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Initiatives to alleviate Yemeni women's suffering

## Vote on minimum age for marriage postponed

By: Ali Saeed and Ismael Al-Ghaberi

SANA'A, March 3 — A vote to approve a minimum age of marriage in Yemen has been postponed, further deferring legislation to prevent early marriage in the country.

In 1994, Yemeni Personal Status Law set the minimum age for marriage at 15, but further amendments to it in 1999 made it unclear and left determining the minimum age up to parents' discretion.

Cases have been reported of girls as young as eight being married off by their fathers. Yemen made the news in the summer of 2008 when Nujood, a Yemeni girl reportedly eight, filed for divorce from her husband who was over ten years her senior.

Tuesday's vote has been postponed to allow the parliament's Sharia Legislation Committee to meet with the Women National Committee (WNC)

to discuss the issue, according to Islah party member and member of parliament Fuad Duhaba.

Huria Mashhour, head of the WNC, said that it was untrue that the Sharia Legislation Committee had asked to meet the WNC.

"We have been campaigning for the article number 15 to set the minimum age for marriage at 18 since 2000, but the parliament up until now has been procrastinating not to approve the law," she said.

"There are 16 members of parliament who are working against passing the law," she said. "They have extremist ideologies or are influenced by extremist groups. Six of them are from the ruling party and ten of them are from the Islah party."

Ali Al-Hababi, head of the Sharia Legislation Committee, denied these accusations and said that his committee is working in favor of Islamic Sharia.

"The decision of the committee cannot be affected by any party or doctrine," he said.

"During the next period of 10 days, the committee will release the article that will serve young girls," he said. "Now the committee is meeting with some experts from the Ministry of Health."

The Sharia Legislation Committee is a panel of seven Islamic scholars in Parliament that looks over each law proposal to see if it is consistent with Islamic Sharia, according to Al-Hababi.

Minister of Justice, Dr. Ghazi Al-Agbari expressed his disappointment at the postponement of a vote on the law.

"The government stands by the age of 18 years as a minimum safe age for marriage," the minister told the press on Tuesday.

The minister refuted allegations that pushing the law was a response to western pressure, and stressed that it was to protect child girls from "human wolves who try to attack them."

He also said that there are dozens of such cases of early marriage in court.

### Debate in parliament

"There is huge ideological terrorism inside the parliament from some members who appointed themselves as Islamic scholars and do not accept any discussion," said Shawqi Al-Qadhi, a member of the parliament from the Islah Party.

He said that those who are working against the law approval always accuse the others of pushing for westernization.

He said that the members of the Sharia Legislation Committee, who he sees as against this law, avoided meeting the doctors' delegation that came to see them on Tuesday to discuss the matter with them.

"There are parliamentarians who play with fatwa and religion," he added.

He said some parliamentarians distributed leaflets with a fatwa warning others from voting in favor of the law and another that said, "Anyone who votes in favor of the law is an apostate non-believer."

### Minimum age against Sharia

Mohamed Al-Hazmi, an Islah party member and member of parliament against the law, denied this information.

He said that the only fatwa distributed was that of Islamic scholar Mohamed Al-Amrani saying that it is illegal in Islam to define a specific age for marriage.

"The fatwa did not say that anyone who votes in favor of the law is an apostate," he said.

"If we set up the 17 years to be the minimum age for marriage, our youth will resort to illegal ways to meet their desires," he said.

"Why all this enthusiasm for passing the law that is supported by the global women's liberation movement?" asked Mohamed Al-Hazmi, who believes that

those in favor of the law are being influenced by a western trend.

Al-Hazmi said that passing the law will have many negative consequences.

"Approving the law will criminalize any marriage under the age of 18 or 17, while 85 percent of marriage in Yemen is under this age," said Al-Hazmi.

Approving the law will also lead to immoral acts by the youth, according to Al-Hazmi.

### Activist reactions

"We are not pessimistic or frustrated by the delay," Omkholtom Al-Shami, coordinator for the Children's Parliament that organized a protest of 1,000 school children outside parliament last Tuesday to lobby for a minimum age for marriage. "The delay was due to the legislation committee's to explain the issue more to the parliamentarians."

Ahmed Al-Qorashi, the chairman of the SEYAJ Organization for Childhood Protection, however said that his organization is worried that the delay in passing the law will lead no law at all.

"This is against the International Convention on the Rights of the Child that Yemen ratified and signed," Al-Qorashi said.

### Politicization of humanitarian issue

Al-Qorashi accuses some powers inside parliament of politicizing this humanitarian issue. He called on the parliament to carry out its legal and moral responsibility towards this humanitarian issue without political actions.

"There are some extremist groups that the president is satisfying because he needs them in some circumstances," he said. "The only person who can approve the law is the president. If he has the will to do it, he can because he is the only person who controls the three authorities: the executive, legislative and judiciary."

The parliament approved the minimum age for marriage as 17 years old in February 2009 and sent the law to the president for ratification, according to Al-Qorashi. But, in response to the request of some parliamentarians, the president did not approve the law and the law was put forward for a vote the second time.

According to MP Duhaba, for an article to be approved by parliament, the majority of parliamentarians in attendance must approve it by vote.

## Dynamite warehouse explodes in Taiz



By: Imad Al-Saqqaf

TAIZ, March 3 — At least 10 people were killed and 8 injured in Taiz as a dynamite warehouse exploded just before dawn, on Tuesday. The explosion which took place in the basement of one residential building, caused another three buildings nearby to collapse, according to eye-witnesses.

The accident caused panic among people as one person died of a heart attack, some died of suffocation and some were buried under the heaps of the destroyed building.

The security authorities said that the accident was a result of an explosion of dynamites and fireworks that were stored in the warehouse of the building.

The owner of the building, Mohammad Mahyub is said to be a dynamite and gunpowder dealer.

Eye-witnesses said that the smell of the dynamite continued to fill the air for two hours after the explosion.

Colonel Abdul Haleem Noman told the Yemen Times that the owner of the store had been arrested.

Noman added that an investigation had taken place to find out the cause of the explosion and to collect evidences about the quantity and quality of the explosives.

The security authorities hastened to evacuate the adjacent buildings fearing their collapse, especially as some parts of these buildings had been already destroyed and cracks had developed in some other parts as well.

The dynamite dealers hold legal licenses to get the gunpowder, which is used to explode rocks for purposes of paving the mountainous roads. Unfortunately, some dealers manipulate and manage obtain it for other purposes, as well, and store them in the basements of residential buildings.

The governor of Taiz, Hamoud Khaled Al-Sofi, said that president Saleh ordered to send the injured people abroad at the state's expense and to give houses for all of those whose houses were destroyed due to the explosion.

Al-Sofi also said that the bad storing of the dynamite and the gunpowder and compressing the materials over each other were the main causes of the explosion. He added that the criminal evidences referred that the explosion was caused due to the leaking of the gas in the Aspirin sprays which is used in fireworks.

He added that the Local Authority is working with the Chamber of Commerce and Trade to conduct a check campaign to confiscate the materials containing the dynamite.

The citizens called on the authorities to get rid of all such gunpowder, dynamites and fireworks stores existing in basements of residential buildings, and expressed their deep resentment over the carelessness of the government toward the lives of the people.

Al-Sofi also called on all the media outlets to spread awareness among people of the dangers of dealing with materials containing of dynamite.

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## Hundreds of child soldiers in the Sa'ada war

By: Shatha Al-Harazi  
For the Yemen Times

SANA'A, Feb. 28 - Over 684 children were recruited in the last Sa'ada war between the government and the Houthis, according to a recent report by the SEYAJ Organization for Child Protection.

SEYAJ conducted a survey of 73,926 children over 30 days in the Al-Mazraq camp in the Hajja governorate, the Khaywan camp in the Amran governorate, Sa'ada city, as well as in Razeh, 'Alb, Baqim, Ghamr, and Qatabir in the Sa'ada governorate.

According to the report, 402 children were recruited by the Houthis and 282 were recruited by the public army, fighter from the tribes supporting the government.

Eyewitnesses in those tribes confirmed that about 50 percent of those enrolled the public army are underage. They join looking for money or because they have been promised other privileges.

"The public army would give them some bullets and YR 1,000 a day," said

Dr. Fahad Al-Sabri, who supervised the SEYAJ survey.

Similarly, more than 50 percent of those recruited by the Houthis are under 18 and their vulnerability to risk is higher than the children recruited by the tribes who mostly fight with their relatives.

Children on both sides were at risk of being killed, injured or held prisoner, according to the report. The report recorded two proven cases of sexual exploitation.

Child victims

In general, up to 187 children were killed in the war, of which 19 of them were infants under the age of one year old.

Up to 71 percent of them died because of weapons used in the war, and the other 29 percent died because of inability to access hospitals.

About 87 children were disabled as a result of the war, nine of which are under 5 years old and 19 are aged between six and 11 years old.

Up to 89,000 children out 89,437 surveyed by SEYAJ were displaced from their homes.

Birth registration to prevent child soldiers

"It's hard to obtain the right information that gives the exact number on how many children were used to serve the war because of the lack birth registrations in the area," said Georges Abu Al-Zalof, child protection officer at the UNICEF.

"We have registered 8,000 births in Sa'ada [in the camps], which is a very important step to prevent the army or tribes from recruiting the children," he said.

"It's a protection measure. Legally you have to be 18 to be a soldier, so when the child is not registered he is more prone to being recruited," he said.

"Since the beginning of the war, UNICEF has registered

Abu Al-Zalof confirmed the report is very important to give the UNICEF the information so they can help those children and the governorates by rebuilding the schools and enable the health facilities

Deprived of education

The SEYAJ survey showed that 3 percent of the children have access to education while, 97 percent have been deprived of this right.

In the Sa'ada governorate itself, only 0.7 percent have access to schooling, which means 383,332 children are out of school, according to the report.

"This report is made to attract the attention of non-profit organizations to the huge damage, to help and coordinate or have some partnerships to bring solutions," Abu Al-Zalof said. "After all, we are a protection not a relief organization."

International convention

Yemen signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in 2004, according to Al-Sabri.

"The protocol sets 18 as the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities, for recruitment into armed groups, and for compulsory recruitment by governments," according to UNICEF.

"Yemen signed the optional protocol



that no one under 18 can join the army, but since we have a major problem with birth registration, faking is an option," said Al-Sabri.

Many children under the age of 18

who do not have a birth certificate to prove their age take two witnesses with them to the civil affairs authority to obtain ID cards, he said. With an ID card, they can join the army.

## Yemen to set up stock market

By: Adam Gonn / The Media Line

SANA'A, Feb. 23 - The Yemeni Minister of Industry and Trade discussed the opening of a stock market in Yemen with a Jordanian advisory team on Monday.

The Minister, Yahya al-Mutawakel, met with a team of consultants from the Jordanian stock market to finalize the regulatory, legal and technical procedures involved in setting-up the trading institution, the official Yemeni news agency SABA reported.

According to SABA, Al-Mutawakel reportedly stressed the importance of setting a timetable for the stock exchange but no dates were announced following the meeting.

"The commercial sector is relatively underdeveloped and as such there are certainly market opportunities," Justin Crump, Director of Threat Intelligence at Stirling Assyt International Group, told The Media Line.

"Tourism is one of the main income generators, but this may be adversely affected by declining security," he continued. "Instead, manufacturing support for the construction industry, resource extraction (other than oil and gas, e.g. granite tiles), telecoms and possibly the financial sector are areas of potential growth."

"Investors should undertake full due diligence to counteract the primary risks in the business environment, which include fraud, exposure to terrorist financing, and ties to various

political clans," Crump said.

In the 2010 report by the Doing Business project, Yemen ranked 99 out of the total 183 countries covered by the survey in terms of the ease of conducting business in the country. The study, an initiative of the World Bank, uses ten different parameters including starting a business, paying taxes and cross border trading.

While Yemen showed significant improvement in the category 'Getting Credit', rising from its previous place at 150 to 174, its 'Protecting Investors' ranking fell 5 places, from 132 to 127.

Yemen's dire economic situation is frequently cited as one of the underlying reasons for the country's chaotic political situation.

Oil reserves account for more than 75 percent of the government's revenues but are rapidly declining. A natural gas plant that went into operation last year is expected to generate \$30 to \$50 billion over the next 25 years.

Since 2004 the central government in Sana'a has been fighting with Al-Houthi rebels belonging to Zaidi Shia Islam, in the north east of the country.

The recent round of fighting is taking on a regional dimension, as rebels fleeing north encroach on Saudi Arabia, and Iran comes under accusations of supporting the Shia rebels.

The Houthis are protesting against discrimination and the systematic neglect of their rights by the government in Sana'a.

In addition, the Yemeni government is facing a secessionist movement in the south, who accuse the government of unfairly diverting the region's oil wealth, and call for a return to the two state division which was in place prior to Yemen winning independence in 1967.

Recently the international community has expressed fears Al-Qaeda is using Yemen's unstable political situation to further establish itself in the region.

Crump said the deteriorating security situation was having a direct impact on international trade.

"Attacks on foreign interests in Yemen have increased significantly since the formation of Al-Qaeda in Yemen in early 2008," Crump said. "The new Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula views the country as a safe haven."

"Successive statements and attacks have confirmed its intent to target Western interests and Westerners throughout the Arabian Peninsula," he continued. "Its ultimate goal is to carry out attacks in Saudi Arabia."

"The group has threatened further attacks on shipping numerous times over the last twelve months, and this is likely to be followed by action," Crump suggested. "The Bab al-Mandab strait remains particularly vulnerable in this regard," he said referring to the channel between Yemen and Somalia connecting the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and the Suez Canal.

ministry added.

According to UN Refugee Agency statistics, out of one million African refugees, only 170,000 are registered; 90 percent of them are from Somalia.

Many Somali refugees were accused of taking the Houthis' side against the government, as an attempt to cross over into Saudi territories.

An amount of USD 100 is reportedly taken from each African migrant as payment to the owners of the small boats on which the refugees sail to Yemeni coastal cities such as Aden, Abyan, Shabwa and Hadramout.

The PCG was only recently established and as such needs a lot of support to do its duty in preventing such incursions into the Yemeni coastline, which is 2,100 km long

## EU reproductive health project in Dhamar

By: Yemen Times correspondent  
For the Yemen Times

DHAMAR, March. 2- In cooperation with the local authorities of the Maghrebans district in Dhamar governorate, 100 km south the capital Sana'a, the European Union (EU) has undertaken a project for improving the reproductive health in the district.

The project, which was launched in the beginning of February, will continue for 18 months. The EU is funding 90 percent of the project, while the local council will contribute the remaining 10 percent.

The project involves training courses for health personnel, equipping existing health facilities, and raising awareness through health education as well as through distribution of communication material such as pamphlets. Around 40 traditional midwives in the district will receive training on safe

delivery and the system of referring some cases to health facilities.

The project is receiving a good response and over 14,000 students from the district have the public education program.

"The project aims to control the increasing population growth rate in the district, to reduce the mortality rate among women and children as well as reduce the morbidity in the district," said Mr. Abdo Al-Jumae, health director of the district.

The fertility rate in the district is almost three percent and out of the 62,000 population of the district, over 12,000 are females in the reproductive age.

There are around 26 public health facilities in the district, which does not have any private health facilities. Three of these public health facilities are health centers and the remaining 23 are health units.

But the district does not have a single hospital.

On an average, the health facilities to population ratio are one health facility per every 2,396 people.

In total, there are 114 employees work in these health facilities, out of which 85 are health technicians and 35 are women.

Recent statistical reports of the district health administration reveal that there is only one general physician in the district, whereas the district health facilities require at least seven specialized physicians. Even the health facilities providing first aid are faced by a lack assistant doctors, lab technicians, nurses, midwives and pharmacologists.

The statistics of the district health administration indicates that 15 health units in the district provide mother and child care and family planning services.

## Independent Yemeni judges club banned

By: Saddam Al-Ashmori  
For the Yemen Times

SANA'A, March.3 - Security forces in Sana'a banned the board elections of the Yemeni Judges Club stopping the establishment of such a club last Thursday.

A group of judges had wanted to establish this club.

"The police in the Al-Thawra district of Sana'a, banned this establishment activity of Yemeni Judges Club and forcibly closed down the hall rented for the purpose of the establishing conference," said one of the judges.

"As a result the judges were forced to hold the conference in the open and declare the organization open for all members of the judiciary," he added.

After banning them from forming their club, dozens of judges gathered in front of the Ministry of Justice, protesting against the act of the security forces.

They considered the act of the security, of banning them from founding their organization, as a violation of the constitution which entitles them the right of organization.

During the protest, 41 judges accused the Minister of Justice and the

Minister of Interior, of directing the security authority to deprive them from their civil rights.

The judges were supposed to hold the conference at the Al-Durra hall in the Al-Thawra district in front of the Sana'a traffic office and were taken by surprise to find the hall surrounded by tight security.

According to a statement released by the judges, the security did not allow the judges to enter the hall, closed it down forcibly, and attempted to detain the owner of the hall. The statement also accused the police of banning the media from covering the incident, not allowing anyone to take photos as well as attempting to confiscate cameras.

The Minister of Justice is firmly against forming the Yemeni Judges Club and has sent a memo to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs rejecting the request of the judges to form their independent club, which says that, "there is already a governmental organization called Judges Forum that was established in 1990, which is open for all judges and that forming a new one is not justified."

The News Yemen website quoted a source at the Ministry of Justice saying that, "judges who are attempting

to form the Yemeni Judges Club are motivated by partisan powers and are trying to form a movement similar to the southern movement."

The source also added that those who are trying to form such organizations are simply attempting to penetrate the judiciary authority.

The source indicated that many of the judges who are trying to form the Yemeni Judges Club, are prosecution members who were harmed by the judiciary reforms and are not working with the Ministry of Justice. He further said that such actions, however, will not bend the ministry to change its decisions regarding the 63 judges who committed professional mistakes staining the image of the entire judiciary system in the country.

The National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) condemned the act of the security and said that the article no. 58 of the Constitution of Yemen states that "any Yemeni citizen has the right to form himself or herself in any organization."

According to HOOD, Yemen is also bound by the international declaration on judges and lawyers and their right in forming their independent unions, which it has signed.

## Yemen closes off waterways to illegal immigrants

By: Ismail Al-Ghaberi

SANA'A, March 1 - Yemen has recently closed off all main waterways leading to its shores on the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea to prevent immigrants from the Horn of Africa from crossing into Yemeni land, according to the Ministry of the Interior.

According to a statement issued on the ministry website, it has commanded the Police Coast Guard (PCG) in coastal provinces on the Gulf of Aden and Red Sea, to shut the main waterways in an effort to stop illegal African immigrants from coming into Yemen.

This step illustrates efforts made by the Yemeni governorate to stop infiltrators, who are said to be possible terrorist elements from the Horn of Africa,

from penetrating into Yemeni land. These terrorist elements, who are from the Somali based wing of Al-Qaida Young Mujahedeen, have announced their intention to support the Yemeni-based branch of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The statement added that the security authorities have been keeping all Somali refugees currently in Yemen under constant observation to prevent terrorists from using the immigration right as a passport to the country. The statement stressed that the Yemeni government's commitment to meet their obligation towards supporting genuine Somali refugees has not changed.

"The government in Yemen is trying its best to provide appropriate living conditions for the Somali refugees, the

ministry added.

According to UN Refugee Agency statistics, out of one million African refugees, only 170,000 are registered; 90 percent of them are from Somalia.

Many Somali refugees were accused of taking the Houthis' side against the government, as an attempt to cross over into Saudi territories.

An amount of USD 100 is reportedly taken from each African migrant as payment to the owners of the small boats on which the refugees sail to Yemeni coastal cities such as Aden, Abyan, Shabwa and Hadramout.

The PCG was only recently established and as such needs a lot of support to do its duty in preventing such incursions into the Yemeni coastline, which is 2,100 km long

## Parliament attendance sheet of members revealed

By: Ismail Al-Ghaberi

SANA'A, March. 1 - Parliamentary statistics revealed recently show that some sessions were dropped by members of the parliament. Independent members of parliament attended around 72 per cent of the sessions between October 3 and

December 29, 2009. The ruling party came second inasmuch as they attended 70 percent of the sessions whilst the Islah Party representatives attended only 59 per cent of the sessions.

According to the numbers, it is obvious that the parliament sessions were only wholly attended by 55 per cent and

46 percent of MPs had left the parliament headquarters before the sessions ended. The opposition parties, however, such as the Socialist Party, the Al-Wahdawi Al-Nasiri Party (the Nasiri united party) and the Al-Ba'th Arab Socialist Party attended the least number of sessions; they attended 50, 46, and 33 per cent of the sessions respectively.

The members of the parliament offered a number of reasons to justify their frequent absences. Some of them said that they had boycotted sessions which contained certain procedures, as a demonstration against them. Others said that as security conditions in their governorates were unstable, they were unable to attend.

As a result of these absentee MPs, the

low number of representatives from small governorates remaining in the sessions impeded the carrying out of various projects. Whereas the governorates that have large numbers of representatives were barely affected when implementing rules or projects.

These small governorates' representatives attended almost all the sessions. Raima governorate's representatives, for example, came first. They attended around 95 per cent. Lahj and Al-Dhale' governorates attended 85 and 80 per cent respectively.

On the other hand, Al-Jawf governorate's members in the parliament attended only 38 per cent.

It is worth mentioning that the term of the current parliament is the longest one. It was extended yet again in 2009

Attendance of parliament sessions according to party

The name of the party	Percentage of members attended the sessions
The independent members	72.8%
The Ruling Party	70.50%
Islah Party	59.20%
The Socialist Party	50.80%
Al-Wahdawi Al-Nasiri Party	50.00%
Al-Ba'th Arab Socialist Party	33.00%

after being previously extended for two years in 2007. It is now 7 years old and passed 25 laws in 2009. Examples are the general health law, the amendment to article 3 of the Yemeni Nationality Law, non-Yemeni ownership of real estate and the law of protecting the society from AIDS and protecting those already affected with the virus.

The parliament also has signed three agreements namely, the agreement of Yemen's joining the Beijing Amendment 1999 of the Montreal Protocol to prevent using materials affecting the ozone layer, the agreement of Yemen joining the International Agreement of Coffee 2007 and the international agreement to combat terrorism.

Attendance of parliament sessions according to date

Week number	Members who attended sessions from the beginning	Members who left in the middle of sessions	Members who left before the end of sessions
1 <sup>st</sup>	58.10%	78.00%	84.00%
2 <sup>nd</sup>	65.00%	86.00%	74.00%
3 <sup>rd</sup>	60.10%	53.00%	82.00%
4 <sup>th</sup>	60.10%	48.00%	74.00%
5 <sup>th</sup>	50.00%	71.00%	70.00%
6 <sup>th</sup>	51.70%	44.50%	70.50%
7 <sup>th</sup>	55.90%	37.30%	63.10%
8 <sup>th</sup>	59.60%	47.60%	54.90%
9 <sup>th</sup>	55.80%	46.90%	73.10%

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سائلين المولى عز وجل أن يتغمد الفقيدة بواسع رحمته ومغفرته وأن يسكنها  
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**Brigadier Abdullah Hussein Al-Basheiri**

Minister of State, General Secretary of the Presidency,  
on the demise of his mother

May God bless

her soul and may she rest in eternal peace

# A ray of hope for refugee children

By: Mohamed Adam  
For the Yemen Times

Three-month-old Ismahan Buh lies in her cot with a general air of confidence in what appears to be her most idyllic moment.

But if she could weigh up things beyond her childhood innocence, life has not always been a bed of roses.

Her desperate single mother was forced to go to work three days after she brought Ismahan into the world.

While the mother is out at work to fend for food, she locks young Ismahan in her room. She comes back to her beloved daughter under pain of the breast milk. She rocks Ismahan to her arms, breastfeeds her and, once again, shows her a sense of belonging.

The next day dawns and infant Ismahan is left alone again, crying and tapping her heels on the ground. Her mother goes to her backbreaking cleaning job, praying that she will come back home to find her daughter safe and sound.

Then the moment to reap the fruits of "day and night in prayer," as Ismahan's mother puts it, finally came.

It was like the infant Ismael in the Holy Quran, who cried for water and kicked the ground as his mother ran around under the scorching sun looking for water, and then miraculously found water gushing out of the ground.

Ismahan's tears seemed also to have earned God's mercy.

Today, Ismahan, among other Somali refugee children, benefits from the generosity of a UK-based Somali charity organization, Gargar Universal.

At its daycare center, in Hail Street, the UK-based charity provides daycare services to 70 children according to the center's project manager, Faiz Abukar.

The center receives children whose

ages range from one month to eight years and is equipped with necessary facilities for children of varied age groups. It employs five babysitters, a nurse, and two teachers.

"We provide lunch for the children and our employees, and we are planning to provide milk and breakfast," says Faiz. "Sometimes mothers are pressed of time since they have to bring their children to the center and race off to work, so they may not have the time to feed their kids and that is why we set our sights on providing breakfast for the children."

The charity entirely depends on donations from the Somali diaspora particularly those in Europe, according to Faiz.

"We run this daycare centers on the good will of the Somalis in Britain, Denmark and Norway who responded to the plight of Somali children in Yemen subjected to demeaning situations as their destitute mothers struggle to foot the basic needs," he says. "We even receive donation from Somali children in the UK who find virtue in contributing their pocket money to help their fellow brothers and sisters here in Yemen."

"Gargar Universal is a God-sent organization and on behalf of my fellow Somali mothers, I thank my brothers and sisters who support this noble initiative," offers Halima, 32, her youngest son strapped on her back while she holds the other's hand waiting to be let in to the center.

"Before this center was opened, I used to lock my two three-month and four-year old sons in my small room and every day I would go to work worried about what would happen to them. When I came back to my children, both were screaming from their lungs out of hunger."



A UK based charity has opened a well-equipped daycare center for Somali refugee children in Sana'a.

### Support to a refugee initiative

Not only did the UK-based charity open a new daycare center for the children of Somali refugees in Sana'a, but it also financially supports the only and first refugee-run daycare center in Sana'a, the Daryeel Baby-sitting Center (DBC).

Located in Safia Street, DBC is a daycare center accredited to the Ministry of Social Affairs initiated in 2007 by a Somali refugee Hadramout University student, Ahmed Hussein, who says the idea of the center dawned on him after doing research into the risk refugee children are exposed to when locked in the houses.

"I raised some money from a network of friends, hired a babysitter, and got the project off the ground by renting one big room for 15 children," says the fourth year medicine student. "Then I received more assistance from individual well-wishers, so I put one more babysitter on the payroll and rented a four-room apartment where we catered

to 30 children."

"However, due to financial constraints, the center was still running on rudimentary facilities and later when the individual donations slimmed down, we had to charge each mother YR 500 (USD 5) a month," he says.

"Gargar Universal now pays for the rent, the employees including three babysitters, a teacher and provides drinking water for the children, so we receive the children free of charge," he adds. "We will also move to a bigger and more spacious center and we aim to receive 60 children in total."

However, the center is evidently under-equipped. There aren't cradles for infants and a group of them lie side by side on mattresses in rooms at the center, while a teacher dictates the Arabic alphabet in the corridor to another group of obedient children.

"Children don't have books and pens and we don't have boards and markers, but they still cram and learn by heart



Learning the hard way! Refugee children at the refugee-run Daryeel Babysitting Center, master the Holy Quran without paper or pens, and their teacher dictates the lessons to them.

verses from the Quran, the Arabic alphabet and numbers," he said.

According to Ahmed, the center now has a capacity of 30 children, but they accept 50 children letting some children play around the compound of the center.

"Every morning we turn away mothers with children because we don't have enough space for them," says Ahmed.

### More daycare centers needed

According to Somali Community Communication Committee deputy chairman Yussuf Diriye, there is a dire need for more daycare centers in order to curb the current trend of locking Somali refugee children in houses.

"A staggering 90 percent of working Somali refugee mothers lock their children in their houses, some tied to their beds," asserts Diriye.

Gargar Universal aims to open more daycare centers, but the charity needs more funding, according to Mr. Faiz.

"We are planning to open eight centers in Sana'a and six in Aden, but we are currently crippled by financial hurdles. We hope we will get more funds to help us restore the hopes of these children by letting them have the joy of their childhood moment instead of being locked in houses tied to their beds," he says.

Yemen Times recently run a story depicting the plight of the refugee children locked in houses while their mothers, desperate to eke out a living, are out at work.

Refugee children locked in houses are prone to rape, physiological disorders, isolation and lack of education.

And while infant Ismahan today enjoys her cot at the new daycare center, six-month old Abdurahman, featured in another story in this paper, wasn't so lucky. Left on his own at home while his mother was at work, he choked himself to death when he innocently wrapped a blanket around his face.

# Yemen's Special Olympics kicks off in Sana'a

By: Oliver Holmes  
For the Yemen Times

The fourth and largest Yemeni Special Olympics was held in Sana'a last week, with contestants flocking in from eight governorates around the country: Sana'a, Hadramout, Abyan, Aden, Hodeida, Lahj, Dhamar and Abyan. The national tournament on February 24-25 hosted unprecedented numbers with over 350 participants from 20 centers for children with special needs, roughly 200 volunteers and 120 supervisors.

The games were held at the Al-Muraisi Hall track stadium, the General Tennis Association Hall, the Faculty of Physical Education Hall and the impressive Olympic Center where contestants fought to win medals in football, table tennis, athletics and bocce ball.

The stands at the opening ceremony were completely packed, filled with thousands of supporters waving Yemeni flags. The Yemeni army band entertained the crowd before foreign and Yemeni volunteers ran into the stadium to form a large circle. The contestants then marched in, supported by the roaring crowd and deafening music, each led by

a child dressed in the traditional attire from their respective governorate.

Many officials attended the events in an attempt to show support for the cause. The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, the Minister of Communications, the president of the Social Fund for Handicapped Rehabilitation and Care, and even the president's son, Ahmed Ali Abdullah Saleh, were in attendance. Saleh was later presented with a custom-made carpet weaved by disabled Yemenis.

Many competitors had been training for months but some of the centers' employees and the care workers

who supervised the children expressed their disappointment over that lack of adequate training facilities during the run-up to the Special Olympics. A care worker from the Sana'a governorate told the Yemen Times that the children had nowhere to train outside the center, and lacked resources as well as volunteers.

Hamoud Obad, the Minister of Youth and Sports, preached the importance the government intends to place on the children's needs.

"How wonderful disabled children are to be able to overcome the obstacles they have faced in their lives; they are

the voice of love and compassion from Yemen," he told the audience. "The President has personally asked me to focus on and deal with disability issues," he added.

At the end of the ceremony, a mentally handicapped competitor walked to the front and shouted the Special Olympic Athlete Oath, which boomed around the room: "Let me win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt," he screamed.

Once the entertainment ended and the dignitaries and officials had left, the games were quickly set up and the children filtered off to compete and enjoy

themselves.

"I heard about the event through friends and decided to sign up," said Azd Al-Kadasi, a volunteer. "My cousin is mentally disabled and although he didn't make it today, I would have loved to have seen him compete," he added.

"I hope that there are more events like this in the future. It keeps disabled people engaged; they feel like they are part of the community and it allows them to see their importance in society."

Yemen Times caught up with three competitors to discuss their dreams and ambitions for the tournament and future.



Name: Muhammed Abdulrahman Al-Lebani

Age: 20-23 (unconfirmed)

Although Muhammed is not sure of his age, his care worker says he is over 20 but has the mental maturity of a child under the age of five. Muhammed has been mentally disabled since birth. The Al Rahma charity in Aden, set up to care for those with severe mental and physical disabilities, has brought him to Sana'a to compete in the Special Olympics. "I've been training for over a month so that I can compete in the 100 meters," said Muhammed in the stands

at the al Muraisi Hall track stadium. "The training made me very excited about the Special Olympics. I loved the trip from Aden. It is really nice to come to Sana'a with all my friends," he added.

Muhammed is happy just to take part but, like many of the other competitors, has high expectations of himself for the competition and the future.

"In the future I want to be a doctor. I want to be able to cure diseases that cause disabilities but also to take care of children like the people who took care of me."



Name: Abdulilil Saadiq Ali Saleh

Age: 8

Abdulilil was in a tragic accident when he was four years old. He was playing on the family farm when his uncle accidentally reversed a tractor onto his body. The back wheels crushed Abdulilil's legs and the front wheels drove over his lower torso. Miraculously, Abdulilil survived and is now able to compete in the Special Olympics. He took part in the wheelchair race as well as the shot-put. Abdulilil goes to the Iman institute in Sana'a.

"I am so happy to be playing sports here. There are so many people and friends around me," he said, waving a Yemeni flag.

Abdulilil has been training for two months and wants to see the Sana'a governorate come out on top. He started to chant a pro-Sana'a tune he had heard earlier during the ceremony.

"Everyone here has been very kind. The only thing that upsets me is watching sports," he said. "Whenever I watch my friend playing sports, I just want to play myself."



Name: Karima Muhammed Hamoud Al-Wutari

Age: 15-19 (unconfirmed)

Karima was born with Down's syndrome, which causes intellectual impairment and physical abnormalities. She is currently being cared for by the School for Rehabilitation for Children with Disabilities in Sana'a.

"I'm very excited! This is the first time I've competed in any sports competition," she told Yemen Times in the sports stadium while volunteers were setting up the arena for Bocce.

Karima wanted to let people know that the games were not just for fun. Many of the contestants come along with a competitive approach and Karima has been practicing for two months.

"It's very competitive; I want to get a gold medal and I want Sana'a to win overall. Winning is very important to me, I'm very determined," she said.

Karima told Yemen Times that she was very comfortable living in Sana'a as a disabled person. She said she rarely faces obstacles at the school, at home or outside. She wants to be a teacher when she is older.



## Violated Women: Part 3/3

# Initiatives to alleviate Yemeni women's suffering

Yemen is 134rd out of 134 countries in the 2009 Gender Gap Index. This means that Yemeni women are deprived in the four main fields addressed in this index's calculations: health, economy, education and politics. Not much statistical information is available as to the extent of abuse and violence against Yemeni women, although it is quite visible in society. The Yemeni Women's Union is one of the leading organizations working to defend abused women through its hotline, legal support and shelter for abused women.

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

One day, Hana came to the Yemeni Women's Union's office in Sana'a carrying the world's weight on her shoulders. She was married, had four children and was on the verge of a mental breakdown. She had left her house at daybreak deciding that she could no longer handle her abusive husband and mother-in-law.

After the union listened to her story they forwarded her to the center where Basadeeq met her and took her in the shelter because she had nowhere else to go.

She is a beautiful young woman, not more than 23 years old. She already has four children and the center's psychiatrist diagnosed her to have a schizophrenic disorder. She was married young, and said that her husband is very dry towards her. He often insults and humiliates her at his mother's instructions.

Hana lost her mother when she was a little girl, and her father and brother who were her only family died suddenly in a car accident. The aggressiveness of her husband and mother-in-law grew worse as they sensed that she has no one to protect her, which drove her out of the house.

"The problem is of multiple dimen-

er-in-law- they began to resolve the problem. Hana stayed at the shelter for a little more than three weeks during which she learned some skills that empowered her and raised her self esteem. She learned to make fantastic "bint al-sahn" (a local dessert in Sana'a) and sold them through the center with pride. The money she got from her baking was the first money she has ever earned in her entire life.

During her absence, her children had begun to develop emotional problems and even the older one who was six regressed and started wetting his bed again. The tension at home was growing but her family realized her value, while she was learning more about herself and her abilities at the center.

Eventually she returned to her husband and the center still provides them with regular counseling. She also comes often to study some of the many economically empowering courses offered by the center.

**She tried to fight him off, but she was sick that day and had an epilepsy fit. The health trainee who is a fourth year medical student took advantage of her weakness and raped her.**

Victims of domestic abuse who flee their homes are mostly rejected by their families. Only when they start earning money do their families take them back according to Basadeeq, whose priority is to empower women.

### Access to the legal system

Economic empowerment leads to ability



Fatima Ali has more than 14 years experience in embroidery, making traditional jewelry, knitting, and hand crafts. Her classes are very popular with students.

yer Khaled Mohammed Al-Akwa, a volunteer lawyer at the union, the quality of service is never guaranteed.

Al-Akwa has voluntarily represented many women who came to the union seeking legal assistance. He is a part of a 150 people task force around the country whose legal assistance extends to women in prison as well as women in communities. Women prisoners take up most of the lawyers' time since majority of the community cases get solved outside the court through social interventions.

"Yemeni tradition dictates that domestic problems are solved internally. We try not to clash with this notion as long as the women get their right. A lot of mediation takes place. The difference is that we help women speak from a point of strength because we educate them about their rights. We also put pressure on the religious men and local leaders to remember the Islamic teachings which are always in favor of justice and equity," said Al-Akwa.

He has just closed a case where a man divorced his wife and deprived her of their two children. The custody battle had to go to court since the mediation did not work. The husband wanted to take revenge on his wife through their children. She eventually won full custody and alimony for the children. This would not have happened this easily had she not stood up for herself and demanded help.

He is currently representing a 40-year-old poor woman who was raped by a medical student while she was on drip in a local clinic. She tried to fight him off, but she was sick that day and had an epilepsy fit. The health trainee who is a fourth year medical student took advantage of her weakness and raped her. When she could, she stormed to the street and cried for help. She went to the police station and reported the rape.

In an attempt to hush things, the rapist's father paid two men to go to her and convince her to drop the charges. These two men eventually became prime witnesses against him. The case is still in court.

"The problem is that in our country police and judiciary forensics are inadequate. A simple rape kit and DNA test at the time when she reported the rape could have solved the issue over night. But in Yemen we are still lagging behind and DNA tests in rape cases are still not a priority," he added.

The problem is not only because of the community, adds Najla Al-Lisani the union's legal protection project officer. It is also with the judicial system because it is not sensitized towards women.

There are only a few judges who rule fairly instead of hushing cases through mediation.

Oxfam carried out many projects in order to sensitize the legal system towards women. The legal protection program is one of the most successful projects in this field.

"We provide the legal assistance service to women in the communities and to the prisoners. Now our partners, the Yemeni Women Union's five branches and the executive office in Sana'a, have gone beyond just providing legal services to advocacy with the local councils to demand institutional changes in the prisons. For example, they are advocating to grant female prisoners their rights and integrate their needs in the five year plan 2011-2015 and creating

budgets for women's needs in prison," said Tahani Saeed Al-Khaiba, gender officer at Oxfam.

Within this project Oxfam is hoping to create a digital database system on violence cases which are reported in hospitals, police stations and local community leaders.

The Yemeni Women's Union branches will provide these three parties with a standard form to document the violence cases not only against women, but any violence cases.

"Usually the doctor, or the police officer and the local community leaders do not report it if a man beats his wife or children and so on. We need to change this and make it obligatory for them to report through standard forms disseminated by the Central



The writer (right) with director of the women empowerment center Nabihah Basadeeq wearing some of the students' products. The raw materials are quite expensive, so the center buys them and allows the students to train on them and eventually sell them in a public exhibition.

Statistics Organization in cooperation with the Yemeni Women Union. We are also working to enhance the awareness of people who directly come across violence cases and train them on how to deal with them," she added.

Another new initiative through this legal protection project is a training program in law for the fresh graduates from the law colleges. The students would be encouraged to enroll in a volunteer program through which they defend women for free in return for which they would be connected to established law firms and get training and real life experience as well as accreditation. Not only would this mean more availability of legal help for the women, it would also install a

sense of commitment into the society and volunteerism among the new lawyers who will get small financial incentives to cover their transportation and operational costs from Oxfam.

### 4U

If you would like to know more about the hotline service call: Yemeni Women's Union Executive Office in Sana'a at: 01-480489

If you would like to know more or support the women empowerment center or the shelter call: 01-403404

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Through the legal protection project which is funded by Oxfam, awareness materials are spread in public places informing women of the available services aiming at eradicating violence against women.

sions. Unfortunately, the Yemeni culture, especially in mountain areas, does not encourage expressing emotions. It would be considered weak if a husband hugged his wife or if a father patted his children. Even mothers refrain from expressing emotions endorsing an emotionally dry culture. The other dimension of the problem is the vulnerability of the women. They are usually uneducated, economically dependent and oppressed," explained Basadeeq.

The Wiam Home contacted her husband and through intensive sessions with all three -the couple and the moth-

to seek and access to rights such as the right to legal assistance. Many women who were helped by the union's volunteer lawyers were trained and given a vocation through which they can earn money. They were gradually asked to contribute small amounts to the trial charges. The purpose of this is to make them understand that money brings services and that even when they are on their own they can still avail any service if they can pay for it.

**The problem is that in our country police and judiciary forensics are inadequate. A simple rape kit and DNA test at the time when she reported the rape could have solved the issue over night. But in Yemen we are still lagging behind and DNA tests in rape cases are still not a priority**

The state facilitates access and appoints lawyers to women who don't have much money but according to law-

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## Building schools to fight terrorism

By: Thomas L. Friedman

I took part in a "qat chew" the other day at the home of a Yemeni official. Never done that before. Qat is the mildly hallucinogenic leaf drug that Yemeni men stuff in their cheek after work — and sometimes during. My hosts insisted that qat actually makes your senses sharper and that you could chew and chisel the top of a mosque minaret at the same time. I quit after 15 minutes, but the Yemeni officials, lawmakers and businessmen I was with chewed on for three hours — and they made a lot of sense along the way.

Most had been educated in America or had children studying there, and they were all bemoaning how the decline of the Yemeni education system, the proliferation of exclusively religious schools here and the falloff in scholarships for Yemeni children to study in America were producing a very different Yemeni generation than their own.

So here is my new rule of thumb: For every Predator missile the U.S. fires at an al-Qaeda target here, it should help Yemen build 50 new modern schools that teach science and math and critical thinking — for boys and girls.

If we stick to something close to that ratio of targeted killings to targeted kindergartens, we have a chance to prevent Yemen from becoming an al-Qaeda breeding ground. Because right now there are some 300,000 college-educated Yemenis out of work — partly because of poor training and partly because there are no jobs — 15,000 schoolchildren not attending any classes, 65 per cent of teachers with only high school degrees and thousands of children learning little more than religious doctrines.

And no wonder. Beginning in the 1970s, the trend in Yemen, Morocco, Egypt and the Persian Gulf "was to Islamicise education as a way to fight the left and pro-communists — with the blessing of the U.S.," explained Lahcen Haddad, a professor at the University of Rabat in Morocco and an expert on governance with Management Systems International, a U.S. development contractor.

Then, in 1979, after the Saudi Arabian ruling family was shaken by an attack in Mecca from its own Wahabi fundamentalists, the Saudi Arabian regime, to fend off the anger of its Wahabis, "gave them free rein to Islamicise education and social life in Saudi Arabia and neighbouring states."

"Missions — cultural and religious, semi-official and private — roamed Islamic countries to spread the word," said Mr. Haddad. "Cheap books followed, and students were brought to Saudi to learn from Wahabi preachers

and teachers in the different religious universities that mushroomed in the eighties."

Small, economically deprived Yemen was an easy target. Uncritically accepting of the "truths" of Wahabism became the core curriculum in many Yemeni schools, Mr. Haddad added, and "it destroyed the opportunity to build the basic skills necessary to train the right labour force — skills like problem-solving, communication, critical thinking, debate, organisation and teamwork."

America's last great ideological foe, Soviet Marxism, produced its share of violent radicals, but it also produced Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn — because it believed in science, physics, math and the classics of literature. Islamism is not producing any Sakharovs.

May Yamani, the author and daughter of the former Saudi Arabian Oil Minister, Ahmad Zaki Yamani, minced no words, writing in *The Beirut Daily Star*: "Saudi Arabia exported both its Wahabism and al-Qaeda to Yemen by funding thousands of madrassas, where fanaticism is taught."

Ahmed Sofan, a Yemeni parliamentarian, told me that back in the 1970s if you visited a village in his rural constituency, most of the women would be unveiled and working alongside the men. No more, he said, "because we now have this Wahabi sense of religious conservatism where women are supposed to be inside and be veiled."

Added Abdul Karim al-Iryani, a former Prime Minister: Growing up, "we studied Darwinism in my high school without challenge". Not anymore. "The East Asian miracle," he added, "wasn't possible without women. In the Arab world, if half our society is excluded, how will we ever catch up with those new tigers?"

The Yemeni journalist Mohammed al-Qadhi reported in *The National* newspaper that there may be 10,000 religious-based schools educating Yemeni youth today. He quoted a top Yemeni education official as saying, "We are now obliging these schools to teach moderation to protect our students against extremism."

In other words, we are now fighting for the West Asia of the 2020s and 2030s. Huge chunks of this generation are lost. When I went to see Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh at his Sana'a palace, he was in a reflective mood: "I would wish that this arms race could end and instead we could have a race for development."

It is the only way, Yemen will have a future. So, yes, fire those Predators where we must, but help build schools and fund scholarships to America wherever we can. — © 2010 The New York Times News Service

## US should fight terrorism in Yemen, instead of in Afghanistan

By: Joel Brinkley McClatchy-Tribune

Al-Qaeda in Yemen has grown so strong and adept that the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Japan were forced to close their embassies in Sanaa, Yemen, this week — so seriously are they taking al-Qaeda's "live and active threat," as John Brennan, the White House counterterrorism adviser, put it. "They've grown in strength."

Ten days earlier, it was able to send a man to the United States on a mission to blow up an airplane. He almost succeeded. What does all of that say? It says to me: Why on Earth is the United States sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan?

Speaking to cadets at West Point last month, Obama said: "I am convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of the violent extremism practiced by al-Qaeda. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted as I speak."

Actually, as he spoke, al-Qaeda in Yemen was plotting that airliner attack. It failed, but set off weeks of familiar recrimination and confession. At the very

same time, fatalities in Afghanistan were mounting and set a record for the entire period of the West's engagement there, since October 2001. Seven Central Intelligence Agency officers were killed last week. One-third of all Americans killed in Afghanistan died during 2009. The number of British fatalities doubled.

Taliban fighters killed those soldiers. The United States and NATO are fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, not al-Qaeda, which now has only a negligible presence — fewer than 100 men, the United States says.

Certainly the Taliban is a despicable, radical group, intent on enforcing the most extreme interpretation of Islamic law, turning women into uneducated chattel and men into cowed adherents. But has anyone ever shown evidence that the Taliban are a direct threat to the United States or the West? No.

Certainly the Taliban gave cover to al-Qaeda in Afghanistan prior to October 2001, and the two groups are allies of sorts in the tribal regions of western Pakistan now. But Matthew Hoh, a State Department officer stationed in Afghanistan, resigned last fall, upset over the conduct of the war — particularly what he called the conflation of the Taliban with al-Qaeda, he told numerous interviewers.

"Al-Qaeda is a worldwide organiza-

tion with an apocalyptic vision to establish an Islamic caliphate throughout the world," he told the *New York Post*. "The Taliban's views are very local. They are not in cahoots. They have separate goals."

The fear, of course, is that if allowed to retake power in Afghanistan, the Taliban would give al-Qaeda its old haven once again. Osama bin Laden could leave his cave and climb down from the mountains. Perhaps. But this time the United States would be watching closely. If bin Laden resurfaced, he would almost certainly be captured or killed.

So what exactly are we fighting for — particularly since we now know that al-Qaeda has several other safe havens from which it is able to carry out deadly attacks. Pakistan, Somalia, Indonesia — and Yemen. Don't forget: Al-Qaeda in Yemen attacked the USS Cole off the southern city of Aden 10 years ago, killing 17 U.S. servicemen.

"The attack on the USS Cole should have been the loudest wake-up call against al-Qaeda," Abdul Karim al-Iryani, a former prime minister of Yemen, remarked last week.

Of course, Pakistan also remains an important headquarters. Last fall, FBI agents in New York arrested Najibullah Zazi and his father on charges of planning a terror attack in the United States

using sophisticated homemade bombs. The two received extensive instruction in bomb making and terrorist strategies from al-Qaeda — at a training camp in Pakistan.

Hoh, the former American diplomat, noted that a terrorist operative can plan an attack from almost anywhere. All he needs is an Internet connection, as was the case for the logistician behind the 9/11 attacks. He planned everything from a small apartment in Hamburg, Germany.

Still, Yemen offers a congenial location for a terrorist headquarters. Its people live in abject poverty; the average annual income is \$870. Only 59 percent of the adult population can read and write. Only one person of every 100 uses the Internet. All of that presents fertile ground for al-Qaeda recruiters so that, now, Yemen has far more al-Qaeda operatives than Afghanistan, the White House says.

So, besides incurring ever-more casualties, what's the United States doing in Afghanistan?

*Joel Brinkley is a former Pulitzer Prize-winning foreign correspondent for The New York Times and now a professor of journalism at Stanford University. Readers may send him e-mail at: brinkley@foreign-matters.com.*

## Treating Al-Qaeda

By: Bernard Haykel

PRINCETON — Although Al-Qaeda's leadership, beliefs, and ideology are rooted in Saudi Arabia, the organization has been all but crushed in the Kingdom by a government policy that combines a big carrot and an even bigger stick. The attempted assassination in Jeddah last month of Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, the deputy interior minister for security affairs, demonstrates both elements of the Saudi strategy, and how a bold attempt by Al-Qaeda to revive its fortunes has failed.

The bomber was Abdullah Asiri, a Saudi citizen and Al-Qaeda member who had returned from Yemen, claiming to have renounced terrorism and wishing to surrender directly to Prince Muhammad in his palace. Earlier that day, the prince had the bomber flown in on his private jet from the Yemeni-Saudi border and reportedly ordered that he not be carefully searched. Yet, Asiri had indeed hidden a bomb inside his body, a one-pound explosive that he detonated near the prince. However, the bomb was not encased in metal and the terrorist was the only person killed.

To an outsider, the episode looks like a colossal security failure, as if the head of the FBI personally greeted one of Bin Laden's lieutenants at a garden party. But it is just this highly person-

alized form of politics that the Saudi royals have adopted with defecting Al-Qaeda's members. Indeed, this policy, even with its risks, partly explains Al-Qaeda's defeat in Saudi Arabia. Highly personalized politics form part of what might be called Saudi Arabia's theatre of state, which keeps the royals firmly in power.

Since 2003, Prince Muhammad has been in charge of a successful campaign against violent Islamism in the Kingdom. In terms of armed security action, he has developed a strong domestic intelligence and police service that is both efficient and brutal in its tactics. At the same time, the prince has cannily used deeply rooted cultural and religious norms to pressure Al-Qaeda's recruits to give up violence.

For example, he offers significant financial inducements to individual jihadis, as well as their families, in return for political obedience. In effect, by not accepting Saudi largesse the militant will be keeping food off his own family's table — a powerful restraint in a culture and religion in which parents are highly regarded and respected.

Prince Muhammad has also established a rehabilitation program that seeks to de-program the jihadis from their radical beliefs through a course of study that teaches that Islam requires obedience to a Muslim ruler. Repentant

jihadis are taught that violence undertaken by individuals — not by the legitimate ruler — is sinful and will be punished by God. These lessons do not rule out all violence, focusing instead on Al-Qaeda's justifications for its attacks and the forms that the violence takes. As such, both fighting without the ruler's explicit permission and suicide bombing are unlawful.

Entry into the program often involves a personal audience with the Saudi prince, in a ceremony that emphasizes the paternalistic and personal nature of governance in the Kingdom, where all subjects are regarded as well-cared-for children of the royals.

Finally, Prince Muhammad has launched an Internet monitoring and disinformation campaign that keeps close tabs on jihadi Web sites and online forums. As a result, the Saudi security services have a feel for the pulse of jihadi debates, as well as for the radicals' recruitment strategies.

Al-Qaeda has also damaged itself with the Saudi public, which has been repeatedly victimized by terrorist attacks. Suicide bombings of public buildings and attacks on oil and other government installations have alienated many Saudis. With at least 80% of the population dependent on government salaries or grants, the attacks have proved very unpopular.

In addition, ordinary Saudis see the chaos next door in Iraq and do not want the same turmoil at home. For most people, stability, even if imposed by authoritarian means, trumps disorder.

In the last two years, Al-Qaeda's increasing failures in the Kingdom have forced the surviving members to regroup across the border in Yemen. The rugged mountain terrain, a religiously conservative population, and a weak government with a history of collaboration with Al-Qaeda have created a relatively sheltered haven. As a result, Al-Qaeda has had a respite to try to rebuild itself and to organize attacks in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere. With two ongoing domestic rebellions, a large population, and the rapid disappearance of oil and water resources, Yemen is quickly emerging as a Western policymaker's nightmare.

For now, however, the Saudi royals have a prince who is seen as a courageous hero for having survived an assassination attempt while offering the hand of generosity to an unrepentant zealot. Saudi King Abdullah chastised Prince Muhammad for recklessness, but the King must also be thankful that his family has produced a security chief who has broken the back of Al-Qaeda, at least inside the Kingdom.

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## Qat joins al Qaeda as Yemen threat

By: Front Row Washington

U.S. lawmakers, convene a meeting last month to discuss the threat posed by al Qaeda in Yemen, found themselves focused on another problem stalking the impoverished Arab country: the mild drug qat, which permeates Yemeni society.

Rep. Howard Berman, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, launched the discussion of Yemen's drug problem in his opening remarks, noting that qat was "a narcotic plant that produces feelings of euphoria and stimulation, but ultimately undermines individual initiative — sort of like being in Congress."

Berman noted that many people chew qat regularly in Yemen — pushed close to the top of the U.S. security watchlist after the Christmas Day bombing attempt on a U.S. airliner by a Nigerian with Yemeni links — and that culti-

vation of the drug consumes about 40 percent of Yemen's fast diminishing agricultural water supplies.

The focus on qat continued with Rep. Gary Ackerman, who mused that Yemen's drug habit might be undercutting its readiness to sign on to a more forceful campaign against al Qaeda militants within its borders.

"These people spend the afternoon getting away from reality, getting high... it's like, wow," Ackerman said.

Rep. David Scott told the panel that on a recent trip to Yemen he had been appalled by the widespread use of qat, which he called "grotesquely disfiguring" as Yemenis plugged big wads of the plant into their cheeks to chew.

"These weren't just young kids. They were police officers, they were businessmen," Scott said, adding that the water demands of Yemen's qat industry were helping push the country to economic ruin.

"It is the driving characteristic of that economy, of that culture," Scott

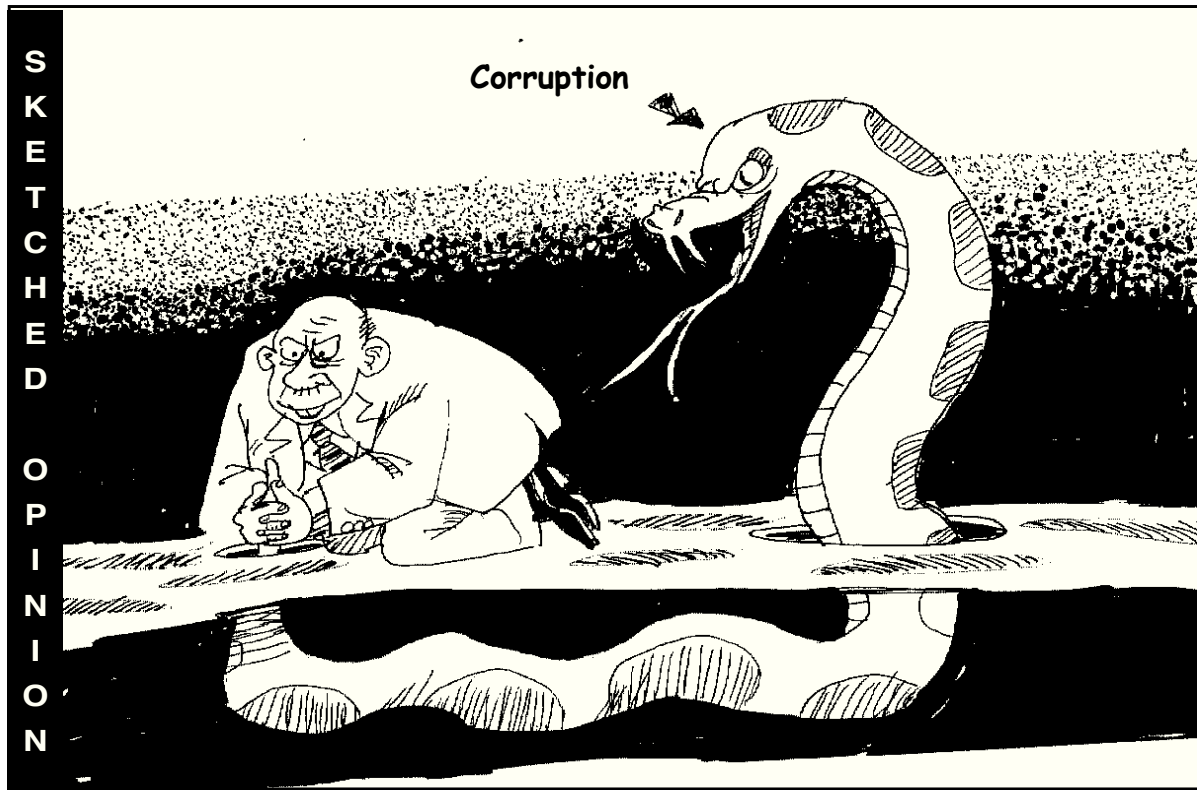
said. "That is not only making Yemen a failed state — it has become a failed state."

Assistant Secretary of State Jeffrey Feltman, who spent most of the morning outlining U.S. plans to help Yemen improve both security and governance to fight off the al Qaeda threat, conceded that there were no quick fixes in the offing for the qat problem.

"Qat is depriving income from families. It is preventing people from effective employment. It is using up precious water resources," Feltman said, noting that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was working with the World Bank and others to develop agricultural business initiatives in Yemen in hopes of spurring farmers to start growing more productive crops.

But he said qat use in Yemen was a "severe problem" that still needed to be addressed.

"I don't think there's any short-term fix to the long-term qat problem," he said.



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## Polygamy in context

By: Alia Hogben

Over the centuries, Muslim scholars and men have accepted polygamy, the practice of having multiple wives, but the Qur'anic permission and the context have been lost. In the Qur'an, polygamy is never discussed in terms of men's rights, but instead in terms of the needs of women and children at the time.

In fact, it is mentioned in verses 4:3, 4:127 and 4:129 of the fourth chapter of the Qur'an, notably entitled An-Nisa' – the Arabic word for women. Much of this chapter was revealed in the fourth year of migration of the fledgling Muslim community from Mecca to Medina, circa 627 CE, and marks the start of the Muslim calendar. It builds on the preceding chapter regarding the

Battle of Uhud between early Muslims and the inhabitants of Mecca in which many Muslim men were killed, leaving widows and orphans.

This is the context which is crucial to any discussion of polygamy in Islam, as permission was granted to men under these specific conditions. Polygamy was allowed in verse 4:3 because of God's concern for the welfare of women and orphans who were left without husbands and fathers who died fighting for the Prophet and for Islam.

It is a verse about compassion towards women and their children; it is not about men or their sexuality. It was an instruction to a patriarchal society that these women and their children needed protection and maintenance, which at the time was most effectively achieved through marriage.

When it came to orphans, God

suggested, "If you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, or three or four, but if you fear that you will not do justice then marry only one..." This solution was to provide some protection for vulnerable women and children in a patriarchal society, so long as all wives received equal, fair treatment.

But in verse 129, God suggested that the possibility for equal, faire treatment is unlikely: "And it will not be within your power to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire it..."

Incredibly, verse 129 is largely ignored and verse 3 is used by some Muslims to justify plural marriages for men, as if the verses are about men's sexual needs rather than about the welfare of widows and orphans.

Scholars, such as the 19th century Egyptian jurist Muhammad Abduh and the contemporary Indian Islamic scholar Asghar Ali Engineer, reject the argument that men's sexual lust should be satisfied by multiple wives, or indeed that men's and women's rights to sexual satisfaction differ.

Yet some men use the example of the Prophet's multiple wives as justification for their own polygamy. But Muhammad had only one wife for 25 years. Only after her death did he enter into concurrent marriages, most of which were political moves to cement relationships with other tribes.

However, one powerful hadith (saying of the Prophet) describes the reaction of the Prophet on hearing that his cousin and son-in-law, Ali – married to his daughter Fatima – was considering taking a second wife. The Prophet was

so angered he announced publicly that if Ali wanted a second wife, he would have to divorce Fatima first.

Over the centuries, the Qur'an has been almost exclusively interpreted by male scholars, and though many have been well-meaning and learned, they have reflected their own times, cultures and assumptions.

Fortunately today many scholars, such as Engineer, conclude that "polygamy was contextual, and monogamy is the norm" for our times. Some countries, such as Tunisia, have based their laws on this understanding.

The Qur'an's message is eternal, but understandably the context has changed, and there are examples of the evolutionary teachings of the Qur'an.

For example, slavery existed for a long time within Muslim communities. It is true that most slaves were those

taken in war, but slaves they still were. The Qur'an teaches kind behaviour towards slaves and encouraged freeing slaves as an act of charity, but did not eradicate slavery. Yet today, no Muslim would justify slavery.

Muslims, both men and women, must understand the restricted contextual permission for polygamy. It is not a God-given right for Muslim men and in today's context it no longer applies as a means of protecting women or providing for them.

Alia Hogben is Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW). This article was written for the Common Ground News Service (CGNews).

Source: Common Ground News Service (CGNews), 2 March 2010, www.commongroundnews.org

## Sudan signs peace deal with Darfur rebels

# The deal appears to give rebel leaders government positions

By: Benjamin Joffe-Walt  
The Media Line

Sudan's government signed a ceasefire with Darfur's largest rebel movement on Tuesday, marking what some analysts called a major development towards ending the six-year ethnic conflict in Darfur.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir signed a ceasefire and framework for further negotiations with Khalil Ibrahim, the leader of Darfur's largest rebel group the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), in the Qatari capital Doha just days after JEM fighters and the Sudanese army clashed in west Darfur.

President Bashir said the agreement "marks the start of the end of the war in Darfur" and will bring "a new Sudan, stable and peaceful, a united Sudan, by the will of its people... Peace will prevail in Darfur before the coming elections."

A political deal in which a series of government and military posts will be offered to rebels, following sporadic negotiations that have dragged on for years, is being viewed as a sign that the Sudanese government has agreed to some form of power-sharing agreement with the rebels.

Rebel leaders have denied accusations that they agreed to the deal in exchange for prestigious jobs.

"This is not about getting government positions for JEM commanders and fighters," JEM negotiator Ahmed Tugud told Reuters. "We represent the people of Darfur... This is a new phase for the participation of the people of Darfur."

After many ceasefire agreements between the government and the Darfur rebels, it is not clear Tuesday's deal will hold. But analysts said that with Sudanese President Bashir facing the first multiparty elections in 24 years in April, the deal has more chance of success.

"It looks good because the Justice and Equality Movement is the most supported of all the rebel movements," Stephen Van Neel, a former commander of international peacekeepers in Darfur and a senior researcher in the Security Sector Governance program at the Institute for Security Studies told The Media Line.

"On the other hand it's not the first time they've signed a peace deal so one can be pessimistic," he added. "The complexity that the international community is dealing with is that as long as we do not have an inclusive peace deal you will still not have peace in Darfur, and this deal is exclusively with the Justice and Equality Movement and doesn't include the SLA and its various factions."

For over a year Doha has sponsored the Darfur peace negotiations between

the Sudanese government and the two principal rebel groups: the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), which has said it will not negotiate with the government until there is an end to all violence in Darfur.

"This is just a peace deal signed on the back of the people," Dr Richard Rossin, Special Advisor to the chairman of the Sudan Liberation Movement Abdel Wahid Mohamed Al-Nur told The Media Line. "Nothing will change and this is not right for the people in the field. It's impossible to make peace with a murderer."

Tuesday's deal comes a year after the Sudanese government and JEM agreed to a series of "confidence building measures", including the government's release of JEM prisoners. On Saturday Sudanese President Bashir revoked the death sentences of over 100 JEM prisoners accused of participation in a JEM-led coup-d'état attempt in 2008.

The Sudanese government has said it is committed to reaching a comprehensive Darfur peace deal by March 15, a few weeks ahead of the national elections.

"Obviously there is a lot of jockeying going on ahead of the April elections," EJ Hogendoorn, Horn of Africa Project Director for the International Crises Group told The Media Line. "This is what's often called a framework

agreement in Sudan. It essentially says how to go forward towards a more comprehensive and binding agreement."

"It's encouraging because it's a ceasefire and in return for the ceasefire the JEM has received a promise from the government to release some of the prisoners of war and to commute their death sentences," he said. "But a lot of the more tricky details remain to be negotiated in terms of political representation, past abuses and so forth. So people are going both ways over whether this is just a stalling tactic or a meaningful improvement in their relationship. It's too early to tell."

If successful, Tuesday's deal could lead to the emergence of the Justice and Equality Movement as a national political party. JEM leader Ibrahim, who was a minister in the central government prior to joining the Darfur rebels, has called on the government to postpone the elections to allow Darfuri rebels to participate. The Sudanese government has so far refused.

Tuesday's deal was signed in the presence of the Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Chadian President Idris Deby, as well as U.N. and U.S. officials. Eritrean President Assais Afwerki is also in Doha for the talks.

"One of the problems is that all these countries are trying to take leadership on peace in Darfur," said Van Neel. "The

Egyptians, the Libyans, the Americans and the Qataris all have their own initiatives but they are not coordinated."

Sudan's western Darfur region has witnessed over seven years of ethnic conflict between dozens of African tribes and Arab tribes backed by the Arab-dominated Sudanese government. According to U.N. estimates over 300,000 Darfurians have been killed and 2.7 million made refugees since the rebel groups launched a revolt in 2003, accusing the government of marginalizing the region.

A number of international bodies have described the Sudanese government's response to the revolt as genocide and the International Criminal Court has charged Sudanese President Bashir with seven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The court issued a warrant for his arrest last year but despite Bashir visiting a number of African and Middle Eastern nations since, he has not been arrested. Qatar is not a member of the International Criminal Court and as such is under no legal obligation to arrest Bashir.

Darfur is named after the local Fur tribe, the largest ethnic group in the region, the name simply meaning "Land of the Fur."

Formerly an independent sultanate, Darfur was incorporated into Sudan by the British in 1917.

Today Darfur's six million inhabitants, principally subsistence farmers and pastoralists, make up one seventh of Sudan's population.

Darfur's 80 tribes are often categorized into Arabs, non-Arab "Africans" and various tribes who have lost their native languages to Arabic.

Some see "Africans" in Darfur as those whose mother tongue is not Arabic, although in reality the line between those considered Arab and "African" is not that clear.

Darfur's "African" tribes, such as the Fur, Zaghawa and Massaleit tribes, tend to be settled subsistence farmers and traditional cultivators who grow millet, sorghum and market vegetables. Darfur's Arab tribes, on the other hand, are principally nomadic cattle and camel pastoralists.

Low-intensity tribal conflict between these sedentary and nomadic communities is nothing new in Darfur, but the war of the past seven years centers around a conflict over natural resources as the region faces an increasingly acute desertification crisis. With Saharan desertification spreading south through Darfur, pastoralist tribes have migrated south in search of grazing lands and water. Lack of employment opportunities or central government investment in the region has made matters worse.

## Google slammed for suggesting 'smelly Arabs'

Organization claims 'Google Suggest' feature perpetuates stereotypes of Arabs smelling bad and having big noses

By: Rachelle Kliger / The Media Line

You're a white Christian living in a developed Western country and your neighbor is an Arab Muslim. It's not a rare setting.

Once a year you notice that for an entire month your neighbor doesn't eat or drink during the day. You hear that this is known as the month of Ramadan. You are curious and worldly and you would like to know more about your neighbor's culture and religion. You may not feel comfortable asking your neighbor. So you resort to the next best thing – Google! – that wonderful tool that helps you trawl through monstrous masses of online information to find the most esoteric information out there.

You may not differentiate between Arabs as an ethnic group and Islam as a religion. You start punching in the words "why do Arabs..."

And here you will be baffled, amused

or horrified at what happens next.

The 'Google Suggest' feature, a labor saving device designed to predict queries will automatically suggest completing your query with 'why do Arabs stink?' or 'why do Arabs have big noses?'

The suggestions are not programmed by Google but rather are based on an algorithm that takes the frequency of Google queries into account.

Other top suggestions yielded by typing, "Why do Arabs" in Google's search include,

- Why do Arabs and Jews fight
- Why do Arabs own gas stations
- Why do Arabs lose wars
- Why do Arabs throw rocks

It is not hard to understand why Arab interest groups such as the London-based Arab Media Watch (AMW) have started to remonstrate against the suggestions.

"What's worrying is that these [suggestions] are based on the overall popularity of searches, so if you may not have been looking for that, many other people have," Guy Gabriel, advisor to

AMW told The Media Line. "We're in a day and age where the Internet is a tool by which we break down barriers and learn more about different communities across the world so it's alarming to notice on Google that this isn't the case as it stands."

The organization advocating fair and objective coverage of Arab issues in the British media says Google is "failing in its aim to avoid offending a large audience of users," and said the feature not only perpetuates stereotypes but also highlights a worrying trend among Google users.

"I'm not suggesting that Google are aware of this and they are refusing to do anything about it," Gabriel said. "What it does mean is that they have pledged to try and prevent it in cases where they know about it. Now that it has been flagged, they are in a position to do something about it."

Similar queries on other ethnic groups suggest that Google users think Jews have long noses and are rude and cheap, Asians smell bad and have bad teeth and Chinese people have bad breath.

AMW claimed that while searches regarding other ethnic groups produced a

similar range of pejorative or stereotypical suggestions, queries about Arabs yielded more offensive results than other groups, and a search using Jews produced noticeably far less. In searching 'Why do Jews', for example, two pejorative suggestions were raised out of a list of 10: 'why do Jews have big noses' and 'why are Jews hated'. Remaining suggestions were more informative, such as 'why do Jews celebrate Passover.'

"It's not to say Arabs should feel singled out," Gabriel said. "There is invective against different people. We're drawing attention to this fact."

But Jeff Jarvis, a media expert, blogger and director of the interactive journalism program at the City University of New York's Graduate School of Journalism warned against regulating the predictive feature. "The reflex of censorship and regulation of speech is what I find offensive," he told The Media Line. "For better or worse, Google is merely reflecting back what people are asking and saying. The result is generally brilliant -- this is the insight that powers all of Google -- but sometimes unfortunate."

"If Google puts itself in the position of censoring anything that anyone could

find offensive anywhere, then we will be left with a least common denominator of nothing," Jarvis argued. "That would be the greater tragedy."

"I suggest that the issue here is not Google but is the larger question of cultural knowledge," he continued. "I suggest that the answer is not to retreat behind complaints but instead to publish more and connect more people with each other to gain greater understanding and muffle the sound of the bad with the sound of the good."

A Google spokesperson told The Media Line that suggestions in the Google homepage search box were "based on neutral algorithms, to help them formulate the query, reduce spelling errors, and save keystrokes by choosing from the list of suggestions."

Google said the 'Google Suggest' feature uses a combination of signals to rank its predictions such as overall popularity of various searches.

"We try not to suggest queries that could be offending to a large audience of users," Google said in a statement. "This includes explicit porn words as well as queries that lead to porn sites, dirty words, hate and violence terms."

"We do remove certain clearly pornographic or hateful or malicious slur terms from Suggest," the spokesperson continued. "We find that by providing suggestions upfront to the user, we can help make their search experience more efficient and convenient."

"We are continuously improving the Google search experience," the spokesperson said. "We have no future plans to announce at this time."

The spokesperson referred users to a page where requests can be filed to remove content from the Google Suggest index.

LINK: <http://www.google.com/support/bin/request.py>

Google Suggest, intended to be a labor saving device is described by Google as a tool to help rest your fingers, catch spelling mistakes, save time and automatically repeat a search that has been made on your computer in the past.

For example, if you type 'New York', or even just 'New Y' it opens a window suggesting New York Times, New York Post, New York University and New York Yankees. You just need to scroll down and pick your query.

## Abu Dhabi 'vanity plate record breaker'

Emirate breaks vanity-plate records as millionaire Emiratis vie to buy license plates worth more than their cars

By: Rachelle Kliger / The Media Line

The third most expensive license plate in the world was sold in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, cementing the UAE as a vanity-plate record holder.

A plate bearing solely the digit '7' was sold in Abu Dhabi for 17 million dirhams, or \$4.6 million, in a government auction on Saturday.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the most expensive plate '1', was sold in Abu Dhabi to Emirati businessman Said Khouri in 2008 for a staggering \$2.2 million dirhams, or the

equivalent of \$14.2 million.

The second most expensive plate, '5' was also sold in Abu Dhabi to the UAE's Al-Awail Holding company for 25.2 million dirhams, or \$6.86 million, during a special number-plate auction organized by the Emirates Auction Company in 2007.

In total, 72 specialized plates were sold on Saturday for a total of 50 million dirhams.

"I think it's a matter of recognition," Muhammad Kashif, owner of the UAE Number Plates Company (link to website - <http://www.uaenumberplates.com>) told The Media Line. "Just having a Ferrari isn't much these days. People want a

nice number to go with the car. It makes them just that much more popular than the other Ferrari drivers."

"Some people have number plates that are worth more than their cars," he continued. "People in Dubai are wealthier than in other countries so people spend."

Though it was mostly a pursuit of the rich, Kashif said that the trend for personalized and distinctive number plates is so popular in the Emirates that those with a flare for the fanciful and a few dollars to spare will settle for something unique, if a little less glamorous.

As number plates in the UAE come by default with five digits, the fewer digits on the plate, the higher the price. A number plate with four digits can cost

around 5,000 dirhams, (\$1,300) but prices are pushed up for numbers that are memorable, in sequence ('4567') or all identical ('4444').

"When you have the rags-to-riches phenomenon, people like to express and to show what they have," Dr. Rima Sabban, a sociologist at Zayed University in the UAE told The Media Line.

Sabban suggested the phenomenon could be a demonstration of one-upmanship vis-à-vis Abu Dhabi's neighbor, Dubai, which has dominated the global headlines over the past decade with its ambitious and record-breaking real estate projects.

"Abu Dhabi is feeling more financially at ease and there is the aspect of showing off and competing with their neighbor,"

she said. "Yesterday it was Dubai breaking Guinness records and today it's Abu Dhabi."

An economist based in the region said the personalized number plates were mostly limited to the rich and famous.

"I think it's an indulgence of people who have money," he said. "If you have billions in your bank account, buying a two-million dollar number plate may not be an issue. Abu Dhabi is not in trouble financially. It's done quite well during this global crisis so they may not feel the need to be conservative."

The Abu Dhabi police, which organized Saturday's auctions, would not divulge the identity or nationality of the sought-after '7' license plate. Other distinctive license plates that were sold during Saturday's auction included

the number 60, which was sold for 6.1 million dirhams, '333' sold for 860,000 dirhams and '7777' sold for a million dirhams.

"There's a great reception and a lot of competition over auctions for distinctive number plates in Abu Dhabi," police official Salem Ali A-Shamsi told Al-Arabiyya. "We have seen that it attracts new bidders and increases our revenues."

Abdallah Al-Manai, who manages the auctions, said the number of bidders has recently gone up by 25 percent and attributes the record prices to the high level of competitiveness in the auction sessions. The trade in license plates has become a profitable industry in the Emirates, and is popular online as well as in the auction rooms.

## Fines without receipts estimated in the billions

By: **Mohammad Bin Sallam**

Taxes and fines are supposed to contribute to new governmental projects in a country. In Yemen, however, the reason for collecting fines is altogether quite different.

Money is taken, without receipts, from different restaurants, shops, barbers, and butchers. According to employees in these shops, the money collected by health and safety and municipality officials is about YR 500 per shop, twice a week.

If, for example, the owners of small restaurants do not pay up, government employees threaten to report them for unhygienic conditions in their kitchens.

Small business owners say that they are forced to pay whatever amounts they may be asked for, despite the lack of receipts, so that the officials won't give a report resulting in their businesses being closed down.

Ahmad Ghaleb, the head of the Tax Authority for Yemen, said that the officials who collect the fines are taking advantage of some restaurants being

dirty in order to make money in addition to their salary.

The restaurants pay because they are unhygienic and fall below health and safety standards, he said.

An employee at the Ministry of Finance, who asked to remain anonymous, accused the management of the Tax Authority of instructing their employees to collect money from these places, in exchange for not reporting any violations.

### Low salaries behind corruption

Ahmad Abdurrahman Al-Tayyeb,

General Manager of the Tax Authority in Sana'a, said that low wages were also to be blamed because a tax collector receives only YR 4,000 (USD 200) a month as a salary.

Traffic police are no exception either. One traffic officer told the Yemen Times that they take bribes from drivers who commit traffic violations, in return for not reporting these offences.

One employee at the Tax Authority reiterated that all these varied employee violations are justifiable because their monthly salary doesn't cover their

basic needs.

Another employee said that mismanagement and rampant corruption in state authorities, in addition to a complete lack of conscience of employees, lead to bribery being a common Yemeni practice.

"There is no fairness in distributing the money collected by each authority. Unfortunately, managers take almost all the extra money themselves and only give a portion to those working around them and forget about the smaller, less significant employees who are in most need for the money,"

said an employee at the Tax Authority, who added that that Yemen's treasury is estimated to be losing billions each year.

Each year, around YR 4,761,122,000 is collected without receipts in Sana'a city alone, according to Al-Tayyeb.

Economists say that if resources were better controlled and distributed in an impartial way, and the wholesale corruption contained, Yemen could be in a better condition than a country similar to Jordan that has only human resources, no oil but good financial management.

## How safe are your dollars?

By: **Martin Feldstein**

CAMBRIDGE – Chinese officials and private investors around the world have been worrying aloud about whether their dollar investments are safe. Since the Chinese government holds a large part of its USD 2 trillion of foreign exchange in dollars, they have good reason to focus on the future value of the greenback. And investors with smaller dollar holdings, who can shift to other currencies much more easily than the Chinese, are right to ask themselves whether they should be diversifying into non-dollar assets – or even shunning the dollar completely.

The fear about the dollar's future is driven by several different but related concerns. Will the value of the dollar continue its long-term downward trend relative to other currencies? Will the enormous rise of United States government debt that is projected for the coming decade and beyond lead to inflation or even to default? Will the explosive growth of commercial banks' excess reserves cause rapid inflation as the economy recovers?

But, while there is much to worry about, the bottom line is that these fears are exaggerated. Let's start with the most likely of the negative developments: a falling exchange rate relative to other currencies. Even after the dollar's recent rally relative to the euro, the trade-weighted value of the dollar is now 15 percent lower against a broad basket of major currencies than it was a

decade ago, and 30 percent lower than it was 25 years ago.

Although occasional bouts of nervousness in global financial markets cause the dollar to rise, I expect that the dollar will continue to fall relative to the euro, the Japanese yen, and even the Chinese yuan. That decline in the dollar exchange rate is necessary to shrink the very large trade deficit that the US has with the rest of the world.

Consider what a decline of the dollar relative to the yuan would mean for the Chinese. If the Chinese now hold USD 1 trillion in their official portfolios, a 10 percent rise in the yuan-dollar exchange rate would lower the yuan value of those holdings by 10 percent. That is a big accounting loss, but it doesn't change the value of the American goods or property investments in the US that the Chinese could buy with their trillion dollars.

The Chinese (or Saudis or Indians or others outside the euro zone) should, of course, be concerned about the dollar's decline relative to the euro. After all, when that decline resumes, their dollar holdings will buy less in European markets. While it is hard to say how much the decline might be, it would not be surprising to see a fall of 20 percent over the next several years from the current level of about 1.4 dollars per euro.

But the big risk to any investor is the possibility that inflation will virtually annihilate a currency's value. That happened in a number of countries in the

1970's and 1980's. In Mexico, for example, it took 150 pesos in 1990 to buy what one peso could buy in 1980.

That is not going to happen in the US. Large budget deficits have led to high inflation in countries that are forced to create money to finance those deficits because they cannot sell longer-term government bonds. That is not a risk for the US.

The rate of inflation actually fell in the US during the early 1980's, when the US last experienced large fiscal deficits.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and his colleagues are determined to keep inflation low as the economy recovers. The Fed has explained that it will sell the large volume of mortgage securities that it now holds on its balance sheet, absorbing liquidity in the process. It will also use its new authority to pay interest on the reserves held by commercial banks at the Fed in order to prevent excessive lending.

This is, of course, a formidable task that may have to be accomplished at a time when Congress opposes monetary tightening.

Looking forward, investors can protect themselves against inflation in the US by buying Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities (TIPS), which index interest and principal payments to offset the rise in the consumer price level. The current small difference between the real interest rate on such bonds (2.1 percent for 30-year bonds) and the nominal interest rate on conven-

tional 30-year Treasury bonds (now 4.6 percent) implies that the market expects only about 2.5 percent inflation over the next three decades.

So the good news is that dollar investments are safe. But safe doesn't mean the investment with the highest safe return. If the dollar is likely to fall

against the euro over the next several years, investments in euro-denominated bonds issued by the German or French governments may provide higher safe returns. Even if the dollar is perfectly safe, investors are well advised to diversify their portfolios.

Martin Feldstein, a professor of economics at Harvard, was Chairman of President Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisors and President of the National Bureau for Economic Research.

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فجئنا اليوم يا (دالسي) لأنسك

(هشام) في الوري باهي المحيا  
تطيب اليوم بالخلان نمسك

متمنين لكم حياة زوجية سعيدة وبالرفاه والبنين..

جميع موظفي صحيفة

جميع موظفي شركة





## JOB VACCANCY

Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF-Spain) is a private, non-governmental organisation, which operates internationally, providing assistance to populations in distress, including victims of natural or manmade disasters, wars and conflicts.

Since November 2009 the organisation is in charge of Nutritional programs in the IDPs camps in Al Mazraqs. In addition to the present activities, MSF-OCBA plans to start a psychosocial program in these camps to provide counselling to the IDPs community.

### 6 Psychosocial counsellors

Place of work: Al Mazraq Camps (Hajjah governorate)

#### QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

##### Knowledge and Experience:

- Completion of the secondary school.
- A university degree would be an advantage (Psychology or Social Work degree)

##### Working Experience:

- Experience in counselling, social work or community work.
- Nursing or teaching background.

##### Skills and abilities

- Interest and commitment to assist people to recover and heal from mass war violence and torture.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Able to speak clearly and loudly in front of a group of people
- Empathic, warm and open personality.
- Strongly motivated to learn and to receive continuous training
- Autonomous and initiative.
- Discreet and able to respect confidentiality
- Flexible
- Able to work in a team

##### Languages:

- English: fluent oral and written skills.
- Arabic: Excellent knowledge oral and written.

Candidates fulfilling the above criteria should send their contact; we strongly encourage females to apply for this position.

Details, CV and a covering letter **before March 7<sup>th</sup> 2010**

You can apply for this position by giving a letter of application and updated curriculum vitae to:

MSF Office in Diplomatic Area  
P.O. Box 16308 Haddah post office  
Medicins Sans Frontieres – Spain  
Sana'a –Yemen

**Only short listed candidates will be contacted**



## Ministry of Water and Environment Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project Job Vacancy Project Management Unit Director



The Republic of Yemen has received a Grant from the International Development Association (IDA) toward the cost of the **Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP)** and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this Grant to payments for the services of a Project Management Unit Director in its PMU office in Sana'a. **This notice is to invite interested applicants to apply for the position of Project Management Unit Director.**

The Project Management Unit (PMU) Director will have overall responsibility for planning and management of RWSSP implementation and management of the PMU. The Director will report to an Oversight Committee headed by the Minister of Water and Environment.

#### The Director's key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that the project is implemented in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Government of Yemen and the World Bank/IDA as defined in the project documents.
- Oversee planning and management of the PMU and coordinate the various project activities.
- Liaise and maintain effective communication with relevant Ministerial departments, other local agencies, IDA and other donors.
- Prepare periodic reports, summarizing the status of implementation.
- The PMU Director is expected to implement the project according to project documents, agreed work plan and Grant agreement, particularly with respect to financial covenants.

#### The applicants should have the following qualifications and personal skills:

- A possession of full rights of Yemeni Citizenship.
- Must have a university degree in Engineering, Social Sciences and /or Management discipline.
- Should possess 12 years working experience of which at least 8 years in rural water supply and sanitation and/or rural development.
- Should have a good experience in international donors working procedures and regulations
- Should be a computer literate.
- Good working knowledge of English Language.
- Must accept full-time employment on a contract basis and if he/she is a government employee he/she should have a leave of absence during the period of contract.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills with an ability to work in close collaboration with various stakeholders, including an ability to motivate, monitor and promote team spirit in the Unit.
- A high work rate and demonstrated ability to work independently and effectively with minimum supervision.
- Good organizational skills and the ability to prioritize and deliver tasks on time.

**Interested applicants should submit their applications with CVs and supporting documents in a sealed envelope to the address mentioned below at 12:30 pm on 20 March, 2010. Please note that Applications sent by fax will be ignored.**

Ministry of Water and Environment  
Office of the Assistance Deputy Minister of Water.  
Amran Street near the office of General Authority of Rural Water Supply Projects (GARWSP)  
Sana'a Republic of Yemen  
Tel: 335021  
Fax: 335011



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**Request for Expression of Interest  
Assessing Targeting and Implementation of Cash Transfer Program  
of the Social Welfare Fund**

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN  
Emergency Social Safety Net Enhancement Project in Yemen  
CONSULTING SERVICES  
Credit No. 4279  
Project ID No. (P117038)

The Republic of Yemen has received an EC-financed Global Food Crisis Response Trust Fund Grant administered through the World Bank toward the cost of the Emergency Social Safety Net Enhancement Project, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for consultant services. The Key components and objectives of this service are:

**Key Components:** (a) completion of multiple rounds of household surveys with a sample of households, and (b) analysis of household survey and administrative data.

**Objectives:**

- Targeting Performance.** Assess whether the cash transfer program under the project is implemented according to the targeting criteria specified by the proxy means testing (PMT). Specifically, the goal is to check whether beneficiaries selected through application of the PMT are indeed the ones who are enrolled into the temporary cash transfer program. To do this, a baseline survey of a random sample of the 97,032 applicants in the Social Welfare Fund (SWF) database will need to be conducted.
- Process Assessment.** Assess whether or not administrative processes are functioning. Part of this assessment can be done using administrative data collected roughly three months after the enrollment of beneficiaries begins.
- Beneficiary assessment and impact evaluation.** The third objective is two-fold. First, we seek a beneficiary assessment that will require a follow-up survey with cash transfer beneficiaries who are enrolled at the beginning of the study. Second, subject to funding being available, we seek an impact evaluation that will be based on follow-up data from not only beneficiaries but also non-beneficiaries.

**Key tasks for consultancy**

- Data collection instrument**  
The survey instrument must include a shorter version of the HBS consumption module, the standard variables presented in the SWF application form and other relevant questions.
- Implementation of baseline and follow-up household surveys**  
A random sample of 5,000 applicants should be interviewed shortly after enrollment begins, and this sample should be re-interviewed 12 months after the baseline as well.
- Results and Analysis**  
The consultant must provide the databases generated for the analysis (in Microsoft Access, STATA, ASCii formats) for all rounds of household surveys.

The SWF now invites eligible consultants/firms to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures providing information on core business, technical and managerial organization, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc.). Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications.


Consultants will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the World Bank's "Guidelines: Selection and Employment of Consultants by World Bank Borrowers" dated May 2004 and revised October 2006.

Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours 0800 to 1400 hours (Saturday -Wednesday).

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by March 15, 2010.

Attn: Mansoor Alfiadhi  
Executive Manager  
Social Welfare Fund  
P.O. Box 4898  
Sana'a  
Yemen  
Tel: (967-1) 544015  
Fax: (967-1) 544014  
E-mail: alfead4@hotmail.com

**UNDP  
PROCUREMENT OF CONSTRUCTION WORK  
EXPRESSION OF INTEREST**



UNDP hereby solicits Expressions of Interest for Civil work to take place in the UNDP office.

UNDP invites qualified potential suppliers to express their interest in supplying the above services. The expression of interest should specify the name and address of company, contact person, relevant supply experience (not less than 5 years), Classification certificate (class 1 or 2 are accepted), financial statement, list of professional staff, list of equipment and at least three reference letters/contract and must be received by UNDP no later than **March 15, 2010**. It should be noted that UNDP is not obliged to invite to participate in the subsequent bidding process any particular potential supplier who had expressed interest in this project.

Only vendors prevailing from past experiences delivering the above will be considered. Interested potential suppliers should forward their expressions of interest, labeled "EOI Civil work" including the documentation listed above to the UNDP OFFICE.

Invitation to Bid (ITB) and any subsequent purchase order will be issued in accordance with the rules and procedures of UNDP.

Interested potential suppliers should forward their expressions of interest with indications of relevant experience to the following address:

UNDP  
"EOI Civil work"  
P.O. Box: 551  
Off sixty road, near Alawqaf complex  
Sana'a, Yemen  
Attn: Ms. Samira Al-Farah  
E-mail: procurement.ye@undp.org or registry.ye@undp.org  
Tel: + 967 1 448605  
Fax: + 967 1 448841

Are we really white?

By: Naji Gazali
naji734@gmail.com

The fact that Arabs are considered as white and not as a minority in America seems problematic to me. Arabs are "not recognized by the US government as a minority group" (Awad, 2010, p.59).

Denying the Arabs the classification of a minority or granting them the classification of being white or a majority will drastically continue to affect them in terms of how they are perceived by both, the majority and minority alike and how they really view themselves as well.

Despite the classification of Arab Americans as white, discrimination towards them "was documented as early

as 1914 in the United States." (Naber, 2000, p. 61).

Recently the tragic event of 9/11 has led "to a sharp increase in prejudice and discrimination towards persons of Arab and Middle Eastern decent" (Ajrouch, 2005, p. 59). It has also, reshaped and reinvented discrimination as a way of combating terrorism, including institutional discrimination such as racial profiling, stereotyping, indefinite detention, wire tapping, and suspensions of constitutional rights under the un-patriot act.

To put it simply, the 9/11 event has stamped the stereotype Hollywood promoted racist image of the Arabs as villains and bad people and proved the sick logic of collective punishment.

Given the historical evidence of many others persecuted in America, for no reason at all, starting with the native Ameri-

can Indians, the African Americans, the Japanese Americans, the Jewish Americans and many other Americans, the Arab Americans are not the first, nor will they be the last to experience prejudice and discrimination in America.

It seems as if racism is maintained by the same system which sustains poverty in the world, where, while some people continue to be poor and hungry, others are saturated with resources and surplus.

The issues of acculturation and religious affiliation of Arabs Americans was studied by Germinie H. Awad to assess the level of immersion within dominant and ethnic culture and how it manifested into discrimination as well as the correlation between discrimination and the degree of acculturation.

He found that religion played a strong

role in the process. Arab Americans who are Muslims are reporting higher percentage of discrimination against them compared to their Christian counterparts. The study also found that "Muslims were reporting a higher degree of ethnic society immersion and less dominant society immersion than Christians." (Awad, 2010, p. 63)

Therefore, the question remains to be answered: Are we Arabs really White?

It is ironic that our ancestors, who came to the US at the beginning of the 19th century, fought to be recognized as the white race in order to avoid discrimination and prejudice, only to find out a century later that their efforts were fruitless.

Being an Arab in America today has become a problem and I wonder what it feels to be a problem.

Through The Mind's Eye

By: Maged Thabet Alkholidy
maged\_thabet@hotmail.com



Youth await action, not words!

In many developed countries, youth are looked upon as the pillars of present and future prosperity and a lot of attention is given to their development.

Yemen too says that it values its youth. But its actions indicate something different. The role of the youth in Yemen is reduced to that of convenient audiences for speeches, promises, advice, and sometimes beneficiaries of the courtesy of high-ranking «authorities.»

In reality education, good health, suitable job opportunities, good standards of life are few of the basic things that should be offered to the youth. But for the youth in Yemen, even these few basic things Yemen seem like a wish list, or even unattainable ambitions.

I do not deny that our authorities are taking steps for the development of the youth. But unfortunately, I find these efforts are mere promises in speeches made to decorate occasions.

Other countries offer the youth numerous facilities and the youth in turn study not only for the sake of degrees and certificates, or for the sake of earning a living, but also to contribute to society.

The most important facility that is offered to Yemeni youth is an acoustically well designed hall (with microphone, speakers, and amplifiers). Such good acoustics not only help the youth to hear the speakers, but also help the elderly and the deaf to hear the speeches delivered by high-ranking authorities on occasions and national events.

Actually, the youth are very good listeners and have a very good level of understanding. Ideally, speeches directed towards the youth must be inspiring, encouraging the youth to be productive and creative and harness their tremendous energy. Such speeches are quick to capture the attention of the youth and do not require a pompous atmosphere or good acoustics. Even if they are delivered on the streets, such speeches will never fail to draw the youth, even the foreigner youth.

But just imagine what a youth coming from outside Yemen would have to say of the speeches delivered by our high ranking authorities. What would he or she say if asked about the impression of Yemen?

This youth might in the beginning say the speeches are 'story like' but will soon realize that these speeches are rather monotonous. The core content remains the same: the glory of the past and achievements of the few.

Actually, it is ok to remind people of the past and its achievements. It can be done, however, once a year.

If a speech addressing the elderly talks about the past glories and achievements, it is understandable. Because then, it becomes a matter of good memories.

But speeches for the youth should deal more with the present and the future so that they can direct the youth towards using their energies productively and earning something for themselves, which they can proudly look back at.

The stories of the past can be taken as models for improving the present and building a better future. But what youth need now is to take action to build a future for themselves.

This is an advice not only for the authorities, but also for the youth which should know better than to stand paralyzed, doing nothing at all in practical life.

It's time they switched out of the old routine of listening to the past stories, and demand practical solutions to empower them to play their roles as pillars of the society. Because only thorough productive actions can the youth build the present and future of this country.

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

High population in Yemen

By: Mubeen Esam
Mibo\_time@yahoo.com

Imagine that there are three families earning the same income but the first family consists of ten members, the second of eight and the last one comprises five individuals. Which family is living comfortably?

I'd like at this point, to shed light on the seriousness of the on-going increase in population which severely affects the Yemeni economy. Such a rise shows parents' lack of awareness of the effect of having so many children. In this case, we have no right to blame our government for the poverty many people are suffering from.

The constant growth in the birthrate threatens our country's stability. Yemen is an importing country and also is highly dependent on foreign aid. The amount of people who suffer from actual starvation is rising steeply. Therefore, the issue of population is the main problem for Yemen. Current estimates indicate that the Yemeni population will grow to approximately 59.5 million by 2033.

As a matter of fact, most men whether urban or rural, believe that dignity and honor lie with having many children, but that's actually wrong. Increased population threatens many poor countries, not

only Yemen, whose population average is 21 million and rises 3.5 % annually. We should ask ourselves the following questions: where will these people live? How will they eat, drink, learn, enjoy, spend holidays, or work?

As we know, Yemen is facing drought, a shortage of resources, poverty, an influx of refugees, difficult economic and political issues and, finally, Qat which takes huge amounts of water to cultivate and large agricultural areas of arable land. Do you think our government is responsible for the high population in Yemen? In my mind, the responsibility lies with us.

Correspondingly, we can't see the positives of the increase of Yemeni development because the population density hinders development programs and expands the need for education, health accommodation services and other basic requirements. Such a high density increases unemployment, and lessens individual wages. In fact, there is no balance between the high number of people in Yemen and its resources.

In this context, there should be awareness programs about healthy family planning within the educational curricula. In Yemen, a boy gets married around 18 years old so by the time he reaches 26, he will have 4 - 5 children and he may have

tired of his wife, so he will want to marry again, resulting in even more children. The government must instigate large advertising campaigns to inform families in the workplace, hospitals, malls, streets, public transport, all aspects of the media, and mosques along with the education sector. If the populations' awareness isn't raised immediately, there won't be any further development in Yemen.

43% of Yemeni people live below the poverty line. Having a large family takes much financial management and funds to support it. As long as there is constant population growth, there will be more unemployment, poverty, starvation, and illiterate young people. I'd like to re-iterate the point that poverty in Yemen is directly linked to the scarcity of the country's resources and the increase in people. It is obvious that big families are poor because parents refuse to organize their offspring and family planning. The high population renders our poor country unable to provide its people with even the basic requirements.

The sheer density of people hinders the march of development in Yemen and foils all the plans and programs put into place by both government and aid organizations, to reduce this abject poverty. Yemenis tend to think that the government hasn't fulfilled any positive changes and they think

the government isn't interested in looking for solutions to the poverty and unemployment many Yemeni people are living with. Accordingly, if you are unable to manage your big family because its needs are too great, our country also can't manage and serve the large Yemeni population because its requirements and needs are endless too.

Last but not least, we have to know that when a family has many children, they will need more clothes, food, education, money, good care and entertainment. We should tackle poverty by ourselves and not only by leaning on the government. We should realize that we ourselves have created this poverty, so we can solve the problem ourselves too. We should understand that Yemen's resources are not sufficient for all Yemeni's requirements as long as the population continuously rises. If we don't think of solutions now for the increase in population, we will be unable to confront the negative outcomes in the future. We shouldn't be proud of the high number of our children. Alternatively, we should be proud of their living standards.

Finally, prevention is better than cure. We should schedule births by leaving more time between them. Islam urges us to organize our offspring to avoid poverty and the Messenger Mohammed was not proud of illiterate individuals.

In defense of listening skills

By: Nashwan Sadek Hassan
nshwan86@hotmail.com

I am unable to comprehend even a single word when I try to listen to a conversation in English." This is what a friend of mine complained. This friend is a student of Level I English and a few days back, I had advised him to listen to English cassettes, English TV channels, and so on, in order to improve his English.

This is not the first time I have heard someone complaining about not being able to follow a conversation in English. Actually, many students underestimate the role of 'listening' in sharpening one's language

skills and assume that 'listening' is of no real use, or just a waste of time.

In reality, however, learning a language, like acquiring any other skill, requires a lot of patience and one cannot expect to master a language in just a few days. Moreover, 'listening' is a tool which if used persistently will fetch good results in the long run. It's like what H.W. Longfellow said in his poem A Psalm of Life "learn to labor and wait."

And mind you, this is not just a theory. If you reflect on how children pick up their mother tongue, you will realize that it's by sheer listening! So you see 'listening skills' are one of the prerequisites for learning a language. It will be difficult in the beginning, similar to what my friend complained.

It will be difficult to catch words, separate between words, but this will improve over time.

Sometimes it so happens that the pronunciations of some words are wrongly registered in our brain. Listening can really improve this. Though dictionaries can help in phonetics, listening is a faster, better and easier way of correcting pronunciations and also makes one more confident in using the word.

Learning a language requires multiple skills and all these skills play a very important role in increasing language proficiency as a whole. For example, reading skills, give knowledge of sentence construction in written English, help in registering spellings, understanding how to use words. Writing,

on the other hand helps in understanding how to structure ones thoughts. Skills of referring to the dictionaries help in finding out the exact meanings of words as well as in increasing the vocabulary. Both of these contribute to writing and reading skills.

But spoken English is different from written English; sentence construction is different, words used are lighter and conversation involves the ability to respond spontaneously. Listening skills, help in understanding pronunciations, sentence construction while talking, how words are used as well as increases confidence.

So I will urge all those who want to learn a language to apply all the necessary skills, develop them equally, and remember 'listening' is also important!

What is Judith looking for?

By: Abdulkareem Alsharhee
Alsharhee@gmail.com
thamar education faculty

To be in another country and criticize the situation there is really a characteristic of democracy and freedom. What I read on the Yemen Times entitled akhdam the forgotten people made me get surprised of the writer's opinion about something none of her business.

The writer shows some ethnic opinion like the use of the word discrimination and marginalization which there is no one of that she mentioned in her article.

The use of the word dirty many times drives me mad that such words insult us as Yemenis not only ashram as the writer called. I do not blame the writer but I blame the persons who help you transfer wrong information about akhdam.

So it is better to be ensured of what you are writing about rather saying things which you exactly do not know.

Here in Dhamar, akhdams are rich people and they don't need any help from any one they eat good food and drink healthy water not as you say that akhdams suffer from malnutrition.

More than that they never want to join any educational center or security forces they said when I ask one of them, they are self sufficient people.

They depend on themselves they buy qat daily from the most expensive kind which the ordinary men cannot do. You can come to Dhamar city visiting their houses and ask them about what you want.

Finally, what I know about you is that you come to study Arabic and know something about Islam values not to be from the opposition parties which they love such critics.

Generally, I wish you good health in Yemen and I want you select a good impression of Yemeni people.

RESPONSE:

Dear Abdulkareem,

Thank you for your useful comment to my article in Yemen Times about the akhdam in Dar Salm (where it certainly is no paradise). I think you are right. It is not always easy to understand Yemen as an outsider and I do realize that very well. I also realize that this means that I sometimes talk to people who only present their - maybe Westernized - view on things. People like you present the other, for which I am grateful.

I would therefore very much like to visit Dhamar and the akhdam there. I can then write a 'second part' of the akhdam story, a positive one. Will you show me around?

Look forward to hearing from you.
Kind regards,
Judith Spiegel

Oxfam JOB ANNOUNCEMENT
Information Technology Officer - (Based in Sana'a)
You will be maintaining of all computers and systems, providing day to day IT support, working with country and regional IT team on system maintenance upgrade and software distribution, providing training for staff on using available technologies and on Oxfam's policies and enhancing best practice of IT resources.

Vacancy Announcement
AMT is a humanitarian, apolitical and non-profit French non-governmental organization created in 1979. Now present in 9 countries, for over 25 years AMT has brought medical cares to those most vulnerable populations excluded from all health care systems. AMT is established in Yemen since 2007, in Hodeidah governorate. AMT health projects are implemented in closed collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Population. They consist in increasing the technical, material and organisational capacities of public facilities of both Al Maraya and Al Hail districts in order to enable them to provide quality, appropriate and affordable care services to the population. The country representative office based in Hodeidah is seeking for:
General Practitioner
AMT is seeking for a General Practitioner to work under the supervision of the medical director. His/her work time is divided in three functions. First, he has to implement and follow up AMT activities according to weekly/monthly schedule. This means particularly, the permanent assessment of the curative activities implemented, the daily recording of data on registers, the participation to the elaboration/organization of necessary trainings, finally the participation to the identification and selection of AMT beneficiaries. Also, the GP is in charge to ensure a good quality of medical cares in health facilities. Finally, he has to report his/her activities through the medical meetings, and a monthly report in order to share it with the complete team and his/her responsible.

AMT is a humanitarian, apolitical and non-profit French non-governmental organization created in 1979. Now present in 9 countries, for over 25 years AMT has brought medical cares to those most vulnerable populations excluded from all health care systems. AMT is established in Yemen since 2007, in Hodeidah governorate. AMT health projects are implemented in closed collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Population. They consist in increasing the technical, material and organisational capacities of public facilities of both Al Maraya and Al Hail districts in order to enable them to provide quality, appropriate and affordable care services to the population. The country representative office based in Hodeidah is seeking for:
General Practitioner
AMT is seeking for a General Practitioner to work under the supervision of the medical director. His/her work time is divided in three functions. First, he has to implement and follow up AMT activities according to weekly/monthly schedule. This means particularly, the permanent assessment of the curative activities implemented, the daily recording of data on registers, the participation to the elaboration/organization of necessary trainings, finally the participation to the identification and selection of AMT beneficiaries. Also, the GP is in charge to ensure a good quality of medical cares in health facilities. Finally, he has to report his/her activities through the medical meetings, and a monthly report in order to share it with the complete team and his/her responsible.

**يمن**  
YEMEN PROTECTION GROUP  
FOR SECURITY AND SAFETY SERVICES

REPUBLIC OF YEMEN - SANA'A - NOUAKCHOTT St. OPP. OF UNICEF  
Tel: 466086 Fax: 534598 Mob: 771808382 - 777884803 Email: YPGSECURITY@yemen.net.ye

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FESTIVALS & CARNIVALS SECURITY  
SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS  
EXPLOSIVE DETECTORS  
FIRE DETECTOR SYSTEMS  
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MAINTENANCE

## عقارات

للبيع: أرضية تشرف على جامعة الإيمان والمشروع الليبي على السنتين الشمالي - ١١٥٠ لينة على شارعين حي سكني. للتواصل: ٧٧٧٦٨٣٩٨

للأجانب فقط: منزل مؤثف بالكامل - ٤ غرف بما فيها غرفتين نوم درجة أولى - ممكن إضافة مولة كهرباء وشاحنة - حديقة صغيرة جميلة جداً للتواصل: ٧٣٣٤١٦٤٠٠

والصومالية والعربية - خبرة في الإرشاد السياحي والترجمة الفورية. للتواصل: ٠٢-٤٦٨٩٦٣

بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - جيد جداً - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية - يجيد التعامل مع الكمبيوتر بشكل جيد والطباعة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - يبحث عن عمل في شركة أو في أي مجال للتواصل: ٧٧٧٨٥٩٤٩

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Sana'a-Hadah St.  
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صنعا - شارع حده  
أمام مركز الكيم التجاري

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الإنجليزية - جامعة تعز - دبلوم سكرتارية - خبرة في استخدام الكمبيوتر - عمل كضابط سلامة فرع شركة هوك لمدة سنتين - دورة في الإسعافات الأولية. للتواصل: ٧٣٥٨٦٤٩٨٥

مفيد أحمد - مهندس مساحة - خريج جامعة بغداد - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية كتابة ونطقاً - خبرة طويلة في جميع الأعمال المساحية والمدنية - يجيد العمل على البرامج الهندسية وكافة أجهزة المساحة - خبرة طويلة مع الشركات الأجنبية والعالمية كمهندس واستشاري. للتواصل: ٠١-٤٧١٠٧٥ - ٧٣٣٩٩٢٩٥٣

علي مصطفى - بكالوريوس محاسبة - جيد في اللغة الإنجليزية - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر والطباعة باللغة العربية والإنجليزية - خبرة لمدة سنتين في بنك التسليف الزراعي. للتواصل: ٧٧٧٥٥٨٨٦٠

دبلوم محاسبة - تقدير جيد - دبلوم كمبيوتر - النظام المحاسبي الإصدار السادس - النظام المحاسبي للأونكس برو - النظام المحاسبي سما سوفت - خبرة في مجال المحاسبة لمدة ثلاث سنوات. للتواصل: ٧٣٤٧٢٩٤٣٤

ماثيور - هندي الجنسية - ماجستير تجارة - خبرة لأكثر من عشرين سنة في مجال التجارة - إدارة - تسويق - مشاريع - يبحث عن عمل (يفضل في مدينة تعز). للتواصل: ٧١١٤٤٥٣٥٤

إدريس - خبرة في عمل المناقصات والمراسلات التجارية لأكثر من عشر سنوات - بك لغة إنجليزية - دبلوم مبيعات - دبلوم إدارة - دبلوم كمبيوتر. للتواصل: ٧٣٣٨٢٦٧٦٩

حمزة ياسين - بكالوريوس اداب لغة إنجليزية - جيد جداً - دبلوم هندسة معمارية بتقدير جيد جداً - دورات كمبيوتر - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية والهندية

اللغة الإنجليزية كتابة ونطقاً - خبرة في مجال المحاسبة لمدة ثلاث سنوات - يجيد التعامل مع الكمبيوتر والطباعة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية. للتواصل: ٧٧٠٥٧٨٧٩٦

علي مطهر - بكالوريوس محاسبة - جيد في اللغة الإنجليزية - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر والطباعة باللغتين عربي وانجليزي. للتواصل: ٧٧٧٥٥٨٨٦٠

بكالوريوس محاسبة - تقدير جيد جداً - دبلوم كمبيوتر - دورة في النظام المحاسبي يمن سوفت بتقدير ممتاز - الرخصة الدولية لقيادة الحاسوب Icdl بتقدير امتياز - الرخصة الدولية لقيادة الحاسوب والإنترنت. للتواصل: ٧١٣٠٧٥٣٣٢

علي عباس - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - تقدير جيد جداً - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر والطباعة السريعة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - يبحث عن عمل في أي شركة. للتواصل: ٧٧١٣٧٨٣٠٩

عبدالباري - تقني كهرباء - المعهد التقني - عدن - خبرة في العمل لدى الشركة العربية للغازات والحديد والصلب - عدن - يرغب في العمل لدى شركة الغاز المسال في مجال الكهرباء. للتواصل: ٧٣٥٢٤١٧٧٨

بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - جيد جداً - يجيد استخدام الكمبيوتر والطباعة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية - يبحث عن عمل في أي مجال. للتواصل: ٧٧٧٨٣٥٩٤٥

بكالوريوس محاسبة - جامعة صنعاء - لغة إنجليزية جيدة - معرفة في النظام المحاسبي يمن سوفت - مهارات في الكمبيوتر - خبرة في تدريس المواد المحاسبية - يرغب في العمل فترة واحدة بعد العصر. للتواصل: ٧١٣٧٠٥٧٦١

علي عبد الحليم - بكالوريوس لغة

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## وظائف شاعرة

ثلاث سنوات في مجال المحاسبة - يجيد التعامل مع الكمبيوتر والطباعة باللغتين العربية والإنجليزية. للتواصل: ٧٧٠٥٧٨٧٩٦

فلبينية الجنسية - بكالوريوس انجليزي - ترغب في إعطاء دروس لمادتي الإنجليزي والرياضيات في الفترة بعد الظهر ومستعدة ان تستقبل أطفال في منزلها . للتواصل: ٧١١٤٣٣٥٣٣ - ٠١/٦١١٨٣٠

نصر سليم - المعهد التقني الصناعي (الحوبان) - تعز - تحكم الالكتروني صناعي. للتواصل: ٧٧٧٠٧١٤١٥

فهد - بكالوريوس لغة إنجليزية - دبلوم صيانة حاسوب - خبرة في المراسلة التجارية - خبرة في الإدارة التجارية - خبرة في تجهيز جميع إجراءات أوراق المناقصة. للتواصل: ٧١١٨٣٣٢٢٢

خريج كلية الشريعة والقانون (ليسانس) - جامعة صنعاء - خبرة ثمان سنوات في صيانة الحاسوب. للتواصل: ٧٣٤٥٤٦٦٨١

شرف العبيطي - دبلوم محاسبة - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية كتابة ونطقاً - خبرة

وكالة رائدة في مجال السفريات - تعلن عن حاجتها لموظفة تجيد اللغة الإنجليزية ويفضل أن يكون لديها خبرة في مجال إصدار التذاكر . للتواصل: ٧٧٧١٨٤١٢٥  
فاكس: ٦٧٧٥٩٤

## باحثون عن وظيفة

بكالوريوس هندسة كمبيوتر - فلسطيني الجنسية - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية وبرامج الكمبيوتر - قدرة ممتازة على التعامل مع الآخرين - مديرسابق لمعهد لغات - يرغب في العمل الإداري في الشركات أو المصانع أو المعاهد أو المدارس أو السفارات وفي أي مكان للتواصل: ٧٣٣٨٠٣١٩٤

شرف العبيطي - دبلوم محاسبة - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية كتابة ونطقاً - خبرة

## كوبون للإعلانات الشخصية (كل الاعلانات الشخصية بدون أي مقابل)

بيع □ شراء □ إيجار □ إستئجار □ طلب وظيفة □ وظائف شاعرة □ غير ذلك

نفاصيل الاعلان:

عنوان التواصل:

قص هذا الكوبون وارسله إلى صحيفة يمن تايمز على فاكس ٢٦٨٢٧٦ او على صندوق بريد ٢٥٧٩ - صنعاء لمزيد من المعلومات اتصل ب (ت ٢/٣/٢٦٦٦١)

DHL: 441099/8/7/6  
ARAMEX  
ازمانس صنعا: ٤٤١٠٢٤/٥  
عدن: ٢٤٣١٢٤/٥  
الكلتا: ٢٠٩٩٠٠/٥  
٢١٩٩٤٣/٥

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وراء لينك : ١-٤٤٤٥٠٠-٤٤١٩٣٥

**مستشفيات**  
مستشفى الثورة : ٠١/٢٤٦٩٦٧-٦٦  
مستشفى الجمهوري : ٠١-٢٧٤٨٦٧/٨٧  
مستشفى حدة الأمل : ٠١-٤١٩٤٨١  
مستشفى الاماني الحديث : ٠١-٦٠٠٠٠٠/٦٠٠٠٠٠  
فاكس: ٤١٨١١٦  
E-mail: felixpene@hotmail.com

**فنادق**  
فندق فرساي : ٠١-٤٢٩٧٠/٧  
فندق شيراتون : ٠١-٣٣٥٠٠  
فندق موفيك : ٠١-٤٦٦٦٦  
فندق سينا : ٠١-٣٧٣٧٢  
فندق ريلكس ان : ٠١-٤٤٩٨٧١  
فندق وأجنحة الخليج السباحي : ٠١-٦٠٣٣٥٥ - ٦٠٣٣٥٥/٨

**مكاتب ترجمة**  
الشهاب لخدمات الترجمة (عربي-إنجليزي-إنجليزي-عربي)  
تلفون: ٧٧٧٧٦٢٠٢ - ٧٣٣٠٠٨٨٦  
إيميل: sts.yemen@gmail.com

**معاهد**  
معهد بالي : ٤٤٨٠٣٩-٤٤٨٠٣٩ / ٢/٤-٤٤٥٤٨٢  
معهد اللغة الألمانية : ٢٠٠٩٤٥  
معهد البريطاني للغات والكمبيوتر : ٢٦٦٢٢٢  
معهد كاروكس : ٥٣٢٤٣٤/٥  
معهد أليكس : ٢٤٠٨٢٢ - ٥١٠٦١٢

**شركات للتأمين**  
الوطنية للتأمين : ٧٧٧٧٢/٧٧٧٨٣  
مكتب التأمين : ٢٠٦١٩٨/٨/١٣  
الشركة اليمنية الإسلامية للتأمين وإعادة التأمين : صنعاء : ٢٤٤١٩٣  
عدن : ٢٤٤٢٨٠  
تعز : ٢٥٨٨٨١  
شركة اليمن للتأمين : صنعاء : ٢٧٢٩٦٧/٢٧٢٩٦٧  
عدن : ٢٤٦٧١٧  
تعز : ٢٥٠٢٤٥

**مدارس**  
روضة واحة الأطفال: تلفاكس: ٤٧٠٢٥٠-٤٧٠٢٥٠ موبايل: ٧٣٤٥٣٣٣٣٥  
مدرسة رينبو : ٤١٤٠٠٠-٣٦/٤٢٤-٤٢٣  
مدارس صنعاء الدولية : ٣٧٠١٩١/٢  
مدرسة التريكة الدولية : ٤٤٨٢٥٨/٩  
مدرسة الماجد اليمنية : ٢٠٦١٥٩

**بمضريات**  
التسليم للسفرات : ٢٧٠٧٥٠  
العالمية للسفرات والسياحة : ٤٤١٥٨٩/٦٠

**مطاعم**  
مطعم ومخازن الشيباني (باسم محمد عبده الشيباني)  
تلفون : ٢٦٦٣٣٧ - ٥٠٢٩٠٠  
فاكس : ٢٦٦٦١٩

**الافكار المهمة**  
تعليم  
**IMPORTANT Numbers**

لايشارك في هذه المساحة الاتصال على  
تحويلة ٢٦٦٦٦٦

الشؤون الخارجيه : ٢٠٢٥٤٤/٧  
الهجرة : ٢٥٠٧٦١/٢  
وزارة المواصلات (تلفون) : ٧٥٢٢٢٠٢  
الإذاعة : ٢٨٢٠٦١  
التلفزيون : ١/٢  
مؤسسة المواصلات للتلفون داخل المن : ٢٦٢١١١/٣  
وزارة المواصلات : ٢٢٥١١٠/١/٢/٣  
السباحة : ٢٥٤٠٢٢  
السلب الاحمر : ٢٠٢١٢١/٣  
تليفون : ٧٥٢٢٢٢٢

**البنوك**  
بنك اليمن والخليج : فاكس: ٢٦٠٨٢٤  
فرع عدن : ٢٣٧٨٢٩  
بنك التضامن الإسلامي : ١/٦٦٦٦٦٦  
البنك التجاري : ٢٧٧٢٢٤  
مصرف اليمن البحرين الشامل : ٢٦٤٧٧٥,٢٦٤٧٠٢  
بنك اليمن الدولي : ٤٠٧٠٣٠  
البنك العربي : ٢٧٦٥٨٥/٢  
بنك التسليف الزراعي : ٠١-٥٢٨٨٢٣  
البنك المركزي : ٢٧٤٢٦٤

**تأجير سيارات**  
زاويه (Budget) : ٢٠٦٣٧٢ - ٢٠٩٦١٨٠  
يورب كار : ٢٧٠٧٥١  
هيزرت لتأجير السيارات صنعاء : ٠١-٤٤٠٣٠٩  
فرع شيراتون : ٥٤٥٩٨٥  
عدن : ٢٠٢٤٥٦٢٥

**مراكز تدريب وتعليم الكمبيوتر**  
أبناك لتعليم الكمبيوتر (تركيز على الانترنت، مناهج، تجارة إلكترونية) شهادة ايزو ١٠٠٠  
صنعاء : ٠١-٤٦٨٣٠٥  
فاكس : ٤٠٧٤٩٩  
عدن : ٢٠-٣٣٧١٩٩  
تعز : ٤٠٢٥٠٣٤٣  
الكلتا : ٥٠٣٠٧٤٩٢

**البريد السريع**  
Infinit Education T: 444553  
NIIT لتعليم الكمبيوتر : ٤٤٥٥١٨/٧-٤٤٢٠٧٣

**صنعاء**  
٤٤٠١٧٠/٢٢٨/٢٣٠  
عدن : ٢٤٥٦٦٦  
الحديدة : ٢٢٦٦٧٥/٤  
إب : ٤١١٩٨٨  
الكلتا : ٣٠٢٦٤١  
شوبه : ٢٠٢٣٢٦  
سنيون : ٤٠٢٢١٩  
تعز : ٢٦٠٥٠٠  
بلحاف : ٧٧٧٥٨٨٦٦  
سقري : ٢٦٠٤٩٨

للإعلان في هذه الصفحة يرجى الاتصال على الرقم 01/ 268661 وارسال الإعلانات المجانية على فاكس 01/268276

## Swearing on two stones

By: Saddam Al-Ashmori  
For the Yemen Times

In the old city of Sana'a, people are used to resolving their problems with the help of two big stones inside the Great Mosque called Al-Masmoura and Al-Manqoura.

Usually, says Yahya Ghamdhan, a resident, when two people in the old city agree to do something, they promise to do it on these two stones and it becomes a binding vow.

If one of them lies about it, he or she will sooner or later be punished by God, say locals.

Abdullah Al-Ashwal, another resident, said that almost ten years ago a woman with a group of men came to the Great Mosque to make a vow on Al-Masmoura and Al-Manqoura.

The vow made by the group of men was a lie, and on their way back to Bani Matar they had an accident. The car flipped over and everyone died except for the woman who was sincere when she made her vow.

"There are a lot of other similar stories," said Abdulla Adedd, "stories that prove the fact that a vow is sacred when made on these two stones."

"A man once lied there and by the time he finished making his vow his hand was paralyzed," he said. "The man later admitted that he was lying."

There are many more stories.

### Two important stones

The two stones are part of two pillars inside the Great Mosque in Sana'a. One pillar has the name Al Masmoura and the other has Al Manqoura inscribed in it.

These two pillars, about six meters apart from each other, outline the location of the mosque that Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) ordered to be built in Sana'a.

The reason why the two stones are



highly cherished by Yemenis, said Mohammed Al-Jalal, one of the mosque attendants, is that they outline the location described by Prophet (PBUH) for Muslims in Yemen to build a mosque.

Nowadays, a vow from any opponent will not be accepted or valued except if made on Al-Masmoura and Al Manqoura.

### Expansion around the stones

Each one of the mosque's expansions took place around the original area that was outlined by the Prophet (PBUH) and the old mosque was well preserved and untouched.

Al Jalal added on the story that when the Yemen became an Islamic nation, the Prophet (PBUH) sent them tutors to teach them about Islam, including Ali Bin Abi Taleb, Mo'ath Bin Jabal, Abu Moses Al Asha'arey and Wabr Bin Yah-

nis (MGBPT).

Wabr Bin Yahnis was in charge of Sana'a and the Prophet (PBUH) told him: "Tell them about Islam. If they



accept what you tell them, pray with them."

He told him to build a mosque for them in the gardens of Bathan by the rock placed in the center of the Himyarite Ghamdan palace opposite the mountain called Dhayn.

In a letter from the Prophet (PBUH), he ordered for the mosque to be built in the Bathan gardens by the rock at the edge of the ruins of the Ghamdan.

A letter was sent from the Prophet (PBUH) to Wabr with a clear indication and specification to the outlines of the mosque. The Prophet (PBUH) told Wabr in the letter to build the mosque from the rock to the wall of the Bathan garden.

### Beside the Bathan gardens

Today, a part the Bathan gardens survives as a small maqshama or garden attached to the mosque. It contains onions, lettuce and radishes.

The praying area faces towards the Dhayn mountain, about 40 km to the northwest of Sana'a, a mountain that was specified in the Prophet's letter. In facing in this direction, the mosque looks up towards the Kaaba in Mecca.

If one draws a line between Sana'a and Mecca, it touches the peak of the

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Dhayn mountain, according to A-Jalal.

Al-Jalal also said that Yemenis consider the Prophet's ability in specifying those accurate details of the mosque's location and direction as a miracle as he was able to identify all these details without seeing the location.

The location of the mosque was revealed to Prophet Mohammed by God, according to Islamic tradition. This makes the mosque very special to Yemenis.

### An invalid tradition

Some well-known religious figures in Yemen however consider the sacred value people have attributed to Al-Masmoura and Al-Manqoura as invalid from a religious point of view.

The Imam and Preacher at the Al-Ihsan Mosque in Hadda, Sheikh Yasser Al-Methaji said, "There is no proof whatsoever of the sacred value of these two stones or of the Great Mosque in Sana'a and worshipping in Islam is

based on clear-cut proof."

"Making vows on those two stones is a tradition and an old habit of the people of Old Sana'a," he said. "This habit has left its psychological effect in people's minds, leaving them horrified at the idea of lying when making a vow on these two stones."

The Imam said that, no matter what, when a person lies, he or she must be punished and that has nothing to do with the two stones.

### Not the first mosque

Sheikh Al-Methaji said that Al-Janad Mosque in Taiz was built before the Great Mosque in Sana'a. It was there that the first Friday prayer was held in Yemen.

He said that there is no proof that the Great Mosque is more special than any other mosque for Muslims, and that making vows on the two stones of Al-Masmoura and Al-Manqoura was nothing more than a habit.

# 24

ساعة / 7

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