah district and in Bandipora district.

Atta Mohammad Khan of Bimyar, aged 65, narrated the story of an area where hundreds were personally buried by him. As per his revelation, he buried a total of 235 dead bodies. He said that the army and police used to bring these dead bodies for burial. Most of the dead bodies brought to him were maimed, mutilated, amputated and disfigured beyond recognition. Mohammad Khan further said that he had buried many dead in mass graves as per the direction of the armed forces that were bringing them. The uniformed men were identifying the dead as foreign militants killed on the borders or in encounters.

Mohammad Khan revealed that the graveyard he buried the bodies in is an extension of the Kitchema graveyard which is over-filled with dead bodies, mostly in mass graves. Nobody knows who these dead are, where they were killed or where they are from. But 20 bodies exhumed so far have been identified as locals by their relatives through signs like clothing, rings and hairstyles. They buried them in their ancestral grave yards. Hundreds more could not be identified due to decomposition.

The identification of such mass graves authenticated the belief that the bodies are those who have disappeared in custody. There are hundreds of pieces of evidences which prove that those who disappeared in custody have been killed and then consigned to earth, fire or water.

One person from Poonch in Jammu Province was picked up by forces from that area. Years later, a relative of his coincidentally found his name engraved on one of the graves in Soura Srinagar. On inquiring into the matter, the people of Soura told him that one

morning they found the dead body of a person buried in the lane. His identity card was bearing this name, so his name was engraved on the grave plate.

Many dead bodies so far have been exhumed and identified by their relatives, but the situation here is dire given that the number of the disappeared amounts to nearly 10,000 people.

The families of the disappeared people are desperately knocking every door and wandering like psychiatric patients from pillar to post to discover the fate of their loved ones. They have visited every jail in the district and throughout India, but have failed to find out what happened to the disappeared. With no option left, they are protesting every month displaying banners bearing the photos of the disappeared while crying, weeping, wailing and begging the authorities at the helm to discover their whereabouts and their fate.

Instead of healing their bruised sentiments, local administration has dealt with them ruthlessly. So far they are not getting justice but are charged at with canes and beaten by police personnel. Local governments, at the behest of the Indian establishment, have distorted facts in respect to human rights violations by Indian forces.

In the case of those who disappeared, the numbers revealed by two state governments falsify the statistics and expose their insincerity. For instance, the previous coalition government led by the People's Democratic Party and congress, while replying to query in the state assembly on June 21, 2003, briefed the members that 3,931 people have disappeared from 1990 up to 31 May, 2003.

The present government then led a national conference six and a half years later. Chief Minister Omer Abdullah told the members of state legislature on the floor of the house on Aug. 23, 2009 that the number of disappeared people from 1990 up through July 2009 is 3,429 people. That means the number after a gap of more than six years, instead of showing an increase the number of people disappeared has actually decreased by 502 individuals. These numbers should have certainly increased given the great increase in disappearances since 2003, not to mention the utter impossibility of a decrease in these numbers.

The families of disappeared persons are paying the heavy price of the misfortune which has befallen on them. Mentally disturbed and economically dried up, they have spent everything they have, including valuables and homes, while chasing down the whereabouts of their kith and kin. Most of them are living in destitution. They urgently need monitorial relief for sustenance which they don't receive.

People in Jammu Kashmir are suffering from economic stress due to the conflict and are not in a position to help them because every Kashmiri has been affected by the conflict one way or another. All of them, particularly the affected and families of disappeared

people, need international relief for survival and help in seeking justice.

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations Development Program may have worked well in Latin America and other subjugated territories, but they are of no help to the tormented people of Jammu Kashmir. UNDP is not visible in Jammu Kashmir and ICRC is working there on a conditional basis. This august international organization has signed a conditional memorandum of understanding with India, and by virtue of that memorandum it has a limited role in Jammu Kashmir and is restricted to visiting jails after permission on a case-by-case basis. It has not and cannot do anything in regard to Jammu Kashmir.

The world has to rise above all other considerations to exert pressure on India to put an end to the systematic human rights violations in Jammu Kashmir at the hands of the Indian armed forces. International justice and human rights protection organizations all have their role to play. Everyone, including individual countries, should come forward to prioritize initiating action regarding justice and monetary relief for the affected families. Only then will the struggle for justice mean something substantial to the tormented people of Jammu Kashmir.

Today we are aware that a huge number has disappeared in custody. To date however, the information about their physical presence has neither been noticed nor received. The concerned authorities have already said, rather announced, that the disappeared are not in jails. The irony of this is that they don't even declare them dead. Circumstantial evidence, including the discovery of hidden graves at three places, hint that those who have disappeared are dead, but this fact has to be established. For that purpose, tedious work is needed. This will demand a search campaign to discover hidden graves and graveyards in all parts of the territory.

One cannot expect any type of help or cooperation in this regard from the state. The people, various NGOs and local groups such as the Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons and Afad, with the active support, help and monitoring of the United Nations Human Rights Council, can take up and coordinate efforts in this regard. They have a major role to play in respect to the arrangement of proper funding and settlement of matters with the state regarding the invoking of all provisions of the convention on enforced and involuntary disappearances.

The state, being a signatory of the international convention on human rights, has the obligation to act on these human rights issues. Compliance of the state is a must for achieving the desired results. It has to authorize courts to order visits to all the concentration camps and those areas where forces are stationed. Questioning of officials and personnel in the armed forces must be



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questioned. Let the visits and questioning be entrusted to ICRC as the state may not allow access to other teams. India, being a signatory to Geneva Red Cross conventions, is bound to comply with ICRC given the international obligation.

Omer Abdullah cannot be counted on to help given the backtracking of his commitment to look into the whereabouts of the disappeared people. Ali Mohammad, one of his senior cabinet ministers, categorically denied any such plan of the government's.

The system of justice cannot do what needs to be done and in fact seems handicapped in this regard, as the judiciary system in Jammu Kashmir doesn't command influence on the establishment designed by Delhi. Its orders are flagrantly violated and disrespected by the so-called democratic setup.

If the judiciary orders a probe and thorough investigation into matters relating to the human rights violations by the men in uniform to take action against other erring men in uniform, the orders are consigned to the dustbin. That is why thousand of cases of human rights violations at the hands of the armed forces are pending before the judiciary for want of justice. Justice has not yet been served to anyone, nor does there seem to be any hope of justice being served in the future.

The State Human Rights Commission created by an act of legislature is worth everything but the paper it was written on. Actually, this commission was created just for saving face, as it lacks credibility and jurisdiction. Its decisions, if any, are not honored by the bureaucrats or the political elite. One of its chairmen resigned, blaming a lack of cooperation from the establishment.

This paper tiger cries for help from the establishment while criticizing the policy of disrespecting its orders. Still, we have a name plate state human rights commission, a showpiece for international community. The actual role of said commission is that of a recommendatory agency and has no powers to implement its decisions.

## Through The Mind's Eye

By: Maged Thabet Al-kholidy  
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## Yemeni youth, perfect your skills

What is my role in the society? I often asked myself. Believe it or not, the question sometimes disturbs me and I am unable to answer it. The same may occur with many other young Yemenis who say "I do not know," or reply with hesitation and uncertainty. This is the situation of most young Yemenis, despite mostly having been university-educated or secondary-school-educated.

Many young Yemenis graduate from school, university, and institutes every year. Yemen is proud to have such well-educated youth, but the inability of this youth to define its role in society indicates that formal education is not enough.

The failure to be effective in society highlights the continuing problems of young Yemenis. And education cannot offer them solutions to such problems, even if they review the entirety of their university and school syllabus.

Here, they realize that they are missing the personal skills to be effective members of their society and to achieve their goals and aims. Since formal education is not enough, young Yemenis must search for another way to acquire these.

There are no special institutes for such qualifications. You cannot study a subject called "youth's role in society," but there are other courses that develop people's personal skills.

These are held for free by organizations or training centers, who organize them to support Yemen's youth. No money or connections are needed to sign up. Someone interested only has to find out where the courses are being held.

Young Yemenis should not hesitate to contact such organizations. The latter will, from time to time, offer them training, qualifications, and sometimes even work to develop their personal skills.

The person who depends on education and extra training courses will play a better role in society than the one who only depends on formal education. All young Yemenis should therefore seek chances to perfect the skills they already have.

Maged Thabet Al-Kholidy is a contributing opinion writer from Taiz. He holds an MA in English, and is the former editor of Taiz University's English-language magazine.

## Yesterday, not tomorrow: An ode typically for Yemen

By: Hameed Hussein Al-Awdi  
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Nations, societies and even individuals usually look forward to the future because most people naturally believe that what is to come is better. For those people, they have the right to trust and believe in tomorrow and its blessings because their today (the present) has been better than their yesterday (the past), and thus tomorrow (the future) will be better – or at least they expect it to be so. They rarely remember yesterday and would not like to recall its image since what they have today is more beautiful, and their tomorrow will be even better.

However, the matter is completely different for us Yemenis. The common sense among people here, whether old people or young, men or women, is that yesterday was better than today. That is why people in Yemen usually look backward to their past, and not forward to their future. Yesterday was better than today and today looks better than tomorrow; our past with all it had was better than our present with all it has, and we expect our present to be better than our future.

We can put it another way. We lived

through the bad times (the past), and we are living in worse times now (the present), but what is scary is the future, which might be the worst of all, if we take into consideration the potential for disaster that we now have in this country. The blooming menaces make our people believe this, and that is why they tend to take refuge in memories of their past instead of looking forward to the gloomy future.

Let us go deeper into detail to make the idea more obvious. Our different aspects of life represent manifestations of this since each of these aspects has been deteriorating more and more, day after day. If we are to mention some of these aspects, we had better start with the main concern of all people today: security and stability.

The country has never witnessed such a troubled situation similar to what we have today. The state of insecurity and instability has spread throughout the country, leaving no exceptions – even the capital city of Sana'a has been subject to many incidents. Of course Yemen has undergone different troubles, conflicts, and even wars in its past, but what is happening today is more serious because the whole country has become vulnerable to this state of insecurity and instability. What is to come might be even more seri-

ous, threatening the future as well as the existence of the entire nation.

Another aspect of common concern among people today is freedom and human rights. They have become the concern of both the local and international communities since they have been subject to many violations due to the mood – maybe madness – of the regime and its influential people. The absence of law and its enforcement is another aspect connected with the above in the ongoing deterioration hitting the different spheres of life in Yemen. Wherever one goes, he can easily make sure that the law is leaving – or might have already left – with no return.

Corruption is another aspect which has spread and hit each and every part of the country more than ever. It has become a characteristic feature of our society, and no one can deny that we have never had such a prevailing state of corruption. It is no secret that because of this we usually come last in any good governance scales while we come first in all failed states which lack transparency and credibility measures.

Economy is another grievance that people suffering through every day. Economic crises and difficulties are beyond the ability of helpless people who

have long been waiting for relief to no avail. People's dreams of a prosperous life have turned into fears of famine, drought and other economic problems. That is why their yesterday (the past), which was full of hopes and dreams, was better than today and tomorrow (present and future), which are full of fears and threats.

Many other aspects can be mentioned as examples, such as education, health, electricity, water, social life, infrastructure projects and so forth. It is not mere pessimism; rather, it is the reality that ordinary people see wherever they look or whatever they think about.

This is the truth that most people, if not all people, have increasingly become committed to believing in. Those people have become less interested and less trusting in their future since the available potentials can never help them. The final result is a yearning for the past in order to escape the gloomy and scary future waiting for them. This yearning has unfortunately become, or may become, the norms for those people.

Unless something happens to change the situation, they have the right to look in the direction they like: backward, with all that the past had, or forward, with all that it might hold.

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# Silversmithery in Yemen

By: Nasser Abdulla Nasser Salah  
For the Yemen Times

Gold and silver have been traditionally known and valued as an ornamental and coinage metal since ancient times. Silversmithery is an artistic, interesting business that came into existence in Yemen long ago.

## Jews and coining

Coinage can be cultural and historical markers, reflecting important elements of communities throughout history and around the world.

In Yemen, it is said that the silver-smithing was linked to the Jewish community in Yemen before 1948, when they started moving to United States and Israel.

There were once Jewish communities that lived along side Muslim communities all over Yemen. Muslims learned the craft of silver-smithing from these communities.

A Muslim woman known as Aunt Zohrab said she was named after a Jewish neighbor. Looking back to the past, she remembers some well-known Jewish silversmiths whose names were Isaac, Salem, and Abraham.

"Silversmithery is not so easy to deal with, but it is a rather laborious job which needs a creative mind, and requires honesty, discipline, and technical skills to make beautiful jewelry which satisfies all tastes," she said.



Jewish Yemenite bride.

"Of course, it is a very interesting, creative job, admittedly it is also a highly profitable business."

II, MTTs were used in many parts of Africa. They were common from to Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and down the coast of Tanzania to Mozambique. They were also used in Yemen along with the Indian Rupee and the South Africa UK Shilling, the standard unit of money for British colonies.

In the past, woman used to wear a variety of jewelry made of glass, wood and plastic beads, typically threaded on strings. The jewelry was worn on arms, necks and ears. Also, imported brass chains were worn as belts. Over the course of time, brass jewelry became locally-made and is now worn along with the old used ones. Silver was used to make bracelets and anklets. The brass chain belt came to be decorated with round metal objects about the size of 5 riyal coin size. This kind of belt was called "Atif."

Later, silver was introduced as well as gold. People in rural areas enjoyed wearing silver objects-known as masafa in Shabwa because the material is cheaper and stronger than gold. Different silver jewelry... Different names  
Silver jewelry was made to be worn on different parts of the body. Bracelets were known as m'aasem or shumilelat\_ anklets were called hegoal. Ganagin are earrings that are made of large rings strung hollow balls that jingle. This design was later made into small pieces called wazaq or gomak, and headdresses were known as hamool ar-ras.

Other varieties of necklaces were called lazim, qladeh, matbakh , loopoh, khoter and rufroof.

In additions, belts of different sizes with square or oblong decorative pieces are called mangad. More elaborate belts are called zimam. Rings are known in Shabwa as madawoor. Also women of the past used to wear a silver circles on their noses.

However, Yemeni jewelry is not just for women. Yemeni men uses to wear silver adornments on their jambiyya knives, and bangles on their upper arms, called ma'adhadah in Shabwa, also they wore a ring with agate on their forefingers.

## Silver with Yemeni mark

Silver jewelry that is presently available is made into light and attractive shapes for women to wear at marriage festivities and other occasions.

It is undeniable that Yemeni brides in rural areas once had no choice but



necklace known as Al-Madbakh.

to wear a heavy load of jewelry from head to foot. What a heavy load for poor bride! Now days, women wear light jewelry sets for decoration.

There are remarkable silversmiths in Ataq, the capital of Shabwa. They remarked that silversmithing has improved considerably over the years and there is demand in Yemen and abroad for jewelry made by experienced and skilled Yemeni hands.

Silversmiths commented, "We fully appreciate Yemeni immigrants, particularly in the Gulf States who are taking an active part to publicize the good reputation of silversmithery in Yemen."

Accordingly, a new variety of reasonably-priced pretty silver objects are designed to answer the demand at home and abroad. Indeed, silversmithery is regarded as a source of income like any other handicraft, and it can be a lucrative business.



Austrian riyal (first face). Austrian riyal (second face)

## Sliver coins as jewelry

Historically, coins of higher value are made of gold and silver, while minor coins are struck from copper alloy. In the second half of the 20th century, gold became almost exclusively used for non-circulating commemorative or bullion coins. Silver replaced nickel alloys to make coins known as token coinage, because they do not contain precious metals and cannot be exchanged for gold or silver. Coins were the main form of currency until European banks began printing paper notes

However, in Yemen, coins are used to make jewelry. Silversmiths do not depend solely on raw materials, but also use traditional silver coins, which were once currency, such as the Austrian coin known as Maria Theresa Thaler (MTT) and the Saudi Arabian riyal.

Before World War



A variety of sliver belts.



A belt decorated with French riyals.



A shop for selling and buying silver in Ataq Shabwa.

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