

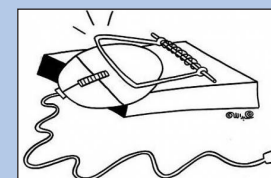
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Pirates in Gulf of Aden cripple business

By: Heather Murdock

ADEN, Nov. 18 —Last spring, piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the east coast of Somalia was all over the international news. More than 25,000 merchant ships pass through the gulf each year, and the waters were quickly becoming the most dangerous in the world.

For about a year now, an international coalition of forces has been patrolling the gulf, led by the European Union. It includes naval support from NATO, the US, Russia, India and China.

But despite the presence of this international might, the number of pirate attacks has doubled in the past year.

There were 100 attempted pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the east coast of Somalia between January and September, and 18 boats were hijacked, according to a recent International Maritime Bureau report. There were half as many in the same nine-month period last year. In 2005, there

were eight.

Eleven ships are currently being held off the east coast of Somalia, and 262 crew members from all over the world are hostages, according to IMB manager Cyrus Mody.

At sea, piracy is making the important shipping lane that connects Asia and Europe through the Gulf of Aden increasingly dangerous. Somali pirates are now capable of operating far from shore, and are targeting merchant ships.

"They realized the Gulf was more lucrative," said Mody. International forces are successfully protecting ships that travel through a designated shipping corridor, he added, but incidents continue to increase in frequency.

And on land, Yemeni businesses are paying the price.

Business and government leaders say

pirates are crippling investment, and the Yemeni Coast Guard says it's too small, new and under-funded to fight pirates alone.

Mohammad Al-Awadi, the head of the General Investment Authority in Hadramout, called piracy a "cancer" in the region in a speech at an Aden business conference last week and advocated the use of military force. "What are the solutions?" he asked. "We talk about the cure for cancer."

But according to Somali officials, the massive international forces in the gulf now aren't even trying to find a solution.

"Most of the time they don't target real pirates," said Hussien Hagi Ahmed, the Somali consulate in Aden. He said he thought most of the international forces came to the area to protect their illegal fishing operations, not to stop piracy. He also said that mistreatment of fishermen by international forces has made Somalis increasingly sympathetic to pirates.

Hagi also said 90 percent of the fish captured in Somali waters are taken by illegal international fishing boats. For example last month, he said, 35 Spanish fishing boats were sent to Somali waters under the guise of fighting piracy.

In a speech last month, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, the prime minister of Somalia, said illegal fishing has forced once-successful fishermen to turn to piracy, just to make a living, according to the Associated Press. "We estimate that the value of the fish being taken from our waters is perhaps hundreds of millions of dollars," he said.

Illegal dumping of toxic waste off Somalia's coast has exacerbated the problem, according to Ahmedou Ould Abdallah, who

led a UN mission to Somalia last year, according to Agence France Presse. And as illegal fishing companies pay local war lords for protection from pirates, Somalia is sinking deeper into conflict. As a result, people are becoming increasingly desperate, and pirate attacks continue to increase.

"It is a disaster off the Somali coast, a disaster [for] the Somali environment, the Somali population," he told AFP.

But according to Mody the constant instability in Somalia is the driving force behind the growing piracy industry. Illegal fishing may have driven some fishermen to become pirates, he said, but now it is big business.

And Yemeni fishermen say the fight against piracy is also turning into a disaster for their businesses. The pirates make the waters dangerous, and force them to stay far from the coast of Somalia, where they used to catch tuna in abundance. According to fisherman Mahran Omayran, his tuna catch is now only a tiny fraction of what it was just a few years ago.

International forces are almost as threatening, he said. Helicopters hover above their boats, and sometimes fire randomly. They have boarded and searched his 10-meter boat and have even ordered him and his 4-person crew to take off their clothes.

"They don't differentiate between us and the real pirates," he said.



Traditional fishermen catch most of the fish in Yemen. They say pirates, and the international forces sent to fight the pirates, have reduced their incomes as much as 50 percent.

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Houthis face heavy ground, aerial shelling

By: Mohammed Bin Sallam

SA'ADA, Nov. 18 — Yemeni and Saudi forces continue their ground and aerial strikes against Houthi strongholds in the districts of Malahidh, Shada, Razih, Maqash, Hassana, and nearby villages. Houthis said that the Saudi army launches airstrikes and rockets while the Yemeni army fires mortar shelling and Katyusha missiles, plus intensive air raids on villages and farmlands stretching over 60km along the Yemeni-Saudi border. A Saudi official source said their troops used F-15 and Tornado jets, Apache fighters and heavy mortars in attacking Houthi hideouts.

Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz said on Monday that the kingdom's territory were cleared of Houthis, and clashes between Houthis and Saudi troops are taking place on Yemeni soil.

A Saudi military source confirmed

on Tuesday that Houthis use hit-and-run tactics in their confrontations with Saudi troops, pointing out that Houthi fighters resort to launching surprise assaults against military positions. "This situation put Saudi troops on full alert in order to thwart such surprise attacks," the Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper quoted the source as saying.

Alarabia.net reported that Houthis attacked military positions with Katyusha rockets and heavy mortars earlier this week, adding that other clashes between Saudi troops and Houthis took place at the border, particularly in areas overlooking Dukhan Mountain from the Saudi side. According to the Spokesperson for Yemeni Army Colonel Askar Zuail, fierce clashes are taking place in the Malahidh district after the army took over the Khazaen Mountain, north of the district.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali

Larijani expressed curiosity about operations by the Saudi army inside Yemeni territory, pointing out that the U.S. supports the Saudi operations.

Fatwa

Dozens of religious clerics in Saudi Arabia released a fatwa statement instigating people against Houthis for their standing clashes with the Kingdom at the Yemeni-Saudi border. Signed by 42 Saudi clerics, including Nasser Al-Omar, the statement called on all people of the kingdom to be on high alert toward what they called "Shia Expansion" and take necessary security measures to thwart Shia threats.

From his side, Mr. Mohammed Khatmi, a Tehran mosque preacher and a member of the Leadership Experts Council, condemned the fatwa made by Saudi clerics, saying that this fatwa is supported by Western intelligence organizations. During a program titled

"From Tehran" televised by the Al-Alam satellite channel on Tuesday, Khatmi said, "Those who made such a fatwa never dared issue statements condemning Israeli practices against the Palestinian people even once."

The Iranian official called on Muslim clerics to sit together through the pilgrimage season and denounce the Saudi fatwa that hurts Muslims, as well as to show the world that this fatwa contradicts the values of Islam and serves western and Zionist interests.

The Houthi group called on the Arab League to intervene, stopping the Saudi military operations against its members, and denying reports that they have relations with Iran. In a letter addressed to the Arab League Secretary-General Amro Mossa, the Houthis field leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi condemned the Saudi assaults against Yemen, asking that the Arab League to do its job in investigat-

ing roots of the crisis.

Houthis accused the Yemeni government of involving the Saudi army in a war against Yemeni people. "The Arab League should support the national dialogue in order to eradicate prejudices that Iran has a role in the Sa'ada fighting," Abdulmalik Al-Houthi said. "The Yemeni regime is responsible for fueling the fighting and direct involvement of Saudi forces in the war."

Humanitarian situation

Regional Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the Middle East and North Africa Sigrid Kaag, warned of miserable conditions to be faced by displaced as a result of ongoing clashes in Sa'ada governorate and neighboring areas.

She called on all parties to the conflict to protect children from violence, and help in securing a humanitarian corridor for access of aid agencies to

war-affected civilians. "Fighting has now spilled into Saudi Arabia, reportedly causing 240 villages to be evacuated and more than 50 schools to be closed," Kaag said in a statement.

The information came from UNICEF's contacts on the ground, a spokeswoman said in Geneva, giving no further details. UNICEF voiced deep concern at the escalation of the conflict in north Yemen, where the United Nations now says 175,000 people have been displaced by the fighting. More than 15,000 are staying in al-Mazraq camp in Hajjah province, the population of which has doubled in the past month, according to Kaag. "Deaths have been recorded among children in the camp as malnutrition, already a chronic problem in Yemen, is reaching alarming levels," she noted. "More than 600 children in the camp are being treated for severe acute malnutrition."

Parliament's Report Reveals Corruption in Energy

By: Mahmoud Assamiee

Sana'a, Nov. 18 — The parliament service committee's report has revealed that the interim solutions made by the government to solve problems of repeated power blackouts across the country do not fit the size of the problem. The report, issued on October 31, said these solutions included operating the power station (or Mareb 1), which will be operated by gas, do not even keep pace with constitutional expansion in the country which requires an increase of power, although the power shortage is not yet solved.

The service committee clarified in its report that mismanaging the projects and failure in implementing them remain the main reasons behind electric sector's deterioration, despite large sums of money the government allocates annually to this sector. The report reveals that the real output of the national electric network is 599.3 megawatts of energy, while they were designed to generate energy of 731 megawatt. The same applies to stations which are not included in the national electric network operating in Hadramout. The real output is 99.5 megawatt, while the designed output is 164.2 megawatt. According to specialized engineers, this means that electric stations in Yemen are deteriorating. These stations entered service in the early 1980s.

The report tackled the most important problems faced by power stations. These problems include expiring date of these stations, lack of regular maintenance, operating the stations for long periods without rest, and lack of financial allo-

cations to buy necessary equipment to conduct periodical maintenance to these stations.

Concerning the increase of repeated power blackouts, the report suggests that they increase demands of electricity, evolve of new projects, deny any new electric generating projects, and increase the burden on the national network by the percentage ranging from 9-12 yearly. According to the report, the 310 megawatt of energy added by the national network during the past six years was not enough to solve the increased demand, because it only covers 6.4 percent of the shortage estimated at 12 percent.

Mareb 2 project station canceled

Media reports say that the government has canceled a second great power project to generate electricity by gas from Mareb governorate called Mareb 2, because of the financial crisis. This project is the second one to be constructed in Mareb, a province which is rich in gas, and Yemen has recently started exporting gas from it via the Balhaf port in Shabwa.

The project output will be 400 megawatt, greater than that of Mareb 1, which was estimated at 341 megawatt. Sources close to the ministry of electricity told the Yemen Times that the government canceled this project because the companies bid for the project presented offers higher than the one put by the ministry of electricity.

The Ministry of Electricity cited USD 200 million as the expected cost to construct the project, and the companies provided offers of more than USD 250

million. But other sources added additional reasons that the ministry is still facing problems in operating Mareb 1 and that the project is (delayed and not canceled).

Power blackouts neither increase nor decrease

According to sources in Central Electric Control, engineers are carrying out tests to add 120 megawatt to the service from Mareb 1. They started with 50 megawatt added to the service last week, which is why blackouts reduced. Because the station is working on a double system—gas and diesel—this 120 megawatt will be operated by diesel until the gas problem is solved.

Last month, the Minister of Electricity and Energy Awadh Al-Suqatri stated that there are impurities in gas to be used as fuel, hindering operating Mareb 1. The operation was scheduled early last September.

Expected increase of electricity bill

There are circulations that the price of the electric bill will increase in the near future. These circulations are based on a meeting held on November 15 to officials from ministries of oil, electricity and finance.

According to Saba, the meeting discussed measures to reduce subsidies on oil derivatives, mainly diesel subsidies on electricity. According to the ministers of oil and finance, the government subsidies for oil derivatives reached last to USD 3.5 billion. Subsidies for the electric sector alone have reached USD 1.1 billion in for the same period.

Yemeni businesses benefit from the International Finance Corporation

By: Youssef Al-Radai
For the Yemen Times

SANA'A, Nov 13 — Established in Yemen in 2004, the Business Edge program of IFC [International Finance Corporation] is taking a leading role in widening Business opportunities for men and women by acquiring them with the needed business and management skills demanded in today's market.

According to an IFC report posted on their website, New Horizons, NIIT, SEEDS Education, the Chamber of Commerce & industry, CMT House and LanTech Institute are all companies part of the Business edge program provided by IFC. The business edge program is aimed at strengthening business skills and improving the business performance and competitiveness of individuals and firms.

"IFC's business Edge offers Yemenis access to business training that is vital to create an active private sector, especially for smaller businesses. By giving them the tools to grow, Yemen will see increased growth and job opportunities. Said IFC's Yemen country Manager, Raymond Conway.

As part of the Business Edge program, IFC concluded their 8th Training Of The Trainers [TOT] workshop in Yemen on November 11. Upon completing the five day course, 10 Trainers, three of whom were women, were awarded the TOT certificate, certifying



as Business Edge Trainers. As stated by the Project Coordinator of Business Edge, Wael A. Makki, These trainers will now be able to provide skill management training at small business and also establish their own business.

Dr. Nabil Al Hazmi, who is a Professor of marketing at Taiz University and also one of the ten awarded the TOT certificate said, "I will use the education which I have received from IFC's Business Edge program and apply it not only in my line of work, but also in my life. I have learned better communication skills and acquired new teaching methods which I can implement."

The Business Edge program in Yemen has trained over 7,000 individuals, 15 percent of whom were women. Today, the program of IFC is seeking to provide training for at least 15,000 more individuals in the next three years. In addition, the IFC also seeks to

advance its Business Edge program to more provident areas in Yemen.

With the financing of Britain's DFID [Department for International Development] and collaboration of the Yemeni government and private sectors, IFC and the Foreign Investment Advisory service [FIAS] will implement a three-year program which will finance numerous projects in Yemen. According to their website-www.ifc.org, this will be aimed at assisting IFC Advisory service efforts of addressing the obstacles which are pressing the private sector in Yemen's challenging market.

IFC is a member of the World Bank Group, its goal is to create a opportunity for people who seek to escape the harsh life of poverty in developing countries. The IFC believes that by supporting private sectors, mobilizing private capital and providing advisory, a sustainable economic growth will be fostered in these developing countries.

Yemen ranks worst at providing government information to journalists

By: Colin Peters

VIENNA, Nov. 16 — The International Press Institute carried out a research project earlier this year investigating the reaction of government and parliament press offices in 12 countries to journalists' requests for information.

"Accessing Governments" project showed that the governments of Turkey, Yemen and Kenya were the worst at providing simple information such as minister's salaries and number of proposed legislations to journalists, according to the results of an International Press Institute pilot project that surveyed reporters' requests for information.

In line with the current press freedom climate in the country, the Yemeni government performed predictably bad in the survey, returning no answers to any of the questions sent to them during the project timeframe, and therefore scoring zero points.

Yemen Times was IPI's Yemen local partner in this survey and the newspaper's researchers made telephone calls, sent faxes and made multiple prompts to the government offices that were the subject of the survey. However, they were greeted with unanswered telephones or unfulfilled promises to call back.

At times they were even blocked explicitly by governments officials, with one officer at Parliament telling them that, as they were a "national and international newspaper read in Yemen and abroad and will cause trouble," he could not give them the information to publish.

After 10 days of trying to get answers from the prime minister's office, the manager finally refused outright to answer any questions. The Parliament did eventually answer the Yemen Times, although after the survey period had elapsed, and partial answers were also eventually obtained from the Justice Ministry.

IPI attempted to contact the Yemeni government for a comment on these results, via the email contact point on its

Countries surveyed and their ranking		
Rank	Country	Total Points
1	Australia	120
2	Spain	115
3	Serbia	100
4	India	95
5	The Philippines	85
6	United Kingdom	75
7	United States	60
8	Russia	47.5
9	Argentina	40
12	Turkey	0
-	Yemen	0
-	Kenya	0

Parliament website. However, the email was blocked, apparently because IPI did not "have permission to access" the Parliament contact point on the server.

Yemen's score was zero although considering the reactions from government and parliament and procedures it scored 12th place, which is last, along with Turkey and Kenya.

IPI ranked the countries on a points-basis, measuring the government offices' response to each individual question. A satisfactory answer to any of the given questions was worth a maximum of 20 points, this value decreasing gradually as time elapsed, from 20 points to 10 if the answer took over three hours to arrive, from 10 to five points if the participating media received no answer within 24 hours, and from five points to 2.5 points if the answer arrived between 48 hours and the end of the working week.

The project was made possible by funding from former IPI board member Isma'ila Isa. Mr. Isa is the chief executive of New Africa Holdings Ltd. and publisher of The Democrat newspaper in Nigeria. Major media organizations - including the UK's Guardian, India's The Hindu and Australia's Seven Network - assisted IPI with the research.

The press offices for the heads of government, Justice Ministries and parliaments of Turkey, Yemen and Kenya were unable to provide journalists any information regarding matters such as ministers' salaries and expenses. Other countries where accessing government information is a concern, according to

the report, are Argentina and Russia, while both the United States and United Kingdom failed to break into the top half of the 12-country ranking.

"It is unacceptable that a government that is supposed to serve the interests of the people would refuse to provide important information to journalists, whose job it is to be the eyes, ears and voice of the masses," said IPI Deputy Director Alison Bethel. "Denying access to information is in essence a denial of the people's right to know and is a clear violation of human rights."

"We hope that the government bodies we investigated will take note of these results, and reform their systems where appropriate. Journalists must not be denied their fundamental right to information. Although the procedure employed in IPI's "Accessing Governments" pilot project means that the ranking can only be considered a comparative assessment of the government press offices' performance in the exact week of the survey, such 'spot checks' as the ones IPI conducted do offer an indication of the larger problems journalists face trying to access government information in the countries assessed."

It is also interesting to note that Parliament press offices, in many cases, outperformed the "smaller" government offices in their respective countries. A possible explanation for this is that Parliament information officers are more accustomed to dealing with information requests in a non-partisan manner; but whatever the case may be, the press bureaus at ministries should take note. Of particular concern here is Argentina, whose performance would have equaled the three countries mentioned above in poorness were it not for the availability on the internet of certain information about members of Parliament.

Japanese engineer still not released

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Nov 18 — An official source at the Embassy of Japan in Yemen told the Yemen Times that the Japanese engineer has not yet been freed from his abductors.

The engineer, who was identified as Takeo Mashimo, 63 years old, was reported in the press that he was released on Tuesday Nov 17, however the Embassy confirmed that he is still held with the abductors.

"The engineer was kidnapped on Sunday Nov 15 at 3:30 o'clock by armed men while he was going to visit a construction project. He is still being held," said Yama Chi, a Counselor at the Embassy of Japan in Sana'a.

The Embassy does not know anything about the abductors' demands and has not yet contacted them directly.

"We do not know what do the kidnappers want and the Yemeni government is negotiating with them," said Chi.

The construction project is a school that was funded and carried out by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in a village of Arhab district,

which is an area 25 kilometers north of Sana'a.

The tribal leaders' mediation from the district of Arhab with the kidnappers failed today to free the abducted man as kidnappers demanded a guarantor from a member of the local council or a tribal leader in the district to meet their demands.

Sources from the Ministry of Interior revealed to the local press that the kidnappers are demanding the Yemeni government to release one of their relatives who is being detained by the Yemeni Political Security Organization on accusations of belonging to Al-Qaeda.

The governor of Sana'a, Noman Duaid, stated that kidnappers are extorting the government to release one of the most dangerous wanted men, and the state will not surrender to their demands.

"The tribesmen pressure the state by kidnapping the Japanese engineer to free a dangerous man, yet we will not submit to their demands," stated Duaid.

Following the abduction, the mediators gave kidnappers a handwritten commitment to release their prisoner at

the Political Security Organization, but later abductors retracted the handwritten commitment asking for a personal guarantee from a member of the local council in the district or a tribal leader.

The abductors' prisoner at the Political Security Organization is called Hussein Abdullah Joob from the Zandan subdivision that belongs to the Arhab tribe, according to the News Yemen website. He was arrested four years ago when he came back from Iraq fighting with some religious groups against the American occupation.

He stayed one year in Syria, one year in Lebanon and two years in Iraq and was arrested while coming back from Iraq. Recently, Yemen witnessed many kidnapping incidents by tribesmen who often seek a ransom, a construction project, or releasing one of their family members in the state's prisons.

Last June, nine foreigners were kidnapped in Saada by anonymous group and three of them, Korean teacher with two Germans, were found dead. A German engineer, his wife, their three children and the Briton engineer are still missing.



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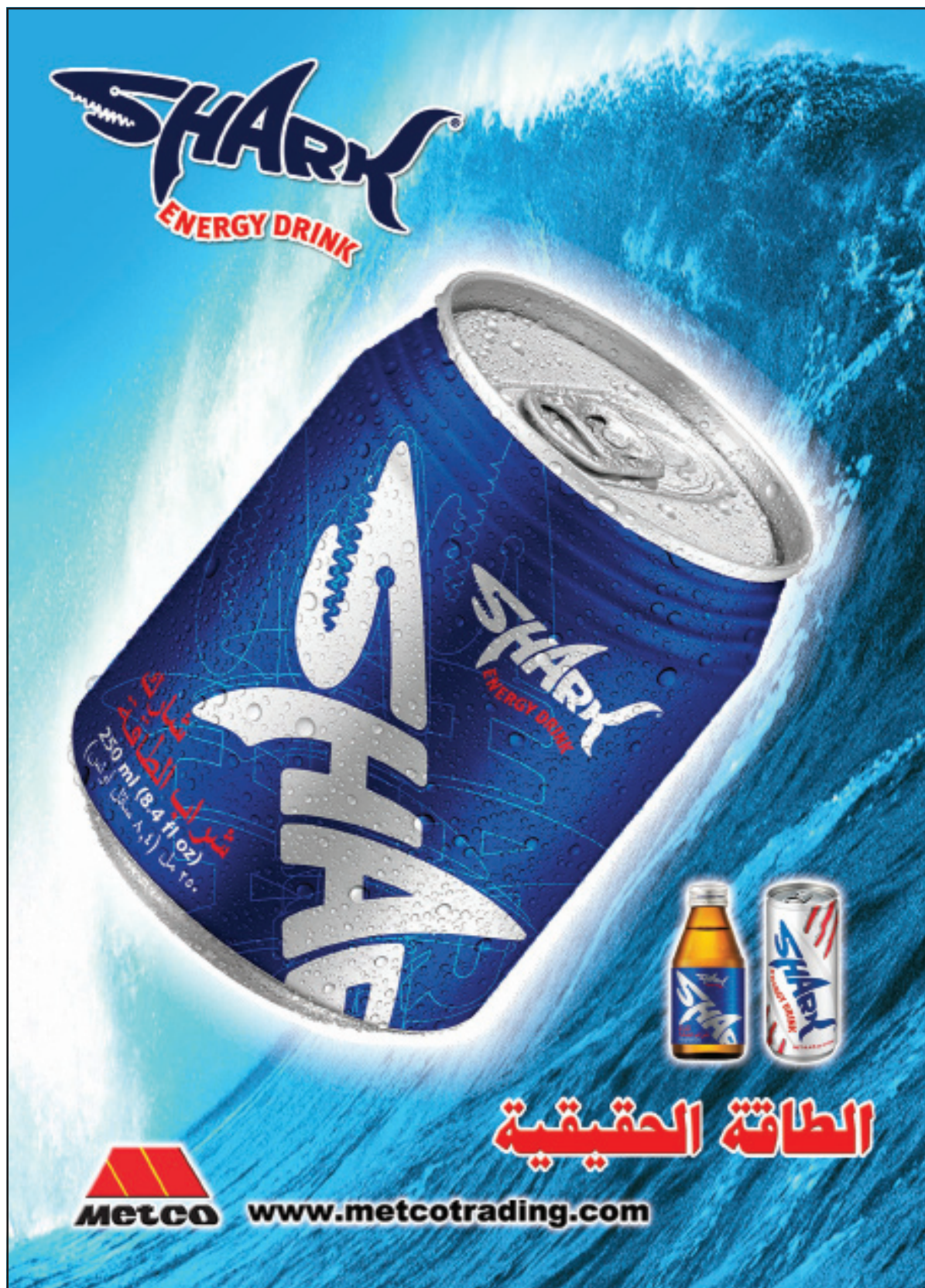
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Desperate refugee mothers risk the lives of their children to eke out living



These children are peering passersby from windows. They reached schooling age, but there single mother cannot afford school and she instead locks them in as she goes to work.

By: Mohamed F. Adam
For the Yemen times

Fairuz is an Ethiopian refugee living in Yemen, and like many other asylum seekers, she has been through more than her fair share of pain and tribulation.

She ran from war to find some peace for herself, her husband and her only two daughters. She survived the brutal hand of smugglers and pulled through rough seas, which took the life of her husband. Yemen was the only safe haven she could afford. But for Fairuz, as the old adage goes, all that glitters is not gold, and life becomes miserable in Yemen.

Upon Arrival to Sana'a, she had no one to rely on and was forced, like her peers, to lock her six-month old son and two-year-old daughter in her room and venture out to her cleaning job in order to bring back some food for her children and herself.

When she came back to her toddlers late in the afternoon on her first day of work, she found her younger son wrapped in a blanket. Sadly, young Abdirahman had already choked himself to death. The painful memories of the loss of her son still

haunt Fairuz, and she worries about providing for her two year-old daughter.

Locking children in rooms while tied to beds is becoming a growing trend among desperate refugee women struggling to put food on the table and raise their children.

According to the Somali refugee committee chairman, Mr. Mohamed Abdi Gabobe, Increasingly unforgiving living conditions force many refugee men to abandon their children and wives. This leaves the women to single handedly shoulder the burden of raising their children. "The number of single mothers is increasing, and will continue to swell as long as joblessness and lack of working skills persists among the urban refugees," Says Mr. Gabobe.

Muno, 40, is a mother of four, and her husband left her when she was two months pregnant with her youngest son, who is now two-years old. She says she hawks anything from toiletries to incense, and raised her children by locking them in while she was away. "My children are the only hope in my life," she reckons, as her children grab with gusto the food leftovers she brought after a long day of work. "My job pays pittance. I make

US\$50 in a good month, and I pay a room rent of US\$40," she says, passing a neem stick toothbrush to her eldest son Abdirizak, who is eight years old. "The majority of my neighbors are refugee mothers abandoned by their husbands, and they are also all struggling to make a living," She adds.

However, married women's children do not stand a better chance. Many refugee mothers interviewed for this story, say they go back to work before they even recover from the rigors of labor pain and pregnancy. Men go out to their car washing job while the children, some as young as three days old, are locked in the houses. "It is time refugee women should lead a life with out men," Says Maryan, 35, who says she went back to work three days after giving birth to her three children and now raises her children alone when her husband disappeared one day never to return or communicate again for three years now.

According to the U.N., developing nations like Yemen host 80% of the world's 15.2 million refugees, nearly 20% of whom are categorized as urban refugees. Unlike refugees living in established camps, who are provided with food, shelter, medical services, and education, urban refugees live in cities and making ends meet is often challenging.

Child abuse

Children locked in their rooms are prone to being abused. Halimo from Ethiopia had her daughter, Zamzam, 12, sexually assaulted. "I locked my daughter in our room and when I came back from work, I saw my daughter weeping and huddled in a corner," relates Halima. The alleged rapist is believed to have broken into the room where Zamzam was locked in. Halima says she reported the case to the police, but could not follow it up. "I have to work for the food and the rent. I am powerless to seek justice for my daughter, but God will punish him one day," Says Halima, tears welling up in her eyes.

According to Mr. Mohamed Abdi gabobe of the Somali refugee committee, there are several cases of child molestation that often go unreported. "Refugee mothers barely report child abuse to concerned authorities," asserts Mr. Gabobe.

Physiological disorders

Refugee elders say, apart from other risks, they are worried about the physiological disorders children develop due to isolation. "Locking children in houses amounts to locking them way on their own, and the children will find it impossible to develop normal relationships with people.

They will find hard to adjust to the reality of life outside the house where they are locked in," Observed Mr.



These children's mother has just arrived from work and she is doing the household chores before she unties her children.



أرض حمير للتجارة
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Gabobe of the Somali refugee Communication Committee, adding: "Refugees are raising a socially lost generation inside the medieval houses of Yemen"

Lack of education

Schools permit enrollment of refugees, but due to financial hurdles, refugee parents can hardly afford the transportation, uniforms, and books. According to the Somali committee chairman, a great number of the children who are locked in their houses while their parents are away at work have reached the schooling age. "Schooling is a luxury among the refugees," Says Mr. Gabobe.

Female refugees in Sana'a often get jobs as domestic workers, and some hawk household goods in residential areas, and are more likely to get jobs than their male counterparts. Men work as car washers, which is often hard to find thanks to the negative stereotypes of thievery associated with refugee car washers. However, due to rising inflation and overcrowding in the cleaning job markets, refugee mothers find themselves between a rock and a hard place as their chil-

dren cry for food when their meager salaries hardly meet the basic needs. Thus, many refugee mothers say they

are forced to jeopardize the life of their children in order to eke out a rudimentary living.

Mohamed Abdirabo,8, is mentally disabled and he is locked in with his younger brother Mahad Abdirabo,6, who pokes fun at him. Locking children in isolation may lead to psychological disorders

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SA'ADA THOUGHTS

Sa'ada Thoughts is a series of reflections on life and people in Sa'ada from an independent perspective, written by a nurse from the Philippines who had been working in Sa'ada for two years. He could be reached at levy9ph2000@yahoo.com.

Two days before Eid

During the early hours, after the sun rose from its deep slumber, most of us in the compound woke up from episodes of gun firing, and cannon and missile launching. For more than a month, this on and off session has become everyone's routine. At first it was scary. Now it has become dull. A few days ago, the water supply from the female's quarters was stopped for a moment because there was a leak and the maintenance has to fix it. They saw a bullet embedded in the pipe. Everyone was ecstatic about the news. This time it wasn't just a tall-tale to scare us all off our feet. It wasn't something people can retell in different versions. Although there were indirect witnesses to this incident, like a colleague of mine who heard a loud thump before their water supply got cut off or that night before they saw an ember in one of the trees near their quarters. This time they have evidence. I saw it with my own eyes; a bullet from a particular kind of gun.

After this incident where they got a "real" bullet in their hands, news of a memo to stop people from sitting under the blanket of stars during the night was spreading. Since our internet got cut off for almost two weeks and our telephone lines have a mind of its own – turning on and off as it wills – most of the employees in the hospital decided to stay in the grounds of the compound to spend their time with friends and family; under our imagined invisible shield, we continue to go against other people's advice to keep us from thinking dark thoughts. Staying in your room doesn't sound therapeutic. When I am in my room, dark thoughts are pervading my mind. I am better preoccupied with my writing and reading than be left without something to do. During times when I feel so down, I have to turn to my friends to keep up that smiley face and peace of mind. I am not starting to become delirious. Sometimes being in a place like this makes you want to jump off a cliff. Then I will have regrets of doing it because instead of making a wise decision of ending my life, I made a fool of myself after I survive the fall with broken bones; making more burdens to my family and the company.

It is Thursday. Two days before the celebration of Eid, the military are intensifying their operations. They started shooting and firing since 6 in the morning. I don't know when is this going to stop. I am sure the 10 days holiday would be a treat for both parties. And the feud between this two will continue after the 10 days break. If they decided to stop, the patients who weren't able to come for their appointments will surely fill the Out-Patient and Emergency Room Department. Those sickly people who weren't able to pass the checkpoints will arrive in the hospital dying, in their last breath or dead. For the past two years, this is the only Ramadan where I have witnessed the war. Last year, they decided to stop to give way to the holy month. This year, Sa'ada is a war zone whether it is Ramadan, Eid or just another ordinary day. Blood is spilled in Sa'ada everyday. There are lean days but when they arrive most of them are critical. There are days when they come in masses but their wounds are so tiny some of the military personnel don't deserve to be given a certificate. The general practitioners and nurses are pressured to do so. Even if the wound is small, some of the soldiers would cringe with pain on the floor just to get what they want; attention. Some of them are psychologically incapable of handling the tension in the war zone, they would sometimes come running from the gate with their fellow soldier on top of the stretcher acting possessed; "psychic" as what most of our doctors would describe these cases.

3 Hours after Eid Mubarak

My friends and I don't know about the true meaning of Eid al-Ifar. We all know we have to greet our Muslim co-employees and doctors with Eid Mubarak during this special day and that's enough. They never explained why they celebrate the breaking of the fast. Although I can remember I would ask them about it. Until now, when I am about to pack my bags and finally say goodbye to Yemen, I have yet to get the answers to my questions. It has remained a mystery and I guess it will remain to be unless somebody out there gives me an answer. The books my Muslim friends gave me were about how to pray and the origin of Islam. It mentioned about the celebrations but I have yet to read a line or two that would give me the correct translation from Arabic or the exact reason why they celebrate this

special day or days. After my shift ended, my colleagues and I went out of ER together with a doctor from Palestine. It was an opportunity to ask so I gave it a shot. I don't know if he was joking but he told me Eid depends on the moon. If the helal or crescent shows up tonight, at 8 pm, Al Jazeera will mention when it will be celebrated even if it doesn't show up in Yemen or in other Muslim countries; he also added, there are astronomers or scholars who use a special telescope to see to it their prediction is right. If they won't see the crescent, Ramadan will extend and the next day will be another opportunity for them to check the skies for any sign. I am lucky to have heard this story from him because my friends and I planned to prepare dinner at the poolside. Around 7:30 pm, my friends and I met. I cooked chicken bathed in lemon, a dash of salt and pepper with little bit of dried red chili for the kick – I had to use lemon because one of my friends doesn't want to eat anything with vinegar so I had to adjust how I cook to how she tastes my preparations. It was a fine Friday night dinner. We all had a good laugh with each others jokes and we waited for the moon to come up. The whole night we waited for the "sign". We might not have noticed but I guess it did rise but we were on the middle of one of our joke sessions and the crescent decided to hide again. He all had crazy nights together because I am about to leave. For how many days we stayed late to talk gibberish and keep each others company – cherishing our remaining days together; complete.

We were all tired and we have to sleep. I slept at 2 am because I transferred some files to my friend's flash disk; we all have our memory sticks with us and my camera has witnessed most of our gatherings. It was time to share those moments with them. It was also my farewell gift to my friends. I still have a few CD's on my desk; some of our co-workers in the hospital left me this CD's for file transfer. They were with me during the parties or I was there when they invited me during their birthday celebrations. They ask me a favor to burn them the files as a remembrance – my camera was always invited; sometimes I feel my camera was more of a celebrity because it took shots of people but it can barely take my photo when I need or want to have my picture taken.

Around 3:26 am, loud explosions arouse me from my sleep. I barely had an hour of sleep since I kept my laptop on and listened to a new play list of Arabic and Indian party music – this was a gift from an Egyptian and Indian friend whom I both asked favor to collect this kind of music for my own birthday party last September 15. A strong force slapped me in the face, although it was only air and dust because our window was side open and our electric fan wasn't working. I felt the impact of the explosions outside. I stepped out of my bed and went outside to see if there were onlookers; but, there weren't anyone. I tried to check upstairs and I saw another Filipino peering out of the window. I came beside him and asked if the explosions have been going on for a long time. He told me it has been 10 minutes since it started. I looked out of the window wishing to see something but there weren't anything to look at. I saw flashes of light and it was all I can appreciate of the battle that woke me up.

Now, it has almost been an hour since they started. I don't know when they are going to stop but I know I need to sleep. I am afraid something bad will happen today. There are only two of us on duty during the night shift and a lot of patients might come in and we won't be able to manage them. Today is also "that special day" when the Governor visits the hospital during Eid. Do you think his visit would push through beside the fact there might be a lot of patients from this battle? Or this might help his image as a politician because he came to their help? I don't know if he is coming with a camera crew. My schedule during the past two years didn't meet his. Every time I was on duty, they would leave bags of goodies for us; to make sure we will all have a great time and spend a few seconds munching on those caramel bars or chocolate coated wafers with nuts. I met him when he got sick. I was taken together with a doctor to his house. I thought he was bedridden or had a debilitating disease; he only had a sore throat.

The early call for prayer came. It's 4:36 am. I need to sleep. I might write something I do not wish to be published. I hope to get a restful sleep. I am quite tired listening for explosions.

By: Gregory D Johnsen

Last week, the sporadic five-year long war between the Yemeni government and Houthi fighters in the country's north finally spilled over the border into Saudi Arabia. The conflict has been steadily escalating since the Yemeni government resumed fighting in August after more than a year of fragile calm. Leaving no doubt as to its intentions, the government calls the present campaign "Operation Scorched Earth": the fighting has already produced thousands of internal refugees and spread outward from the northern governorate of Sadaa, where the Houthi rebels are based.

Like much of the conflict, the clashes that began on November 4 are clouded by conflicting and contradictory reports. The Houthis claim that they were responding to repeated strikes by the Yemeni military, which was using Saudi territory as a rear base to launch flanking manoeuvres into Sadaa. Saudi Arabia contends that it was responding to incursions by the Yemeni rebels, and both sides insist that the other fired the first shots.

But whatever the sequence of events, the skirmishes mark a major escalation in the messy and murky guerrilla war that has only become more intense – and drawn in an increasing number of players – since its start in 2004. The Saudis deployed troops to their southern border, where they launched air and ground assaults on pockets of Houthi fighters, purportedly to drive them back into Yemen. The intervention was meant to be a limited one – and the Saudis claim they only attacked positions on their side of the border – but it is doubtful, having joined the fray, that they will be able to extricate themselves easily.

The tangled roots of the conflict extend deep into Yemen's contemporary history. The rebel group is known as the Houthis after their first military commander, Husayn Badr al Din al Houthi, who was killed by the government in September 2004 during the first round of fighting. Al Houthi, a former member of parliament, was from a prominent scholarly family from the market city of al Houth, on the main road between Sanaa and Sadaa.

The Houthi family, like much of northern Yemen, is Zaidi – a sect of Shiism, but one far removed from the twelfth Shiism practised in Iran. Many scholars of Yemen, in fact, refer to Zaidism as the "fifth school" of Sunni Islam, and in Yemen there has traditionally been little conflict between Zaidis and other Sunnis.

The Zaidis have a long and robust political tradition in Yemen, dating back to 893 when Yahya bin Husayn first arrived in northern Yemen. The political and religious office that he instituted there would survive, in various forms, until the 1962 revolution and the subsequent eight-year civil war, which brought an end to more than 1,000 years of the imamate. Sadaa was the last region to capitulate to republican forces and many claim that it is still paying a price for its loyalty.

President Ali Abdullah Salih and numerous other leading figures of contemporary Yemen are of Zaidi origin. But this identity is one of culture and tradition rather than

The sixth war

political allegiance. The distinction that has emerged is between Hashimis – descendants of the Prophet – and non-Hashimis. In post-revolutionary Yemen, the Hashimis, who made up Yemen's ruling class, have largely been kept from power, and many claim to have been the victims of active discrimination.

As a non-Hashimi Zaidi, Salih would be ineligible to rule if the country still adhered to Zaidi law. In a country where recent economic and political difficulties have helped to spark an almost ahistorical nostalgia for the imamate, this helps to explain his sensitivity to a rebellion cloaked in religious rhetoric.

To describe the conflict, the Houthis have used some of these religious idioms, particularly the loaded term khuruj, which in the Zaidi context refers to an uprising against an unjust ruler. But the roots of the rebellion are not exclusively religious: this is more a case of theology put in the service of politics.

Salih has long favoured a divide-and-rule approach to governing, playing different factions off one another. In Sadaa, the government has long supported Wahhabi-like Salafi groups – and encouraged the Saudis to fund them – as a counter to the more entrenched Zaidi power base in the region. Throughout the 1990s the two sides clashed repeatedly, as Salafis destroyed Zaidi tombs and attempted to convert Zaidi youth. The Zaidis responded by publishing a series of theological texts designed to shore up local support; at the same time they formed a youth organisation that combined religious teaching with military training.

The Houthis see themselves as defenders of a community under attack and in danger of cultural eradication, facing a two-pronged threat from the alliance between the government and local Salafis. But despite the religious rhetoric on all sides, the Houthis are primarily a group driven by the local politics of Sadaa. Among their complaints is what they characterise as a deliberate neglect from the government: they allege the regime in Sanaa has studiously ignored the needs of Sadaa, thumbing its nose at the traditional seat of Zaidi power as a way of letting the Hashimis know that they no longer rule Yemen.

In 2004, after more than 20 years of periodic clashes between paramilitary forces, the conflict lurched into open warfare, sparked by the government's attempt to arrest Husayn al Houthi in June of that year. The first round of fighting lasted until his death that September.

Since then there have been five more rounds of fighting, and the protracted nature of the war has produced multiplying justifications for its continuation. The conflict has now spread well beyond the core group of Zaidi and Hashimi purists who initially supported Husayn al Houthi in 2004, and it now includes many tribesmen in Sadaa and neighboring governorates who have been rallied to the Houthi cause in response to the harsh reprisals of government forces and the destruction of homes and crops in the area.

Much of this destruction was presumably unintentional, but government shelling throughout the war has often been indiscriminate. This means that what was

once a three-party conflict – between the government, its Salafi allies and the Houthis – has become much more complex. Now, tribesmen and other groups have been brought into the fighting on both sides. Many of those backing the Houthis are doing so not out of any adherence to Zaidi theology or doctrine: after six rounds of fighting, the government's various military campaigns have only created more enemies.

In July 2008, President Salih announced a unilateral cease-fire. This held until August, when the government launched "Operation Scorched Earth" in an attempt to finally defeat the rebels, who are now under the leadership of Husayn's younger brother, Abd al Malik al Houthi. The latest fighting was sparked, at least in part, by the government's concern that its previous failures to put down the Sadaa rebellion were emboldening secessionist elements in the country's south. This desire to strike a decisive knockout blow has led to some of the fiercest combat to date, with the government launching daily bombing raids on suspected Houthi targets.

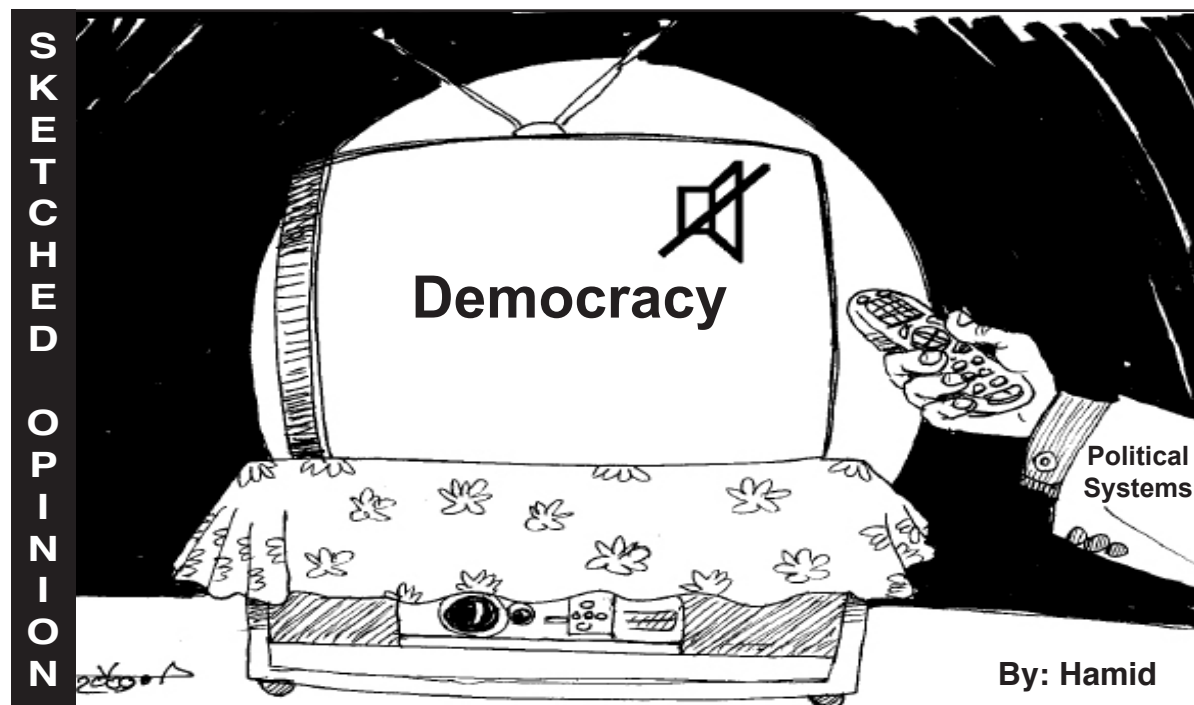
Outside commentators have begun to describe the conflict as a proxy war that pits Iran against Saudi Arabia, and the Yemeni government has alleged that the Houthis are supported by Shiites throughout the region, including Iran and Hezbollah. But at the same time, the government has attempted to link the Houthis to both al Qa'eda and to the southern secessionists in Yemen, as if all the threats to the state were in league with one another.

Part of the problem is that the Yemeni government has learned that in order to attract the attention (and aid) of the international community, it must link its domestic problems to larger regional or American security concerns. To this end, Yemen has deliberately confused Houthi supporters with al Qa'eda, blurring the lines between the two groups by including members of both on a single list of wanted terrorists. This tactic, it believes, will allow it to pursue the war against the Houthis under the guise of striking at al-Qa'eda.

It has also attempted to tap into Saudi fears of a rising Shiite threat on its southern border, playing up the Houthis' alleged international connections as well as obfuscating the traditional differences between Zaidism and twelfth Shi'ism. But it has yet to provide any firm evidence of direct Iranian support. Instead, the war in Sadaa – a local rather than regional struggle – is rapidly becoming just one more rhetorical stick for Iran and Saudi Arabia to beat each other with.

After five years of fighting, it is clear that there is no military solution; even the involvement of Saudi Arabia will prolong, rather than end, the war. Already its influence has significantly altered the complexion of the conflict: the spectre of foreign intervention will only draw more and more local actors into the fighting. A final and decisive settlement to the war now seems further away than ever.

Gregory D Johnsen is a PhD candidate in Near Eastern studies at Princeton and one of the authors of *Waq al-Waq*, a blog on Yemeni affairs. This article was published in *The National* on Nov. 12, 2009.



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Marwa killer gets life: Egypt, Arab World and Germany look for peace

After nearly four and a half months, the Marwa el-Sherbini saga has come to a conclusion of sorts after a German court sentenced the man who stabbed the "veiled martyr" 17 times inside the court in July to life in prison without possibility of early release. Egyptians, Arabs and Germans alike have welcomed the verdict and hope Europe and the Middle East can begin to heal the wounds of the killing and move "toward a better future."

By: Joseph Mayton - Bikya Masr

For many, it is time to move on and look to the future. Speaking via telephone from Berlin, German journalist Henrich Egger told Bikya Masr that he believes justice was served to a man who "employed more racism than the overwhelming majority of Germans."

"We are all pleased to see this man go to prison for the rest of his life, but it won't be the end if we Germans and Egyptians cannot begin to understand how to deal better with our differences," the journalist said.

Back in Cairo, Dalia Yussif, a 35-year-old mother of two, believes Alex Wiens, the murderer, should have gotten the death penalty, but "the life sentence will let him suffer more, maybe. We know that not all Germans are racists and that many of them are our friends. It is just disappointing that this kind of discussion had to have Marwa die before we talked openly about the cultural

struggle between Europe and us."

Wiens had confessed to killing the woman, who has been dubbed the "veiled martyr" by Arabic media.

"It is true that I am hostile to foreigners but that was not the motive," Wiens said in a statement read by one of his lawyers on November 4.

Prosecutors, including an Egyptian delegation from Cairo's Lawyers Syndicate, had said that the man was driven "by a pronounced hatred of non-Europeans and Muslims."

Sherbini was killed only minutes after winning a court case against the man for defaming her after he had called her a "terrorist" and demanded she return home on a Dresden playground.

The murder stimulated a cultural battle between Europe and the Arab world, with a number of Arabs claiming the murder was part of a larger problem facing European society, namely, racism and hatred of Muslims and Arabs.

"We have seen that Europe is growing more and more conservative by the day, so the killing was a shocking

example of what some people will do in order to try to make us go back to where they think we come from," said 27-year-old German-born Hana Jabar. The Tunisian-German artist, who has lived her entire life in Berlin, says that there are undercurrents within society that are very hateful toward Arabs.

"They don't realize that there are Christian Arabs, that many of us were born here and are German citizens. They fear what they don't know," she added.

For el-Sherbini's family, the tragic loss of their daughter led to a campaign against all things German. In Alexandria, local pharmacy's called for a boycott of German products, but the movement drizzled out with little success. However, they did manage to get the Egyptian culture ministry to cancel two performances by the Dresden Symphony Orchestra.

In Europe, experts were quick to point to Egypt's own problems with racism, arguing that they had no place to talk of Europeans failings while Africans and black people are "treated with such disregard it is appalling," as one Geneva-based intellectual told Bikya Masr last summer.

But some Germans said that the cause behind the murder were well-founded within German, and European society. One student, who had traveled throughout the Middle East, said that it "is common in German press to downplay the existing racist and neo-fascist activities."



One of the main factors that caused much angst among Egyptians and Arabs was the international media's apparent lack of attention given to the murder. It was not until the anti-German chants began at the Alexandria protest days after the killing that major news networks began following the story. By then, it was too late, with Egyptians demanding a reason for what they called the "double standards" of Western news.

"If it had been a Christian white woman killed in an Egyptian courtroom, it would have been the lead story, then there would have been a discussion of how the Middle East hates America and the West, but in this case, there was nothing until a few Egyptians chanted against Germany," said one Egyptian activist at the time, who was participating in the protests at German government buildings in Egypt.

In the end, the back and forth war of words died down and the German judicial system took charge of the case, which left the vast majority of Arabs at ease, but the cultural friction created by the murder continues still, as media have once again put Marwa's picture back in the limelight.

Bikya Masr was the first English language publication to report Marwa's murder in July.

Marrakesh Elects Its First Woman Mayor Equal Rights and a Change of Generation

Last summer saw the election of the 33-year-old Fatima Azzahra al-Mansouri as the first woman mayor of the city of Marrakesh in the south of Morocco. As Alfred Hackensberger reports, she won the vote in spite of the warnings of conservative politicians

"The election of a woman as mayor of Marrakesh is a positive sign for me," says Saida El Farah, who is a senior manager in a Moroccan company. "It shows that women can make it right to the top in politics!"

It's not so easy for women with political ambitions in Morocco. Male party officials, mostly from prominent or wealthy families, are the ones who determine what happens in the political world and who wins nominations.

"Even in the parties which have existed for a long time," says Fatna Lakhail, who sits for the Mouvement Populaire in the Moroccan parliament, "women are looked down on."

Career and family

Fatima al-Mansouri is young, open-minded, educated and successful. She doesn't fit into the clichés of orthodox Muslim society, in which women wear headscarves and stay at home with the children.

A French-trained lawyer, she knows how to combine career and family. Following her studies, she set up her own legal practice specialising in property

and commercial contract law.

But her new position, as mayor of a city with 1.6 million visitors from throughout the world every year, demands much more responsibility and far more time than her legal practice.

The image of a modern Morocco

For Sheikh Muhammed Biyadillah, secretary-general of the Party for Authenticity and Modernity (PAM), her election reflects the "image of a modern Morocco". It was his party which nominated al-Mansouri as a candidate.



Mansouri's election victory marks a change of generation and, at the same time, a step towards gender equality in a society traditionally dominated by men.

But it wasn't as easy to get her elected as the PAM secretary-general would like to make it appear. The PAM is the second largest party in the council and had to negotiate intensively behind the scenes with its coalition partners before Mansouri could be assured of election.

Her opponents accused her of "lack of experience in public institutions and

in management." And indeed, she had virtually no political experience.

One local politician who prefers to remain anonymous says, "There was obviously influence used. The PAM is trying to give itself a new, youthful image, and it will have used its influence all the way up to the king."

An allusion to the former interior minister, Fouad Ali al-Himma, who's a friend of King Mohammed VI and who founded the PAM in 2008 as a counterweight to Islamist political groups.

The local elections of last June were the party's first test, from which it emerged the winner, with 27 percent of the country's council seats.

The existing parties accused the authorities of having supported the PAM actively. "The party used every possible method to push itself through," says Ismail Aloui, secretary-general of the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS). "They put up candidates who had no political scruples."

Votes for sale

There were complaints about the local elections on the day of the poll even before the polling stations

had closed. Some 900 complaints about unfair competition were submitted: votes, it was alleged, were being bought with "dirty money" – especially the votes of the lower social classes. Between 100 and 1,000 dirham (between 10 and 100 euros) was paid for each vote. This is not an unusual procedure in Morocco.

"I see who pays best," says Mounir, a taxi-driver in Tangier. And his brother in Rabat says he does exactly the same: "It's a useful bit of income on the side," he says, and he adds with a smile, "It's just a shame that elections aren't more frequent."

There are other ways of making money from elections. Butchers or grocers offer their shop fronts for advertisements to the politician who offers most.

Mayor for three weeks

In Marrakesh on July 13th, the administrative court declared the results of

the vote in the Menara constitutions invalid, after a candidate for the opposition party Front des Forces Démocratiques submitted a complaint.

As a result al-Mansouri's election was also declared invalid. She had been mayor for just three weeks. A new election would have to be held to fill the now-vacant post.

The situation is being blamed on Mounir Chraïbi, governor of the Marrakesh-Tensift-El Haouz region. He also wanted to convince al-Mansouri to give up some of her responsibilities as mayor, such as that for housing construction.

But she responds, "I couldn't accept that point. He was pushing too hard, especially in respect of my giving up responsibilities."

A week later, Mounir Chraïbi was dismissed by the interior ministry. In a statement, the ministry said it had observed "serious dysfunction" in his administration.

The opposition parties, including the Islamist Parti de la Justice et du Développement (PJD), expressed surprise at the mood, and suggested that their competitors in the PAM had once more brought their royal contacts into play. "There are some people who are just lucky, and who always find their way through," said Lahcen Daoudi, deputy chairman of the PJD.

Women have to offer more proof

By now, Fatima al-Mansouri has probably got used to the speculation and the scepticism of her opponents.



Fatima al-Mansouri wants to fight poverty in Marrakesh and make the city and its sights, such as the Djamaa el Fna market, more attractive for tourists and visitors

Initially, she may well have been surprised by the significance which was being attached to the election of the first woman mayor of the city. There was never any such fuss over



Fatima Azzahra al-Mansouri was elected mayor by a majority of 54 to 35 in the Marrakesh city council. Her election brought to an end 12 years of rule by the conservative city baron Omar Jazouli

Asmae Chaabi, who was elected mayor of Essaouira on the Atlantic coast in 2003, and was the first woman mayor in Morocco.

After all the controversy over her, al-Mansouri will scarcely be surprised by any future developments. She's now back in office, after the appeal court in Marrakesh reversed the administrative court ruling. The supreme court will shortly make a final decision.

But it is regarded as unlikely that al-Mansouri will lose her office once again. After she returned to the position, al-Mansouri said, "Women are used to having to prove themselves particularly intensively."

Fight against poverty

Now she has to prove herself again and achieve the ambitious aims she has announced. "If we want to remain an attractive city in spite of the international crisis," she says, "we have to improve the conditions of the people in Marrakesh. It is unacceptable

that a city which is undergoing such an economic boom should be suffering from such a social inequality."

But it's still unclear how she intends to bring about such long-term changes. The tourist numbers in Marrakesh as in other tourist destinations have fallen sharply this year.

It's doubtful whether a new autumn campaign in Europe really will "promote Marrakesh as a tourist destination and increase demand" – as the Moroccan tourism minister, Mohamed Boussaid, imagines – especially in the current economic climate.

These are unfavourable conditions for Fatima al-Mansouri and her plans, which need plenty of money. She will make herself no friends if she takes millions from her tight budget to improve the infrastructure for those who live in corrugated iron huts. And she'll make even fewer friends if she tries to do anything about the city's widespread corruption.



King Mohammed VI is seen as committed supporter of women's rights

Farmers need infrastructure and incentives

have resorted to taking Yemeni coffee plants abroad, growing it there, and selling it again with little change to our country," he said.

Although the cultivation of coffee was linked to Yemen historically, it has now become threatened by qat.

"Farmers are going to focus on qat cultivation since it brings more money to them than other products, and farmers first and foremost care about their own income, not about what that means for the country," he said.

To encourage farmers to grow coffee, they should be provided with incentives.

"The project of the EOF should give farmers incentives to change from qat cultivation to coffee and horticulture," he said.

To make the Yemeni agricultural products competitive in the world market, the expert suggested improving the micro-industry in the country.

"Why not improve our micro-industries? Micro-industry means the commodity should be prepared well, should be selected well, and should be certified well, and then sold competitively," he suggested.

Although the program was entitled Economic Opportunities, many things were missing from the program as it only included coffee and honey in its business plan.

Domestic produce of livestock does not meet the local demand and Yemen imports sheep, cattle and goats from the Horn of Africa. Domestic livestock, including cows, sheep, goats and camels only reached 18,863 heads in 2007, according to the National Information Centre. However, the livestock was not introduced in the program as an economic opportunity.

Moreover, cultivation of dates, grown in Lahj, Hadramout, Shabwa, Mahra and Tehama region, was not mentioned as an economic opportunity.

Yemen is ranked third among Arab countries in import of dates, with around 31 thousand tons imported every year, according to an online study by Dr. Abdullah Wahbi, published in 2008 in the Al-Marefa (knowledge) Saudi Arabia magazine.

In addition to that, some mountainous governorates which were famous of coffee cultivation but have now turned to qat cultivation, such as Mahwit and Hajja, were not included.

Also, the mechanism for distributing funds to the targeted areas was not revealed, nor was the program timeline.

During the workshop, a presentation about the current situation of coffee cultivation and marketing in Yemen was presented by the engineer Sameer Al-Otmi.

The cultivation of coffee is a strategic crop for the country, as Yemen is the

origin of coffee, according to Al-Otmi.

However, in the recent decade the coffee crop in Yemen deteriorated due to many factors, mainly the climate change in the production areas, the inland migration from the countryside to the urban areas and farmers switching from the coffee cultivation to qat, as qat is fast and lucrative, according to Al-Otmi.

"The drought, poor exporting, the absence of marketing policy and the qat crop are the direct reasons of the

coffee crop deterioration," he said.

The total agricultural area in Yemen is around one million and half hectares and the coffee crop only has two percent of the total area, whereas qat cultivation area is about ten percent, according to the engineer.

The global production of coffee is 400 to 2240 kg solid coffee per one hectare, but the Yemeni produce of coffee is low as it is just 350 to 800 kg per one hectare, according to Al-Otmi.

Yemen ranks the sixth in Asia of

coffee production and the 46th among 60 countries globally.

"What makes the production of coffee in Yemen very low also is that the current coffee cultivation farmers are less experience that their fathers," Al-Otmi said.

"The Yemeni coffee is excellent among other coffee in the world and it is reputable around the world with its good flavour, but it is threatened and not available strategy to maintain it," he added.

YT Photo Archive

Investing in high value commodities such as honey and coffee will help farmers in rural areas to overcome poverty.

By: Ali Saeed

In order to encourage Yemeni farmers in rural areas to switch from the cultivation of qat to the cultivation of other cash crops such as coffee and produce honey, they must be provided with infrastructure and incentives, according to agricultural researchers.

This finding came following the launch of the Economic Opportunities Fund (EOF) that was organized by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) with the collaboration of the French Development Agency (AFD) and Islamic Development Fund (ISD) on Sunday, November 15.

"This program is a link between international funding agencies and poor families in rural areas, with the goal of overcoming poverty by investing in high value commodities like coffee and honey," said Hervé Gallette, Design Mission Team Leader at the AFD.

The EOF was welcomed by the Yemeni government as it brings together the IFAD, AFD and the Islamic Development Bank to fund the project.

"What makes this project more important is that it brings together many funding agencies," said Abdulkarim Al-Arahabi, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation.

"There are many who spoke about investing in high value commodities, but until now no actions have been taken in this field. However we hope this project will help us do that," he added.

The targeted areas of the project would include the governorate of Abyan, Amran, Tamar, Hodeidah, Lahj, Taiz, Ibb and Sana'a with possible extension, according to Thierry Mahieux, a Design Mission team leader at IFAD.

The program is mainly targeting Yemeni women in rural areas in the above-mentioned governorates.

In Yemen, women make up roughly 30 percent of the workforce and 80 percent of those women are in the agricultural sector in rural areas, according to the Department for International Development (DFID), a British government agency for promotion of sustainable development.

However, interested persons who attended the project workshop said that in practice the program will likely not reach its targets, as most Yemeni rural areas women are illiterate and lack to

training in those areas.

"For the project of cultivation in coffee and honey, it needs water and there is scarcity of water in the whole of Yemen," said a woman from the National Committee for Women.

"From my experience, these projects usually do not reach Yemeni women in rural areas. Reaching such areas is hard due to the absence of infrastructure and the high rate of illiteracy among women there," she added.

Another key threat to the project is that Yemen in the process of joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), making it more difficult for Yemeni commodities to compete on the international market.

"How is this project going to work if Yemen is entering the WTO?" asked Nasr Al-Shihab, an agricultural expert at the Agricultural Research and Extension Authority.

"The export of honey and coffee would be threatened if Yemen joined the WTO," he said. The absence of marketing policy of agricultural products is also a disturbance to the success of the project. "The marketing of agriculture in Yemen is miserable," Al-Shihab said. The Ministry of Agriculture has been speaking for more than eighteen years about marketing policy, but without results, according to Al-Shihab.

The marketing policy should consist of many channels that are obligated to prepare Yemeni agricultural commodities to compete in the WTO, the expert suggested.

"Now if we just prepared our products to be competitive for ten years, we could be bot competitive and adhere to WTO standards," he said.

Moreover, the expert recommended utilizing this period for marketing policy preparation. However, there is now no authority working on the preparation of a national strategy for marketing, nor any standards imposed on farmers to optimize their products, according to the expert.

Infrastructure is the most urgent tool that farmers in rural area need for that, and that infrastructure is lacking.

"Farmers in rural areas need to move their products, and that takes machines and other infrastructure that is simply not there," he said.

In addition to that, the current method of agriculture marketing that farmers and even some export companies use is traditional, and lacks modern methods.

"Because of poor marketing on the part of farmers, some export companies



USAID | YEMEN
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Job vacancy

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) announces for an immediate job opening within its organization:

"Economic Growth/Agriculture Specialist"

The incumbent serves as the Mission's specialist for technical and policy matters associated with improving economic growth and agriculture in Yemen. The specialist supports USAID/Yemen's economic growth and agriculture activities under the livelihoods portfolio. USAID's definition of livelihoods is the combination of factors in a community that have a direct impact on the quality of individuals' lives. Those factors are the elements in a community that affect citizens' well-being, prosperity, and future choices, including income, health, education, security, water, infrastructure, citizen participation, etc. The position serves as part of a team of Foreign Service National (FSN) specialists and advisors to Mission senior management, to other U.S. Government agencies, to Government of Yemen (GOY) counterparts, and implementing partners. The position requires travel, security permitting, to activity sites to monitor and evaluate progress and to identify and resolve problems.

Qualifications Required

A. Education:

A minimum of a Bachelor's degree in Business, Economics, Agribusiness, International Economic Development, Anthropology, Public Policy, or a related field is required. A Master's degree is preferred.

B. Prior Work Experience:

The incumbent is required to have a minimum of four years of work experience. Technical experience in integrated rural development, economic growth and agriculture, agribusiness, MSMEs, water conservation, and alternative agriculture is required. Demonstrated increasing responsibility for managing, analyzing, coordinating, and guiding significant analytical and project management efforts is preferred.

C. Language Proficiency:

Very strong fluency in English (level IV) and native fluency in Arabic (level V), both oral and written, is required.

D. Job Knowledge:

Must have a sound, experience-based knowledge of integrated rural development, economic growth and agriculture. Knowledge of agribusiness, MSMEs, water conservation, and alternative agriculture programming and policy is preferred. S/he must possess a thorough knowledge of the political, economic, and development realities of Yemen as they relate to economic growth and agriculture programming and related service delivery. S/he must have knowledge of host country socio-economic conditions. Knowledge of USAID's and USG's environmental regulations is preferred but not required. S/he must be knowledgeable of technical/project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and project financial oversight.

E. Skills and Abilities:

The incumbent must be organized and have demonstrated success in project management. Excellent communications skills are required. S/he will have a high degree of technical, analytical, and quantitative skills. Strong interpersonal and teamwork skills and a proven ability to work independently with minimal supervision or guidance is required. Incumbent must have operational and management skills, computer skills, multi-tasking skills, and the ability to conceptualize both strategically and programmatically. S/he should have proven ability to communicate quickly, clearly, and concisely, both orally and in writing, including preparation of technical reports. Incumbent must demonstrate an ability to learn and explain USAID's overarching goals and the Agency's economic development objectives within the first year of employment.

Grade/Salary: *Ordinarily Resident:

- FSN - 10 (Full Performance Level) US \$ 15,457 per annum Starting Salary

Detailed Position Description is available at <http://yemen.usembassy.gov/yemen/vacancies.html>

How to apply:

Interested applicants should complete OF-612 or submit a current C.V. (with awards, recommendation letters, copies of degrees earned). All applications also must include a letter which explains the candidate's past experience and how it relates to the required qualifications, and send it to the Human Resources Office, American Embassy, Dhahr Himyar Street, Sanaa or via Fax No. 303-182 or through e-mail address: hrosanaa@state.gov no later than December 01, 2009.

* NOTE: ALL ORDINARILY RESIDENT APPLICANTS MUST HAVE THE REQUIRED WORK AND/OR RESIDENCY PERMITS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR CONSIDERATION.

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Blogging flourishes; governments block and monitor content

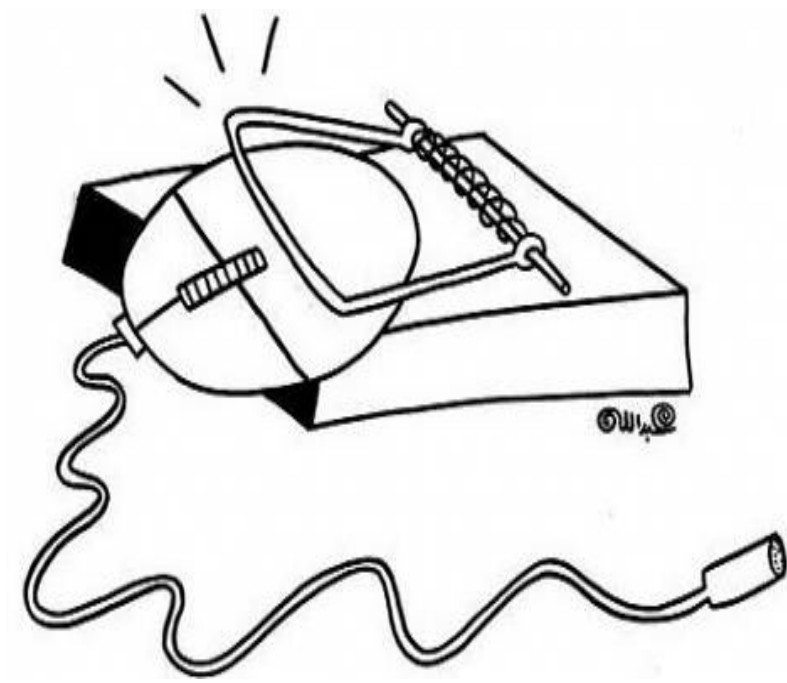
Thousands of writers, journalists, activists, lawyers and others are expressing their dissent and reporting on social issues by blogging throughout the Middle East and North Africa, says a new report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Bloggers are free to write about issues that are not covered by traditional media due to intimidation and interference by the state.

The number of Internet users grew 13-fold, from 2000 to 2008, in this region, says the report, "Middle East Bloggers: The Street Leads Online." This cross-section of repression and Internet use has resulted in an estimated 35,000 active blogs in the Arabic language and a staggering 70,000 in Farsi.

However, the report goes on to say that a resulting vicious and severe crackdown on blogging region-wide reveals how much of a threat to power electronic communications can be. It adds that the tactics of authorities may vary but the goal is often the same: convince a blogger that the cost of challenging the state far outweighs any benefit.

Egyptian Wael Abbas started blogging in 2005 about domestic issues. But in 2006 he posted a video of police torture. There was a massive outcry as Egyptians were able to witness first-hand police torture that had largely been hidden. It led to the conviction of several police officers. Since then, Abbas has been detained, harassed and vilified on television and online, so that he is unable to find stable employment.

Regimes in the region are increasingly finding ways to monitor, intercept, alter or block online content. But Iran is at the forefront of surveillance and has started to develop technology that will seek out and block undesired websites, including blogs. In addition to this year's brutal crackdown, Iran jailed at least 23 bloggers and online journalists in 2004. Many have been tortured into



giving false confessions, says CPJ.

Iran has also spearheaded a move toward laws or decrees that explicitly regulate online expression. Iran's Guardian Council has approved the Cyber Crime Penal Code, which went into effect in July. It requires Internet service providers to keep records of all client data for at least three months, which allows the government to monitor information about users and their online practices more efficiently.

In Syria, blogger Karim al-Arbaji, was detained in June 2007 and finally sentenced in September 2009 to three years in prison for "spreading false news that weakened the national sentiment," under the Syrian penal code. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) reports that al-Arbaji's alleged confessions were extracted under torture. At least 11 Syrian bloggers have been convicted by an emergency law that gives authorities sweeping powers to shut down "all forms of expression," according to CPJ.

Pioneering Tunisian blogger Zouhair Yahyaoui was convicted of publishing false information and savagely tortured in prison, he told CPJ. He was hung from the ceiling and beaten; given rotten food and poor health care. Yahyaoui undertook many hunger strikes to demand better treatment during his 531 days of incarceration. Sixteen months after his release, Yahyaoui, 36, died of a heart attack.

Despite severe repression, a growing audience for blogs and the ease with which journalists become part of the blogosphere make it a challenge for governments to completely control online dissent. The report adds that there can be a backlash to government excess. Tunisian blogger Yahyaoui "was popular enough before he was sent to jail, but his jailing and premature death turned him into a martyr for Tunisian free expression," comments CPJ. Even though governments invest in considerable technical measures to suppress blogs, it can all be rendered obsolete by innovative programmers.

Occupational safety and health in times of crisis: "We have to invest in a healthy workforce now"

More than 300 participants from some 60 countries discussed this week the potential impact of the global economic crisis on occupational safety and health (OSH) at an international conference hosted by the ILO in Düsseldorf on "Implementing Occupational Safety and Health Standards Globally". ILO Online asked Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri, Director of the ILO's Safe Work Programme, to draw some conclusions from the meeting

DÜSSELDORF (ILO Online) – ILO Online: How is the global economic and jobs crisis affecting occupational health and safety at work?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: The financial crisis has become a factor of concern for the health and safety of workers around the world. On the one hand, workers have to deal with the fear and stress of losing their jobs. On the other hand, we might expect a reduction in resources allocated to safety and health. Enforcement agencies, labour inspectorates and occupational safety and health services may also have to operate with limited resources. The result could be a sharp rise in work accidents, injuries and fatalities and work-related stress – although some sectors, particularly those affected by rising unemployment like the construction sector, may actually see a decline of accidents as a result of a recent pilot study of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) shows.

ILO Online: Several participants to the Conference addressed the impact of crisis and restructuring on the mental health of employees. What were their conclusions?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: Mental ill-health is on the rise. In Europe, more and more early retirements today are based on mental ill-health. In extreme cases stress can even lead to suicide, and some enterprises are being asked to prepare stress prevention programmes at work. The reasons for this trend include information overload, intensification of work and time pressure, high demands on mobility and flexibility, being constantly "on call" due to mobile phone technology, and last but not least the worry of losing one's job.

ILO Online: Do work-related illnesses and injuries have a strong negative impact on workers as well as on the economy?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: Our estimate is that roughly four per cent of the annual global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), or US\$1.25 trillion, is lost due to direct and indirect costs of occupational accidents

and diseases such as lost working time, workers' compensation, the interruption of production and medical expenses. Even in industrialized countries, the overall cost of work-related accidents and diseases is still very high: in the European Union it is estimated at 2.6 to 3.8 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

But absenteeism due to work-related illness and injury is only the tip of the iceberg. Another form of loss is incurred by "presenteeism", a term used to describe the phenomenon of ill employees who show up for work but cannot perform effectively owing to their illness. Fearing for their jobs, many employees no longer dare to take sick leave. Some specialists estimate the costs incurred by "presenteeism" are three times higher than those caused by absenteeism as a result of illness and injuries.

ILO Online: Can labour inspection play an important role in preventing work-related accidents and diseases?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: The world's 120,000 labour inspectors face daunting challenges: preventing more than 2 million fatal occupational diseases and accidents each year and contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS, child labour and forced labour. The ILO has set "reasonable benchmarks" for the number of labour inspectors in relation to workers in a recent report (one inspector to 10,000 workers in industrial market economies and one to 40,000 in less developed countries), but many countries still fail to reach these benchmarks.

The ILO calls for an Integrated Labour Inspection System (ILIS) to integrate administrative, procedural and technical elements into a holistic, coherent and flexible approach to labour inspection: from the global policy level down to the operational level in the enterprise where the quantity and quality of inspections can be significantly improved. The bedrock for such reforms is ILO Convention No. 81 on labour inspection in industry and commerce. With 135 ratifications, it is one of the 10 most

ratified ILO conventions to date and serves as a good international guide to secure the enforcement of the legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers.

ILO Online: What is the ILO's message regarding occupational safety and health in times of crisis?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: First, everyone has the right to a safe and healthy working environment. That is what the ILO's Decent Work Agenda states and it is something we deeply believe in. This is especially true in a time of crisis. It should not be an excuse to lessen decent working conditions, including occupational safety and health standards, but an opportunity to promote them. Second, prevention is also good business. In the long term, investments in the physical and mental health of staff will always pay off: companies will save more from reducing the need for continued wage payments during illness than they spend on OSH measures. According to one study, companies gain three dollars for every dollar they spend on preventive measures.

ILO Online: What is the potential long-term impact of the economic crisis on occupational safety and health?

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri: If companies cut back now on occupational safety and health, they will pay the price in the not too distant future. And with demographic ageing, we will all have to work longer and ensure that the health of the workforce will permit us to do so. If we fail to invest in a healthy workforce now, we will not have a sufficient number of healthy staff in the future.

Source: International Labour Organization (ILO)

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"Implementing Occupational Safety and Health Standards Globally", Düsseldorf, 3-6 November 2009. For further information, please visit the conference website on <http://www.ilosafetyconference2009.org/es/index.html> which includes the background documentation prepared for the event



Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), is an International Humanitarian Organization providing medical aid to populations in distress, victims of natural and man made disasters, regardless of race, religion and political beliefs. In 1999 MSF was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its work. Currently MSF works in more than 70 countries, including Yemen, Palestinian Territories and Somalia. For more information, visit our Arabic website, www.msfuac.ae

JOB VACANCY: Medical Doctor

MSF-France is looking for Yemenis nationals to be recruited to work in Yemen as Practising Doctor. The doctor will work in MSF hospital and outreach activities under the supervision of MSF medical referent doctor.

Job Duties and Responsibilities:

- o To provide proper health care for patients in the hospital and on outreach activities.
- o To implement medical practices based on the required medical standards and medical ethics
- o To participate in the training provided by MSF to medical staff in the hospital
- o To communicate with the medical team of each department to improve patients care

Qualification and Skill Requirements:

- Valid medical diploma in curative medicine
- At least 2 years of medical practices in a hospital
- Fluent in English language
- Capacity to work under tense situation
- Computer skills, particularly Word, Excel
- Experience with other humanitarian organization will be a plus

Applications must be in English language. Candidates should submit a Cover Letter, CV, copies of diplomas, copies of relevant training and work certificates (originals will be asked during interview), and any recommendations from previous employers.

Deadline for application: December 12th 2009 to be sent to:

Médecins sans Frontières France
P.O. Box 12565 Old University Post Office
Sana'a
E-mail : msff-sanaa@paris.msf.org

Only short-listed candidates will be contacted to fill a C.V module application and interviews. No face-to-face contact or phone contact will be considered.

Civil Works Bid Announcement

For the Rehabilitation of Al-Mukala-Sayhout Road Project (135 km) in Hadramout Governorate IFB#4CW/AFESD/2009 Republic of Yemen

- The Republic of Yemen has received credit no (403/2000) from the Arab Fund for Economic & Social Development, towards the cost of construction of Al-Mukala-Sayhout Road Project (135km) in Hadramout Governorate, and intends to apply part of the credit proceeds towards eligible payments for the civil work bid whose details are shown below:

S/R No.	Project/Location	Bid No	Date of Availability of Documents	Prie of Bidding Documents	Date and time for pre-bid meeting	Amount of bid Guarantee	Bid submission time & date	Bid opening date
1	Rehabilitation of al-Mukala-Sayhout Road Project (135km) in Hadramout Governorate	IFB#4CW/AFESD/09	14/11/2009	US\$300	11AM 9/12/2009	US\$6600,000.0	10AM 13/1/2010	11AM 13/1/2010

- The Ministry of Public Works and Highways (MPWH), Internationally Funded Projects Implementation Unit (IFPIU), now invites contractors to submit their sealed bids for the construction of the road projects mentioned above. A post-qualification will be conducted for the participating bidders which will include the following:
 - o Past experience in similar nature projects
 - o Minimum average annual construction work turnover for the last 5 years = US\$12,500,000.0
 - o Minimum cash flow and liquid assets=US\$4,500,000.0
- Interested bidders may obtain the required bidding documents upon submission of a written application and payment of the above mentioned non-refundable fee, plus the courier charges for overseas delivery of US\$150, during working Hours (8:00 Am: 2:00 Pm, Sat-Wed) from the following address:

Ministry of Public Works and Highways
Internationally Funded Projects Implementation Unit (IFPIU)
3rd floor, MPWH Head Office Bldg
Nuqum Area, Next to Berlin Public Park
Phone: 00967-01545164
Fax: 00967-01-546134
Email: ifpui@yemen.net.ye
Sana'a, RoY

- Interested Bidders can inspect bidding documents before purchasing during working hours until one week before the bid opening date, at the same address shown above.

- Sealed and properly addressed bids should be delivered to the above address, on or before 10:00 AM of the specified date, and shall be accompanied by:
 - o A bid Guarantee for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 180 days from the date of bid opening.
 - o A valid tax card (for local contractors)
 - o Valid registration and Classification Certificate for local Contractors in road construction.

- Bids will be publicly opened in the MPWH-IFPIU office on the date and time specified above at the presence of the bidders/or their authorized representatives who choose to attend. Late bids will be rejected and returned unopened.

Jasmine – part 3

By: Marwa Abubaker Al-Maisari
marwaalmaisari@gmail.com

Jasmine was refreshed and back to the campus. She had told Maria all about the letter that she got from Daniel. They told each other all about how grand their summer was.

Second Year was tougher than Jasmine that it would be. But her spirit was up high since Daniel kept in contact he even sent her some picture at his new place. Things were brightened up for him and he said that he owed it all to Jasmine. As tempting as it was for Jasmine that Dan wrote to her, she still had to keep her true feelings unspoken. She feared she'd lose him forever. She tried so hard to control her emotions and not drift away with illusions.

Jasmine never forgot to write to Samer too, but unfortunately she never got anything back. She even checked the address from her aunt although he did write to his mom. But Jasmine never gave up she thought at least he would know that she thought of him. She finally managed to tell him about Daniel and thought he would probably answer back, yet he never did.

After another great and successful year at the university, Al-Mayasi's decided that they would spend the summer vacation over at Jomana's. As usual they had their wonderful time and this time Samer managed to join them but only for two weeks. Jasmine was overjoyed to see him. He was tall, tanned and masculine. His hair was black and shiny, he had the Arabs features. "Welcome back Samer. God! You have changed completely. I really missed you." Jasmine said with great anticipation in her voice, now that she is talking to her cousin, her friend and her brother as Jasmine had always liked to think that of him.

"Hey Jasmine, you look great yourself." Samer replied trying to answer shortly without further description of the beauty he saw in Jasmine. The family sat at the dinner table and discussed what they had been doing from the last time they all gathered as one happy family.

The next few days Samer had tried to

avoid being with Jasmine, until it was becoming so obvious to Jasmine that he doesn't want to talk to her. One day after dinner, he was out in the back yard he lit a cigarette and stared up the sky. It was a full moon and the sky was filled with stars. "I didn't know you smoke." Jasmine's voice came from behind of him. "I didn't used to; I started just these few last months." He answered almost too sure that she will follow him out. "I couldn't help noticing that you have been trying to avoid me. Is there something I did that upset you Samer? I really have been looking forward to see you; I thought we could spend some time together just like we used to, remember?"

Samer never turned to look at her, he was afraid she will see the pain in his eyes. "Things change Jasmine. Maybe am not who I used to be back then. We're grown adults now. Besides you have a love story going on in your life, you are probably don't have time for me anymore."

"So you got my letters? How come you never replied back?"

"What was I supposed to write to?" His voice was filled with pain and anger. "I told you, you are too busy Jasmine. And I can't even try to make you see that." He finally managed to turn and face her. He looked straight to her eyes and said, "I had been planning this trip for years, I want to come back for you. Until I received your letters I was crushed, but I had to come back. My mom had been worried sick about me and had already promised her that I was coming. I had even bought an engagement ring. But I never saw this coming...NEVER!" Without giving Jasmine a chance to talk he turned and went back to the house.

Jasmine stood there for long time not realizing what had just happened. She stared at the sky and let her mind free from any thought and all of the sudden she started crying. The last couple of days was really awkward for both of them, and things were left as they were from that night.

Summer was over, Samer went back to Yemen and Jasmine studied her third year. There were two letters from Daniel in her mailbox. She didn't reply until he

sent his third letter wondering where she is. Samer's words haunted her, she hated what she had let Samer go through, yet she couldn't do a thing to change the fact that there actually was a love story blooming between her and Daniel. She really did care about Samer, but not in the way that he had thought she did.

Jasmine was worried that all these mixed emotions will affect her studying but luckily her first semester was okay. Daniel's birthday was a week away. After thinking so hard what she wanted to give him, she finally decided to give him her own copy of the Holy Quran on tape and a couple of the Prophet Mohamed sayings. She really didn't know how he would accept it but she had wished god will enlighten him to Islam. Not long after she sent it he thanked her for it and said that the tapes were relaxing and it was comforting for the soul. Jasmine's happiness was indescribable. So each time she sent a letter to him she would tell him a little story that happened during our beloved Prophet times and his followers. Daniel had told Jasmine that he had applied for real job finally, it was in a travel agency and he is still waiting for their acceptance.

This summer wasn't as fun, since Jasmine had only got to spend three weeks with her parents and she had to go back to the university and prepare for her senior year. Jasmine worked really hard for this year, she wanted to keep her grades up. The University had dealt with the biggest gallery in town and they managed to get the top five students who get the highest grades in for six months training and finally they get to be a regular employee.

Daniel had gotten accepted in the agency and for his training he had to visit the six branches that the agency had world wide. Jasmine had one semester left and she will finally graduate. There was a lot of unexpected events happened. Daniel travelled and she had no contact of him since he didn't really have a fixed address. Her parents were travelling back to Yemen to attend the funeral of Jasmine's grandmother (her mom's mom). Jasmine couldn't go with them but they had promised they will be back for her graduation.

Democracy in Yemen?

By: Majed Al - Kotamy
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Since unification in May of 1990, elections have disguised oligarchy as democracy. The few in power have succeeded convincing outside observers; such as UN election monitors applauded the first governorate elections in May of 2008 as monumental progress in the Middle East's struggle for democracy. However, those elections, along with the three for parliament, two for President and two for local councils, were facades to delude public and international opinion.

Political parties conglomerate in Yemen, excluding serious opposition. The ruling General People's Congress (GPC) emerged out of several different groups joining together as one imperious party. The Islah (Islamic) party emerged in the same time period (early 1990s), allied with the GPC against the Social party. Later, Islah and the Social Party

united with others including Nasserite and Al-Hag to become The Joint Meeting Parties (JMPs).

The ironic alliance inspired the new slogan popular among all the political blocks: "Yesterday's enemies are today's friends." The slogan raises several questions: Who brought the different extremes together and how? What are its concealed motives? How are they countering the GPC?

The ruling GPC Party's recent alliances are also suspect. They joined the Ba'ath (revival, standing for "social revival") Party as the National Counsel's Parties (NCPs).

The NCPs also includes several smaller parties who opposed GPC policies before joining the conglomerate. Let us devote our efforts to renewing Yemen's greatness. Let us think critically about the political alliances and motives that may threaten our national security, along with the facades that feign democracy.

The story of my city

By: Majed Ahmed Al-Kotamy
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But they were a few
People no heard them

Once by chance
A cloud passed by our halcyon city
Coming from the deep criminous cavity
of the sea Gray mass, it dropped, spreading
in all the rooms at glance
Containing smoke, dust and a thing
Which makes people feel afraid and
unhappy
People shocked by that magnetic view
People loved it much
People absolutely worshipped it instead
of God
People changed
They began drooling over that thing
makes them fell afraid and unhappy
They took it all
Some opened shops and joined smuggling
Some gave it people for voting for him
To win the municipality's chair
Some spent it here and there
Satisfying his/her worldly desires
And some warned people of the pernicious
Consequences of that material thing
Alas!

At night
A murder happened in the city
A victim was unknown nor had identity
Two ladies raped
A central Bank of the city robbed
Their heavy armed guards found snoring
Robbers had given them juice containing
Sleeping pills
A baby drowned in its mother's pool
Buds and flowers left their homes
And never seen again
Husbands beat wives
Divorce prevailed
Justice went stray
The state's awe lost
Eat or you will be eaten
Corruption stood revealing its long
hands
Bribe became the language using under
All the governmental roofs
Those came, those went
War broke out
Sorry!
All those up were done with your
consent.

The Mutineers

By: Waleed Shapa'a
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Go, wherever you go, in the wrong
way.

Do, whatever you do,
you will stay.

Oh! Where are you going to?
Sorry, you don't have the key.

You will find strong hands,
So you have no chance,
You must submit to the government,

to do whatever It wants.
Even If you are beside the moon,
You will surrender later or soon,

You will not succeed
Never, you will fail
Don't disturb the peace
You are wrong in this case
You will be nothing

And, you will stop unwillingly
We must say,
Yes for security,
We must say,
Yes for stability,
Finally, we must say,
No, for damage and cruelty.

Teaching aids

By: Ahmed Mohamed Aflah
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You always need me.
You can touch me, See me and hear me.
I am beside you, I am not far of you,
I am near you.
Do you love me? I love you why
don't you try me
Why don't you catch me,
Why don't you think about me
I am not expensive, I am your
relative.
Take me, I am here, I am there, you
can find me every where.
I make your work interesting, I am
very cheap
Why don't you touch in keep
I love you in deep
With your hand take me, in your
heart stick me, On the wall hang me
For whom you love show me
Let us be friends you and me

Through

The Mind's Eye

By: Maged Thabet Alkholidy
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The veil, much ado about nothing

Recently, the 'veil-issue' has become a common topic in local as well as international discussions, among individuals or social or religious sects, nations and groups of different social, and religious backgrounds. This difference of attitudes is to be expected. However, it becomes negative when these differences occur among people of the same religious and social backgrounds. The veil issue has been recently used as a propaganda tool to create much ado, reflecting the fact that sometimes simple things are exaggerated, while many significant issues are neglected.

Locally, from time to time, the veil-issue dominates people's religious and social interest as an impetus of conflict, social or religious, and sometimes even political affairs. This issue is used to create or sometimes settle other topics. For instance, it is sometimes used as a means to instigate clashes due to political or social conflicts of inter-

ests, which use the veil issue in order to gain support from people or institutions. The real problem does not actually lie in the veil, but it is exploited as a means to settle larger problems.

This happens not only in Yemen, but in many countries, such as Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and recently Egypt. Such a simple problem is brought out in order to bring about severe, unending conflicts among groups of people, leaving wide gaps in the society as a whole.

The same phenomenon also occurs on the international level. Diplomatic or public relations are sometimes shaken due to different attitudes towards the veil, as it happened with Turkey, and France with some of the Islamic countries. The matter occasionally gains the people's interest. All capabilities, hence, are devoted to rectifying this issue. Preachers, clerics, journalists, social activists, and other interested people move the earth upside down either against or for a certain attitude

towards the issue.

With such conflicts, in fact "much ado about nothing", sometimes disturbs the stability of the nations. Those who personally benefit enjoy the situations, but other poor and pay the costs, since they spend their capabilities and skills in running after nothing, leaving their real rights behind.

In short, the "veil-issue" is not the only issue, and neither is it the most important one. Many more significant problems are neglected - "without any ado." One may ask why such people do not take issues that negatively impact social, religious life, such as corruption, fighting, or lack of education. If this is taken into consideration, many relevant problems and obstacles might have been solved.

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.

We should respect Yemeni women's rights

By: Mubeen Esam
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Yemeni society is a traditional, hardened, and conservative society. Its tribal rules and customs control people in most towns in Yemen, and create a wide gap between men and women. Yemeni customs and social habits are hindrances against woman, and serve to take away her rights. They lower her status so that she is below the man, and her roles are relegated to cooking, cleaning, and taking care of her children and husband. Her work in any field - particularly in the political field - is seen as a bizarre, and often puzzling behavior.

Most Yemeni men view women as a source of shame, and they are controlled by her family's habits. She has no personality, opinions, ideas, or even freedom until she dies. I think the main reason for the backwardness in Yemeni society is that it lacks considerable and effective female roles. Female roles in Yemeni society aren't effective politically, economically, socially, or culturally. However, Yemeni religious parties use the female vote more effectively than other parties have.

Yemeni society doesn't give women popular support and confidence in elections. In fact, it seems like Yemeni women are important only in election season, when all the parties race to attract her to the voting centers. There should be a suitable environment in the parties in order to help the woman to work and practice her political roles creatively. When women doesn't participate in the political field, they loses one of their most important rights. The woman is the main component of any society, so when she doesn't participate politically, it affects the economic and social situation.

There are a few women who work and participate in political parties, social organizations, and in the government. Their roles aren't concrete, and they don't make decisions by themselves; they only apply the decisions made by others.

Yemeni women feel conspicuous in public. A lone woman in the street may be exposed to violations or abuse. In my opinion, women work harder than men, so she must have all her social, political, financial, civil, educational, and religious rights protected. There is rampant violation of woman's rights in Yemeni society, many of which are against Islamic principles. The woman's rights to education and work are suppressed. Indeed, women's rights is one of the most complex and controversial issues in Yemen.

The media in Yemen must play

their parts in explaining women's rights correctly, and the political roles of the man and the woman in an understandable way. There should be campaigns to illustrate the importance of the education for men and women, and there should be a training program supported by international organizations and the Yemeni government together to enlighten and educate illiterate people, help them use a computer and the internet, and encourage women to make decisions by themselves.

Tribal rules in some towns deprive women of most rights. For example, in some towns the woman is deprived of the estate when her mother, father, or brother dies. Such tribal rules control life in Yemeni towns and villages instead of Islamic rules and Yemeni law.

Illiteracy in Yemen means that the woman doesn't know her rights. The low-level of education in the villages and most towns perpetuates this ignorance of deserved rights. The educated woman realizes how to run her house and her family affairs wisely as well as she knows exactly what her husband and children need, better than the uneducated woman. Education is the dynamic factor that motivates the woman to participate effectively in the social, economic and political progress of any society.

As a result of the poverty and the low income of most families in Yemen, the parents prefer to let the boy complete his study and they spend a lot of money on his education, while they don't give the girl her chance and right to study or work outside her house. The parents let her stay at home and work inside until she gets married, but all that is not in adherence with Islam. If the girl is beautiful, her parents don't make her study, because they think that she has a better chance to get married quickly.

Recently, there were some hardened Islamic female clerics supported by some parties who asked female students to give up studying, stop watching TV, listening to music, and taking photos for themselves. All these actions are extremist, and help to spread violence and terrorism throughout Yemen and distort civilized aspects of Yemeni society. If the man cared more for his wife, mother, and daughters and gave them their rights that are determined by the law and Islamic principles - not by their tribal rules - then they will be more aware of such hardened Islamic groups.

Some mosques in Yemen have become centers to oppose women's rights, and the Yemeni men view women's rights as foreign customs. We can use the va... mosques in Yemen as guiding centers that help the woman recognize her perfect rights which Islam determines.

The woman must have all her rights as the man has his own. She must have the

right to choose her husband or refuse any who wants to marry her. She must have the right to divorce and to decide how many children she wants to give birth to. She has to have the right to possess the houses, cars, lands, and companies and run them. There should be strict rules in our constitution determining the woman's suitable age to be married and protect her rights. We should respect the woman as a wife, and a mother. Islam urges that the woman must study, work, and have her right to choose her husband if he is competent. We should prevent the early marriage of the woman. There should be a lot of schools in the countryside and enough women teachers in the schools for the girls.

Additionally, one of the main reasons that make the woman afraid of running in the elections is that she is afraid of being exposed to abuse, and some people make bad comments about her photos. However we should encourage the woman to participate in the elections as candidates, and we should stand for her to participate in the local councils and the parliament. The man should be more concerned with women's rights and needs so that both the man and the woman, can make a greater development in Yemen.

Yemeni women must learn, study, and work in various fields, political, financial, social etc. The woman must study to become a doctor, an engineer, an accountant, a lawyer, a judge, a teacher or a minister, or even a president. Any society that keeps the woman from her rights will not be developed at all. The woman is the only factor that can work with the man together to develop any country, but without her, this country is nothing. It is said that one hand can't applaud. The woman is the only force that makes this life continue and the generations alternate regularly. She's also the reason for bringing happiness to the family.

Imagine if our president in Yemen was a woman. Do you think that our society would accept her? Yemeni women are always disappointed when they ask for their rights.

Finally, we see countries in which women's rights are completely fulfilled, or partially fulfilled, and they are successful. The Arab world is less developed than the others, and some Arab countries are more developed than the other Arab countries, because I think most Arabs misunderstand the woman's rights. Therefore, the woman is deprived of her true rights. If we want to make our country developed, we must respect all the woman's rights and let her study, work, and participate freely in any field that Islam allows. Islam never prevents the woman or the girl from education, work, or choosing what is compatible

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باسم محمد عبد الشيباني
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- معتم - بكالوريوس كمبيوتر - يجيد استخدام الانترنت والمراسلة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - حاصل على دبلوم لغة إنجليزية من الهند - خبرة لمدة سنة واحدة في مجال العلاقات العامة للتواصل: ٧١١٧٢٤٨٦٢
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والإنترنت - يرغب في العمل في أي معهد أو شركة أو مدرسة خاصة للتواصل: ٧٧٧٢٦١٤٧٥

• علي - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة سنتين في التدريس - يجيد استخدام الحاسوب والمراسلة عبر الانترنت - يرغب في العمل في أي شركة للتواصل: ٧١١٨٦٠٨٦٤

• فلسطيني الجنسية - بكالوريوس هندسة كمبيوتر - دبلوم برمجة - خبرة عشر سنوات في تدريس دورات الكمبيوتر - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية وقادر على تدريس مواد الرياضيات - يرغب في العمل في أي مكان كمدرس أو مهندس صيانة للتواصل: ٧٣٢٨٠٣١٩٤

• ماثور جوفيد-هندي الجنسية - ماجستير تجارة - خبرة أكثر من عشرين سنة في مجال التجارة - الإدارة - تسويق - مشاريع للتواصل: ٧١١٤٤٥٣٥٤

• عبد الرحمن العامري - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة في مجال الكمبيوتر والمراسلات الخارجية - يريد العمل في إحدى الشركات النفطية أو إعطاء دروس خصوصية للتواصل: ٧٧٠٤٠٤٨٧٢

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IMPORTANT Numbers

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المستشفى الجمهوري: ١-٢٧٤٨٦/٨٧
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البنوك

بنك اليمن والخليج: فاكس: ٢٦٠٨٤٤، ١٦٠-٨٢٣-٩٦٧
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فاكس: ٤١٤٧٥
معهد كاروكوس: ٥٣٢٤٣/٥ - فاكس: ٥٣٢٤٣٦
معهد أليكس: ٢٤٠٨٢٣ - ٥٠٦١٢٣ - فاكس: ٣٦٥٢٧

تأجير سيارات

زاويه (Budget): ٢٠٠٦٢٢٧-٢٠٠٩٦١٨، فاكس: ٢٤٠٩٥٨
بيرب كار: ٢٧٠٧٥١ - فاكس: ٢٧٠٨٠٤
هيزر لتأجير السيارات صنعا: ١-٤٤٠٣٠٩
قرع شيراتون: ٥٤٥٩٨٥
عدن: ٢-٢٤٥٦٢٥

شركات للتأمين

الوطنية للتأمين: ٢٧٢٧١٢/٢٧٢٨٧٣ - فاكس: ٢٧٢٩٢٤
مرب للتأمين: صنعا: ٢٠٦١٢٩/٨/١٣
الشركة اليمنية الإسلامية للتأمين وإعادة التأمين: صنعا: ٢٨٤٩١٣
عدن: ٢٤٤٢٨٠
تمز: ٢٥٨٨٨١
شركة اليمن للتأمين: صنعا: ٢٧٢٨٠٦/٢٧٢٩١٢/٤٣
عدن: ٢٤٧٦١٧
تمز: ٢٥٠٢٤٥

مراكز تدريب وتعليم الكمبيوتر

بنك لتعليم الكمبيوتر (تركيز على الانترنت، مناهج، تجارة إلكترونية) شهادة ايزو ١٠٠
صنعا: ١-٤٦٨٢٠٥
فاكس: ٤٠٧٤٩٩
عدن: ٢٠-٢٣٧١٩٩
تمز: ٤٠-٢٥٠٣٤٢
الكلاب: ٥٠٣-٧٤٩٢

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٤٤٥٥١٨/٧-٤٤٢٠٧٣

مدارس

روضة واحة الأطفال: تلفاكس: ٤٧٠٢٥٠ - موبايل: ٧٣٤٥٢٢٢٢٥
مدرسة رينبو: ٤١٤٠-٢٦/٤٢٤-٤٢٣
مدارس صنعا الدولية: ٢٧٠١٩١/٢ - فاكس: ٣٧٠١٩٣
مدرسة التركه الدولية: ٤٤٨٢٥٨/٩
مدرسة الماحد المنيه: ٢٠٦١٥٩

البريد السريع

FedEx
صنعا: ٤٤٠١٧٠/٢٢٨/٢٢٠
عدن: ٢٤٥٦٢٦
الحديدة: ٢٦٦٩٧٥/٤
إب: ٤١١٩٨٨
الكلاب: ٣٠٦٢٤١
شبه: ٢٠٢٢٣٦
سيئون: ٤٠٧٢١٩
تمز: ٦٦٠٥٠٠
بحاف: ٧٧٧٨٨٦٠
سقطرى: ٦٦٠٤٩٨

مطاعم

مطعم ومخازة الشيباني (باسم محمد عبد الشيباني)
تلفون: ٢٦٦٦٢٧ - ٥٠٥٢٩٠ - فاكس: ٦٦٧٦١٩

• فنانز الحميري - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - يجيد التعامل مع الانترنت والكيبوتر والمراسلات الخارجية والعلاقات العامة للتواصل: ٧١٣٢٠٧٢٧٢

• معتم - بكالوريوس كمبيوتر - يجيد استخدام الانترنت والمراسلة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - حاصل على دبلوم لغة إنجليزية من الهند - خبرة لمدة سنة واحدة في مجال العلاقات العامة للتواصل: ٧١١٧٢٤٨٦٢

• سلطان علي - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة تسع سنوات في مجال التدريس - يرغب في العمل في الفترة المسائية للتواصل: ٧١٢٦٦٦٨٤٠

• فيئ صائب - بكالوريوس تجارة - الهند ٢٠٠٧ - سنة خبرة - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر - يرغب في العمل في مجال المحاسبة والإدارة للتواصل: ٧٣٣٨٤٨٠٥٤

• أنور علي - دبلوم عالي مساعد طبيب - يجيد التعامل مع الحاسوب والانترنت - خبرة في تدريس الاسعافات الأولية للتواصل: ٧٧٠٦٤٩٧٩١

• بكالوريوس حاسوب - خبرة في تصميم و تحليل الانظمة باستخدام برنامج اوراكل للتواصل: ٧١٣٩٧٦٣٥٨

• فنانز الحميري - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - يجيد التعامل مع الانترنت والكيبوتر والمراسلات الخارجية والعلاقات العامة للتواصل: ٧١٣٢٠٧٢٧٢

• معتم - بكالوريوس كمبيوتر - يجيد استخدام الانترنت والمراسلة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - حاصل على دبلوم لغة إنجليزية من الهند - خبرة لمدة سنة واحدة في مجال العلاقات العامة للتواصل: ٧١١٧٢٤٨٦٢

• سلطان علي - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة تسع سنوات في مجال التدريس - يرغب في العمل في الفترة المسائية للتواصل: ٧١٢٦٦٦٨٤٠

• فيئ صائب - بكالوريوس تجارة - الهند ٢٠٠٧ - سنة خبرة - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر - يرغب في العمل في مجال المحاسبة والإدارة للتواصل: ٧٣٣٨٤٨٠٥٤

• أنور علي - دبلوم عالي مساعد طبيب - يجيد التعامل مع الحاسوب والانترنت - خبرة في تدريس الاسعافات الأولية للتواصل: ٧٧٠٦٤٩٧٩١

• بكالوريوس حاسوب - خبرة في تصميم و تحليل الانظمة باستخدام برنامج اوراكل للتواصل: ٧١٣٩٧٦٣٥٨

والإنترنت - يرغب في العمل في أي معهد أو شركة أو مدرسة خاصة للتواصل: ٧٧٧٢٦١٤٧٥

• علي - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة سنتين في التدريس - يجيد استخدام الحاسوب والمراسلة عبر الانترنت - يرغب في العمل في أي شركة للتواصل: ٧١١٨٦٠٨٦٤

• فلسطيني الجنسية - بكالوريوس هندسة كمبيوتر - دبلوم برمجة - خبرة عشر سنوات في تدريس دورات الكمبيوتر - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية وقادر على تدريس مواد الرياضيات - يرغب في العمل في أي مكان كمدرس أو مهندس صيانة للتواصل: ٧٣٢٨٠٣١٩٤

• ماثور جوفيد-هندي الجنسية - ماجستير تجارة - خبرة أكثر من عشرين سنة في مجال التجارة - الإدارة - تسويق - مشاريع للتواصل: ٧١١٤٤٥٣٥٤

• عبد الرحمن العامري - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - خبرة في مجال الكمبيوتر والمراسلات الخارجية - يريد العمل في إحدى الشركات النفطية أو إعطاء دروس خصوصية للتواصل: ٧٧٠٤٠٤٨٧٢

• فهد علي - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية (آداب) - دبلوم حاسوب (الهند) - خبرة في الأعمال الادارية وأعمال الإدارة التجارية

باحثون عن وظيفة

- علي علي جيد - بكالوريوس (موانئ + ثروة سمكية) روسيا - خبرة في (المحاسبة - المناقصات - شؤون ادارية - ادارة عامة - اعتمادات بنكية - التنسيق بين المصانع والشركات والوكلاء في اليمن) - أكثر من عشرين سنة في المجال التجاري - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية - يرغب في العمل في أي مجال للتواصل: ٧٣٥٤١٤١٤٠
- نشوان أحمد - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - جيداً - خبرة أكثر من سنتان في التدريس - يجيد الترجمة الفورية - يجيد التعامل مع الحاسوب

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Universal Children's Day



By Resolution 836 (IX) in December 1954, the UN General Assembly recommended that all countries institute a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children all over the world, and to promote the protection, welfare and education of children.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20, 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Nov. 20, 1989.

The 1990 World Summit for Children in Copenhagen, Denmark, set standards aimed at boosting children's health and education. In May 2002, the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children adopted an outcome document, "A World Fit for Children," which focused on four key priorities: promoting healthy lives, providing education, protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, and combating HIV/AIDS.

However, about 9.7 million children died in 2006 before their fifth

birthday, mostly from treatable diseases such as malaria and pneumonia. More than half of the deaths were caused by malnutrition, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

About 42.5 million children do not have access to clean water, and 1.5 million children under five die each year due to the lack of clean water and basic hygiene facilities. About 2.5 million under 15 have been infected with HIV/AIDS.

The "Progress for Children: A

Report Card on Child Protection" report, released by UNICEF, estimated that some 218 million children between five and 17 are working outside and 126 million are working in poor conditions.

More than 300,000 children around the world are forced to fight in wars, 2 million children are believed to be exploited through prostitution and pornography, 1.2 million are trafficked every year, and 40 million below the age of 15 suffer from abuse and neglect, the report says.

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Children's popular culture points to Japanese values, traditions

By: Richard Smart

TOKYO, Nov. 17 (Xinhua) -- Through decades of industrialization, concrete and neon have become the environment for most Japanese, and feelings of alienation are never far away. In popular culture, however, there are cues for both parents and children linking Japan to its past and presenting the values of the nation.

From the start of any foreigner's trip to Japan, there is often a sense of bewilderment at a land that is so alien and yet so modern. A lot of this can be attributed to the connections between Shinto, Japan's oldest religion, and the animism that seems to fill the streets of the country today.

"The cute mascot characters you see around Tokyo tend to make people around the world say 'aren't the Japanese crazy,' but if you look to the roots of this, there is a sense of anthropomorphism that comes from the nation's past," said Matt Alt. Alt is the author of "Yokai Attack," a book exploring Japan's fabled monsters and ghosts of old times and tracing their roots.



Children dressed like a ladybug and bee participate in Halloween parades.

"Japan was a nation of farmers with deep connections to the environment and Shintoism, the local religion, anthropomorphizing a lot of natural phenomenon. And in a modern sense, you see it in the super cute mascots," he explained.

These characters, with origins deep in Japan's past, allow for a continuity of traditions within Japan. As well as "updating" a tradition from Japan's past and making the main religion, Shinto, more palatable, they also connect the Japan of today with the Japan of yore.

Perhaps no show has done more to maintain this connection than the manga series "Gegege no Kitaro," writ-

ten by Shigeru Mizuki.

According to Alt, "what he (Mizuki) did was he went back to the old yokai books and stories from the 17th century and synthesized them into a whole new world. Mizuka took these old characters and remixed them for modern audiences."

These characters from Japan's past are now an endearing part of Japan's modern culture. The show, which has been aired sporadically since the late 1960s, has developed into a family favorite, which both parents and children alike enjoy.

"It is very much like a Star Trek and Star Wars phenomenon," Alt said,

drawing an implicit comparison with Western culture. "Kids now watch the same show as their parents enjoyed when they were younger."

But "Gegege no Kitaro" does more than just connect Japan with its animistic past. It also enforces Japanese values, such as collectivism and prioritizing the group over the individual, through dialogue and story lines.

The show's enduring popularity over the last four decades also makes it beneficial. "I watched 'Gegege no Kitaro' when I was a child, and it surprises me that it is still popular with kids today," said Akemi Nakata, 48.

"Today, the program is enjoyed by children and adults alike, creating a connection between them."

Alexander Jacoby, the author of "A Critical Handbook of Japanese Film Directors: From the Silent Era to the Present Day," argues that there is "one continuity between old and new Japanese children's films: their focus on the difficulties and frustrations of being a child."

Jacoby points to filmmakers such as Hiroshi Shimizu (1903-1966), who

made films about "war orphans, children who are ill or disabled, children who do not love, or are not loved by, their parents, and children who are neglected by their fellows," and Nagisa Oshima (born 1932), who depicted parents exploiting their son, "instructing him to fake car accidents to extort money from the alleged perpetrators."

Through their films, these directors paint a picture of a morally bankrupt society, and instruct their viewers on how not to treat their children.

While today, there are "a large number of lighthearted films about kids, such as the high school movies of Shinobu Yaguchi (Waterboys, Swing Girls), such themes of the unhappiness of children have been sustained in some of the best films of the modern era," Jacoby said.

He cites Hirokazu Koreeda's "Nobody Knows" (2004), for which young actor Yuya Yagira won Best Actor at Cannes Film Festival, as an example.

In the film, "a mother abandons her four children in their tiny rented apartment, leaving her older son to care for the others in a bleak, doomed imitation of family life."

Through those dark portrayals of family life, the movie industry both underlines the problems that can arise from modern life, and offers pointers to viewers on the consequences of irresponsible behavior.

In film, animation and everyday Japanese life, there are clues on how children should view the world in which they are raised, which is very much connected to the Japan of old times.

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More details can be found on special website for children's day: www.xinhuanet.com/english/ucd

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IY423	1245	SCT	RIY	1345	
	1430	RIY	ADE	1530	
IY403	1630	ADE	SAH	1715	

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IY428	0500	SAH	RIY	0600	EFF. 27NOV TILL 26MAR
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