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Empower women to counter extremism, say activists

By: Amel Al-Ariqi

SANA'A, JAN. 24 — Although women are the most vulnerable to extremists in Yemen, their voices are the least likely to be heard and their role to face terrorism is restricted by social and legal status, say human rights activists.

On Thursday, Sisters Against Violent Extremism (SAVE Yemen) brought together a group of women representing human rights groups, academic institutions, the press, and university students, to discuss how Yemeni women can be involved to face extremism and terrorism.

"The whole world is focusing on Yemen and terrorism right now, but the true Yemenis have no voice. People are talking about Yemen, but no one knows what Yemenis think or how they feel," said Fahima Al-Fotih, SAVE Yemen coordinator.

"With the increasing media coverage that portrays Yemen as a training ground for terrorist activities, a hub for extremism and a state about collapse, many

Yemeni women have expressed their concerns regarding the worst. Mothers have started warning their kids not to play on the streets, fearing the terrorist activities," said Bilqis Hanash, a journalist.

"Fear and concern are natural," said Asma, a university student. "As women shoulder more responsibilities in their families, women are main victims of what is going on. Women as mothers and sisters suffer when a member of the family loses his path and goes towards extremism. Extremists often impose their extremist beliefs on the female members in their families, preventing them from receiving an education and working," said Yassera Al-Shahari, a member of SAVE Yemen.

Moreover, many women in Yemen are illiterate and unable to understand

the reasons behind the ongoing conflict in Sa'ada with the Houthis, the unrest in the southern governorates, and the emergence of Al-Qaeda.

This lack of knowledge and awareness makes women "the victims of fears and worse expectations from the unknown," said Nadia, a university student.

Samia Al-Aghbari, a university lecturer, pointed out that violent extremism in Yemen is not just religious. It is independent of religion, nationality, political or social affiliation, and many women are often victims of such extremism, as they stand powerless within the family and the state to stop the phenomenon.

Participants revealed their concerns over the ongoing security, economic breakdowns, which can aggravate the human rights condition in general, and women rights in particular, saying that women should be empowered to be able to face extremism.

Yet many international reports indicate that women in Yemen are facing systemic discrimination and endemic violence with devastating consequences for their lives.

According to a November 2009 Amnesty International report, the rights of Yemeni women are routinely violated because Yemeni laws as well as tribal and customary practices treat them as second class citizens.

"Instead of recognizing women as equal citizens to men with equal rights, Yemen's Constitution in Article 31 describes women as 'sisters of men,' an expression with cultural and traditional connotations, supporting the supremacy of male family members over females. This phrasing falls far short from acknowledging women's equality, which is their right under the international human rights law," said the report.

"Discrimination against women in Yemeni legislation is also reflected in family law, the exercise of male authority, and the lack of respect for women's personal integrity. In some instances, discrimination amounts to gender-based violence, such as extreme restrictions on woman's freedom of movement, and forced marriage of girls and women by their male guardian," said the report, which elaborated on the Yemeni law saying that it



Yemeni girls race in a school yard. Social norms in Yemen restrict women's participation in public sports. Yemeni women rights activists say that social cultural and legal restrictions are holding women back from combating extremism.

eliminates the role of women and creates social and cultural attitudes that discriminate against women.

Besides amending the laws which eliminate the role of women in society, the participants called for "an immediate needed changes in the education system in Yemen."

"Curricula and attitudes of some teachers towards women's rights should be addressed. Yemeni women still suffer from the misconceptions related their rights to education, work, and even their personal appearance. In university classes, for example, you find that some professors continue to promote the stereotypical roles and certain dress codes for women. Such attitudes nurture extremist thoughts and fade women initiatives to change the society," said a participant.

The participants shared and cited real stories of women targeted by their extremist relatives and also of women who lost a family member to violent extremism.

The participants recommended legal and psychological support for such families, that usually feel stigmatized and tend to isolate themselves.

They also emphasized that schools, mosques, media, and non-government organizations should not talk about extremism as a phenomenon without addressing its roots and helping individuals to face it.

"Empowering women, comes first. Once empowered, women will then be able to combat extremist activities and terrorism within their families, and communities," concluded one of the participants.

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Confrontations in Sa'ada ongoing

By: Mohammad Bin Sallam

SA'ADA, Jan. 24 — Confrontations between Houthis and the Yemeni and Saudi forces are ongoing.

Informed forces from Sa'ada said that the Saudi and Yemeni forces have not been able to expel the Houthis from their strongholds.

The sources added that Houthis are controlling around 70 percent of their sites including the old city of Sa'ada.

According to the Saudi deputy of Minister of Defense and Aviation, Prince Khaled Bin Sultan, Houthis are in contact with Al-Qaeda in Yemen.

He said in an interview when he visited his troops, positioned between the mountains of Al-Dood and Al-Dokhan, that they are working on establishing Saudi military sites in Jizan, an area adjacent to the Yemeni border confirming that they will withdraw all forces by the time the war comes to an end.

Prince Khaled added that the bodies of 20 Saudis out of 26 had been found, denying what was reported about a Saudi plane having been shot down in Al-Dood mountain.

"We believe that Houthis have received training tactics and support from another country because the ammunition they have now cannot be attained," he said. "They have received this training tactics in another place which we know very well."

According to analysts of guerilla warfare, the prince means the training

tactics used by Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel in 2006.

For their part, the Houthis have said that the Saudi air force has launched around 3800 missiles on areas like Al-Malaheeth, Shatha, and the mountain of Al-Dokhan.

A statement by the Houthi leader's office said that the Saudi air force on Wednesday launched about 21 air raids after which the Saudi forces were seen to be trying penetrating into the Al-Majda'a village.

Furthermore, the statement added that the Saudi air force launched around 3,700 missiles on Tuesday on the mountains of Al-Dood and Al-Dokhan. During the air raids, battles took place all the day long on land.

Areas in the Sa'ada and Amran governorates witnessed intensive confrontations between the Yemeni forces and Houthis.

Houthis attacked a site controlled by the Yemeni army in Al-Mazalena, in which they seized all weapons and ammunitions they found, according to the statement.

The Yemeni army's website mentioned that on Thursday, the army took control of Al-Mahdana to the south of Sa'ada and seized farms in Al-Abara, Sa'ada. The website mentioned also that Houthis sites in areas like the Damag valley and Al-Malaheeth were destroyed.

The army's website added that the army could also take control of a car

full of ammunitions belonging to the Houthis. In addition, the army attacked a car used for communication among Houthis.

Houthis say leader alive

Rumors about the death of Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi has spread among the media. Houthis, however, deny this and published a video on the Internet showing their leader in good health.

They denied allegations which say that their leader's leg was amputated after he was injured. Abdulmalik Al-Houthi appeared in a video with no apparent injuries and none of his legs amputated.

The Houthis have said that the government wanted to spread these rumors as a tactic of war.

Government news agency Saba said that lately 8,900 families have fled their homes recently due to intensive confrontations.

Around 157,000 people lost their homes since the beginning of the war in Sa'ada, according to a report by the United Nations.

The UN report also mentioned that the media is not allowed to cover the situation in Sa'ada.

In a related subject, Houthis demanded President Saleh resign. Houthi spokesperson Saleh Habra said, "We ask him to keep the peace in the country, or else he should present his letter of resignation."

Yemeni-Gulf conference discusses Yemeni labor in the Gulf

By: Mohammad Bin Sallam

SANA'A, JAN. 23 — Under the motto of "the past, present and the horizons of future," the Yemeni-Gulf conference was conducted in Sana'a last Tuesday.

The conference was conducted by the Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies and attended by the media, politicians and academic people.

During the conference, Yemeni and Gulf researchers presented eight working papers in four work sessions, in which they discussed the issue of Yemen's joining the Gulf Countries Council (GCC).

Mohammad Al-Afandi, the chairman of the Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies and the coordinator of the conference, explained that the conference is intended to enhance all positive sides of the relationship between Yemen and Gulf countries. He said that practical strategies are expected to be established to improve the political and economical relationships between Yemen and the Gulf countries.

Many politicians and academics have considered promoting Yemeni labor in Gulf countries as a practical step to help Yemen join GCC.

The participants called on Gulf countries to support Yemen and encouraged all political parties to participate in the dialogue, which is considered as the safest way to help Yemen avoid wars that may affect it and the neighboring countries in a negative way.

Abdul Kareem Al-Eryani, the con-

sultant of president Saleh, said that the Yemeni-Gulf relationship issue carries a lot of weight as it affects the whole Arab region politically, economically and humanitarily. He added that everyone should collaborate to lift Yemen up to a place free of challenges and dangers.

Umar Al-Hassan, the chairman of the Gulf Center for Strategic Studies, said that the present crises, in addition to its negative impact on Yemen, calls for all the Gulf countries to help Yemen overcome the problems that might affect the Gulf countries in a way or another.

As for the Yemens' eligibility to join the council, he commented that some find Yemen to have a great economical and geopolitical opportunities, while some, find Yemen unqualified to be a country of the Gulf council, for many reasons, one of which is Yemens' inferior economical activities as compared to the economy of the Gulf countries.

Furthermore, Yemen rears political diversities and tribal distinctions which were clear in the wake of the war against Houthis, not to mention the prevalent phenomena like kidnapping and holding weapons. Moreover the Yemeni administrative and corporation structures are very humble when compared to those of the GCC.

In his working paper titled "The Yemeni-Gulf relationships from a Gulf prospective", Al-Hassan mentioned the quality and quantity differences between the gulf and Yemen and dis-

tinctions such as the demographical imbalances and the humble economical activities in Yemen, in addition to the illiteracy and health care rates and educational progress.

Khaled Al-Dakheel, a Saudi expert, said that Yemen should stop exporting its crises to the neighboring countries pointing at the war that affected the Yemeni-Saudi political relationships.

Ali Al-Wafi, an economical expert, said that Yemen needs at least 200-300 billion to qualify itself to be a country of GCC. He said that this is impossible in the short-term given Yemen's deficit that it could fulfill only 20 percent progress as per the London Conference for Donors in establishing projects in order to get donations.

Al-Wafi suggested preparing a program to uplift Yemen to the standards of Gulf in which Gulf countries fund projects in Yemen.

Abdul Rahman Ba Fadhil, the former Yemeni Minister of Industry and Trade, dragged the Gulf Countries attention to the fact that the Yemeni labor force is better than the labor force coming from non-Muslim countries.

Aidroos Al-Naqeeb, the head of the Communists in the parliament, pointed at the crises caused by the state which crippled Yemen's development.

Naser Al-Awlaqi, the former rector of Sana'a University, confirmed that transparency is the best policy to be conducted regarding Yemen's joining the GCC saying that the sooner the better.

Yemen in our hearts

By: Mahmoud Assamiee

Sana'a, Jan. 24 — "Because Yemen is in our hearts, we have announced the establishment of the National Awareness Authority," said Aref Al-Zoka, Executive Director of the authority.

"Our aim is national awareness as a means of securing our homeland and fending against plots threatening its wellbeing," said Al-Zoka, in a ceremony held last Sunday, inaugurating the National Awareness Authority (NAA).

Composed of five committees, the authority will work in public awareness raising, especially awareness raising among the youth, guiding them onto a righteous path and awakening in them a sense of national loyalty.

"Destructive thoughts have invaded our homeland bringing with them instability impeding the interests of all Yemenis. This calls for all Yemenis to resist this invasion with souls full of national loyalty," said NAA's executive director.

The ceremony was attended by nearly a thousand participants; ministers and senior officials led by the Prime Minister Ali-Mujawar, representatives of different organizations, civil society organizations, activists, intellectuals, dignitaries, Sheikhs, VIPs and many other senior government employees (directors, managers and deputy managers, etc.).

"We are establishing an important national role at this critical stage," said Prime Minister Ali-Mujawar. He also said that establishing the authority is a very important step considering that it targets the youth.



The NAA and civil society organizations, together, hope to carry out specific roles towards guiding the young minds away from devious thoughts rooted in extremism and onto the righteous path of the unity of the republic and democracy.

The NAA aims to realize the following:

- Contribute to studying and diagnosing the causes and solutions to the phenomena of extremism, violence, doctrine and political fanaticism
- Actively contribute to fighting intellectual, sectarian and regional fanaticism, as well as discarding all forms of violence and terrorism, through public awareness raising and promotion of moderate thinking and tolerance
- Participate in building a generation committed to the teachings and principles of Islam, and especially those related to loving and protect-

ing the homeland.

- Actively contribute to deeply inculcating and enhancing principles and values of national loyalty.
- Coordination and cooperation with concerned interior and exterior bodies to undertake programs geared to safeguard national interests.
- Coordination and cooperation with state institutions and civil society organizations to realize principles and foundations of NAA.
- Active contribution to building public awareness in order to eradicate socially harmful phenomena, such as those with potentials to harming Yemeni values and moralities.
- Positively contribute to building educational, environmental and health awareness.

The National Awareness Authority is private, non-governmental and non-profit authority, established on 1-1-2010 for sole purposes of national awareness raising.

The Yemeni Riyal stabilizes after sharp decrease

By: Ali Saeed

SANA'A, Jan. 23 — The dollar value went back against the Yemeni Riyal to YR 208.78 for buying and YR 210.22 for selling after rising to its highest level on Wednesday and Thursday, when it reached YR 221 for buying and 217 for selling.

Responding to the requests of the commercial banks and money exchange companies, the Central Bank of Yemen (CBY) offered, on Saturday, USD 200 million to meet the demand. USD 150 million were bought by the commercial banks and money exchange companies, according to the CBY website, thus taking the total dollars sold by the CBY, since the beginning of January till date, to a total of USD 364 million, including the USD 214 million sold by the bank, earlier on January 12.

The sharp increase in the rate of the

dollar against the YR in the recent days and the fluctuation of the YR against other currencies is because of the general instability in the country and the growing panic among people regarding the deflation of the YR, said an economist.

"The local increase in demand for the dollars comes as Yemenis no longer trust the Riyal, especially in context of the recent incidents in the country and the western media blowing up the Al-Qaeda in Yemen," said Ali Al-Wafi, a Yemeni economist with 20 years experience on Yemen's economy and former chairman of the financial parliamentary committee.

"Panicking at news referring to Yemen as a 'failing state' or that on the 'threat of the Al-Qaeda', Yemenis, hasten to exchange their YR savings into dollars, resulting into a huge demand for dollars and hence an inflation in the

price of the dollar," explained Al-Wafi.

According to Al-Wafi, the huge flow of local capitals outside the country attributed to the current instability in the country is another crucial factor responsible for the deflation of the YR.

The economist claims that the fluctuations the YR witnessed in the recent years, are due to the unclear and rather ambiguous monetary policy of the CBY, where the CBY sometimes intervenes and sometimes does not, the depleting oil resources and hence the consistently reducing foreign reserves of the CBY, and the political, economical and security issues of the country which further aggravate the situation.

The economist strongly feels that serious and comprehensive institutional reforms are the only solution and that "without such reforms, Yemen will, within two years, head towards an economic and financial catastrophe".

Yemenis call on international intervention to end piracy in the Gulf of Aden

By: Ismail Al-Ghaberi

SANA'A, JAN. 20 — Participants in the recent seminar on piracy in the Gulf of Aden agreed that Yemen needs international help to fight the Somali pirates in its shores.

The seminar was organized by the Diplomatic Institute of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last week. Participants also emphasized the importance of enhancing the capacity of the Yemeni coast guards.

Moreover, participants appreciated the government's efforts to establish the Piracy Controlling Center in Sana'a which is supposed start operating in March in the capital Sana'a. The center will be responsible for surveying the Yemeni costs and the international marine paths to protect ships.

"Yemen gives Gulf of Aden and Red Sea security and stability special concern in its plans to ensure easiness in marine trade activity," said Foreign

Minister Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi during the last Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation meeting which was hosted in Yemen July last year.

"Yemen shoulders the responsibility for protecting international maritime activities in the Arab Sea and the Gulf of Aden, combating piracy and working on restoring Somali peace and stability. These are the real solutions to piracy," he said then.

In 2007, 25 ships were exposed to piracy attacks, in which ten succeeded. In 2008, around 111 ships were exposed to piracy attacks and during the first half of 2009, 114 ships have been exposed to piracy attacks.

"Over 5,000 people are operating as pirates in the Gulf of Aden," said First Deputy Chief of the Russian Navy General Staff Oleg Burtsev on Saturday to Ekho Moskvyy radio station.

The civil war in Somalia which started in 1991 in addition to the weakness of the Somali government, its inability

to control its costs in additions to the unemployment and poverty, are the main reasons of piracy, according to the participants.

More than 25,000 merchant ships pass through the gulf each year, and 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. According to a government report cited July last year by the Yemeni national news agency Saba, piracy in the Gulf of Aden has cost Yemen USD 350 million, a sum that includes USD 200 million in losses suffered by fishermen. Other losses include the costly piracy insurance purchased for Yemeni ships.

Saba said that Yemen has secured its regional waterways despite dealing with a fragile economy, using scarce funds to enhance its marine forces by building security centers along its coast and by purchasing boats worth more than USD 150 million.

SNACC refers dozens of officials to the prosecution

By: Mahmoud Al-Harazi
For the Yemen Times

SANA'A, JAN. 23 — The Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption forwarded about 57 employees for public prosecution due to their refusal to submit their financial statements to the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption, said Mohammed Hamood Al-Matari, Head of Asset Deceleration Sector.

These government employees hold senior management positions, and have important financial functions in the Ministry of Finance, the Tax Department, Customs Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the Agricultural Cooperative Credit Bank.

These employees refused to submit their financial statement, in spite of the Authority for Combating Corruption addressing and mandating them to submit their statements. The SNACC has demanded the Attorney General to forward these employees to the Public Prosecution Funds in Sana'a, and carry out legal procedures to start the criminal proceedings against them.

According to Al-Matari there is an agreement between the SNACC and the General Prosecution to establish a criminal prosecution specialized in the corruption cases.

"the criminal prosecution will be just specialized in the government is-

sues especially the corruption in the public money, and the public job. The Criminal Prosecution is under construction and soon it will work on forwarding the lawbreakers of the country," Al-Matari added.

The Financial Disclosure Law punishes the lawbreaker by imprisonment for not more than six months, if the lawbreaker delays or forbids to submit the financial statement after being informed about it. In case of repetition the punishment would be dismissal from the position, based on the law No. 30, article 24 for the year 2006 of the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption.

Next week about 18 employees from Ministry of Public Health and Population will be forwarded for public prosecution in cases of violations related to the bids of the Ministry of Public Health and Population, according to Al-Matari.

The Agriculture Cooperative Credit Bank employees as well as some other employees from the other ministries have already been suspended from their work. Some others have not been suspended yet but will be suspended soon, Al-Matari added.

Al-Matari praised the Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council Essam Abdel-Wahab Al-Samawi, as well as the Supreme Judicial Council members who presented their financial statement

for the second time to the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption.

On January 19, 2010, the Supreme National Authority for Combating corruption forwarded, more than 20 government employees, including general managers, and deputies of ministries for public prosecution in cases of financial and administrative corruption in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Electricity and Ministry of Public Health and Population, according to Al-Matari.

The charges against the involved employees have been proved by the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption. The charges were about using the public jobs, breaching their duties, fraud of administrative procedures related to the bids and purchases, as well as causing the country huge losses of money, according to Al-motamar net.

The Complaints Department in the Supreme National Authority for Combating Corruption had received about 600 complaints until the end of 2009, said the General Director of Complaints Department, Azil Abdullah Hashim

The complaints included violations in several government agencies and varied between individual complaints and press notifications in addition to dozens of complaints received via internet, according to Hashim.

In Brief

SANA'A
Yemen, WTO to hold new talks in Geneva soon

The Republic of Yemen and World Trade Organization (WTO) will hold the 7th talks session on Yemen accession into the Organization in Geneva during 25-27 June.

In a statement to Saba, Chairman of the Communication and Coordination with WTO at the Ministry of Industry and Trade Hamoud al-Najaar said that this talks round has a big importance as Yemen has made a remarkable progress in the accession by signing a bilateral agreement with Australia in October 2009 to join the WTO following years-long negotiations.

He noted that this round will be headed, for the Yemeni side, by Minister of Industry and Trade Yahya al-Mutawakil and will hand over all documents answering questions presented by the Organization members to the WTO General Secretariat.

"The answers Yemen will present are the grounds on which meetings of work team meetings are based for Yemen to access the WTO and this is what is conducted with each country seeking accession into the Organization," al-Najaar said.

He noted that Yemen committed, through the answers, to the WTO rules and accession requirement in accordance with demands of the Organization members in a way that does not contradict with economic and development potentials of Yemen and in line with the special and preference treatment stated in the Organization agreements.

Al-Najaar expressed aspiration of Yemen to achieve greater progress in the coming round, particularly that members of the work team has agreed to move to drafting the team report, wishing the round be an additional step in Yemen accession into the WTO in 2010 directly reflecting investment attraction in Yemen.

Yemen film about al-Qaeda in US Film Festival 2010

A documentary film about al-Qaeda by

Yemeni journalist Mr. Nasser Arrabyee will be screened at the Sundance Film Festival 2010, which started January 20, in the United States.

In a statement posted on his blog, Arrabyee was the producer of the 95-minute documentary film about al-Qaeda and Guantanamo detainees, which was directed by American filmmaker Laura Poitras.

The film, which is called The Oath, will be screened from 22 to 31 of current January in the Salt Lake City, Park City, and Sundance Resort in the State of Utah in the US.

The Oath was filmed over two years in Yemen and Guantanamo Bay, and tells the story of two Yemeni men whose fateful encounter in 1996 set them on a course of events that led them to Afghanistan, Osama Bin Laden, 9/11, Guantanamo, and the US Supreme Court.

Three films premiering at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival - Last Train Home, My Perestroika and The Oath - will have their national broadcast premieres on the award-winning POV documentary series on PBS, it was announced by Simon Kilmurry, Executive Director, American Documentary POV.

Unraveling like a lush, gripping novel that constantly subverts expectations, The Oath is the interlocking drama of two brothers-in-law, Abu Jandal, Osama bin Laden's former bodyguard, and Salim Hamdan, an ex-prisoner at the US-run Guantanamo Bay Prison and the first man faced the controversial military tribunals, whose associations with al-Qaeda in the 1990s propelled them on divergent courses.

The film delves into Abu Jandal's daily life as a taxi driver in Sana'a, Yemen, and Hamdan's military tribunal in Guantanamo Bay prison. Abu Jandal and Hamdan's personal stories—how they came to serve as Osama bin Laden's bodyguard and driver respectively—act as prisms through which to humanize and contextualize a world the Western media demonizes. As Hamdan's trial progresses, his military law-

yers challenge fundamental flaws in the court system.

Yemen, SFD to discuss financing agreements

Yemen and Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) are to discuss the agreement drafts for financing projects of water and sanitation sector in eight cities in Yemen.

Upon his departure for Saudi Arabia on Saturday, the undersecretary of Planning Ministry for Programming Projects Sector Abdullah al-Shater said that the visit comes in response to invitation from the SFD to discuss also the other projects financed by the Saudi government under the Saudi pledges in London donor conference held in November 2006.

Al-Shater said that the agreements would be signed initially and the two sides would agree on the agreement drafts that would be signed finally during the meetings of Yemeni-Saudi Coordination Council next month.

Moreover, al-Shater will convey a letter from Planning Minister Abdul-Karim al-Arhabi to the SFD's deputy chairman Yussef al-Basam on possible means to enhance the bilateral relations, he said.

HUDAIDA

Two boats missing in western Yemen

The west-based Coastguard said it had received an alert from the elder of fishermen in Alaraj area in Yemen's province of Hudaida that two fishing boats went missing in the Red Sea, the Interior Ministry's Information Bureau reported on Friday.

The two boats sailed from Warsha island on January 11 and they have never come back yet, the elder told the website, adding even there was no trace of them.

The ministry said a search was organized for the boats after circulating the incident to fishermen living in areas near Alaraj to help find or at least know something of the boats and their crews.

Piracy has recently soared off Soma-

lia with Somali pirates attacking hundreds of ships passing in the region.

Several pirate attacks on Yemeni boats were reported late last year in the Arabian and Red Seas in southern and western Yemen.

Few days ago, Yemen said it was equipping a regional anti-piracy center located in Sana'a that would be opened in the first quarter of this year.

LAHJ

Yemen, India discuss investment cooperation

Yemen and India discussed here on Saturday areas of trade cooperation and possibility of investing in technical industries, agricultural and fisheries fields in the province.

During his meeting with the Indian trade delegation from Banjul State, head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Lahj Hussein al-Wardi briefed the delegation on the benefits and opportunities provided for foreign investors.

He also highlighted the volume of investment in different basic industries and manufacturing areas in Lahj province.

AMRAN

Ten-year-old retaliates for dad's execution shooting five in Yemen

A Yemeni child has shot five people in the northern province of Amran, with some of the five left in critical condition, security officials in the province have said.

The ten-year-old boy waited for the five outside the jail after a court sentenced his father to death, laying ambush against and shooting them by a firearm he hid under clothes. He was later arrested by guards of the prison.

The Interior Ministry's Media Bureau also reported that the motive was only revenge after the father, Hamid Jabir Al-Hamshali, was executed by firing squad along with another man after the two were convicted of deliberate murder of a man in the province.

Their News

U.S. Embassy Assists in Conflict Areas of Northern Yemen

The Office of Food for Peace of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has signed a \$5 million food aid agreement with the World Food Program (WFP) to support WFP's Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and Conflict-Affected Persons in Northern Yemen. This agreement provides 6,400 metric tons of wheat, vegetable oil, and beans to aid over 150,000 Yemeni civilians negatively affected by the continuing conflict in the north. The commodities will be distributed over the next six to nine months by WFP and its implementers in Yemen.

In the past year, USAID has provided over \$8.4 million in emergency assistance to those displaced by the conflict in northern Yemen. In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migra-

tion has provided \$4.4 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to assist displaced Yemenis in northern Yemen with non-food assistance, and \$1.5 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide food, shelter, medicine, water and sanitation to conflict-affected populations.

The U.S. Embassy has called on both parties to the conflict to ensure the security of civilians and humanitarian aid workers in the region and the safe passage of emergency relief supplies to those in need.

MEPI 2010 Youth Summer Leadership Institute

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Youth Summer Leadership Institute is a fully-funded five-week intensive leadership training program in the U.S. for

undergraduate students between the ages of 20-24.

Participants develop leadership and collective problem-solving skills, exploring U.S. history and culture to expand their leadership skills and knowledge.

The Institute consists of hands-on leadership training workshops, academic sessions, site visits, community service projects, optional homestays and other opportunities for interaction with Americans peers, and other cultural activities.

The program runs in the summer of 2010. It includes a two-day orientation in Washington D.C., a four-week academic residency program at a U.S. university or college, and a one-week educational study tour to other regions of the U.S.

Students will also participate in an alumni conference held in the Middle East or North Africa in early 2011. The conference is fully funded, including international airfare, travel within the United States, accommodation, food, and program fees.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Participant must be a Lebanese citizen, living in Lebanon, and attending school in Lebanon
- Participant must be 20 to 24 years old as of July 1, 2010
- Participant must be proficient in English
- Participant must be Mature, responsible, independent, open-minded, tolerant, and thoughtful
- Participant should have a strong interest in learning about the United States

Applications:

- Check the following site: http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/scholarships/mepi_summerinstitute.html to download the application form
- Applications are due to the U.S. Embassy by February 1, 2010 - late submissions will not be considered
- Applications can be hand-delivered or submitted electronically to BeirutPD@state.gov

Call for the Gulf & Mid East Directors/Producers

A new Middle East - Europe Training: Interchange - TFL/DIFF/EAVE Development and Co-production Workshops.

The aim is to build cooperation between film professionals from Europe, the Gulf countries and selected countries of the Middle East (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen), selecting 12 teams of writer/direc-

tor + producer and bringing them together for 2 residential 4 and 5-day workshops, one in Torino in April and one in Dubai in December.

The training is designed to match the needs of:

experienced professionals who want to develop their skills by concrete work on their projects, under the expert guidance of international tutors, and who are ready to share their ideas with colleagues and involve themselves in discussions in order to improve and increase their knowledge.

for more details check: <http://www.media-desk.eu/uploaded/20100112104226-interchange-2010.pdf>

Full Scholarships for Graduate Study, MASDAR Institute, Abu Dhabi

Full Scholarships for Graduate Study at MASDAR Institute in collaboration with Massachusetts Institute of Technology at Carbon Neutral, Zero Waste City

The MASDAR Institute of Science and Technology in Abu Dhabi is pleased to announce full scholarships to highly qualified graduate students from around the world for its Fall 2010 intake

The MASDAR Institute is the centerpiece of the MASDAR Initiative, a landmark program by the government of Abu Dhabi to establish an entirely new economic sector dedicated to alternative and sustainable energy. The MASDAR Institute is a private, not-for-profit, independent, research-driven institute developed with the support and cooperation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). MIT provides assistance in recruitment of faculty members and senior administrative staff and the provision of course curriculum, amongst other matters. The Institute is located inside the world's first carbon neutral, zero waste Masdar City which will be powered solely by alternative energy, mainly solar energy. Eighty-eight students from 22 countries were admitted into the Fall 2009 intake, all on full scholarships.

The Institute offers MSc programs, and in Fall 2010 is planning to start PhD programs in science and engineering disciplines, with a focus on advanced energy and sustainable technologies. It welcomes and encourages applications from qualified students and provides scholarships to talented students who meet its high admission standards.

Details of faculty profiles, current research, programs offered, course description, scholarships, and other information including an online application module is available at www.masdar.ac.ae.

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Email: gordonblackie@qsi.org Web site: <http://yem.qsi.org>

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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invites Yemeni Nationals to apply for the following position with its Project "Economic Diversification Support Programme (EDSP)"

Post Title: National Tourism Project Manager
Duration: one year renewable
Duty Station: Sana'a

Responsibilities:

- Provide leadership and strategic thinking to ensure proper implementation of project activities
- Overall management and planning of the implementation of the project's outputs and activities
- Provide substantive inputs to the project activities;
- Assist in the projects' resource mobilization initiatives
- Manage and administer the day-by-day operations to ensure the effective implementation of the activities of above mentioned project
- Initiate coordination with relevant national organizations, private sector companies and civil society initiatives where necessary
- Undertake all necessary financial arrangements, processes, request for authorizations, payments and ensure financial accountability
- Collaborate with the Programme Support Coordinator to prepare and arrange for Project Board Meetings.
- Coordinate with the other components of the EDSP project;
- Prepare annual and quarterly work plans, annual and quarterly progress reports and Terminal Report.
- Participate and contribute to the capacity development activities undertaken under the project;
- Supervise all staff assignment and consulting agreements.

Qualification:

- At least 5-7 years working experience preferably in the field of tourism in Yemen
- 5 years experience in project management in the public or private sectors.
- Advanced university degree in tourism, international development or a closely related field. First level university degree in combination with a qualifying experience may be accepted in lieu of the advanced university degree
- Proficiency in English and Arabic Languages spoken and written.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Computer literate.
- Resourcefulness and strong networking skills.

Only Online Applications will be accepted.

Interested candidates are requested to apply online via our website at <http://jobs.undp.org/>
Response will only be made to short listed candidates.
The deadline for receiving applications is Saturday, 06 February 2010.

CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL

Creative Associates International, Inc.
Yemen Community Livelihoods Project
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Creative Associates (CA) a US-based international development firm is proposing a multi-year multi-sector \$65 million high profile Community Livelihoods Project (CLP) designed to support USAID/Yemen Mission's 2010-2012/Yemen strategy. CLP will focus on mitigating some of the key drivers of instability in Yemen through the facilitation and implementation of activities that foster quality government service delivery, job creation, responsive local governance and active civic participation. Innovative approaches and activities will be designed using a community mobilization model that results in community-based initiatives that address the needs of underserved communities in Yemen. These activities will be implemented in communities where there has been limited rule of law and will be undertaken in ways that build trust and relationships between these communities and the government authorities.

These are senior-level positions. Candidates should be fluent in English, have strong professional references and prior USAID or other donor program management experience. Interested Yemeni candidates are requested to send their cover letter and CV via email with **VANCANCY - (POSITION)** in the subject line to **RECRUITMENT@CREA-CH.COM**

- Director of Finance and Administration
- Director of Program Operations
- Grants and Contracts
- Procurement and Logistics
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Community Mobilization
- Health
- Infrastructure/Engineering
- Gender
- Agriculture development
- Small business development
- Local Governance
- Training and Capacity Building

International Summer School 2010, Odense

State, Society & Citizen - Cross- and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives on Welfare State Development
Odense, 15-20 August 2010
Call for papers for Ph.D. students
Deadline 1st February 2010

NCoE NordWel and NCoE Re-Assess in cooperation with the Centre for Welfare State Research, University of Southern Denmark, organize an international summer school in Odense, 21-25 August 2010.

The aim of the summer school is to stimulate discussions across disciplines and thereby foster innovative cross-disciplinary and multi-perspective research. To this purpose the Summer School bring together Ph.D. students and well-established scholars in scientific exchanges.

Distinguished international scholars lecture in thematic sessions on:
*Religion & the Welfare State
*Immigration & the Welfare State
*The Service Sector in the Welfare State
*as well as Agency & Welfare State Development.

We invite Ph.D. students from different disciplinary backgrounds both within and outside the Nordic countries to participate in discussing the development of the welfare state, its preconditions, present status and how we ought to study it. Ph.D. Students present their papers in parallel sessions and get feedback from senior scholars and junior colleagues.

We welcome paper proposals by Ph.D. students on the themes of the thematic sessions as well on welfare and the welfare state more generally.

Papers are selected on basis of their quality. Papers can be written from a broad historical or contemporary perspective and from disciplines such as sociology, history, social policy, political science, and political philosophy. Participants who complete the summer school successfully are credited with 6 ECTS credits.

Course fee
The Course fee is 100 Euros. Accommodation is financed by NCoE NordWel and NCoE Re-Assess. It is possible to apply for a travel grant after a confirmation of acceptance by the organizing committee.

How to apply
Ph.D. students interested in participating in the summer school should send an abstract (½ page) for a paper proposal and a short biography (including list of publications) by email no later than 1 February 2010 to coordinator Tina Drejer: tidr@sam.sdu.dk.

For inquiries, please contact the organizing committee:
Assistant professor Patrick Emmenegger: emm@sam.sdu.dk
Professor Jon Kvist: kvi@sam.sdu.dk
Professor Klaus Petersen: klaus.petersen@hist.sdu.dk
More info: http://www.sdu.dk/Om_SDU/Institutter_centre/C_Velfaerd/Summer%20School%202010/Call%20for%20Papers.aspx



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Beirut	Bella Rive Suite	721\$	1154\$	*4
Damascus (O/B)	Fardoss Tower Hotel	885\$	1341\$	*4
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Mumbai	Hotel Sahil	889\$	1374\$	*3
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Dubai	Sadaf	747\$	1270\$	*3
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- Our ME&M and MIT&M programmes are developed and supervised by an international network of experts.
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- The courses of the ME&M and MIT&M programmes are taught by highly qualified international professor members.
- English language is the language of teaching.
- The Master programs in MIT&M & ME&M are specifically designed to equip students with the highest level of skills in a postgraduate setting.
- In our programmes, academic standards are carefully maintained to ensure the integrity of the degree gained.
- The CGS programmes basically aim to provide the country and the region with highly – professional, honest and quality conscious graduates.

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The MIT&M program aims at lifelong learning, global competitiveness and development of skills in information technology and management.

The ME&M and MIT&M programmes are designed to fit working schedule of professionals from all Yemeni cities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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JUST ANOTHER DAY IN THE CAPITAL (15)

Akhdam, the forgotten people

By: Judith Spiegel
For the Yemen Times

Four small dark skinned children are feasting on small plastic cups of chocolate paste, the ones you find at the breakfast buffet of a hotel. The children did not find them in a hotel, nor are the cups full. They found them on the garbage belt near their homes and now run with their little fingers through whatever chocolate is left in the cups. Their mothers and fathers collected the garbage and brought their loot home, to see if there is still anything useful or edible in it.

The children belong to the akhdam, "servants" in Arabic. The akhdams are distinct from the majority of Yemenis by their African features. They are ranked at the very bottom of Yemen's social ladder and face discrimination and marginalization. They have no access to labour, they can only work as street cleaners, a governmental job which is given to them on a day-to-day basis. Their living standards are

generally below that of the average poor Yemeni. There are at least 1 million akhdam living in Yemen, of which 100,000 live in Sana'a, in slums at the outskirts of the city. Like in Dar Salm, in the south of Sana'a, not far from the royal palace.

There, four slums are erected between modern buildings of schools and a private university. The slums consist of tiny houses made of wooden planks, jerrycans, blue tarpaulin, pieces of cloth, old suitcases and every other imaginable or unimaginable building material. Dirty children walk through the stinking heaps of garbage and human waste. Women - many of them pregnant - collect water at the only well and men hang around their houses.

Many Yemenis believe that this extreme poverty is wilfully chosen by the akhdam. According to them the akhdam do not want to be part of Yemeni society, not even of the poor part. It is true that many akhdam do not send their children to school because their parents consider it more useful if they beg in the streets, or find

some food somewhere. Or because they believe that their children will at most be street sweepers anyway, so there is no need to send them to school. But are these signs of self inflicted poverty or of a deep rooted lack of confidence?

Someone who knows the akhdam community of Dar Selm very well is Ishraq, 31. She is a doctor at a small clinic, located in the middle of the four slums. The clinic is run by Millennium, an American based non-governmental organisation. Ishraq distinguishes three categories of akhdam. The first group sees the difference between them and the "normal poor."

"They are the ones who know there is something better in life but do not know how to get there", Ishraq says. The second group does not want to be like the others. "They are preconditioned, and too afraid of normal life." Thirdly, there is the group who just lives from day to day. "They are the majority. They think they have a closed bag of choices, that their life is the way it is and nothing can be done about it."

This total lack of confidence - for that is what it seems to be - may be explained by history. The akhdam have most probably always been a marginalized group. While their origins are unclear, they are widely believed to descend from Ethiopian soldiers who invaded Yemen between 100-600 AD. The soldiers were hated by the Yemeni people so when the Ethiopian invasion failed, they were forced to take the worst jobs and thus became slaves and servants. Despite slavery being abolished in Yemen in 1962, the akhdam have not been able to ascend to a higher position in society. 1,500 years of submission may very well explain the deep rooted lack of confidence and the high level



of ignorance among the akhdam.

Ishraq's work in the clinic mainly consists of explaining the basics of hygiene and good food to her patients. When a mother walks in with her little daughter, Ishraq gives a fine example of this public health education. The girl has lost weight since the last time Ishraq saw her. The mother explains that her daughter refuses to eat, so there is nothing she can do. Ishraq is furious. "Then you force her to eat, you are the mother! And not only rice and potatoes, but also vegetables and proteins."

Malnutrition is the most common problem Ishraq has to deal with. It drives her mad sometimes, since it is not necessarily the lack of food but the lack of common sense that causes the death of many of the children in the slums. "Like the myth that children

should be given water so they will learn how to talk. If you give water to baby's under 6 months, they will most certainly get diarrhoea, the water is dirty and so are the bottles or cups used. Furthermore, the water rinses the mother milk out of their intestines." Ishraq shakes her head in disbelief and gives her next patient, a pregnant woman, a tetanus injection.

It is difficult for Ishraq and her colleagues to bring fundamental changes to the akhdam community. They provide relief but they would prefer to do more, to provide development. This is easier said than done. Fatalism and lack of confidence stand in the way of real improvement. Ishraq remembers a project of some NGO's, in the 80's. They built an apartment block for the akhdam in Taiz. "The akhdam moved

in and were provided with furniture, fruit, vegetables, everything". After a month, the aid workers came back to see how it was going with their project. "The akhdam were gone, the whole building was stripped, even the washing basins. They sold everything and went, for they did not trust it, did not believe that the situation would last."

Outside in the slums a little girl is walking through the garbage, only wearing a dirty red sweater. She is looking for some food. Inside one of the houses a young man is tied to a rope to prevent him from running away. When working on the garbage truck he witnessed a horrible deathly accident and now suffers a severe shock. He needs psychological help, but there is no such thing in Dar Salm.



Students run away from school to Internet cafes

By: Saddam Al-Ashmori
For the Yemen Times

Around eight o'clock in the morning, adults wait outside an internet cafe for a free seat because students in green or light brown uniforms occupy their chairs instead.

Despite governmental instructions to prohibit children and teenagers from entering Internet cafes in school uniform, school students are increasingly found at their computers during school hours.

Abdullah Al-Najjar, an adult, said that he used to go to an Internet cafe in the morning. However, he now cannot find a spare computer, as school students use the Internet there in the morning instead of going to schools.

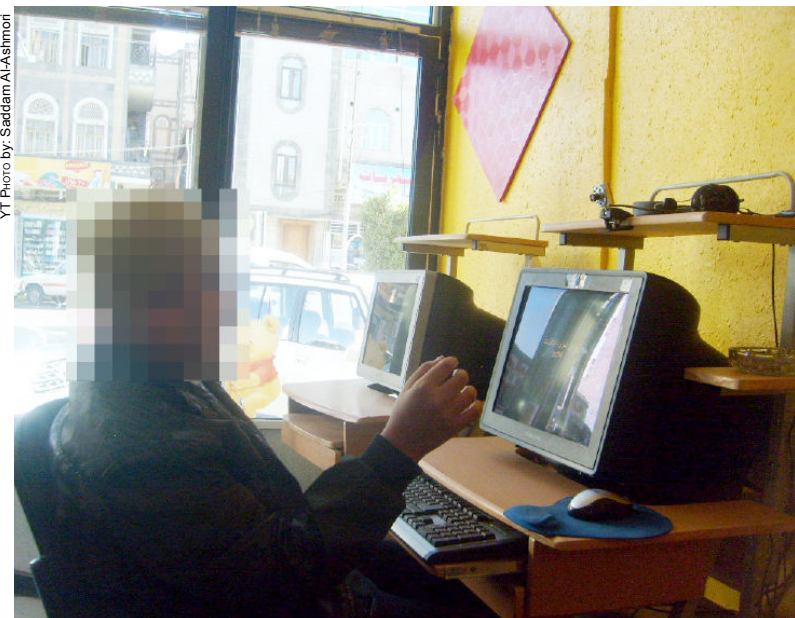
Ninth grade student Hosam said that when he is late for school, he is punished. He prefers to seek shelter in one of these Internet cafes, rather than being punished by his teachers.

"Out of six months of school, I only attend two months," he said. "I manage to pass exams by cheating."

Kamal, an Internet cafe owner, said that he cannot prevent school children from using the Internet. He said that he is not their teacher but a small business owner who wants to make money, and added that if he ordered them not to come to his shop, they would surely find another one.

Khaleel, another student, was pessimistic about his future. He said that finding a job after graduation is difficult and that there is no point in studying for a university degree, as some university graduates end up working in restaurants or selling fruit and vegetables from wheel barrows in the street.

Yahya Al-Haimi, a school guard, said that sometimes the wall of the



Schools are unable to retain students because they do not organize interesting activities, according to a sociologist.

school is short enough for students to climb over it and escape school with their friends.

Parents said that teachers should be responsible for keeping their children in school.

No'man Al-Hakeem said that the teachers should ask for students if they are absent. He added that schools do not call parents if their child is absent to find out why they missed school.

Teachers however blamed student's absence from the classroom on the school curriculum. They said that the workload is too much to handle for students, which is why they choose to spend time with their friends in Internet cafes instead.

Mohammad Salah, a school principal, said that parents should bear the major responsibility of keeping their children in school. He also called on the government to pay

more attention.

According to an academic in Sana'a, schools are unable to retain students because they do not organize interesting activities.

He added that entertaining excursions could uplift the spirits of students and persuade them to attend classes.

Bilqis Al-Maswari, a sociologist, said that boredom is the main reason why students hate school: "Students look for alternatives like Internet cafes where video games are available."

Al-Maswari commented that schools should contact the parents of absent students to find out why they do not come to school.

She said that teachers were responsible for students not attending class because they were unable to deal with them, but that parents also shared the blame for not paying enough attention to their children.

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إعلان

يعلن البنك الأهلي اليمني عن حاجته إلى خبير مؤهل في مجال إدارة نظم التكنولوجيا والمعلومات .

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- وضع خطة إستراتيجية المعلومات والتأكد من انسجامها/تطابقها مع إستراتيجية البنك. وتوفير التوجيه والموارد والخبرات من أجل تطبيق الإستراتيجية بصورة فعالة.
- إدارة الأنظمة والبرامج الموضوعة لمعالجة المعلومات في البنك.
- إعداد أدلة العمل والسياسات والإجراءات الخاصة بتكنولوجيا المعلومات.
- إدارة المشاريع والمخاطر الخاصة بتكنولوجيا المعلومات.

المؤهلات والكفاءات والخبرات المطلوبة :

شهادة ماجستير في العلوم المعلوماتية أو ما يعادلها.

شهادات متخصصة في مجال الكمبيوتر (أنظمة - برامج - شبكات - امن المعلومات)

اللغات :

الإنجليزية والعربية (قراءة وكتابة وتكلم) أما الفرنسية تعتبر إضافة قيمة .

الخبرة :

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المهارات الإدارية :

القدرة على التخطيط والتنظيم والإشراف والقيادة لفريق العمل وتحمل المسؤولية وحل المشكلات والتفاوض.

ملاحظات :

سيخضع جميع المتقدمين للمقابلات الشخصية وسيتم المفاضلة بين جميع المتقدمين في المؤهلات والخبرات والإمكانات .

على من يجد في نفسه الكفاءة والرغبة عليه تقديم الطلب مع سيرته الذاتية والوثائق المؤيدة إلى الإدارة العامة (دائرة الشؤون المالية والإدارية) - عدن شارع الملكة أروى .

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ت - 252429/02 - 260897/02 - (فاكس 252974/02)

البنك الأهلي اليمني
National Bank Of Yemen



إعلان

يعلن البنك الأهلي اليمني عن حاجته إلى خبير مؤهل في مجال الشؤون القانونية.

أهم المسؤوليات:

- الإشراف على معالجة القضايا القانونية ذات الصلة بالنشاطات المصرفية (العقود والاتفاقيات، الدعاوى القضائية).
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- مراجعة قانونية الأنظمة واللوائح الداخلية للبنك.
- مراجعة العقود والاتفاقيات التي يكون البنك طرفاً فيها والموافقة على قانونيتها.
- إعداد وتحديث السياسات والإجراءات الخاصة بدائرة الشؤون القانونية.
- الإشراف على أعمال الدائرة القانونية بالبنك.

المؤهلات والكفاءات المطلوبة:

ماجستير في الحقوق مع تخصص في القانون المصرفي والتجاري.

اللغات:

الإنجليزية والعربية (قراءة وكتابة وتكلم) أما الفرنسية تعتبر قيمة مضافة.

الخبرة:

لا تقل عن عشر سنوات في مجال القانون المصرفي والتجاري والقوانين الأخرى ذات الصلة بأعمال البنك منها خمس سنوات في مركز إشرافي من ضمن مؤسسة رائدة أو مكتب محاماة رائدة.

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القدرة على التخطيط والتنظيم والإشراف والقيادة لفريق العمل وتحمل المسؤولية وحل المشكلات والتفاوض.

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القدرة على استعمال الحاسوب بما فيها استعمال برامج مايكروسوفت المكتبية والبرامج العائدة لعمله.

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Words of Wisdom



Many countries hold elections. Even when these are not rigged, they tend to cement the old patron-clientele relations in a new grab. The reason is that the people in power use their connections (and state funds, media, bureaucracy, etc.) to achieve the election results they want. The result is that they create docile parliaments. Elections thus end up enabling those in power to hold on to it.

Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf, (1951 - 1999)
Founder of Yemen Times



OUR OPINION

Asking God to do our work

Every Friday, Muslims have a prayer assembly which includes a sermon by the imam. Usually this sermon does not exceed half an hour, although some imams tend to talk more. It is also usually about a local affair such as describing some practices noticed lately among the locals or social habits or even political events. It always includes, however, a part where the imam urges the worshippers to revert to God and repent for their wrong doings. It ends with supplication usually for the benefit of the president and leaders asking God to support them and give them guidance, and definitely destroy their enemies and the enemies of Islam.

Most imams repeat themselves. They talk about the same issues in the same way over and over again, boring their audience and causing them to doze off. But what is most interesting is the lectures by some imams who supposedly feel for their communities and demand a better life for them.

"Oh God Al-Mighty, please reduce the prices!" one imam was crying out during a Friday sermon. Religious preachers are very influential in Yemen because Yemenis are conservative Muslims who give a lot of power and authority to religious men. Yet those men, speaking on behalf of God, many times misuse their influence and lead their communities towards passiveness and apathy.

This imam who is entreating God to come down to earth and reduce the prices is only one example. Many others call on God to stop wars, help the students pass their exams, grant the daughters good husbands and so on.

I am not saying there is anything wrong in asking for God's help and guidance, but come on, requesting a reduction in the prices is one prayer that deserves first place in the competition for being passive.

Yemenis revert to God in most of their doings and what happens to them. You make an appointment with someone, and he or she says: "in sha'Allah" [God willing] and does not show up. Apparently this "in sha'Allah", was supposed to do the trick and if God had wanted the meeting to take place, he would have sent angels to drag the person and take him/her to the appointment on time.

Yemenis blame fate for many of the mishaps in their life. It becomes God's will that someone failed on an exam, or got fired. And although it is true that God runs the universe, it is also true that he delegated the responsibility on earth to mankind. And asking God to reduce prices is simply ignoring the fact that we, as human beings, should have the will and strength to run our own lives the way we want.

The way Islam is portrayed and used among Yemenis is one of the main reasons why Yemen is one of the least developed countries in the world. The culture does not encourage entrepreneurship, volunteerism and initiatives. People are very passive and their habit of sitting about chewing qat for hours every day is only making matters worse.

What would help Yemen become a better place? Certainly not more prayers asking God to come fix things for us, but perhaps more dedication and interest in our own lives and taking action to make it better. It is time for our preachers and religious men to step up and instead of being human sedatives, act as real agents of change.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Soccer fans and their mess (2)

By: Suleiman Raise Bauzer
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A week ago, when the second monthly tests were over, I said to myself why I shouldn't go to the creek or Cornish to inhale a fresh freeze air, or in fact to forget the test's phobia which sometimes stuck in our minds.

As I set off my journey from my university's hostel to the creek, I reached in, moreover, I started on foot from the right bank hoping to reach the end and take the other sightsee to reach the left bank to get a bus and come back nevertheless, while I was walking enjoying my picnic I got disturbed by a loud crossfire negotiation between tow men, one who is about in his forties with his son sitting on the stool "I know that we got defeated last night ok? But, we are going beat you in the next derby match" the sitting man shouted to the second standing man who was near him leaning on the blue fence of the creek.

At the same time when I fade away them to go on, but I actually I ceased my walking on the way to sit on another blue stool, which are many of them.

Such reason like this hard dissection with a careful speculations, which reflects a shocking image to our urban community especially those as matures men.

I can understand from their dialogue that they were talking about the last night's match with a serving and strange analyses and wasting their time by repeating their point of views on things which could end up with a dreadful results and could disturb the visitors, couples and students like me, who came to rest and get relaxed, the women who want to be a little bit faraway from the confine which maybe twenty four hour they are at home as well.

Do you think those sensible aged men are just free to talk or else discuss regarding the soccer games over and over as a jobs or entertainment hours? Of course, it is quite not, because they are quite mature and have wives and children to be concerned about.

Like the son who I have said above ,who was with them while their crossfire arguing ,as a fine listener for their conversation , quite sure this adult is going to be spoiled in my opinion for one most obvious reason ,is that, since the father is screaming , shouting and stressing the importance of matches and soccer as a specific ,the child (the victim) is going to extol the same significance of the soccer and it will fix in his mind for good.

Through most different views this child also is going to imitate with his friends, buying some T-shirts and getting angry for the father's side without any realization of the father seeing that is a small kid.

When moment in time like that, this extremist fan father must enroll and send his son to the mosque to be taught since the hard dissection took place- at about six o'clock pm - freely or to other different institutions to learn computer and languages, involve in other activities or at least should avoid taking him to listen such dissections which may possibly cause a awful thought for the kids in general.

By this kind of caring for the kids, they are going to be the leaders of tomorrow

In addition to the obeyed ones for the families and they will achieve the expectations that fathers and mothers want.

This occasion reminded me about the pain that I had suffered, therefore once again I would like to disclose my secret for you readers like I actual teenager wounded player, who used to play this devil game, which causes to me tow weakness the first one, I got my left elbow hurt while exercising , the other one the time and money, in which I regret now through wasting reading the sport newspaper and magazines.

Confirming and conceptualizing this diminutive and valuable experience if you let to me to pronounce and write down, it is not a matter for inciting you to put aside or discontinue the sport not at all, nonetheless, for those who are like me when I was regard the soccer as the supreme during his life and engage all his time and effort toward it, to meant for exist in his red blood, "It is as a target passion designed intended for our youth, brought by Western" when my classmate Waleed said ,while we were debating the issue of the cause of soccer last week.

What's more, it is a suggestion form a regret ex-addicted soccer team member as well as fan , designed for those

who are the fans, when they act in return or get wrought-up for the matches, while and after it is over to outcome through quarrel in addition to be furious by the both feeling and emotions.

On other hand most of them are students in colleges, schools, or workers if they are compulsory to work to cover their study expenses or families.

Ultimately, this fundamental importance of games comes from the media /social framework, the top-people with our business men, who utilize and waste their obvious interest and wealth plus the leaders, who put it in a self-righteous and huge thing to their countries, in which its citizens are in an urgent and vital demand to eliminate and get rid of the last uneducated citizen in the country

At this point another regional event it is scandal event when the former player for one of Saudi Arabia clubs who is Hassan Keita , when he made a wrong and the referee sent him out by the red card, and then Keita has signed by his hand for impolite signal, in which he forced to leave the Kingdom.

The strange thing is the other team's fans were shouting against him, while his team' fans were standing for him while he was leaving the field.

Is not that scandal? To be reacted by a professional player like him or even other one and why Saudi authority made him leave the country immediately.

Consequently that football for us as Arab is not merely a game, it is also matter of dignity and culture, therefore our admiration to those non-Muslims player is not eliminated.

On the other hand, why do the admirers who all stand in the stands on feet to say or to see his last step of the field as a great respect, forgetting what he has just signed for against the other fans.

Football admiration by Arab is nowadays is exceed even by the women who was found a lot of them in the last decades by joining the fans ,when we don't used to see that habit.

On the stands of the stadiums ,who do you think affected them and encouraged them to go outside?

Or where is the man who let his wife go such places like that?

Is not that football adoration? Which forced us to watch with entire family?

Now let us move to the few days before the match between Egypt and Algeria "Fifa should have postponed Saturday's tense World Cup qualifier between Egypt and Algeria after the visiting team bus was attacked in Cairo", said the Algeria midfielder Khaled Lemouchia (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2009/nov/16/egypt-algeria-world-cup-qualification>)

He was completely right because that match which in the world cup qualifying match was very tension to the both countries.

In addition to, as a fresh evidence of how this match was going to the cause of war to the both teams, and how the fans were tensed and angry!.

Surely am not pessimistic toward these football matches, but am wondering how much concern do we have got to admire and prior it.

Plus am not a predictor about what is coming, nevertheless I feel something toward the upcoming Gulf Twenties, which will take place in Yemen, because we are afraid that the Yemeni security will not prevent the tribal members, or the Houthi rebellious who are going to abduct some neighbors players and that will put our government under the trouble with the neighboring Gulf countries, therefore am afraid this soccer matches are going to bring wars for our country, which already is fed up of.

Finally, to say the truth, how many adults watching, reading, browsing and playing the PC football games, and how much concern of our countries toward it all about football, even they want more time to analysis about it.

since football esteem exceed, hence we need at least to eradicate this admirations with suitable ways and different methods at least we should start with our families, therefore, who dares to prove to me that these soccer matches are just kind of completion and different rules planed by Fifa, because I just see the dark side of this devil called soccer, aimed to ruin our youth and families as well, furthermore those pervious stories at least should learn us or learn us lessons, otherwise this approbation will deeply cause our life, if we put it as a paramount ,otherwise as "love is blind"



By: Hamid

COMMON SENSE

In case anyone has forgotten:
In Yemen, there is
a real war up north

By: Hassan Al-Haifi

Apparently, the "War on Terror" has sidestepped all other events in this world and all focus is on Al-Qaeda, especially since a suspected AQ peon managed to get on a plane headed for the USA with some dirty underwear. This latest escapade of AQ phobia, unsuccessful as it was, is a long way off from a number of airplanes being turned into explosive ordnances and ramming into the Wall Street Trade Center twin towers, the US Defense Ministry and the backwoods of Pennsylvania (9/11). God forbid that anything like that should find recurrence in our times or any other times. However, the question of "Has AQ lost its pants?", is almost inescapable as a comparison of 9/11 and the "failed" post Christmas 2009 bizarre bombing attempt is forced upon the observer. Thank God, it was a failed attempt indeed. However, should all attention be diverted from real ongoing bloody encounters, in which scores of human bodies (civilians and combatants) are daily being torn to shreds, in the same country where the Nigerian bomber is alleged to have begun his long range bombing mission (the material must have been irritating to the underwear wearer on such a long journey).

Two states are currently pinned down in a futile project to eliminate a defiant adversary, who remains undefeatable despite the balance of means of the two states and this adversary tilting heavily in favor of the former. This conflict is resulting in high casualties amongst the civilian population of Yemen's northern governorates. Many of these civilians are located far away from the "battleground" areas. It is also clear that Saudi Arabia failed in achieving its declared intention of turning back the "infiltrators" into their territory. Saudi entry in the conflict has given the once "local" conflict between the Houthi fighters and the Yemeni Government (which has managed to remain "local" for five increasingly bloody rounds) regional and international dimensions.

Recent efforts to associate the conflict in the north of Yemen to the Yemeni Government's (and their Saudi counterpart's) "War on Terror" are somewhat intriguing (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/expat/expatnews/6966691/Yemen-using-war-on-al-Qaeda-to-bolster-regime.html>). This effort was given greater momentum at the start of 2009, when Saudi Arabia allowed some 200 of its own suspected AQ "dangerous and wanted men", who were under the "watchful eyes of the Saudi security organs", to momentarily escape those eyes and infiltrate to Yemen (<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/02/05/starr.alqaeda.yemen/>). This happened just a few months before the Yemeni Government decided to embark on a "scorched earth" campaign against the Houthis, at the behest and with all the backing and support of the Saudi Arabian Government. Is there some link between such questionable occurrences? This is apparent, especially since Saudi Arabia decided that the Al-Houthi job needs bigger and stronger boys to tackle it, as the Yemeni Government faced difficulties with its "scorched earth" effort. Of course, both the Yemeni Government and the Saudi Government, hardly consider the Al-Qaeda threat at par with the threat, which both, rightfully or wrongfully, view the Houthis as being. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Osama Bin Laden and the home of origin of Al-Qaeda and all manifestations of Salafi/Jihadi culture. Yemen has been an incubator of such a culture for a number of decades (since the early 1970s), on behalf of, and in consort with the Saudis.

Yemen's war with the Houthis could have probably been managed locally and dealt with in the usual manner of a few engagements on the rocky terrain of Sa'ada and then a truce. Maybe, even a peaceful way out of the seemingly relentless conflict altogether could have been worked out. But it was obvious that this was not in line with the wishes of the neighbors to the North, whether due to ideological considerations or the Saudi perceptions of the regional manifestations of the conflict. The Saudis perhaps felt that they have invested far too much in this drive to eliminate the Houthi threat to have it halted and restarted again (like the five previous rounds). They may have also overestimated their own strength and military prowess. They have unleashed the AQ factor, probably to give them ample cover for the extensive use of all their various firepower capabilities and thus blanket the tragic civilian suffering that is now being witnessed. This civilian "collateral damage" was in addition to the already disturbing high civilian casualties that the Yemeni Government was inflicting. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the United Nations and the ICRC) have all condoned the disproportionate use of force and the unnecessary civilian casualties with respect to both allies (including the direct hits on IDP camps).

Whether the AQ factor is indeed intended for this or not, both the Yemeni Government and the Saudis, individually or collectively have considerable leverage in influencing the direction of the AQ factor. Many observers contend that this factor is being used to take away public and particularly Western attention from the bloodbath in Sa'ada and surroundings, murkily projecting such tragic consequences as of the "War on Terror". This kind of deliberate confusion was tried with the Bush Administration in the earlier rounds of the Sa'ada War. However, it appears that the former US Administration did not buy this mixed-up logic for too long.

Will the Obama Administration in the United States eventually catch on as well? The unnecessary deaths and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Yemeni civilians should not be added to those already inflicted directly or indirectly by the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan. The AQ factor, as dubious as it appears to be, does not justify further senseless and unreasonable suffering of helpless Yemeni citizens with the blessings of the United States, especially in a conflict that is really far away from the anytime callable "War on Terror/Al-Qaeda".

Hassan Al-Haifi has been a Yemeni political economist and journalist for more than 20 years. He may be blogged at: <http://com-senfromyem.blogspot.com>

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The Al-Qaeda storm in Yemen

By: Khaled Fattah
For the Yemen Times

Yemen is a deeply unstable Middle Eastern political entity, with a magnificent landscape and generous people, but with socio-economic indicators that are amongst the worst in the world. Yemen is of significant geopolitical importance as it is strategically located at the Southern tip of a neighborhood of oil monarchies, and lies at the access point to the vital maritime shortcut of the Suez Canal. Yemen has been resting for decades on a knife's edge, and has been known for a long time as a fertile soil for violence. However, Yemen only appears on the surface of the international media and on the desks of senior western policy makers if its chronic instability is crystallized into a threat to western interests. Once these threats have passed, it sinks deeply and for long periods back into obscurity.

During the 2nd half of 2009, Yemen entered more frequently than usual into the regional and international media as a result of the re-eruption of a radical Shiite insurgency along the Yemeni-Saudi borders. The catalyst for the international media coverage of the Shiite insurgency, however, was the assumption that Yemen is turning into an arena for a proxy war between the Sunni Muslim world led by the US ally Saudi Arabia and the Shiite Muslim world led by the anti-US mullahs of Iran. During the same period, a number of security and policy reports expressed concern that militant Jihadists fleeing Pakistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are making use of Yemen's three Cs: chaos, corruption and conflicts, and are sheltering and reorganizing themselves in the ungoverned 'dark spaces' in the eastern and northern tribal areas of Yemen. Some strategic reports went even further to explain that Yemen has become not only a breeding ground for insurgent movements, but also a dangerous base that links al-Qaeda's three main theaters of operation in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

Yemen after Christmas Day

It was the exposure of the link between al-Qaeda cells in Yemen and the Christmas Day plot to blow up an American passenger jet over Detroit, which made

the peripheral and often forgotten Yemen climb to the top of world news, and attract the full attention of the White House, the US State Department, the Pentagon, Downing Street and the British Foreign Office. The statements on Yemen that were issued from these globally powerful and influential political and military seats highlighted the determination to address and uproot the causes of cross-national terrorism and regional instability emanating from Yemen.

It is indeed remarkable how a single Nigerian citizen in his 20s can cause a sudden panicking shift in the foreign policies and international development aid strategies of major world powers towards Yemen, the long-neglected, chronically conflict-infested and least developed state in the Middle East. It is a well known that Yemen's endemic poverty, severe weakness of state institutions, acute scarcity of natural resources, the flourishing of imported extremist ideologies, and political instability have created an ideal environment for al-Qaeda. The question then begs to be asked-why is such a sudden intensive spotlight focused upon understanding Yemen's social structure and economic conditions from major capitals of the Western world? The answer is as simple as this: the Christmas Day plot illustrated how al-Qaeda offshoot in Yemen can reach an American domestic target. Thus, if it can reach an American domestic target, it can also reach any international target. It is only the security of the western world and that of the oil monarchies in the Gulf, which has been, and continues to be, the main determinant of the international community's relationship with Yemen.

For the public in the western world, the plot was a shocking reminder that after more than eight heavy years of the 'war on terror' the horrendous atrocity of September 11 can be repeated, even on a peaceful Christmas Day. The plot, also, resulted in additional security measures for the processing of passengers at airports, including full-body scanners. The latter generated a heated public debate about moral and ethical issues related to human privacy in the 21st century. Questions in this regard included amongst others: what will be the impact of these scanners on conservative women in concealing clothes?

What about passengers who suffer severe psychological body image problems?

For observers of the Middle East, on the other hand, the botched Christmas Day attack is a tough test for Obama's administration. Two main questions are circulating among these observers: will the Obama administration move closer or further away from the Bush doctrine; and how will Washington react to the threat of Al Qaeda in Yemen, while its inherited 'war against terror' remains tarred by risky ambiguities.

Elephant in the Porcelain Shop

Alarming statements by Howard McKeeon, a Senior Member of the U.S House Armed Services Committee, among many others, claim that the US 'no longer have confidence that the Yemeni government has the capacity to assist the US' in providing for the security of the American nation. This statement, and others similar, suggested that Yemen is a new theater for the US-led 'war on terror' encouraged the headquarters of western media outlets to dispatch their war correspondents to the Yemeni capital. The wave of foreign correspondents in Sana'a, the sudden meeting of General David Petraeus, the US regional military commander, with President Salih of Yemen, and the closure of the US and UK embassies, created the impression that missiles and bombs of the US-led 'war on terror' shall be soon heard loud and clear in different parts of Yemen. In the context of the current explosive security, political, economic, religious and regional congestions in Yemen, a military-driven anti-terror strategy is more likely to be a recipe for a long destructive civil war with severe regional repercussions, than a method for uprooting terror cells in Yemen. Counter terrorism cannot be achieved by a «destroy-the-village-to-save-it» attitude and actions.

A short-termed US militarized solutions will further open the gates for a flood of global Jihadists, who are not necessarily supportive of Al-Qaeda, but are still volunteering to be candidates for death. On the 14th of January, the Association of Yemen Clerics, headed by the Sheikh Abdulmajeed al-Zindan, issued a warning, signed by 150 influential Islamists, that they will call for a holy war in the event that the US invades Yemen. Similar warnings, state-



ments and religious decrees are likely to ripple to other parts of the Muslim world if American ground troops are sent to Yemen. The appearance of these troops on Yemeni soil will substantially swell the ranks of extremist recruits, not only from the Middle East and the Horn of Africa but also from South East Asia and even Europe. Many of these recruits will be more than willing to act as human bombs. A direct US military intervention will also destroy the very delicate balance, which the government of Yemen maintains between its allegiance to the US, on the one hand, and the domestic tribal, Islamist and political forces that resent U.S. policies in the region, on the other. Damage to such a balance carries the risk of regime collapse, leading to total chaos and anarchy at the door of Saudi Arabia, the world's top exporter of oil and at the gateway to one of the most strategic shipping lanes. From a tactical and military point of view, Yemen is a paradise for guerrilla warfare that hosts one of the most heavily armed populations on earth. For the majority of Yemenis, a Kalashnikov is as practical and very dear to the heart

as a bicycle is to a Dutch person. Yemen is also a country where in some of its parts, even the presence of central government troops is perceived as an intrusion.

Yemen's Human Security

The terror, which Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula poses to western and regional interests, is much less damaging in capacity and scope than the danger associated with a civil war resulting from a direct US militarized intervention in Yemen. The history of the post September 11 counterinsurgency makes it clear that it is impossible to win an insurgency through the use of military force alone. Neither the US, nor the Yemeni central government will be able to win the struggle against Al-Qaeda in Yemen without a clear and comprehensive strategy that focuses on human security and on filling the power vacuum outside Yemen's urban centers. Furthermore, no national or foreign fighting force, or a combination of them, can achieve a successful counterinsurgency strategy unless the host government is viewed as legitimate by the majority of its people.

The vast tribal areas of Yemen are the ideal environment for the protection and support of Al-Qaeda fighters, precisely because of the legitimacy crisis of the Yemeni state. The latter has failed to extend its authority and services throughout the country, coupled with a lack of improvement in the harsh daily lives for the majority of the Yemeni population. To disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al-Qaeda in Yemen, the US and its western allies' counterinsurgency strategy should not only be about the number of Al-Qaeda fighters killed or arrested. Instead, it should be, above all, about building an effective Yemeni state that can control its national territory and deliver its citizens much craved for basic urban services, job opportunities, democratic participation, reconciliation at local level, and economic development. In dealing with Al Qaeda in Yemen, a people-centered view of security, hence human security is essential for national, regional and international security.

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Somali traffic: A smuggler's story

With mounting violence and escalating refugee numbers, human smuggling is a growing Somali business.

Abdinasir Mohamed Guled / The Media Line

Each week hundreds arrive. Most of them Somalis and Ethiopians, they seek to flee East Africa for Europe or the Middle East in the hope of escaping violence and poverty. Bossaso, a small port town surrounded by ancient buildings in the north-eastern Puntland region of Somalia, is witnessing a boom in human trafficking.

Because of its post on the main smuggling corridor in northeastern Somalia, Puntland has one of the highest rates of human trafficking in East Africa.

But while Bossaso's regional government runs the local administration

and handles security, human smuggling is one of several issues over which it is suspiciously silent.

"Our operations are well-coordinated and the government's efforts to block us amount to nothing," one smuggler at the Bossaso harbor told The Media Line under condition of anonymity. He points to one of the wooden boats his colleagues used to smuggle people out of the country.

"I hope to build good hotels in Puntland and then I will stop this dangerous work," he says clutching a long stick for beating immigrants in the sea on his hands.

Like many smugglers, he took up this work for the opportunity to earn easy money by driving immigrants across the shark-infested waters of the Gulf of

Aden into Yemen.

Refugees are typically charged between \$50 to \$100 for the treacherous journey. Some refugees are lured from nearby bus stations by smugglers promising to lead them to a better life.

But these promises are rarely fulfilled. More often than not, smugglers are all too happy to take their fee and abandon the migrants at the slightest indication of trouble. Many of the migrants fall victim to human traffickers, who hold them against their will and force them to work in the bush lands of Saudi Arabia.

Hundreds die at sea every month and for those who do survive, the sad reality is often arrest, deportation and refugee camps. Those who succeed as migrants, usually do so having attained poor jobs with no legal status and little freedom.

Abdirahman Haji Nur, a Somali analyst in Puntland, said that the majority of the thousands of immigrants who die at sea are under 18 years old.

Tsegaye Gilu, a young Ethiopian man, stands under an old crumbling building clutching a small tattered bag in his left hand. He fled Ethiopia by road to reach Bossaso hoping to catch a boat to Yemen.

"I'm trying to get to Saudi Arabia via Yemen to get a good job and find a better life," the dark-skinned, tall 20-year-old told The Media Line.

Gilu, who survived tragedy in the Gulf of Aden, was repatriated from Saudi Arabia, but says he won't turn any work down. It's his only chance to send money back home to his family in Jijiga, the capital of Ethiopia's Ogaden region.

"Work is work," the famished-looking Gilu says as he sits on a stone next to a ramshackle building. "I have been in towns where I have no money, job or life. I'm ready for any employment regardless of the conditions involved."

While some Yemeni villagers have tried to help the new arrivals, care for the sick, rescue those drowning and

bury the dead, the Yemeni government has responded differently. Most Somalis are sent to squalid refugee camps. Ethiopians and Eritreans can expect arrest or deportation, and reports have emerged lately of the Yemeni government forcing Somali migrants to fight against the Houthi rebels in northern Yemen.

These days, smugglers are extra careful to search every passenger, banning everything beyond small biscuits and two liters of water for the long journey ahead.

It is commonplace for smugglers to throw migrants overboard, even pregnant woman and children. Over-laden boats often sink in storms or in calmer waters from the sheer weight of their cargo.

In 2007, Gilu remembers, one of his co-passengers managed to smuggle a gun aboard the boat. When the smugglers started beating some of the immigrants, throwing some in the sea, the armed refugee shot one of the

armed smugglers and another two who were beating passengers. News spread quickly and searches and brutality have since been stepped up.

"If you don't inspect them they will pick up weapons and kill us," one refugee smuggler, who asked to remain anonymous, told The Media Line.

Despite the fact that human smuggling would be easier to curb than other crimes in the region, not a single person has been brought to court, fuelling widespread suspicions that Puntland regional officials are involved in the smuggling.

As Bossaso authorities were telling local media that they were cracking down on illegal migration, closing ports and confiscating immigration boats last year, the numbers of smuggled persons surged at the same time.

"We have begun to stop the trend of human-trafficking," Muse Gele Yusuf, governor of Puntland's Bari region told The Media Line. "We're forcing immigrants to go back to their countries."

Cosmetic changes and Islam

By: Dr. Terry Lacey

A forum of 250 East Java clerics, leaders of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) have just issued an edict from a conference in Kediri forbidding Muslims from dying and straightening their hair, and from pre-wedding photo sessions. (The Jakarta Post, 16.01.10).

University student Ulfa Damayanti, 19, rejected the attempted fatwa and said, "Hair coloring and straightening are just a matter of fashion, and have nothing to do with ones level of faith," having just completed rebonding treatment at a hair stylist in Surabaya. (The Jakarta Post, 18.01.10).

Cleric Darul Azka said that hair straightening was regarded as haram for women because it could invite immoral acts if the intention was to im-

prove one's appearance.

Darul said a woman was allowed to change her appearance if she intended only to please her husband, and that she must ask for her husbands consent before doing so.

"So, there should be no excuse for unmarried women to change the shape and color of their hair. This prohibition is also aimed at preventing Western cultures from influencing Muslim youths in Indonesia". (The Jakarta Post, 16.01.10).

Although press reports referred to the edit from the East Java network of clerics and boarding school directors as a fatwa, this local network has no authority to issue fatwas, or binding religious edicts, and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has neither endorsed the edict on hairdos nor has it been officially requested to do so. However the Indonesian beauty in-

dustry got another form of endorsement last week from Jean-Paul Agon, the CEO of French-based cosmetics giant L'Oréal who confirmed that Indonesia is one of the countries that "will very soon represent the majority of the business of L'Oréal worldwide" alongside China, Brazil and India.

L'Oréal has long seen 90 percent of its business coming from outside France. In quarter three of 2009 sales in Asia reached \$716.18 million, an 11.4 percent increase, while European sales dropped 2.4 percent.

"The beauty market in Indonesia is growing very fast. The two markets in the world with the highest growth in 2009 were China and Indonesia, both at 12 percent, which is fantastic. There is no crisis in the beauty industry in Indonesia," he said.

He added that he expected this kind of growth to continue for some 20

years. The company is building a second factory in Indonesia and investing \$50 million.

L'Oréal local president-director Jean-Christophe Letellier said the company held the third biggest market share in Indonesia.

Agon confirmed the L'Oréal marketing strategy would be to go deeper into distribution and make mass products affordable for the world's fourth largest population. (The Jakarta Post, 18.01.10). This decision to aim down market reflects confidence that poorer people, as their income rise, will buy these products.

Conservative clerics in Indonesia seem to be on a collision course with broad economic and social trends in this 250 million strong majority Muslim nation.

Even in the previously poorer rural areas incomes are rising, consumer-

ism is rapidly spreading and society is challenging the social and declining political power of conservative clerics, whose economic power base is being eroded as pockets of rural poverty are diminished.

Yet with slightly better education and contextualization Muslim clerics, including the conservatives, and lay leaders could make a far greater contribution to challenging the excesses of globalization and modernization in far more intelligent ways.

This would best be achieved through debate and positive advocacy instead of trying to ban things left, right and center as if clerics can stop the tide of history.

Indonesia needs a proper debate on the rise of the sex industry, HIV and Aids, and what can be done to help girls get out of this, and perhaps to change the behavior of men.

Islam can make also make a tremendous contribution to the environmental debate.

Since there are so many issues that could unite Muslims instead of pitting the conservatives against the Muslim majority it seems a pity that there are not greater efforts to help the conservatives, who are understandably frightened of change, to seek adaptation strategies that will help to address contemporary issues in more constructive ways, instead of taking up positions that leave them marginalized, subject to public ridicule, and which may inadvertently undermine the credibility, role and relevance of Islam in a modernizing majority Muslim society.

Terry Lacey is a development economist who writes from Jakarta on modernization in the Muslim world, investment and trade relations with the EU and Islamic banking.

The struggle of young Egyptian artists in natural colors

In *Natural Colors*, Egyptian director Osama Fawzy's latest film, has caused a stir. Among its critics, students and staff from the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cairo where the film is set have protested at "a distortion of their image on the big screen." Reem Shawkat went to see the controversial film.

By: Reem Shawkat

Extracts from the film "In Natural Colors," by the Egyptian director Osama Fawzy's. A few weeks ago, I was told that a new movie featuring art students had come out. An avid art lover, I rushed to the movies to watch art students paint and try to interpret, re-interpret, and reflect on their paintings.

I was excited. The actor playing Yousef, the film's main character, was my classmate in sophomore year. We took history of the theatre and drama classes together. Yosra Al-Lozy, his co-star, also went to my university. I took a class with her brother and I became acquainted with her mother when I organized a poetry night.

Finally, I believed, my generation, with all its contradictions, frustrations and attempts at escapism, was going to be represented.

The film opens with a clip of a young man by the name of Yousef, played by Kareem Qasim, reading verses from the Holy Quran, then praying to God. His prayer resonated some of my own prayers four years ago before taking my final high school exams.

Yousef is facing a serious dilemma too common to ignore in the Arab world. We are introduced to his mother's dream, to see her son become a doctor, and to his dream, to become an artist.

Yousef is fragile. He is sensitive to his single mother's sacrifices and he wants to please her, but there is one problem. He can't pass chemistry to save his life. In fact, organic chemistry makes him hallucinate. He is living in limbo. He can either pass chemistry to please his mother or follow his number one passion, art.

Yousef, like other young Arab men and women, is torn between his dreams and a society that sees science as superior to social sciences and the arts.

Artists are struggling all over the world, but sadly, in the Arab world, they struggle to secure much-needed resources in the form of grants, residencies and venues to showcase their work. I wasn't an art student, but as a student of journalism and sociology, I struggled to convince others that what I was studying was not easy or unproductive. Art students were met with even more criticism. Not only is art viewed as a major for the eccentric, but its students are written off as elitists living in their own secure bubble.

Chemistry pushed Yousef into the Faculty of Fine Arts. The school is a microcosm of Egyptian society - the ultra-religious with their beards and loud calls for prayers during classes, the westernized urban youth struggling to grasp the glaring contradictions between their religious and cultural heritage and their lifestyle, and the corrupt professors who are willing to sell grades in exchange for sex, money or even valuable resources.

In the film, Yousef leaves the Faculty of Fine Arts to retake his exams. The trigger is nudity as he decides to leave art school because he feels guilty about painting naked bodies. But his inability to do anything other than art eventually pushes him back to art school a few weeks later.

Art is embodied in the bodies of man and woman, declares professor Naeem in

the movie. Always in shorts, summery Hawaiian t-shirts, and with a scooter, his chosen method of transport, Mahmoud Al-Lozy shines in his role as Naeem, the hip and least corrupt professor on campus. He brings in a number of male and female models who strip in front of his class. Yousef is flabbergasted, the veiled girls look away, and the students with beards are too shocked to even utter a word. Naeem is uncompromising and, like Al-Lozy in his theatre classes at the American University in Cairo in real life, is a master at teaching students about art by teaching them about life.

Art vs. religion

Religion is so obvious in Egypt today that it's difficult not to include it in movies. With *Natural Colors* features veiled women and we see prayers or gatherings encouraging extremism, as well as many Muslims struggling to balance their faith with a modern life.

In this movie, the struggle between religion and modernity is portrayed through the voice of youth. It focuses on the internal dialogue of Egypt's youth. They want to party, love and express their love by having sex, but then there is always remorse.

Elham, played by Yosra Al-Lozy longs for Yousef's kisses. She sleeps with him, but cries in his arms after sex. Guilt-stricken, she dons the veil, then covers her face with the niqab. We don't see her face much after that and she disappears from the movie. We only see her tearful green eyes in one scene when she is asking God for forgiveness and then again when she glances at Yousef. She stops returning his calls, because, she says, she has to choose between leading a sinful life or being a Muslim.

The struggle to choose

In my opinion, Elham emulates the main idea of the movie: struggle. All the students and professors are struggling to make choices. Yousef has to choose between medicine and art. He has to choose between alcohol and his prayer mat. He has to choose between being corrupt and selling his art or not.

There is the gay professor with little choices to make, and the young female professor in tight blouses and short skirts having to choose between money and love. A young artist played by Ramzy Lener has to choose between taking responsibility for a child born out of wedlock or living the free life that he thinks he deserves. Yousef's struggle is always connected to religion, and throughout the movie, he is pursued by a sheikh. He haunts him like a ghost, appearing in different scenes and trying to lead him onto the right path. He chases him around to remind him that art is haram. He wants him to make the right choice.

Artists, we are reminded, are frowned upon by society. They are seen as enemies of religion by extremists who outlaw any work of art that is not a mere representation of nature.

Critics divided

I was introduced to the film's director, Osama Fawzy, through his controversial 2004 film, *I Love Cinema*. Set in the 1960s, the story is told from the point of view of a six year old boy, Na'em, who loves cinema.

The main family in the film is a Coptic Christian family, a minority that is rarely represented in mainstream Egyptian cinema. As in *In Natural Colors*, it discusses the themes of freedom, the struggle to make choices, religion and art.

Some critics see Yousef as the grown-up version of Na'em, and the movie as a

continuation of Fawzy's journey to tackle all the restrictions forced on art in all its forms. Whether it is film-making, painting, writing or event performing, the significance of art is often overlooked. But art, contrary to a luxury, is a necessity in all societies that helps them grow and reflect on their development through creative means.

According to Fawzy, "freedom of thought and creativity is a victim of change in society, because of the wide incursion of fundamentalists, even in the Faculty of Fine Arts, which is a symbol of freedom of creativity in the country."

The film was attacked when the trailer came out, and critics established a Facebook group calling for a general boycott of the movie. Art students protested the negative light in which art was presented. Fawzy was shocked at how the movie was received and perceived. He viewed his film as much more than a film about art students, in his view, it was a documentation of Egyptian society over the last 25 years, the time interval was changed to five years to make more sense.

A reflective film

Fawzy's films tend to suffer. Their production time is usually longer than that of commercial films, and production companies tend to avoid artistic films like his because they don't consider them to be profitable.

Commercial films -the majority of films produced in Egypt- are box office successes because they are embraced by an Egyptian population desperately seeking a laugh. Perhaps the economic woes and difficult life in present-day Egypt forces Egyptians to shy away from more serious and reflective movies. They want a funny movie with one or two good songs to sing along to.

More reflective movies are rare, and this is mainly why I was certain that I wanted to watch this one.

As much as it was criticized for its unrealistic portrayal of art students, the critics should be reminded that any faculty or institution is only representative of the society in which it exists.

And *In Natural Colors* doesn't present a new image of artists to the Egyptian public. The image of artists here is already negative.

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"I don't want him, save me!"

Saudi girl married off to 80-year-old man

By: Benjamin Joffe-Walt

Saudi women's rights advocates are outraged after a 12-year-old girl was sold by her father into marriage with an 80-year-old man.

A Saudi father, whose name has not been released, sold his 12-year-old daughter to his 80-year-old cousin for the equivalent of \$22,600. The elderly man, who lives in the city of Buraidah, stands accused of raping the girl after the wedding. He has previously married three other young girls.

"She was raped and they took her to the hospital after the wedding night," Wajihah Al-Huwaidar, a Saudi journalist who has been banned from reporting by the government told The Media Line. "Usually when the girl is very young, the authorities tell the husband not to touch her until after puberty. When he was interviewed, the guy just said she was old enough and he didn't know she would get hurt."

The girl, already in the custody of the elderly man, was reported to have shouted "I don't want him, save me!" when contacted by phone by a journalist from the Al Riyadh, a local newspaper in the Saudi capital. The girl's mother, who had objected strongly to the marriage, took the case to local media after her lawyer's efforts to get it legally annulled failed.

After the case was publicized, the public prosecutor of Al-Qassim Province is said to have set up a special committee to look into the case.

"They say they're going to look into it but nothing will really happen," Eman Al Nafjan, a Saudi blogger and women's rights advocate told The Media Line. "Even if they solve this case, they are not going to recommend a new law to the king. We should set a legal minimum age at which girls can be married."

"Without a law we get people like this 80 year old guy who takes advantage of the system to fulfill his sick obsession with little girls," she wrote on her blog. "Where else in the world can a man openly say that he is in a polygamous marriage with four underage girls and not get arrested? At this rate we might as well start a tourism industry to attract rich Muslim pedophiles."

The girl's parents are divorced and the marriage is understood to have been arranged on the initiative of the father, who told the local newspaper that he did so on the basis of the girl's physical development, not her age.



"This is not at all unique," said Al Nafjan, who has written extensively about similar cases. "In all the cases that have gotten the attention of local newspapers it was because either the mother or an aunt made an issue of it."

"Girls are seen as very risky in Saudi Arabia because they can later shame the family name by sleeping with someone," she explained. "So families often marry off their girls at a young age so they can't shame the family."

"It's particularly common in cases when you have people from the lower economic status who get divorced," Al Nafjan said. "The father usually wants to keep the boys, because culturally they are not seen as risky, and doesn't want to give the daughters to the mother out of spite, so he just marries them off to the first person who'll pay."

The girl currently attends school during the week, when she lives with her father, and spends weekends with her elderly husband at his home out in the desert outside the city.

The 80-year-old husband told local journalists that he had tried to do the right thing by inviting his new mother-in-law (the girl's mother) to the wedding but she cursed at him in response. When asked by the mother's lawyer and the Al Riyadh newspaper why he had agreed to the marriage, the officiator stated that he was under the impression that the bride was 13 and a half years old.

Child marriages in Saudi Arabia have made international news a number of times over the past year. In April there was international outcry when a Saudi judge refused to grant a divorce to an eight-year-old girl who had been married off by her father to a 47-year-old man as part of a loan repayment agreement, and in August a 10-year-old bride ran away from her 80-year-old husband and sought refuge at her aunt's house. After ten days in hiding, the girl was returned to her husband by her father.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Saudi Arabia has signed and ratified, defines a child as any person under the age of 18 and Article 16.2 of

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, states that "The marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory."

Saudi Arabia, which ratified the convention in September 2000, did so with the stated reservation that "In case of contradiction between any term of the Convention and the norms of Islamic law, the Kingdom is not under obligation to observe the contradictory terms of the Convention."

Nadya Khalife, Women's Rights researcher for Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa Division, said Saudi Arabia should set a legal age for marriage.

"We call on all governments to ensure that they have a legal age of marriage," she told The Media Line. "Working from a human rights framework, we believe that early marriage has negative consequences on children, especially girls because it affects their health, education, literacy and economic empowerment skills. The reason we focus on girls is because it is principally girls who are married off at a young age."

Saudi Arabia's religious leadership defends child marriages, often citing the marriage by Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, the founder of Islam, to Aisha bint Abu Bakr, when according to traditional Islamic texts she was six or seven years old. Aisha stayed with her parents for a few years after the marriage, according to most sources, moving in with Muhammad and consummating the marriage when she was nine. Aisha was Muhammad's third of 13 wives or concubines.

Al Nafjan rejects using Aisha as a basis for justifying child marriages.

"It's not allowed in Islam to marry off children," she said. "There is nothing in the Koran that states that children should be married off."

Al-Huwaidar agreed.

"Whatever their religious justification, this is just a way of legally justifying the rape of little girls," she said. "Modern Muslim scholars dispute Aisha's age at the time of marriage, but even if Muhammad got married to Aisha when she was nine, that does not justify applying the same standards to today."

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Anti-corruption civil society coalition to demand good governance

With funding from the World Bank, a coalition of 16 civil society organizations working in the field of anti-corruption has been created in Yemen. The aim of this coalition is to fight corruption and improve service delivery to the Yemeni people. Nadia Al-Sakkaf interviewed Arun Arya, Senior Public Sector Management Specialist at the WB's Social and Economic Development Group, to talk more about this initiative.

In a country where corruption is rampant, what do you really hope to achieve through this coalition?

We aim to enhance the demand for good governance. We want to empower the citizens to demand good governance practices from the concerned authorities. Governance means the procedures and the manner in which a government exercises its authority and interacts with the public. We hope to raise the demand for good governance at the service delivery level, which means, for instance, when a Yemeni goes to a state institution to apply for a license, or admission to an educational establishment or even medical treatment in a health facility. We want this coalition to focus on the problems people face in their interaction with the state through the services delivered by the government.

The World Bank will support this coalition for three years. We hope that during this time there is an enhanced demand for good governance and hence, in response, an actual improvement in the services the public receive from their government.

We hope that this project eventually improves the transparency of procedures and that a level playing field can be created, which is merit-based and is without the favoritism or other factors that currently influence decisions and decision-makers.

To give you a practical example, we hope that through the enhanced demand for good governance, the government will take measures to ensure the effi-

ciency of its staff and how their working hours are duly divided between public interviews and processing paperwork. It would mean that government employees who interact with the public would have to plan their time in a way that allows sufficient time for the public to apply or raise their concerns regarding their issues, while also having enough time to actually process these applications and get things done in an efficient, transparent manner.

Eventually, if governance is improved, we will achieve two goals: reduced corruption and improved service delivery.

These two objectives are the main outcomes we hope to accomplish through this project.

Sounds good, but is it realistic to hope to achieve this much in three years throughout the entire country?

It would be impossible to do everything everywhere. This is why we are targeting only four sectors: education, health, social protection and water. In the beginning we only chose three sectors excluding education. But then the coalition wanted to include education because of its importance. All those sectors have significant impact on the people directly. For example, corruption or mismanagement in any water project would directly impact the citizens who are suffering from the water shortage. Social services cover around seven million Yemenis and these are the poorest of the population. Any mismanagement in this sector would affect them significantly.

At this stage, the coalition is in the process of defining their strategy and action plan. They might also decide to focus on a few governorates in the beginning before expanding to other places.

Moreover, we are not talking about fighting corruption at the higher levels because that would be much more challenging and complicated. We aim at the service delivery level, which we hope will be easier to tackle while simultaneously having much more impact on the daily lives of the citizens.

The civil society organizations will connect with their grassroots and benefi-

ciaries to better understand their needs and demands. The organizations will then document case studies and publicize them using media to propagate those stories. Through exposing issues of poor service delivery and corruption, the coalition would be able to create pressure on decision makers to improve those services.

If the organizations discover repetition or identify a pattern in a certain sector, they could raise the case with the Supreme National Committee against Corruption and demand further investigation into the issue.

They could also coordinate with the concerned ministries to suggest recommendations and demand improved services.

Do you think civil society can be effective in fighting corruption during this current emergency situation where security is the number one priority of the state?

Yes, I do. First of all, we know that we have people in the government who are on board with this initiative. In fact, we are helping the government handle one of its problems which is the economic crisis. We know that we have fewer resources today for the same demands. Increasing the efficiency level of the state run institutions would help utilize the available resources to the optimum level so that the citizens can get the utmost out of the country's resources. This will also mean increased satisfaction at the public level, and hence, indirectly, this initiative would help the security and stability of the country.

The coalition will provide a voice to the victims of poor service delivery and corruption and use media to create demand for better services.

We do understand the risks with such a project. Will there be resistance?

Of course there will be. Resistance will come from the people who are affected negatively by this demand and close scrutiny of service delivery.

We are relying on the fact that this demand will be a community based



Arun Arya, Senior Public Sector Management Specialist at the WB's Social and Economic Development Group.

one, which means legitimacy and public support, as well as on the fact that we are focusing on the lower levels of the government chain of command, which is the one that interacts directly with the public.

For more complex issues which involve going up those levels, we need a larger and more inclusive coalition. This is actually one of our long term objectives through SNACC. Eventually, we aim at creating the National Integrity Alliance which is an outcome of SNACC's long term strategy. This alliance would include not only all civil society organizations but also academia, media and even some government officials who are reformed minded.

The coalition we are discussing today is only a part of this alliance. The coalition will be sort of a pilot project in order to pave the way for further reforms.

Is the civil society coalition ready to handle such responsibility?

We have chosen its members after surveying all civil society organizations working in the field of anti-corruption already, so for them it was not a new task, and many have long years of experience in fighting corruption. We had 34 organizations on the list and we met with them and asked them to be part of this coalition. Some of them did not show interest and declined to join. Only three organizations were willing to join but we excluded them because they did not have the institutional capacity level required to be an active part of the coalition.

The World Bank has contracted Partners International, which is a reputed international organization working in supporting civil society and reform, to provide technical support to the coalition throughout the project and especially now in the designing and planning

stages. Through partners, we have already given them some training, but we hope that the strategy and action plan the coalition comes up with soon will also include any capacity building or training needs.

The World Bank merely provides the financial support without interfering in the priorities or policies of the coalition. Moreover, Partners International will also provide neutral technical support and the coalition will lead it itself.

In addition, we have hired one of the most distinguished lawyers in the country, Mohammed Naji Allao, to help the coalition draft its mission, vision, strategy and internal charter. We also want the coalition to register with the Ministry of Social Affairs for more legitimacy.

You said this coalition will coordinate with SNACC. We heard news that SNACC had some internal problems among its leading team. Is this a concern for the World Bank?

As far as I know, SNACC is still fully functional and although we also heard about the problems among its management committee members, we are continuing with our support for them as long as they continue to deliver. We had some concern when one of its members, Sa'adadin Taleb, quit from the committee. We voiced our concern to them, and they said he quit on his own, and he is most welcome to come back.

Now we are observing what is happening with the team and we still think that it is functional. We will wait and see, but if the team becomes incoherent and dysfunctional, we will continue our support for some time until the situation is rectified.

However, at this time I don't have the sense that the situation will reach that level. The management committee includes strong professional people and everybody is an asset to the organization. They need to put procedures in place to manage the overlaps as well as implement a decision making process so that no discrepancies take place, and the chairman has to lead and provide motivation.

صبراً آل الكهالي

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والده

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بواسع رحمته ومغفرته وأن يسكنه فسيح
جناته ويُلهم أهله وذويه الصبر والسلوان ...
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Silent death in Yemen

Yemeni orthopedist Said Ba-Mashmus is dedicated to raising awareness about osteoporosis in Yemen. Mahmoud Al-Harazi met with him to find out more about the causes, diagnosis and prevention of the bone disease.



Dr. Saeed BaMashmus

“Osteoporosis is one of the most dangerous diseases not only in Yemen but all over the world,” says Yemeni orthopedist Said Abdullah Ba-Mashmus.

“It can resemble cancer because cancer can be discovered easily but osteoporosis is very challenging and its treatment requires a great deal of time,” he said.

Osteoporosis is a condition that causes the bones to lose calcium and bone tissue, causing them to end up being weak and brittle, which means that they break easily.

The complication of a fractured bone is keeping people immobile in bed often awaiting death, which is why osteoporosis is dubbed the “silent death”.

Osteoporosis is widespread all around Yemen and can mainly be found in the elderly of both sexes, male and female, as well as occasionally in the young.

“Not being exposed to the sunlight in the early morning, and the late evening, as well as not getting enough vitamin D, a failure to do sports, and not eating suitable food such as, milk, eggs, and dark green vegetables, are some of main factors leading to the osteoporosis,” said Ba-Mashmus.

Osteoporosis affects women more than men. Women can be affected after

45 years of age or menopause because of a drop in estrogen, but men can also develop the disease after the age of 55 to 60 years, because of a drop in testosterone levels and a lack of physical activity.

Osteoporosis occurs in all human bones but specifically in bones such as the vertebrae, neck, femur (bone of the upper leg from the pelvis to the knee), humerus (bone of the forearm from shoulder to elbow), and wrist.

If an individual feels any pain in one of these bones after menopause or 45 years of age for a woman, and 55 years of age for a man, it is almost a sure sign of osteoporosis, according to Dr. Ba-Mashmus.

Exercise, particularly weight-bearing exercise, is essential in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis because motion strengthens the bone.

The normal cleaning routine at home for women and just taking a walk around for men is not enough to count as exercise. Preventing and curing os-

teoporosis requires a really dedicated exercise program, not just our normal daily activities.

Osteoporosis can even affect people younger than 25 years of age, because of malnutrition, lack of exercise, hormone deficiency, or vitamin D deficiency.

Dark-skinned people are more likely to get osteoporosis than fairer-skinned people. Five minutes a day of exposure to sunlight can be enough for fair-skinned people, while darker-skinned people need more than 15 minutes daily.

Smoking can cause osteoporosis, and can affect smokers directly.

“It has not been proven scientifically that qat is directly linked to osteoporosis, or leads to this disease, but it could exacerbate osteoporosis indirectly in view of the behavior of qat chewers, which obliges them to not move and sit for long periods of time,” said Ba-Mashmus.

Genetic factors appear to have nothing to do with osteoporosis.

Diagnosis

Osteoporosis can be diagnosed in different ways: by DEXA-scan with a new machine that measures bone density, by MRI to discover the location of osteoporosis, and by routine x-ray to examine the quality of the bone.

An elderly person suffering from pains in the vertebrae bones, neck or femur, humerus and wrist bone may be suffering from osteoporosis.

According to Ba-Mashmus, a blood test will not diagnose osteoporosis. Even a person with a high presence of calcium in the body can have osteoporosis, because the osteoporosis is in the bone not in the blood.

Increasing calcium will not treat osteoporosis because the bone building

process is already affected. But it can be treated by doing sports, such as running, riding a bicycle and weight lifting, eating the right foods, and exposure to sunlight.

“Many people and many doctors might not be aware of the danger of this disease,” added Ba-Mashmus.

If somebody is affected by osteoporosis in the spine and this leads to a fracture, this bone will need to be fixed, which costs about USD 5,000.

Raising awareness

“Charitable associations must be established to fight osteoporosis, just like cancer and AIDS associations and others that care for people,” said Ba-Mashmus. “In addition, insurance companies should consider insuring for osteoporosis in Yemen.”

Treatment for osteoporosis is available in Yemen, but is very expensive.

“If somebody has osteoporosis, he would initially require one tablet of bisphosphonate weekly at a cost of about YR12,000 for a year,” Ba-Mashmus explained.

Osteoporosis is a cultural disease related to human habits, and the cure is also cultural.

“Therefore I call on every one who knows about osteoporosis to inform his friends, relatives, and neighbors about the ways to fight it before it becomes a disease which cannot be treated,” Ba-Mashmus added.

“I also call on the government to take care of osteoporosis, and inform the public about this dangerous disease, and about the ways of preventing it through all means available, be it audio, or visual media, newspapers and any other means which can reach the public and educate them about osteoporosis,” he said.

HEALTH WATCH

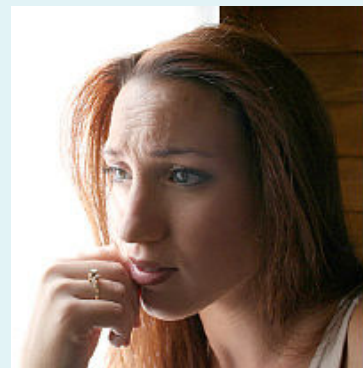
By: Dr. Siva

This weekly column is to disseminate health information to the readers in Yemen and outside. Dr. Siva is currently working at Aden Refinery Company Hospital. Life style diseases and cancer prevention are his special interests. Complementary medicine and Naturopathy are his passions.



Myths and misconceptions in pregnancy

Ansam's parents and her Aunt visited her after they came to know that she is pregnant. Ansam's Aunt recalled how her daughter Gameela took four years to deliver a healthy baby. Gameela had several miscarriages (abortions) in between. Ansam's Aunt imposed a lot of restrictions to Ansam about food and other daily activities. She suggested that Ansam should not go for work and should take absolute bed rest for the first three months, in order to prevent abortions. Ansam was confused.



Pregnancy is a time of joy and happiness.

The expectant parents should be able to look forward to the arrival of the baby, with anticipation and exhilaration. It is a natural event in the life of a woman and therefore should be treated as such. Unfortunately, many couples are filled with anxiety and apprehension, fostered by myths and misconceptions generated by family and friends.

As soon as a woman becomes pregnant she starts being treated like a fragile being who might break if she does any work! This is unnecessary and turns a lovely experience into one filled with unwarranted restrictions.

Let's take a look at some of the most common misconceptions.

Myths in the first trimester (first three months)

- If the fetus has a lot of hair, vomiting will increase- false!
- If you don't eat well in the first three months of pregnancy, the baby will be affected- false

It is difficult to eat well in the first few months of pregnancy. The sudden surge of estrogen in the body causes nausea. It is best to eat whatever you are able to keep down. You need not worry about nutritious value at this time. Eat small quantities frequently and avoid oily and spicy food. Some women cannot stand the smell of butter or cheese in the first few months of pregnancy. It is not harmful to avoid milk and yoghurt at this time. Once your appetite returns to normal, you can start eating nutritiously.

- You should be under complete bed rest in the first three months of pregnancy- False!

This is absolutely untrue. If the pregnancy has formed normally, strenuous activity cannot lead to a miscarriage. On the other hand, if the pregnancy is abnormal and is destined to miscarry, no amount of bed rest can keep it safe! Of course, you will feel very sleepy and exhausted in the first two or three months of pregnancy. You can keep up your usual work schedule and rest whenever you get the time. Complete bed rest, however, leaves the woman feeling unwell and actually leads to weakening of the leg muscles. There is no scientific basis for a pregnant woman to be advised complete bed rest in early pregnancy unless she has had some bleeding. In that case she will be asked to rest for a few days.

- Don't lift anything, you'll hurt the baby! -Not true!
- Lifting things will not hurt your baby. However, if you are not careful while lifting, it can tell on your back though. Avoid lifting heavy objects in the last few months of pregnancy or get help.

Lifting your arms above your head will put a knot in the cord.-Not true! Any suggestion that makes you question the health and well-being of your baby is probably a myth. There is no relationship between arm movement in the mother and the baby twisting and turning.

- Don't use cell phones, microwaves and even computers -False!
- Computers are totally safe. Use them by all means but maintain a safe distance while they are on, just in case. The use of cell phones is safe too.

If you are still not convinced, avoid overuse of microwaves and cell phones. Use them only when necessary.

- Drinking coffee is not safe when pregnant - Not true!
- Coffee in small amounts will not affect the baby, but avoid drinking more than three cups a day. Very large amount of caffeine might result in a baby with a low birth weight.
- You should not climb stairs in the first three months of pregnancy- False!
- Travelling in a taxi or on bumpy roads can lead to a miscarriage- Not True!
- You should avoid sex in the first three months because it may lead to a miscarriage- Not True!

Food myths

In pregnancy, women are bombarded with unwanted 'tips' and warnings that supposedly protect the baby. Most have no basis in scientific fact.

- You should not eat papayas, mangoes or pineapples because they may cause a miscarriage-Not true!

As mentioned earlier, a miscarriage occurs because there is usually an abnormality in the fetus. A miscarriage is Nature's way of preventing the further growth of an abnormal baby.

- Sesame seed (simsame) can cause an abortion- Not true!
- In some cultures, certain foods are considered to have increased 'heat' and supposedly can harm the baby. This has no scientific basis and no food need be avoided.

- You better eat up, you're eating for two. Not true!

Eating for two should refer to quality of the food you eat, not the quantity. That second person you are eating for only needs about 300 calories a day. Your body only needs between 200 and 300 extra calories when you are pregnant (up to 500 near the end of your pregnancy). That is about the amount in one cooked chicken breast, without the skin.

- Salt will make you swell up. Not true!

Salt is an essential nutrient, even when you are pregnant and it should not be removed from your diet to prevent swelling. Some swelling in pregnancy is normal; if your swelling is continuous consider the other foods you are eating to be sure you are getting enough protein and water. Rule of thumb, salt your food to taste. If you take iron tablets, your baby will be dark. Not true! The skin color of the baby is determined by its genes, not by what you eat.

- Saffron makes your baby fair skinned. Not true!

Saffron, when mixed in food actually imparts an orange tinge! No one knows why this expensive spice gained such a reputation in pregnancy. No food that you eat can have any effect on the color of your baby's skin. Skin color is determined by genes. The future characteristics of the baby are fixed on the day fertilization occurs and the fetus forms. The color of the skin, the shape of the nose, the curliness of the hair and its future height are some of the things that are already determined by the genes the baby has inherited from its parents.

- Eating ghee is important because it will make the delivery easy. Not true!

Ghee is an unsaturated fat that will only add unwanted weight and should be avoided.

You are supposed to be blissfully pregnant, but are plagued by countless fears, not to mention the pieces of advice you receive from your well-meaning relatives and friends. Relax. A lot of the things you hear might not have a scientific basis. Before you take anything they say to heart, you'd better be sure that you know the difference between a pregnancy myth and a pregnancy fact.

Sustainable environment projects

By: Mohammad Al-Ariqi

In the late nineties, Yemeni agricultural authorities launched the Developing Forests and Combating Desertification Project funded by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

First-class Yemeni agricultural engineers and researchers in agriculture, forests, water, and desertification worked on the project, which was discussed at length in the media.

A national strategy was formulated after many field studies, and is still considered to be an important source of information on the subject.

I witnessed part of the project and witnessed the enthusiasm of a hard-working team planting vast areas of land with trees to combat the formation of sand dunes, then intensively spreading to the southeast and west of Yemen.

Two years later, I went to visit a friend of mine who shared an office with the authority for the Developing Forests and Combating Desertification Project. The project's once busy office was now quite empty. I wondered what had happened.

I was told that most of the team members working on the project had changed jobs and were now working for other organizations.

“What about the enthusiasm? What about combating desertification?” I asked surprised.

“After the funding ended, it became very difficult for us to visit the areas we planted to combat desertification,” one of the employees replied. “Now nobody funds the project.”

I wondered whether sand dunes had, by then, covered all the plants the team had

planted, burying with them all the project's efforts.

Many other projects reach a similar fate, end abruptly before reaching their goals because of a lack of further funds.

Today, the Sana'a Basin Well Inventory Project is in its last phase and should be complete by mid-2010.

The project aims to better manage the water in the wells of Sana'a Basin, and to enhance the legal and technical structures of the area's bodies responsible for their management. The project encourages a decentralized and participatory approach to the management of this vital resource.

It was established as a part of a long-term funding program of the Organization for International Development with a budget of USD 30 million, under which 26 international donations and 6 local donations are provided between 2004 and 2010.

It follows the concept of integrated water resource management, a direction encouraged in all water affairs by experts both locally or internationally.

Over the last years, the level of groundwater in the Sana'a Basin has continued to drop, especially due to its use in the agricultural sector.

According to the project's statistics, the agricultural sector consumes 80 percent of all water over 24,000 hectare (or 10,000 square meters).

Up to 47 percent of water is consumed by qat, 35 percent by grapes, 16 percent for vegetables, and only 2 percent for fruit.

Statistics show that qat consumes the most water in agriculture, especially in provinces like Bani Hushaish, Hamdan, Bani Al-Hareth, Khawlan and Sanhan. The project aims to solve water problems in these areas.

In evaluating these projects, one is eager to assess their results and evaluate to what extent they reached their intended goals.

Project statistics refer to new water distribution networks for 2,543 hectare. Modern irrigation systems were set up for 903 hectare and works are underway for these for a further 618 hectares. Of these, an estimated 94 percent had been completed in November 2009. In 71 hectare, old water networks were completely modernized.

The outcomes of the project can be summarized by the following points:

- Minimizing the number of generator operation hours by 40 percent to help prolong their lifetime and reduce power consumption
- Decreasing manual plant irrigation by 80 percent
- Increasing produce by 30-40 percent, knowing that it is possible using less water with better irrigation techniques

Stimulating the cultivation of trees or plants that demand less water such as the almond and thorny fig trees, and starting green house projects as part of a new agriculture system

The obstacles encountered by the team in charge of projects such as these are useful lessons learned for future projects of a similar nature.

Lessons learnt

Many farmers in the Sana'a basin project for example did not abandon the traditional flood irrigation method when modern drop irrigation was introduced, because they did not believe that the new technique would quench their plants' thirst. This distrust was intensified by the absence of awareness raising campaigns.

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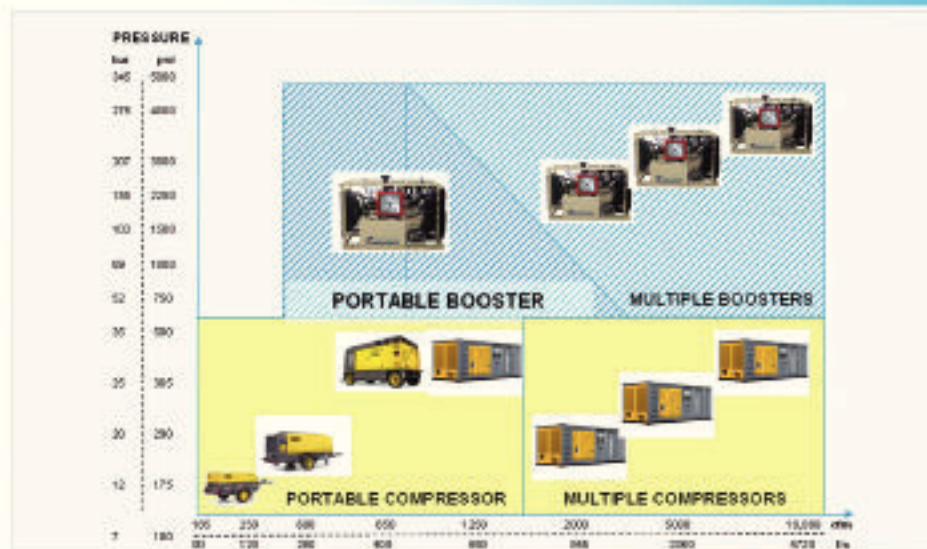
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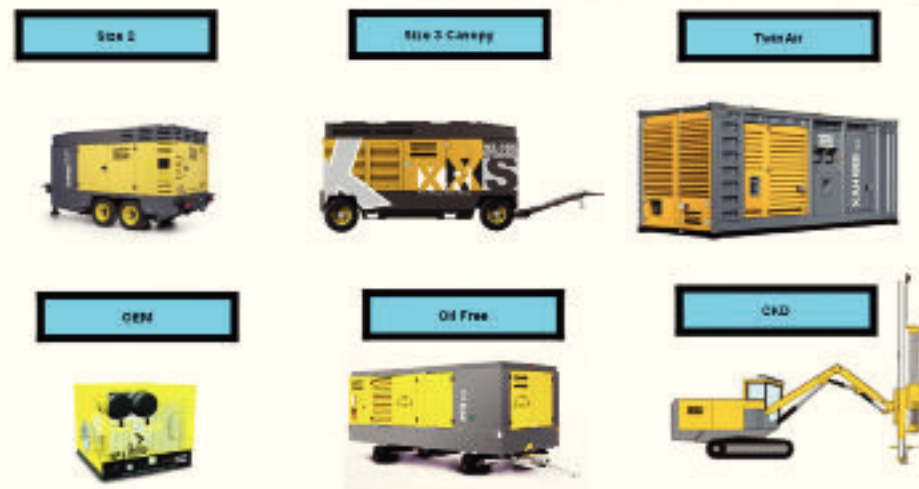
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Sexual harassment in the work place

By: Amina Al-Arasi
For the Yemen Times

According to studies conducted in Yemen, sexual harassment of women in Yemen is a serious issue. The phenomenon is widespread and the work place is no exception.

Today's financial difficulties have pushed women to join the labor market, and made them more vulnerable to being harassed.

Siham, 20, works to support her family of eight, two parents and six brothers and sisters.

"I worked in a dentist clinic for eight months," she said. "Everything was fine till the day the dentist, who is married, asked me to bring some papers to sign. When everybody in the clinic left, he closed the door and started harassing me sexually. I found a piece of glass and threatened to hurt him. After that I quit."

Yosra, 26, who works as an attendant in a shop selling womens' garments, likes to communicate with people and hopes to gain practical experience. However, she sometimes has to face verbal molestation from the clients, who sometimes even try to entice her with money to go on a date with them.

Um Salem, 30, works as a cleaner in the Faculty of Arts where she is verbally abused by some of the students.

"I do not feel ashamed of myself for being a cleaner. Students mock my looks. This does not ever bother me, because the main reason I am here is to

work and support my family."

Um Sara is another woman who has been harassed. She has been working as a secretary for more than seventeen years at the Faculty of Arts. She rejects media reports that, in the past, men did not harass women. She says that men usually attract girls with talk of marriage so that she surrenders herself, although sometimes women also provoke the men with their charm and the way they dress.

A doctor working in a university clinic says that women cannot be confined to domestic work and that they should make themselves strong enough to resist the harassment they face outside their homes.

Sabah Al-Matari, a 28-year-old employee in the Faculty of Science, said that she likes her job. Many students and employees come to her office to talk to her because she is a good listener. As for people who she cannot tolerate, she does not even respond.

Samar Mohammad, 17, is a girl from Aden governorate who came to Sana'a to work in a perfume and cosmetics shop. She says that many people enter the shop just to talk to her and she cannot stop them, fearing losing her job. She ignores the verbal abuse.

On the other hand, Abeer who is of the same age as Samar, says that she is lucky as her manager protects her from sexual harassment.

Asma Mohammad, 30, works for a travel agency. She says that the girl is the only one who can stop the sexual harassment by laying down borders that nobody can cross.

Sexual harassment happens not only in closed work places but also in open areas.

F. A., 22, is a girl who sells lohooh (bread) in her neighborhood. She says that she is verbally molested by the owner of the house in front of which she sits every day to sell the bread.

"I have paid YR 100 a day to sit in front of his house for more than three years. I cannot stop his sexual harassment because I don't want him to stop me from sitting in front of his house," she said sadly. "Sometimes, some passers-by touch me on purpose. Thank God, my mother, who works on the opposite pavement, comes to my rescue."

Not only illiterate girls but also educated girls sell bread in the streets. A.S is another lahooh seller who finished high school and has a secretary diploma. She complains about people bothering her with physical and verbal abuse. She added that she cannot stop working because she is the only one earning to support her family.

Majed Al-Madhaji, member of the Yemeni Sisters Arab Forum, said that women cannot report sexual harassment given the traditional and cultural constraints and the social norms of superiority of the man over the woman.

Afaf Al-Haimi, a sociologist, attributes sexual harassment to faulty upbringing that inculcates the wrong values of the inferiority of women.

Inferiority complexes, notably in men from lower social classes or humble economic backgrounds, are also important factors driving men to sexually harass women.



Arab society suffers from a complex that grants men a status of superiority and degrades women to a level of inferiority. Women are considered minors and men, the ones privileged to treat women in whatever way they like.

Ironically, walls in Yemen are very high whereas in western countries, walls

are barely one meter high. The high walls symbolize the barriers between men and women, where a man does not perceive the women as an equivalent.

This may explain the reason why women in Yemen are disrespected and do not usually obtain even minimal respect, despite the higher walls com-

pared to other countries.

The sexual harassment of women is considered to be a primitive and disrespectful way of treating women. It leaves women with only two choices: to keep her job and lose her dignity, or to reject the harassment and lose the job, but keep her dignity.

Part 3

Qat: The cursed plant in Yemen

By: Yusuf Al-Shiraif

Refuting suspicions about the Qat
If Yemenis realize what could be the social, economic, agricultural, hygienic, and psychological disadvantages and damages of the qat then why does all of the excessiveness in consuming it? Why do Yemenis waste around 20 million hours annually in practicing this filthy habit instead of working, producing, and innovating? Why if we know that quitting this habit is extremely easy when desire and willpower are existent and especially if we know that the qat does not lead to addiction as other vegetal and synthesized drugs? Definitely there is an unknown secret and a dominant magic overpowering minds and pockets; is not it? The answer is always controversial among Yemenis. On the contrary, one group finds that the qat is a symbol of forfeit and self-destruction and another group has the same opinion but finds it less dangerous than other addictive substances like drugs. As proof of that was the great success of Egyptian security apparatus in blocking the outlets of smuggling Lebanese hashish. The result was more harmful after spreading the phenomenon of inhaling heroin and cocaine which are lighter, more profitable, and more hazardous. Also, the recovery process

of addicting such drugs needs longer time and more costs.

The supporters of the latter opinion add that planting, trading, marketing, and selling the qat take more than 2 million Yemenis who work in these fields. Hence, how would be the case if the qat would be prohibited if we know that an addition to this number around 2 million unemployed persons in Yemen? The Yemeni distinguished poet and one of the qat's opponents, Ibrahim Al-Hadhrani, versed the following verses:

*"Stand with me who you fear of crisis
To hit together the Qat with the curses' lash
We have never seen damage similar to it
Which destroys the families' glories
The person kills his or her future
When he or she gets addicted to the smoke and the Qat"*
*The Syrian poet, Suleiman Al-Eissa, who chewed the qat and lived the qat's sessions versed:
"A poison in which the freemen's homeland is fed
A poison destroys those who are living and who already have lived
When will O my country get rid of this ailment?
When this criminal, the Qat, will be executed?"*

There are other individuals enjoy chewing the qat and do not believe or even want to believe in the qat's harms.

They also do not find any meaning for life without the qat. Chewing the qat is also the responsibility of its chewer and neither the government nor the society has anything to do with personal freedoms. I have heard once a speech of Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahamr, the sheikh of Hashid's sheikhs and the icon of cultured tribe in Yemen and also the chairman of the Yemeni Parliament, who agreed with that opinion. He also believes that every nation has its own peculiar temperament which uses to rest of its worries and troubles. Also this temperament grants its nation the feeling of happiness and relaxation. Consequently and according to this viewpoint, Yemenis delighted the qat as their own peculiar temperament instead of other intoxications or inebriations.

This also explains for example why the Lebanese people plant hashish whereas others smoke it like Egyptians. Even Islamic scholars in Yemen differ in opinion or try hard to issue legal opinions regarding the legality or illegality of the qat. It is known that Imam Sharaf Ed-Din issued a legal opinion (fatwa) in 950 A.H. (anno Hegirae) which forbade



chewing the qat.

This fatwa enraged the fury of scholars, jurists, Sufis, and poets who started defending the qat. This pushed the imam to legalize what he just forbade. Since then, the qat became a controversial religious, political, and social cause. Additionally, many books had been published regarding the qat which were written by Yemeni scholars. Among these books "Tahdheer Al-Thuqat min Isti'mal Al-Qat" (Warning Experts of Using the Qat) by scholar Ibn Hajar Al-Haithami. "Al-Bahth Al-Musfir ann Tahreem Koll Musfir waa Muftir" (The Resulted Search to Every Intoxication and Narcotics) is another book written by judge Al-Shawkani, "Dahdh Al-Shubhat Hawl Al-Qat" (Refuting Suspicions About the Qat) by Abdullah Al-Amodi, "Tarweeh Al-Awqat fee Al-Munadhara bayn Al-Qahwa waa Al-Qat" (Entertainment in Comparison between the Coffee and the Qat), and "Al-Qat

fee Al-Adab Al-Yamani waa Al-Fiqh Al-Islami" (The Qat in Yemeni Literature and Islamic Jurisprudence) which was issued lately. Allah, the most glorious, the most merciful, says in the Holy Qur'an: "And spend of your substance in the cause of Allah, and make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good." (Al-Baqara: The Cow; 195) which emphasizes that Islamic law is with applying benefits and parrying blights. It seems that the qat's Mafia practices its terrorism even on religious men and scholars otherwise why they did not agree on the legal opinion for forbidding chewing the qat although they do agree on its numerous harms!?

Judge Muhammad Qasim Al-Shami, the Supreme Court's member, says: "The Saying of forbidding or boycotting the qat is a government's responsibility. This government estimates the public interest by making

thorough study for the problem. The right thing which all scholars agree on is the evidence of forbidding every drug and narcotic especially in the light of the mentioned medical, social, and economic harms of the qat. Due to that the affliction of the qat becomes drastic and it is true that if you want to be obeyed, you should not issue impossible orders; hence, I clarify that the required and possible thing is not preaching and advising only; rather it is motivating endeavours and reviving wills and informative cognition concerning the qat's dangers. It is the role that media, political, and cultural apparatus should apply in order to get the freely undertaken and willing convince on quitting the chewing of the qat."

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Keeping Yemen's historical cities on the UNESCO list



By: Ismail Al-Ghabri

The General Antiquities and Museums Authority is working to conserve Yemen's historical cities. These include the Old City of Sana'a, the city of Shibam in Hadramout, and the city of Zabid in Hodeida.

All three cities were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List because of their distinctive historical features, but the archaeological and historical heritage of Zabid's buildings have seriously deteriorated in recent years.

Zabid is one of the coastal cities located in the west of Yemen. It was commissioned to be built by Abdullah Bin Ziyad, in 204 AH.

Located in the Tihama plain, 25 km from the Red Sea, the city is considered to be one of the most important historical sites in Yemen as it has many monumental landmarks. Zabid is also considered a city of Islamic knowledge.

It is surrounded by forts and towers and it has four areas that look out in the direction of the sea: Al-Boqa'a, Mina Ghalafiqa, Al-

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Faza and Al-Makha.

Up to 40 percent of the town's original houses have been replaced by concrete buildings, according to UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Zabid was added to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2000 at the request of Yemen, according to UNESCO.

Chairman of the General Antiquities and Museums Authority, Abdullah Zaid Ais, has said that urban conservation of historical cities in Yemen is not straightforward.

The chairman stated that the unregulated construction of residential blocks in these historical cities may cause them to be removed from the UNESCO World Heritage List, and that this construction should be stopped.

Renovation works on historical buildings do not follow strict guidelines. In Zabid, for example, existing buildings are renovated using steel and cement instead of the traditional red

baked bricks used in the past.

However, he said that the situation is not so critical that the Yemeni historical cities face the threat of being excluded from the list.

He added that Zabid had been given a notification from UNESCO because of unregulated construction in the city.

"UNESCO is helping the local authorities to develop an urban conservation plan and to adopt a strategic approach for the preservation of this world heritage site," UNESCO says on its website.

Ais said that the authority had managed to improve the city's condition by preventing unregulated construction there.

Ais also said that the state should spare no effort in keeping the historical cities in Yemen in a condition that allows them to compete for the position of the most beautiful historical sites in the world.

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