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World Bank view on Yemeni economy

In December 2005, the World Bank issued their latest on Yemeni economy, Yemen Economic Update

Yemen Economic Update is a quarterly report published by the World Bank. The first section highlights major economic and policy developments. The second section provides a special topic on the Yemeni economy. The third section summarizes new legislation, publications, data, conferences, and donor activities in Yemen.

Stalled reforms get a restart

The reforms that stalled since 2001 finally were restarted in July, 2005. The reform package approved over July-August 2005 had several welcome components: (i) upward revision of petroleum product prices between 70% to 120% (diminishing but not eliminating the subsidies), (ii) announcement of a phased implementation of a new national wages and salaries strategy, (iii) cabinet approval of a comprehensive strategy to modernize public financial management, and (iv) simplification and cut in custom tariffs to bring the average down to 7%. Disappointingly though, the decision to introduce broad-based General Sales Tax at a uniform 10% rate was deferred by another 18 months and in its place a hybrid sales tax at 5% was introduced.

I. Summary

Exceptionally high oil prices somewhat improve macroeconomic outcomes

In 2005, Yemen is reaping historic windfall from exceptionally high world

	2001	2002	2003 (est)	2004 (est)	2005 (proj)
GDP Growth	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Oil	4.6	3.9	3.1	2.5	3.7
Non-Oil	1.3	0.4	1.8	7.0	1.2
Core Inflation (CPI)	5.2	4.6	4.0	4.1	4.0
Memo Items	10.7	6.8	11.9	12.0	12.5
Per-capita GDP growth	1.5	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.1
Crude oil production (1,000 barrels/day)	434	433	425	395	400

Source: Staff Estimates based on World Bank and IMF sources.

oil prices amounting to US \$ 1.3 billion (10% of GDP). This windfall is helping to enlarge current account surplus to 7.6% of GDP and reduce budget deficit to 2.4% of GDP. Higher oil prices provide the incentive for oil companies to extract more oil which in turn boosts oil sector GDP. Led by oil sector, overall GDP growth could rebound to 3.7 percent in 2005. Though consumer price inflation

Recent developments in Yemen's Gas Sector

Though Yemen has some reserves of gas, it is unlikely to replace the role of oil in the near future. More recently, Yemen has initiated development and export of its gas reserves. It has been successful in securing long-term (25 year) contracts for development and export of a third of its 17 tcf of gas reserves in a highly competitive environment. It is not known what will be the net value for the government after paying for the costs of development, transport and liquefaction to the developers. With dwindling oil supply, gas resources will also need to be utilized for the energy needs of the domestic economy. Therefore, developing sources of growth other than oil and gas is critical to providing sustainable livelihood for Yemenis.

has been surprisingly low until mid-2005 at 5% annual rate, the upward revision in petroleum prices in July could push it higher closer to 12% for the year as a whole. However, the growth of non-oil sector is expected to remain flat at 4% and below PRSP target.

Disappointing progress under PRSP

On the whole, progress under Yemen's first PRSP's first two years (2003-04) has been slow and "short of PRS targets in many respects" according to the candid review prepared by the government. GDP Growth has barely kept pace with population growth whereas the proposed target for per-capita growth was 2.5 percent. Poverty most likely did not drop, failing the targeted 13% reduction. Except in basic school enrollment, coverage of population under health services, some aspects of roads such as maintenance and rehabilitation and coverage under social protection, most of the targets are missed. Though overall devel-

opment spending exceeded the target, spending on energy subsidies crowded out allocations to social sectors (education, health and social welfare). FALL 2005
 Recent reforms are partial and continue to show insufficient resolve to tackle long-term issues.
 Though the full implementation details of the reform announced programs will become clear in the coming months, it is feared that the reform package misses some of the key elements required. The wage strategy implementation is not budget-neutral, the announcement of petroleum price increase did not specify a calendar and formula for periodic revisions to eliminate subsidies eventually, GST announcement has multiple rates, exemptions and applies a rate at 5%

II. Macroeconomic developments and outlook

Weak GDP growth and lack of firm resolve for far-sighted fiscal management are the main weaknesses in Yemeni economy. On the positive side, the authorities are lending more flexibility to exchange rate management and minimizing trade policy distortions aggressively.

Weak GDP growth has delivered little rise in per-capita incomes in the last three years

Yemen's economic growth has been decelerating from 2001 (Table 1), a year after oil production started leveling off. The outlook for the current year (2005) looks better as more oil has been pumped out to take advantage of prevailing higher oil prices, masking the persistent weak growth in the non-oil sector. Over the PRSP period (2003-05), Yemen is likely to record negligible growth in per-capita incomes compared to the target of 2.5 percent by 2005. While growth in the non-oil sectors remained weak, the government is actively pursuing the mining of gas reserves with foreign investors (Box 1).

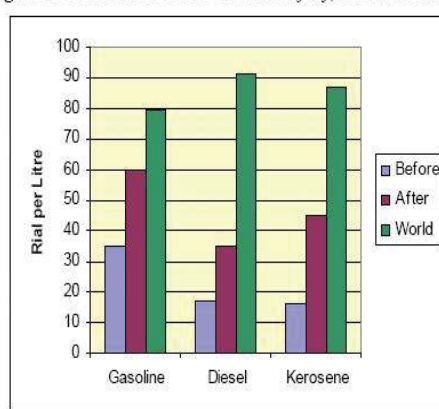
Fiscal deficit in 2005 is expected to be reduced to 2.4 percent of GDP on the strength of oil revenues

One of the positive signs is the announcement in mid-July of much delayed increase in petroleum prices. But its beneficial effects are clouded by the announcement of an increase in salaries for the government employees without reducing the size of work-force (the new national wage strategy) and lack of resolve to implement VAT as originally envisaged at 10 percent. The announcement of the sharp revisions in petroleum prices (70% to 120%) in July, 2005 (Figure 1) was a positive sign. The increase in administered prices of petroleum products could reduce the 2005 subsidy outlay only by 15 percent because it will be applied only from end-July. Yet, the announcement is in the nature of a one-off increase with no indication that the prices will continue to adjust to match world prices. Increased revenue from exceptionally high international oil prices during 2004-05 and increases in domestic petroleum prices announced in July 2005 are expected to

help narrow the central government fiscal deficit to 2.4 percent in 2005. However, contrary to the budgeted cut by 9 percent of GDP, the government is unlikely to compress current expenditures that stay at around 29 percent of GDP. This is because of three reasons: higher oil prices also imply larger outlay on petroleum subsidies (despite higher administered prices), higher salaries announced for government employees and cuts in custom tariffs. As a net result, despite a cut in development spending by 1 percent of GDP, non-oil primary deficit for 2005 is likely to stay at around 26 percent. Yemen is planning to pass a supplementary budget with additional expenditures of YR 451 billion, roughly 54% of the originally budgeted expenditure. Full details of the supplementary budget are unclear at this stage. Pending the full details of the supplementary budget, the analysis in this section must be treated as tentative with caution.

Monetary policy has shifted focus

Figure 1. Fuel Prices before and after July, 2005 Reforms



recently to lend flexibility to exchange rate

The Yemeni Rial has been allowed to gradually depreciate by about 4 percent since January (Figure 2). This has been made possible in part because of less pressure for money creation to support fiscal deficit. The apparent success to bring down inflation to near 5 percent by May, 2005 from 12 percent annual average during 2003-04 may be short-lived because of sharp rises in domestic petroleum prices announced subsequently in July. It is estimated that increases in domestic petroleum prices of the order announced could push general level of prices higher between 7 to 11 percent. Inflation fed by imported goods could still surge by the year end as the cut in customs tariff would not be offset by the gradual depreciation of the Rial and rise in world commodity prices. As yet, a clear commitment of monetary policy to containment of inflation has not taken root.

Higher Oil price generates Current Account Surplus

Yemen's current account balance has been in surplus since 1999 because of buoyant oil revenues barring 2003. After narrowing sharply in 2003-04 to 1.1 percent of GDP, the indications are that the current account would turn into a sizeable surplus of 7.6% of GDP in 2005 (Figure 3). Inter-national reserves of Yemen continue to increase albeit at a slower pace than in the past. By end 2005, net international reserves of the central bank are projected to be close to the US \$ 6 billion equivalent to about 12 months of imports.

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Table 2. Import Tariff Changes in July, 2005

Tariff	No. of commodities (before)	No. of commodities (Now)
0	6	82
5%	1400	4230
10%	1644	1616
15%	2337	0
25%	719	231

Source: Government of Yemen

The Yemeni government campaign in the Saadah region

By: Adel Al-Dhahab
 Summarized by: Zeeba Anarwala

In 2004 and 2005, there have been two significant military campaigns in Saadah, Yemen, that have been one of the strongest and most expensive in the nation's history. The government and other concerned parties agree that the targeted groups belong to the Zaidi sect of Islam and to the Hashemite race. The government overwhelmingly claims that there are foreign powers behind the anti-government forces. Some opponents claim the government was running a genocide campaign. The particular group concerned is Believed Youth, which was led by Shiite scholar Hussein Bader Aldeen Alhouthi and after his death in September 2004, has been led by his father, Bader Aldeen Alhouthi. Extensive research found that these government campaigns were not aimed at a group of criminals, but rather a group of activists vying for change. Furthermore, it was found that there was a disproportionate abuse of power by the government.

Assessment of the government's campaign based on laws and facts

First, the Yemeni government claims that Alhouthi's group was planning a terrorist strike. There is no evidence that an actual attack ever took place, only accusations. By looking at the United States', the European Union's, and the U.N. Security Council's list of terrorist organizations of the world, it is easy to see that Alhouthi's Believed Youth is not listed. To give further proof, the United States' 2004 human rights report also doesn't mention that Alhouthi or Believed Youth are linked to terrorism in any way.

Secondly, the government was unable to produce a convincing argument stating that Alhouthi was the one who incited the war. Government explanations constantly contradict each other so it would be difficult to buy the argument that Alhouthi was responsible for starting the war. To add to the government's culpability, a research of Yemeni newspapers found that none of the nation's independent papers confirmed that Alhouthi had something to do with starting the war.

The question that must be asked is whether Alhouthi should surrender himself to the government. The logical answer is no because several human rights reports confirm that courts are subjected to much government influence in Yemen, and judges are harassed. Turning himself in would make no sense since there is great reason to believe that the judicial system cannot guarantee Alhouthi a fair trial.

Since this conflict was both a political and religious conflict, it is important to determine what the stand of the union of religious scholars would be. They agreed with the government. However, this is not something out of the ordinary, since the union is not really an independent party, and there is a long history of them siding with the government and praising the president.

Even the Committee on Dialogue sided with the government on this issue. Once again this committee, which claims to be independent, cannot be trusted for several reasons. First, the president is the one who selected the members of the committee so a conflict of interest is definitely present. Furthermore, the head of the committee is also the head of the Yemeni human rights organization, which is well-known to have ties to the government.

The government has a difficult time justifying the campaign against the Believed Youth and Alhouthi because the accusations against them are incoherent. For example, the government claims the war started because Alhouthi claimed to be a prophet, then they changed that to a Mahdi, then an

Imam, then being an agent of foreign powers, then being a terrorist, then being a fanatic who attacked checkpoints, and finally he was wanting to return to the old Imam regime by being a military wing for certain parties. Clearly, the government's claims are inconsistent. Furthermore, one of the founders of Believed Youth, Mohamed Yahya Ezzam, was released in February 2005. If this group was a terrorist group like the government claims, then he would never have been released. Furthermore, most of what the government calls evidence against Alhouthi was provided single-handedly by the president. Finally, one of the accusations against Alhouthi is that he is Ethna Ashary Shiite. However, this is not a crime, but rather a way to manipulate some fanatics in Yemen who think everyone should worship in one way.

Was the government's campaign genocide?

It is uncertain right now, but many facts point to genocide. Three elements must be present for it to be considered genocide: a protected group (religious or ethnic) is targeted, certain acts have been committed, and third, there is special intent to commit genocide.

Although not all Zaidis or Hashemites were targeted, a significant part of them were. For example, the Believed Youth are either Hashemite or Zaidi. So they were targeted because of being Zaidi, Hashemite and anti-government. So it can be safely said that a protected group was targeted.

The acts that were carried out in Yemen by the government were similar to what happened in the Darfur region of Sudan, and this was classified as genocide. For example, in Yemen 4,000 people were killed, more than 500 homes were destroyed, 22 schools were destroyed, 1,000 people were arrested and not put on trial for more than two years, there was torturing of these detainees, burning of books, targeting of religious scholars, and indiscriminate attacks which targeted civilians. All these violate international human rights law and fall under genocide.

But was there intent to commit genocide? For example, many laws point to the systematic dissolution of the group. For example, Zaidis in Yemen were banned from announcing the call to prayer, high-ranking Zaidi scholars were arrested and some Zaidi activists were restricted from moving to the Saadah area such as Bader Aldeen Alhouthi. Laws were passed aimed at this group which would prevent them from establishing a political party if its principles contradicted the republican system.

Furthermore, there is a lot of racist tone and hate speech present in the public media, similar to what was present at the time of the Nazis toward the Jews in Germany. For example, the military newspaper described the Hashemites as guests and strangers who are on Yemeni land temporarily. This is a clear indication that the Yemeni government was trying to incite ill feelings toward this group.

Another example is when the government said Alhouthi was claiming to be a prophet. This is heresy in Islam, and it is evident that the common public would be aroused by this and develop a hatred for this leader and his group. Furthermore, an array of heavy weapons was used in the war, which showed the government's determination to terminate the group. Also, according to the Geneva Conventions, there were a number of war crimes carried out, such as destroying mosques, targeting religious leaders, prohibiting certain religious activities, restricting humanitarian aid, taking hostages and banning water.

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Remembering the tsunami from a female perspective

The 2004 tsunami had disastrous effects on millions of lives. But so far, no study has focused on the consequences for the female victims.

It has been a year since the tsunami struck 14 out of 28 districts Sri Lanka, and the southern and south-eastern coast of India. It destroyed a large number of areas, diverse forms of living beings, livelihoods and much more. In India, it has severely affected Andaman and Nicobar Islands; Nagapattinam, Cuddalore and Kanyakumari districts in Tamil Nadu; Nellore, Prakasam, Guntur and Krishna districts in Andhra Pradesh; Karaikal in Pondichery; and Kollam and Alappuzha districts in Kerala.

The tsunami has been unprecedented in many ways but natural disasters are frequent in Sri Lanka and India. Natural disasters, for a long time, were treated as a matter of material fix up job – it was considered sufficient to provide shelter and amenities and at the most, bring some work to the affected people. Over a period, it has been realized that natural disasters present gender specific challenges to women. Notwithstanding critics of the tsunami response programmes, it is appreciable that the agencies involved recognized the emotional and psychological distress people affected by disasters suffer and took some measures to minimize dangers to girls and women's safety. Trafficking in human beings, especially children and among them girls has been given special recognition.

So far, I have not come across any

study from India which talks about violence against women (VAW) in the tsunami affected districts. But reports like UNDP's sitrep 29 and Oxfam's reports from Sri Lanka suggest that there has been a rise in VAW since the onset of the tsunami. It would not be surprising if VAW has increased in the tsunami affected Indian districts too. Gender relations between women and men in these districts have been such that despite being earning members of their families, women have been dependent on men. All forms of violence including VAW connected as it is to power equations, in frustrating and depressive times is more likely to be perpetrated against those who have the least power to protest or retaliate.

Reports from Nagapattinam district in Tamil Nadu, India as recorded in a study, Gender and Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation, conducted in March 2005 by the Womankind Worldwide suggest that single women and women headed households have not been able to meet basic needs. Most of the families in the affected districts of Tamil Nadu, India are dependent on fishing. Men from these families catch fish, while women are engaged in diving to collect pearl, prawn farming and marketing of fish. Women are not recognized as fisherwomen. Any relief and reconstruction measure which identifies and supports affected people on the basis of occupations is bound to miss out people who are engaged in



By: Nisha

unrecognized occupations or those whose contributions to the concerned occupation is not recognized. The destruction of prawn farms, salt-making areas, fish markets, and equipments which women use in their occupations has affected their capacity to provide for their families very badly.

In both Sri Lanka and India, women are the primary carers in their families. Most natural disasters invariably mean evacuation and living in congested temporary shelters. Women experience an expansion of their household responsibilities and increased stress after a disaster. With the source of family income destroyed and the trying conditions of a temporary settlement, women face the challenge of providing food and water for their families.

Women in general in both countries are not only responsible for their own health but also for the health needs of the family members, especially children. Spread of diseases means a weakening of their own capacity to care for others but their responsibility to care for sick family members increases sharply. The increase in the

intensity of this responsibility is made more difficult due to the destruction of the primary health care centres and other health facilities.

As mentioned earlier, women's livelihoods in the tsunami-affected areas have tended to be dependent on natural resources and on the produce brought home by men. The tsunami has destroyed natural resources and consequently women's sources of income. Currently, some efforts are being made to give unconventional skills to women so that they could begin from a new base. But it is not clear yet, how much resources and efforts will be extended to build the infrastructure and the base which would help women gain and maximize benefits from their recently acquired skills. If this is not done and the traditional means of livelihoods are not revived with women in a good position to advance their interests, there would be fewer job opportunities for women in the future.

The tsunami, however, also presents the opportunity to reconceive and reshape ownership of assets and property. But these opportunities have not been taken advantage of by the relief and reconstruction agencies. Most of them have tended to keep away from issues involving rearticulation of gender relations. Some NGOs, however, have tried to alter gender based occupational patterns and asset ownership practices.

The tsunami relief and reconstruction has also highlighted the need to give equal participation and decision-making opportunities to women. An observation paper, Watson in Kargil Nagar through a gender lense,

on water and sanitation facilities in Kargil Nagar in Chennai, India highlights how siting and design of shelter and shelter facilities like toilet and washing facilities could become unusable in the absence of local and need based knowledge. It also shows that poor management planning and management of the water and sanitation facilities could become a threat to health of the people.

It would be a mistake to attribute shortfalls of a disaster preparedness, mitigation and reconstruction programme only to the shortage of resources and urgency of the response. The human element is equally if not more important in the giving a shape and direction to a response programme. Gender sensitive attitude and

knowledge of gender issues and gender relations, and the capacity to analyze the impact of a particular disaster on women in the immediate and long run among those who are responsible for disaster related programmes are prerequisites to an egalitarian programme. If the prerequisites are present, there would be a greater possibility of people making efforts to devote sufficient time, involve women in the programmes, and get adequate funding to meet and highlight women specific needs.

Nisha is an Indian activist working in development and gender. She is a campaign and advocacy expert and has published many research papers around the world.

2005 investment climate statement in Yemen

Conversion and transfer policies

The Yemeni riyal is freely exchanged at market rates and has been largely stable for the last five years at 186yr/1USD. Most foreign currencies, especially us dollars, are readily available and trade freely at market rates. Investors may transfer funds in hard currency from abroad to Yemen for the purpose of investment and may re-export invested capital, whether in kind or in cash, upon liquidation or project disposal. Net profits resulting from investment of foreign funds may be transferred freely outside of Yemen. Cash transfers are limited to 10,000 USD, transfers above that amount must receive approval from the Central Bank of Yemen.

arbitration, a private arbitration center, was created by a group of lawyers, Bankers, and businessmen as an alternative to the courts. The center has settled about 37 disputes so far in the areas of trade, finance, construction and industry, and is gaining recognition as a viable alternative.

Most investors are best served by establishing a partnership with a Yemeni who knows the system, and by including an international arbitration clause in their contracts. In cases involving interest, most judges use Shari'a (Islamic) law as a guideline, under which claims for interest payments due are almost always rejected. Local commercial banks are sensitive to this problem, and rarely lend to other than established, large trading houses well known to them.

Expropriation and compensation

In the Republic of Yemen's fifteen-year history, there have been no cases of property expropriation. The government recognizes that expropriation (which existed in the former socialist Peoples' Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) until reunification in 1990) is contrary to its economic aspirations. Most of the lands expropriated by the PDRY were returned to the rightful owners. Land registration, however, is in its infancy and disputes over both residential and commercial plots are frequent and nearly impossible to adjudicate legally (see dispute settlement section). One American company has purchased the same plot of land on which its factory lies several times. Since deed information is inexact, owners can sell multiple copies of a deed, and commercial suit options are extremely time-consuming, prone to corruption, and judgments are often not enforced. Yemen's investment law stipulates that private property will not be nationalized or seized, and that funds will not be blocked, confiscated, frozen, withheld or sequestered by other than a court of law. Real estate may not be expropriated except in the national interest, and expropriation must be according to a court judgment and include fair compensation based on current market value.

Dispute settlement

While there have been no significant investment disputes involving us investors in the past several years, commercial disputes are common. Yemen is a signatory to the convention on the Settlement of Investment Disputes, as well as the 1958 New York Convention on Arbitration.

Yemen's judicial system is inefficient and corrupt. While Yemen's investment-related laws are generally sound, enforcement remains problematic at best and nonexistent at worst. The government has special commercial courts to provide a mechanism for commercial dispute resolution, but they are generally considered ineffective as well. In January 2005, the Minister of Justice, with the support of President Saleh, removed several high-ranking Ministry of justice officials and judges in an effort to reduce the corruption and ineffectiveness of the court system. International donors actively encourage the government to press forward with more extensive judicial reforms.

Business disputes are generally handled by informal arbitration or within Yemen's court system. In 1998 the Yemeni Center of Conciliation and

Performance requirements and incentives

Yemen's investment law does not specify performance requirements as conditions for establishing, maintaining or expanding investment. Incentives permitted under the law include, but are not limited to: exemption from customs fees and taxes levied on fixed assets of the project; tax holiday on profits for a period of seven years, renewable for up to 18 years maximum; the right to purchase or rent land and buildings; and, the right to import production inputs and export products without restrictions and registration in the import/export register.

Right to private ownership and establishment

While foreigners may own property, foreign companies and establishments generally operate in Yemen through Yemeni agents. Law 23 of 1997 (as amended) regulates agencies and branches of foreign companies and firms and outlines the requirements for establishing a Yemeni agent. Chapter 3 of Law 23 permits foreign companies and firms to conduct business in Yemen by establishing foreign-owned and managed branches. Foreign establishments wishing to open branches in their own names must obtain a permit by decree from the Minister of Industry and Trade. Regarding investment projects, under the 2002 investment law, foreigners can own 100 percent of the land and can execute projects without a Yemeni agent and without obtaining import/export license from The Ministry of Industry and trade or implementing Law 23 of 1997 (the investment law implemented in October 2002 has precedence over other laws). As a practical matter, however, foreign establishments should plan to engage a Yemeni partner. Mortgage lending in Yemen is rare because of the unwillingness of the court system to uphold the payment of interest. In addition, Yemen has a long history of incomplete or inaccurate land records and frequent land ownership disputes, making the use of real estate as collateral difficult. While the general survey authority is working to establish a just and legally defensible land registry system, implementation remains some years off.

This report was issued by the United States Embassy in Sana'a. The US embassy website provides the latest embassy news, reports, travel warnings and visa information.

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World Bank view on Yemeni economy

III. Structural development & policies
Widespread smuggling of imported goods and a desire to harmonize tariff rates with GCC has prompted the government to move strongly in lowering import tariff rates.

The government is also actively pursuing WTO accession process with the second working party planned in September, 2005. Yemen already had low tariff rates before the recent cut. Policy changes announced in July, 2005 have reduced the number of bands from 4 to 3, with the maximum rate still at 25%, but with two-thirds of the commodities attracting only 5% tariff rate (Table 2). After the recent changes unweighted tariff rate has fallen to as low as 7 percent, lowest outside GCC in MENA

Strategy for modernizing Public Financial Management announced

In August 2005, the Cabinet approved a strategy for the modernization of public financial management (PFM) proposed by the Minister of Finance. This is a key component in the Government's policy to strengthen public finances, improve public service delivery in line with the objectives of the PRSP, and reduce corruption. The strategy is comprehensive, covering all areas of the budget cycle: budget preparation and execution, accounting, financial reporting and control, internal and external audit, and oversight by the Parliament and civil society. It was developed with the help of the World Bank, IMF, DFID, the Royal Netherlands Embassy and other donors. The donors will sign a Partnership Agreement with the Government to coordinate their technical support for implementing the strate-

gy. The next step is for the Ministry of Finance to prepare a detailed action plan that will include requests for donor assistance. This plan should be completed and approved before December, 2005. The work on PFM modernization complements a range of activities being carried out by the Bank and other donors in the field of strengthening governance and public administration, e.g., the CSMP which includes PFM components such as the Accounting and Financial Management Information System (AFMIS) project and reengineering COCA (the external audit agency).

New National Wage Strategy Announced

Yemen's civil service is characterized by a large but poorly paid work force and inadequate salary differential between high and low skilled jobs to attract and retain talented staff. Following the adoption of the national wage strategy in May, 2005 by the cabinet, the government announced its implementation. This increase comes on the top of the 20 to 40 increase announced in May, 2004. Though full details are not known at this stage the key elements are: introduction for the first time the minimum wage at YR 20,000/month, establishment of a database and unifying wage scale, incl. for military, adoption of a 5-phase salary increase, with phase one effective July 1, 2005, an average salary increase of about 40% and some marginal reduction in the very high compression ratio of salaries from 2.4 to 3.0 (from a norm of 10).

IV. Conclusion

Yemen's reform agenda in the area of

macroeconomic management should continue to build on the recent impetus to reforms witnessed in July, 2005. Sporadic efforts at reform are not likely to be viewed favorably by the private sector. With trade policy reforms nearly complete removing the relative price distortions, macroeconomic management has to guarantee a stable, viable and competitive macroeconomic environment in which private agents can make their decisions. The two key planks of reforms consist in persisting with fiscal reforms to preserve sustainability of fiscal balance and external debt and the active use of monetary and exchange rate policy tools to provide a low inflationary and competitive environment conducive to the development of non-oil sectors.

On the structural front,

developing a comprehensive strategy to address governance issues is a priority for the success of Yemen's reform efforts. In an era of low growth as Yemen has witnessed in the recent past, protecting the poor becomes imperative. While extension of the coverage under the Social Welfare Fund by 200,000 beneficiaries (nearly a third of existing numbers) announced in

July 2005, is welcome, the government has to quickly move on the identified reforms to improve the working of the social protection sector such as improving the targeting and creating an insurance mechanism to protect the vulnerable.

Figure 2. Gradual Depreciation of the Rial

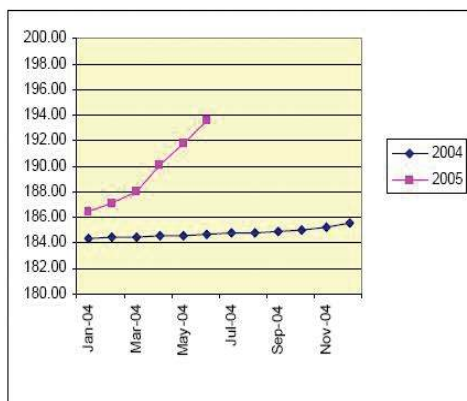
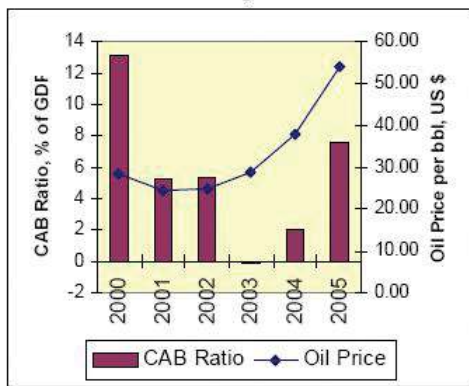


Figure 3. Current Account Balance as a ratio of GDP (percent)



The Yemeni government campaign in the Saadah region

So what does all this mean?

Looking at the assessment, it can be concluded that the Alhouthi and Believed Youth are not terrorists or criminals, the Yemeni government started this unlawful war, the accusations against Alhouthi are incoherent, there are credible reasons to believe the Yemeni army committed war crimes, there was a direct and public incitement by the president to commit genocide against Believed Youth, and finally, there are plausible reasons to believe the

Yemeni president breached the constitution by committing conspiracy by using the army for his personal agenda.

Steps to fix the problem

Since Yemen's judicial system is weak, the only party that could fairly investigate would be the U.N. Security Council by sending an independent committee or truth commission to recommend solutions. Furthermore, in order to prevent any such crimes from ever taking place

again, it would be necessary for involved government figures to be frozen from practicing any authority, especially for anything related to this conflict. Yemeni bodies involved in this case such as judicial institutions, union of religious scholars, and Committee of Dialogue should be stripped of any authority.

To help the victims of the campaign, immediate aid should be sent to the area and the victims of the military operations should be compensated. Prisoners should be

released or given guarantees of a fair trial.

The law banning the establishment of a political party against the republican system should be amended so that any party can achieve its vision through free and fair elections. Finally, the Yemeni parliament should practice the authority it is given in the constitution by investigating the president's breach of the constitution.

Adel Al-Dhabab is a Yemeni lawyer who lives in Canada.

Horseback photography in Sana'a

Historically, horses are associated with the battlefield and galloping in the wilderness. They are graceful and domestic creatures that have provided man with great service throughout the ages.

The few stables in Sana'a either are private or inaccessible to most citizens. However, at Al-Tahrir Square, one can see horses not used in battling foes but for taking photos.

This Eid, Mohammed Hassan came with his five children to Al-Tahrir Square for entertainment. There, one finds a small garden with a fountain in the middle. A host of outdoor photographers also are there, persuading passersby to be photographed.

"My children want to take photos on horseback," he said. "I could not convince them that a studio photo may be better." However, it is not only children who like horseback photos. Many grownups also queue up for shots, as the number of horses is limited.

Four elegant horses stood on the pavement and people, in turn, mounted them for a "natural and original touch of photography," as one expressed.

Actually, horses remind people of the glory of the Arabs' past and in riding them, people can feel the horsemanship and heroism inspired by the stories of old.

Ahmed Qayid, 25, said he will



A young girl posing for a picture on horseback at Al-Tahrir Square

enlarge and frame his photo and hang it in his house. "It will definitely be a distinctive picture I will like," he said of the unseen photo taken just moments before.

Horseback photographers talk
Abdul-Raqeeb Saif, a photographer since 1984, said he took it up through

experience, not through formal training. "At the beginning, I had myself photographed at Al-Tahrir Square. I found it was a good idea to practice photography," he said, describing how he joined the profession. He bought two cameras, one instant and the other normal.

It was by chance that he began doing

horseback photography. "It was in 1989," he recalled, "I was at Al-Wohdah Park in Taiz doing my usual job of photographing people. Someone came over with a horse and since it was uncommon to see horses in the city, people gathered around it. I suggested photographing them on horseback."

Later, he bought his own horse for 60,000 riyals. "I went to the Tihama where horses are raised," he said, "Now the price is no longer the same. It has risen to between 600-700,000 riyals."

As for Fahd Ahmed, 30, he has been in this job for five years. "My uncle trained me," he said, stroking the hair of Rabea, his two-year-old horse. Previously, he made picture frames. He said he likes the job because it is interesting and artistic in nature, but he complained of moody customers.

Special care of horses
As horses are sensitive and require

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam 9

Translated by Edward FitzGerald

**But come with old Khayyam,
and leave the lot
Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru
forgot!
Let Rustum lay about him as
he will,
Or Hatim Tai cry supper -
heed them not.**

care, their keepers wash them weekly. Moreover, they eat special food, such as large quantities of barley, dates, raisins, carrots and hay.

"That costs us a lot, plus stable rent, which costs 35,000 riyals, but we try to manage it," Saif noted.

Eid is profitable

For photographers in general, Eid brings a marked increase in income. Ironically, they work at full-swing while everyone else is enjoying their holiday. However, they impatiently wait for such occasions.

The same applies to horseback photographers, who must compensate for low-activity periods. Their workday usually begins at 9 a.m. until noon, followed by a three-hour break for lunch and prayer. Then, they continue until after nightfall.

Some photographers roam the streets with their horses while others prefer to be stationed at Al-Tahrir Square, which is a bustling spot.

Difficulties and oddities

Horseback photographers described difficulties caused by cleaning and municipality authorities. "Although, we are committed to cleaning the horse dung, we face arbitrary harassment. Sometimes we are compelled to pay unjustifiable fines."

Saif related an amusing situation he experienced. Often, when he is riding on horseback and passes unwary pedestrians, upon suddenly seeing the horse, they are very surprised and even unnerved. However, he admits that he himself gets afraid when he sees the municipality police vehicle.

He described a problem sometimes caused by the horse. "When the horse is galloping, it runs into cars and breaks their windscreens or dents them. This lands me in trouble."

According to Saif, in general, Yemenis are their customers. Although many tourists come to Al-Tahrir Square, they are the minority of customers because they have their own cameras.



Respect for children

(Part 3 of 3)

By: Abdulaziz Atieq
The Cultural Center for Foreigners' Call

Nicknaming a child also is known and accepted in Islam. In doing this, children are not thought of as small and weak, as they have nicknames just like adults. Anas narrated, "The Prophet was the best amongst people in conduct and manners. I had a brother called Abu `Umar and he was weaned at that time. When the Prophet would see him, he used to say, 'Abu `Umar, what has the Nughair (an Arabian bird) done?'" (Reported by Muslim) This hadith indicates not only permissibility in nicknaming children, but also playing and joking with them.

Apart from having a home full of love and acceptance, children need and have the right to be safe from all kinds of harm, no matter from where it comes. Many of us may feel we provide adequate protection for our children by living in nice neighborhoods and sending them to 'good' schools, yet we continually expose them to the dangers, violence and filth that TV offers. Islam commands us to protect children's lives, whether Muslims or not.

Islam prohibits killing women and children. Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with them both) narrated that a woman was found killed in one of the battles during the Prophet's time (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) so the Prophet prohibited killing women and children. (Reported by Bukhari)

Prohibiting killing of children also is shown in the story of the Prophet's companion, Khabib ibn `Adiy, captured by Banu Al-Harith on the Day of Ar-Raji'a battle. They decided to kill him in place of Al-Harith, whom he killed in the battle of Badr, so he was imprisoned at Al-Harith's house. He asked the woman of the house for a razor to make istihdad (shaving the pubic area). The woman said, "I was not paying attention when suddenly one of my children approached him and sat on his thigh. When I saw that, I was terrified, and he saw that in me. So he said, 'Do you fear that I would kill him? I would not do such a thing.'" (Reported by Bukhari) This noble stance and other references reveal that Muslims are very concerned with preserving children's lives, as well as being merciful and kind to them.


Additionally, Islam organized the process to protect foundlings from loss

and going astray. Islam made it mandatory upon the one discovering a foundling to shelter and protect it. If a child is found in a place where he may die if he stays there, then the one finding him and leaving him unprotected will be held accountable and tried for murder.

The finder has the right to keep the foundling, more than others, as long as he doesn't abuse him. If money is found with the child, it can be spent on the child with a judge's permission. The finder has the right to the child's money unless someone else claims it. If none are able to sponsor the foundling, then the government is responsible for doing so.


In these days of test-tube babies and children from fathers known by numbers instead of names, ultimately, these children are left asking the questions, "Where do I come from and who is my family?" Under Islamic Law, it is the specified right of every child to know the answers to these questions.

Thus, Islam pays great attention to the children's lives from the moment man and woman decide to marry to the time of the child's maturity. The unborn child is as important as the newborn, which has the same right to live as his father and mother.



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Dimensions and consequences of kidnapping

By: Abdulhuy Ali Qasim

The kidnapping phenomenon the country has suffered the past two months, targeting European tourists, is not strange to Yemen's tribal community. It is an extension of a previous kidnapping phase government attempted to restrict because of negative impacts on Yemen's development, stability and reputation.

The phenomenon is not born of chance, nor is it a whimsical crisis without political, economic and social dimensions and therefore, undeserving of government attention to investigate its motives and suggest possible solutions to it.

Government's insistence on its improvised decisions having instant influence is one of the reasons for the phenomenon's escalation, despite knowing the harm the kidnappings will leave on development infrastructure.

Government should take quick and serious action to tackle such issues negatively impacting the country's development. Tourist safety is the responsibility of rulers and the ruled. Government knows the kidnapping incidents are committed by tribal communities with demands to be met by authorities.

To solve the kidnapping phenomenon, authorities should first know its causes and motives and see if there are other reasons and motives. The phenomenon's escalation has perplexed the government and placed it in a critical situation. In a previous phase, kidnappings began in the areas of Al-Jawf and Mareb as a response to unjust distribution of resources, public services and government posts.

Among the reasons behind tourist kidnapping is scant government presence and its passivity in tackling provincial issues and showing dominance over them, coupled with absence of the status of law and its enforcement upon locals, who tend to prefer tribal arbitration to law. Government itself seems to prefer tribal arbitration to rule of law in saving the lives of the kidnapped.

Barbaric conduct is a characteristic associated with government and the tribe as well. Both choose law in solving problems and disputes with each other. We dispense with such conduct on the part of government or tribesmen and must bear in mind there are rights and commitments the two parties should fulfill in compliance with the country's political regime.

An observer of the phenomenon realizes that tribes resort to committing such acts to force government to respond to their demands. In other words, they commit these acts to send a letter whose content is, "Our living standards and political and legal situations do not bear more than this."

There are some voices that liken kidnappers to terrorists, but the matter does not merit such charges. How can one label kidnappers as terrorists without listening to them? Kidnappers have no means for making government listen to their complaints, so they have no choice but to commit such acts harming public interest. Terrorists have clear goals and sharp means, but tribesmen usually treat hostages kindly and therefore, release them as soon their demands are met.

There are many points in need of study and analysis, and it is of vital importance to examine these points thoroughly, mainly as the kidnapping phenomenon occurs in areas rich with checkpoints and those committing such acts live in these areas.

Surely, there is a relationship between the areas of the incidents and the living standards of citizens; mainly as the recent round of reforms left negative impacts on those living in these areas, which depend on agriculture. Sheikhs and locals in these areas described the recent reforms cutting fuel subsidy as the killer. So, government should suggest constructive solutions and not treat the mistake with another mistake, particularly as the Sa'ada events constituted a sufficient lesson.

Government's recently implemented change of governors and police chiefs in Mareb and Al-Jawf is not expected to tackle the problem, which is bound to get complicated unless the disease is diagnosed in a better way in order to prescribe suitable medicine for curing it.

Government learns that violence in Yemen can never solve a problem, but similarly, voices come from here and there with no focus on the event. It therefore wants Kidnapping Law No. 24 issued in 1998 to pass, but it appears lenient toward kidnappers and does not punish them for what they commit.

Abdulhuy Ali Qasim is a political analyst and researcher at the Yemeni Center for Strategic Studies.

Mass graves discovery

The disclosure of the sorrowful fact of mass graves was accidental. We live in a country that can be described as the land of massacres and graves. Other opportunities may bring more revelations, as the earth itself seems to be restless with the large amount of secrets it is hiding.

The mass graves in Aden appeared among many images, as if they are electoral propaganda of a ruler who continues killing his people since coming to power.

During the 1994 war, trucks and trailers used to carry dead bodies to mass graves dug by bulldozers. They were thrown in these holes and buried there. Drivers were ordered to tread on the dead bodies with their trucks. Some were alive and could have been saved.

Storming Aden was a barbarian sight. Military units raced like hungry wolves wanting a mouthful of flesh. There was looting, killing and burning. Land, property, houses and Adeni citizens were seized. Many died because those who stormed Aden were under a fatwa to kill everyone. It is the policy of the president and his aides to legalize looting by troops in all wars.

We remind all Yemenis and the world at large that we are missing more than



By: Yahya Badredeen Al-Hothi, MP

280 bodies of our people in the Saada war. Soldiers brag of their atrocities by stealing dead bodies. They even dig them from graves, as if wanting them as hostages. We asked the president several times to hand them over so we can give them a decent burial, but we've had no response.

Forty-five people disappeared on Political Security premises in Sana'a. Now we fear they are being buried in mass graves like those of Aden. A short time ago, people heard the demand of Nasserite relatives to disclose the fate or graves of their lost ones.

This exceptional method of treatment is against all humanitarian conscience, religious, Arab and Islamic values. They should remember the story of the noble crow sent by God to teach man how to bury his brother's body. Remembering such a story would have deterred them from this shameful behavior. This shame will haunt even their posterity.

It worthwhile to consider the president's call for more blood last November at the military college, while his sons and the sons of his key commanders are intact.

They exploit the inattention of the international community to what is

going on in Yemen and oppress their people in a disrespectful manner. They follow this behavior because they think their power's existence depends upon more killing.

Another belief is that the people's suffering will distract them from thinking about authority. They are aided in oppressing and distracting people by their hypocritical preachers who tell people the hardships they are undergoing are God's will. The unheard of phenomenon of obtaining death certificates for living persons happens only in our country. People do it to evade their hard situations. Dengue fever is nowhere other than Yemen.

They will do their people a great favor if they grant those services, welfare and protect them from harm. They can gain people's respect by cooperation, leniency and keeping away from injustice and oppression. If they do this, we will be proud of them, as we are proud of late president Al-Hamdi, despite his brief tenure.

Yahya Badredeen Al-Hothi is a member of Parliament from Sa'ada. He is currently residing in Germany. He is a Yemeni activist working on solving the Sa'ada conflict especially that his brother is the late Hussaien Al-Hothi founder of Faithful Youth Organization in Sa'ada.

Yemen and challenges of this age

Mr. President:

No one can argue that there are two challenges facing your rule: namely, the country's miserable economic situation and the Al-Houthi movement threatening national unity. Because of these two issues, I find myself compelled to offer a suggestion, although you are surrounded by a number of advisors.



By: Abduljabar Sa'ad

Government will be held accountable for consequences of the country's economic situation. You believe government understands many things and affairs. Your preoccupation with ongoing security, political and tribal issues shifted your attention away from economic issues, except in a few cases. The economic issue is not a difficult one with which to deal. If you, Mr. President, had observed the economic situation, we would not be in such condition.

Fifteen years ago, there was a middle class, as well as higher and lower classes. Due to wrongful policies of consecutive governments, the middle class faded and people fell into extremely rich and extremely poor classes.

Consecutive economic reforms targeted expenditures on subsidized commodities and services, while to the contrary, they never took into account citizens' living standards, particularly military and civil employees. Imbalance began when employee incomes did not increase as economic burdens and cost of living doubled over the years.

The employee earning more than \$1,000 in past years now earns less than \$200 because government is not in close contact with citizens' situations.

Government never has any radical reform project to eradicate corruption and tackle the economic situation. It never shows a well-studied plan to achieve a distinctive leap forward in citizens' lives and in the country's situation. The case has become simply automatic responses to internal and external pressures.

Recent procedures aimed at alleviating the people's sufferings were expected to reduce commodity and foodstuff prices through customs exemptions. Commodity prices, particularly those exempt from customs, were expected to fall. However, what happened is commodity prices, which are exempt from customs, rose by 30 percent without any international price hikes. Moreover, the price of exchange does not stand for 5 percent. These instances are attributed to lack of accountability and planning.

The import of diesel, which was highly consumed over the past four years, sharply increased and its price doubled without logical justification, despite moderate petrol consumption and vehicle tax reduction.

Mr. President:

The civil and military employee sector is the most important among other sectors, as it is responsible to sustain half of Yemen's 20 million-strong population. So transforming government subsidy to this sector is key to economic reform and eradicating corruption. This requires issuing a proper decision whereby government sponsors citizens' rights and prioritizes their living conditions and affairs.

The new wages and salaries strategy should be applied to its maximum limit. Employees at the bottom of the job ladder should earn no less than 30,000 Yemeni Riyals.

Concerning the Al-Houthi issue, the father is different from his son Hussein, despite some ideological rumor affecting him. This movement began from religious jealousy and never was connected with any foreign force.

Mr. President:

Your support of the "Faithful Youth" plays an integral role in maintaining the dissident movement's independence for a long time. Al-Houthi's movement, aided by the Faithful Youth, is different from his father's. That became clearer when he forwarded files to the U.S.

Opposition from inside and foreign forces from outside exploit Al-Houthi's rebellion, as well as the country's economic situation, to disintegrate national unity and destroy its forces. So, if these two issues are not dealt with prudently, they will provide an opportunity for Yemen's enemies to do what they've masterminded.

Abduljabar Sa'ad holds a Master degree in economy from USA. He is the deputy minister of finance in charge of revenue affairs. He is currently staying at home in protest against financial corruption at the Ministry.

Letters to the Editor

Something to say

I read your article about the Indian president Dr. Abdul Kalam. So let's take him as an example and let's have our leaders try to imitate him and any one like him in ruling our country and have the same vision that Dr. Abdul Kalam has for his people and country.

On the other hand I read a letter written by "Clint Carruth clintal@gmail.com" about discussing sexual freedom, and giving gays (men and women) enough freedom. What a comparison between the two subjects!! Logically speaking (let alone religion, which subjects you think will benefit our society and which one will destroy it, and I leave the answer for you and the readers. I live in the USA, and I know exactly what they mean by "sexual freedom myth", and I know how corrupted this country is from within, and if there is anything that will destroy this country (USA), it will be the corruption that they claim it as a freedom. I have a lot of American friends, mostly at work. I can hardly find any one of them who live a normal life with his/her family or even her/himself. It's either parents fighting with their kids most of the time or wives having problems with husbands a lot of the time, or the person her/himself having problems with alcoholism and drugs. All that is mainly because of the unconditional FREEDOM that they want to export it to us. Let me tell you this, I know at least 10 girls (between 18 to 30 years old) whom I work with are single mothers. Where is the husband (I ask), the answer is I left him or I divorced him or I found out that he is a gay, so on so forth. I swear to God this is a fact and I am telling you the truth. So what do you expect from this kind of society, and which one are you going to

be in favour with: Dr. Abdul Kalam who has a vision for his society or our other friend who has a vision for sexual freedom in our Islamic society where ALLAH and his prophet Mohamed made it clear for how to live our life...

Nabeel Albadany nabeel_albadany@yahoo.com

Dear Nabeel

Thank you for your letter. I appreciate your concern and your comments. My only argument is that the Future Youth corner is dedicated for the Yemeni youth wherever they are to speak their minds. I promised from the beginning that there will be no censorship. I wanted to create space for dialogue. And I think your response means that I have succeeded. I want you, and everyone who has something to say to freely say it and I promise to publish it for you. I am publishing your response in the newspaper and would like it if you write in more details about the issues you are concerned about so that we can publish them in the Future Youth corner.. no hard feelings, just constructive criticism and a lot of dialogue.

—The Editor

Corruption.. again

In fact, such an incidents are not embarrassing the govt, but they are embarrassing the Yemenis all around the world. Around the year and I am hearing questions & comments from my Arab and foreign colleagues here in Abu Dhabi about what is going in YEMEN, and I do my best to explain what's going on in a way reserve our patriotic dignity which is spoiled by the carelessness & corruption of the regime, it became so offensive and painful. I believe that the tribesmen are ONLY reacting to the misbehaviour of the govt. So the regime, as a

matter of fact, needs to be corrected and punished, as its corruption is the main factor, which led our country to this destination. MAY OUR GOD PRESERVE OUR HOME.

Saba Faisal Al-Aghbari saba71@emirates.net.ae

Watani Bank confusion

I strongly would agree to the previous comment on the Bankruptcy of Banks, The issue over the Watani bank is still confusion, has nothing yet been disclosed? Something Should be done soon, and finding out the real culprit, other than keeping both, the innocent and culprit together. Proper Law Should be used and assessed rightly.

anon wictory_bint@hotmail.com

The Somali refugees' issue

No doubt this incident was an unfortunate one and as a result of lack of respect for people. We are Muslims and brothers and sisters and Islam calls that we respect each other and care about each other but when you see behaviours like this you just wonder if we really understand Islam and turns these brotherly words that always hear into mere words. Yemeni authorities must apologize for these poor Somali refugees whom their rights were violated. If they were in a western country they would have been welcomed and treated with respect.

Mohyeddin Issa mohie005@yahoo.com

2006 national budget

I was reading about the 2006 budget form the news of almoatamar net. I surprised and might most of honesty people of Yemen through out the world agreed with me that the new budgets not fare. If we calculate the amount that the government and the parliament agreed on its 5.5

billion US Dollars, which mean the income for just around 120000 barrels of oil \$45 per barrel. So is it true just 20,000 peoples of Yemen surviving and leaving only on this quantity of barrels from oils. How come all these oil companies just working for only for 120,000 barrels? These are about 35% of from announced quantity of barrels, which around 450000 barrels per year. Ok we can accept by any means, what about other types of income like tourists, transaction money from Yemeni abroad also Aden port and agriculture and etc. So we can believe why Yemeni people suffering from life because of embezzlement and no one can disagree what going on or we be silent because can not do anything. So I believe there are a lot of educated Yemeni can calculate the budget and can imagine what's going on. Please Yemen be strong for our children's future, as long as for current people no hope of futurity. Yemen be strong we love you we need to survive on your land.

Mohamed Haidar mosaha@hotmail.com

In favor of Abdulwadood in his struggle for justice

It is a courageous attitude from Mr. Abdul-Wadood and I stand with hem and I hope that every body faces problems like this one eventually other kind of problems in his work will do like hem. I know that the corruption in the country is widen particularly in the public sector and it is difficult for one to stand against major bosses and head officials at the Ministry. It is ashamed for officials at the Ministry to read and hearing cases like this case. But I think unfortunately, there are a lot of cases like this one in all departments of public sector.

Dr. Obadi ekonbadi@savba.sk

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Godless morality

By: Raúl Alfonsín

Last year witnessed a decisive turn in Latin America. A growing number of countries in the region now seem determined to pursue their interests regardless of what the United States desires.

José Miguel Insulza's election as Secretary General of the Organization of American States, in which he defeated the candidate supported by the Bush administration, emphatically demonstrated the decline of America's continental leadership. The US not only lost control of the OAS, which generally serves US interests, but also failed to persuade 2005's Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, to endorse unanimously a declaration supporting US economic and political stances in the region. That setback was all the more striking, given that the summit was structured to defend and promote US positions.

Attempts throughout 2005 by the Bush administration to discipline Venezuela's government also failed. President Bush was simply unable to get other governments to back the policy of isolation that he sought to impose on President Hugo Chávez's administration. America has also been frustrated in its effort to obtain regional support for its policy of direct

involvement in Colombia's internal strife.

Of course, not everything is going against America. The election of the Colombian Luis Alberto Moreno as president of the Inter-American Development Bank had clear US backing. This means that the bank is likely to continue its orthodox, neo-liberal policies. But a clear line in the sand has been drawn between Latin American countries that want to pursue regional integration on their own terms, and those that favor hemispheric integration under US direction.

Led by Brazil and backed above all by Argentina and Venezuela, the first group's project is the construction of the Community of South American Nations. The Mercosur countries – Brazil and Argentina, plus Paraguay and Uruguay – seek the defense of their respective national interests and a more just and democratic international order: they are not looking for a confrontation with anyone.

In the second group – the countries that pursue a direct relationship with Washington – there are two trends: some countries, such as Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, act individually, while others, notably the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, act from a regional perspective. All of them are in line with the policy already initiated by

Mexico and, to a lesser extent, by Chile.

But it is the ideological picture that presents the starkest contrasts. Indeed, there could be political consequences affecting the entire region if the confrontation between Venezuela and the US worsens, and if the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional wins an electoral victory in Nicaragua. The US is likely to consider the eventual formation of a triangle linking Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua as a direct threat to regional stability, putting Latin America dangerously atop the Bush administration's security agenda. The triumph of Evo Morales's Movimiento al Socialismo in Bolivia will only fan this anxiety.

To be sure, one should not view Latin America in 2005 only in terms of the region's relations with the US. There are also deep concerns about the internal situation in many countries that suffer almost permanent political and institutional crises, such as Haiti, Ecuador, and Bolivia. Unfortunately, the structural causes that originated these crises won't begin to be resolved by next year.

Indeed, local problems are likely to exacerbate regional tensions. In 2005, Chile and Peru have faced off over their maritime border. In Bolivia there are mounting revanchist pressures for recovering sea access, which was lost to Chile in the nineteenth century, and to use gas

SKETCHED OPINION



exports as a pressure point. The dispute between Costa Rica and Nicaragua over navigation on the San Juan River, and the heated jurisdictional arguments between Colombia and Venezuela, also help raise regional tempers.

All these tensions pose the threat of a new arms race – this at a time when the region's worst problems are poverty, inequality, and the marginalization of indigenous people. If these problems go unattended, destabilization will undoubtedly grow.

Finally, massive migration is contributing to the region's anxieties. The problem is not just illegal migration to the US. Migration, triggered by dire economic conditions – and, especially in the past, large-scale violence – is also occurring between Latin American countries. Keeping the movement of people peaceful will pose a serious challenge to the region's leaders in the months and years ahead.

Throughout Latin America, if poverty and violence are not ameliorated, ten-

sions are bound to grow. The region is truly at a crossroads: 2006 may well determine whether it lapses back into the sad days of the chaotic past or finds a new maturity to strike out – in conditions of liberty and democracy – on its own path to growth and stability.

Raúl Alfonsín was Argentina's first democratically elected President after the fall of its military dictatorship. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2005. www.project-syndicate.org

Latin America at a crossroads

By: Marc Hauser and Peter Singer

Is religion necessary for morality? Many people consider it outrageous, even blasphemous, to deny the divine origin of morality. Either some divine being crafted our moral sense, or we picked it up from the teachings of organized religion. Either way, we need religion to curb nature's vices. Paraphrasing Katherine Hepburn in the movie *The African Queen*, religion allows us to rise above wicked old Mother Nature, handing us a moral compass.

Yet problems abound for the view that morality comes from God. One problem is that we cannot, without lapsing into tautology, simultaneously say that God is good, and that he gave us our sense of good and bad. For then we are simply saying that God meets God's standards.

A second problem is that there are no moral principles that are shared by all religious people, regardless of their specific beliefs, but by no agnostics and atheists. Indeed, atheists and agnostics

do not behave less morally than religious believers, even if their virtuous acts rest on different principles. Non-believers often have as strong and sound a sense of right and wrong as anyone, and have worked to abolish slavery and contributed to other efforts to alleviate human suffering.

The opposite is also true. Religion has led people to commit a long litany of horrendous crimes, from God's command to Moses to slaughter the Midianites – men, women, boys, and non-virginal girls – through the Crusades, the Inquisition, innumerable conflicts between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, and suicide bombers convinced that martyrdom will lead them to paradise.

The third difficulty for the view that morality is rooted in religion is that some elements of morality seem to be universal, despite sharp doctrinal differences among the world's major religions. In fact, these elements extend even to cultures like China, where religion is less significant than philosophical outlooks like Confucianism.

Perhaps a divine creator handed us these universal elements at the moment of creation. But an alternative explanation, consistent with the facts of biology and geology, is that over millions of years we have evolved a moral faculty that generates intuitions about right and wrong.

For the first time, research in the cognitive sciences, building on theoretical arguments emerging from moral philosophy, has made it possible to resolve the ancient dispute about the origin and nature of morality.

Consider the following three scenarios. For each, fill in the blank space with "obligatory," "permissible," or "forbidden."

1. A runaway boxcar is about to run over five people walking on the tracks. A railroad worker is standing next to a switch that can turn the boxcar onto a side track, killing one person, but allowing the five to survive. Flipping the switch is _____.
2. You pass by a small child drowning in a shallow pond, and you are the only

one around. If you pick up the child, she will survive and your pants will be ruined. Picking up the child is _____.

3. Five people have just been rushed into a hospital in critical condition, each requiring an organ to survive. There is not enough time to request organs from outside the hospital, but there is a healthy person in the hospital's waiting room. If the surgeon takes this person's organs, he will die, but the five in critical care will survive. Taking the healthy person's organs is _____.

If you judged case 1 as permissible, case 2 as obligatory, and case 3 as forbidden, then you are like the 1,500 subjects around the world who responded to these dilemmas on our web-based moral sense test (<http://moral.wjh.harvard.edu>). If morality is God's word, atheists should judge these cases differently from religious people, and their responses should rely on different justifications.

For example, because atheists supposedly lack a moral compass, they should be guided by pure self-interest and walk

by the drowning child. But there were no statistically significant differences between subjects with or without religious backgrounds, with approximately 90% of subjects saying that it is permissible to flip the switch on the boxcar, 97% saying that it is obligatory to rescue the baby, and 97% saying that it is forbidden to remove the healthy man's organs.

When asked to justify why some cases are permissible and others forbidden, subjects are either clueless or offer explanations that cannot account for the relevant differences. Importantly, those with a religious background are as clueless or incoherent as atheists.

These studies provide empirical support for the idea that, like other psychological faculties of the mind, including language and mathematics, we are endowed with a moral faculty that guides our intuitive judgments of right and wrong. These intuitions reflect the outcome of millions of years in which our ancestors have lived as social mammals, and are part of our common inheritance. Our evolved intuitions do not neces-

sarily give us the right or consistent answers to moral dilemmas. What was good for our ancestors may not be good today. But insights into the changing moral landscape, in which issues like animal rights, abortion, euthanasia, and international aid have come to the fore, have not come from religion, but from careful reflection on humanity and what we consider a life well lived.

In this respect, it is important for us to be aware of the universal set of moral intuitions so that we can reflect on them and, if we choose, act contrary to them. We can do this without blasphemy, because it is our own nature, not God, that is the source of our morality.

Marc Hauser is a Professor of Psychology and Director of Primate Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory, Harvard University. Peter Singer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University.

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For Turkey, for Europe

By: Michel Rocard

Turkey is now, finally, negotiating with the European Commission the terms of its possible membership in the European Union. But whether "possible" becomes "eventual" remains very much an open question. Indeed, completing the negotiations is likely to prove as difficult as the decision to start them.

Recall that Turkey made its first application to join in 1959, and that since 1963, the European Economic Community, the forerunner to today's EU, responded with a delaying tactic: a request for a customs agreement. At the same time, having never had to take "no" for an answer – and after receiving a series of nods and winks that hinted that membership might one day come – Turkey's expectation of eventual EU integration became increasingly palpable.

But ordinary Europeans have begun looking at maps, and the geography that they see cannot be denied: 95% of Turkey's territory and 80% of its population is in Asia. As a result, the fierce and lively debate – in Turkey and much more emphatically in the EU – about whether Turkey really belongs to Europe has continued, despite the start of negotiations.

Of course, the question of Turkey's European identity cannot be answered with geography lessons. At least half of the body of Greek theater and philosophy was produced in Asia Minor. The first Christian evangelization trips of Saint Peter and Saint Paul were to Turkey. Later, Ottoman Turkey was for centuries considered a part of the "concert of Europe," proving indispensable in defining and securing the strategic balance among the European continent's Great

Powers.

Yet this historical evidence is not enough to unite European sentiment in favor of Turkey's EU membership. On the contrary, "the Turkish Question" will be resolved on the basis of the current political preoccupations and concerns for the future. Fortunately, that choice was not settled prematurely and peremptorily: the process that will lead to a final decision was merely allowed to start with the opening of negotiations.

Membership talks can't help but be long and arduous, if only because adopting the *acquis communautaire* (the body of EU law) requires that Turkey integrate around 10,000 pages of texts into its legislation. However, all this now seems to have a serious chance of succeeding.

And yet Turkey scares countless Europeans. With 67 million people today, and a population that will reach 80 million in 20 years and 100 million in 2050, Turkey is bound to become the most populous of all European nations. It is also a very poor Muslim country.

To be sure, a few countries in Europe, mainly Germany and Austria, have welcomed strong inflows of Turkish immigration. But the immigrants have been mostly poor peasants from Anatolia, whose integration has proven to be difficult. By contrast, Turkey's large, secular intellectual community, whose cultural background is European, and from which the Turkish state recruits most of its executives, has remained in Istanbul and Ankara.

Europe, then, is frightened by the prospect of more immigration by Turks who find it almost impossible to assimilate. For the moment, such immigration has almost stopped, owing to rapid economic growth – indeed, the fastest in Europe – in recent years, which is

absorbing the country's available labor and has thus stemmed the flow of emigrants. Yet the fear remains that membership in the Union will unleash a new human tide.

Economic fears are not the only concern for EU citizens. Turkey was the theater of exceptional violence in the twentieth century: its participation in WWI fueled hatred and gigantic massacres, with the genocide of the Armenians the last vicious spasm of the Ottoman Empire's brutal demise.

Moreover, while Kemal Atatürk restored Turkish national pride by creating the secular Turkish republic, his legacy is mixed, for it includes both Turkey's strong attraction to the West and a militarization of public life. The latter explains much of the repressive attitude towards free speech and independent opinion that has characterized much of Turkish public life – a straitjacket that has left little room for real negotiations with Turkey's restless Kurds or for resolving the division of Cyprus.

Indeed, by integrating Turkey, Europe would show that it is not a Christian club, that the supposed "clash of civilizations" need not be fatal, and that the European project, born out of a desire for reconciliation and the need to promote development, can spread its benefits far beyond the Western half of Europe. In opening itself to Turkey, the EU would finally begin to play its proper role in confronting today's most daunting political challenges.

Michel Rocard is a former Prime Minister of France and leader of the Socialist Party. He is a member of the European Parliament.

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Future Youth

Voices of tomorrow delivered today!!

God's Gift

By: Fuad Noman
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Life is a Great God's gift
Life is too short to live
So, as we were born
Once day we would be missed and left
From the creation start
On earth...only the red color springs
We are moving round in circle
Its features flare and rankle
In kind, humans are same
But we are not in degree equal
We are always forgetting our Peace pace
On our universe
Why should it be death by murder?
Are we under the control of evil's game?
Maybe it is a matter of fame
why do not we blame?
No end for sorrows and pain
Tomorrow is closer to us
Let us know how our life can pass
How to meet God and what we would discuss!
Oh my God!
A Strange Smell out of smoke of gloom
A Silent storm shakes my room
The hands of wind poison my bloom
Strangers in Home

No rain
Only a lake of flood
within the color of blood
Why am I in a wrath way?
God can help me from the evil and Fay
when I am looking for my happy day
on dirty streets I never walk or stay
Cheating games I can't play
I do not feel my current time as it was before
Only something is still so pure
it is my deep core
whatever the ocean's depth is!
It can't be deeper than my love for all
Teach them what love can be?
As it lives in your dream's lea
My love still swims in your eyes' lake
Your love let my heart's fire easily slake
And my mind be wide awake
A genuine Love doesn't change or flake
My heart is really a big dale
So, it cannot be for sale
Just believe me what I say
A successful love can't once more fail

Time of nowhere to be found

By: Yousef alaater
alaater@hotmail.com

My heart moan once I behold
Human weep this peace away
Every day for me anew wound
In quest of the melancholy decay
Many say so proud,
Others say "thee must obey".
But never care for what they laud
Never care for what they say
Just for who you really are be concerned
Dwelling in the land gone astray
Roaming all around
Across the seas and the sky
Searching for the pleasure shrine
But after all there is no sign
There is nowhere to be found.

Henna drawing a profitable profession

Unemployed women in Yemen tell their story of how they have succeeded to use the art of decorating with henna as a job providing them with good incomes for living

By: Mahyoub Al-Kamali

There are certain work opportunities for Yemeni women in the labor market, especially in handicrafts. Among these crafts is the art of drawing on the body with henna. This handicraft is used in Yemen on special occasions like weddings, wherein women, especially brides, are decorated with beautiful designs by using henna.

Henna, Latin name *Lawsonia inermis*, is an Asian shrub or small tree with elliptic leaves and fragrant flowers. Plant leaves are used especially for coloring hair. One of the most-used

plants for decorating and treatment, the henna tree contains a colorful substance used to dye hands, feet and hair. The majority using it are brides before their wedding night. The flourishing of the profession and its spread to urban areas, after being more confined to rural areas, also has increased henna tree growing.

As a profession, henna drawing provides many job opportunities for women, as henna decorating is widely demanded by Yemeni women for weddings and special occasions. Henna is used widely among Yemen's coastal populations in Aden, Hadramout, Lahj and Hudeida, as well as mountain populations in Sana'a, Taiz, Ibb, Saada and Hajja.



Females enjoy decorating their hands with henna

A'isha Bint Saeed Mohammed of Sana'a works in this handicraft, saying the profession helped her and her family overcome poverty and become among the well-to-do by opening a coiffeur and henna decoration shop. She says her expectations were met after opening her Sana'a coiffeur shop.

Her monthly income is between 200,000 and 300,000 riyals. She pays 25,000 riyals for shop rental, 30,000 riyals for henna and drawing tools and 50,000 riyals for three girls working for her. In any event, she makes a good profit. She has succeeded in practicing her profession in wedding halls, brides' houses and shopping centers.

She advises young girls not to surrender to poverty but to take action, for there are good job opportunities in henna decorating. In particular, the job does not require qualification, training or university study. It only requires courage and primary skills women can acquire through daily practice.

An expert in henna drawing and use as a treatment substance, Mariam Mansour, 55, says henna leaf powder has different uses, some for beauty and some for treating headaches, sunstroke and some skin diseases. Coiffeur shop owner Mohammed adds that henna also is used to dye hair and cure problems like dandruff and cleaning the scalp.

For their part, doctors recommend using henna and consider it the best natural treatment. They say it also eases blood circulation in the scalp and reduces sweat so hair remains dry.

Fathia Al-Mattari, a coiffeur shop worker and henna artist, says she gets 25-30,000 riyals to decorate a bride the eve of her wedding, adding that it is a good income and she helps her family live well instead of staying at home unemployed. She says the important thing about the profession is that she earns a good income for her family and has a job opportunity.

Yemen's Millennium Fund support suspended

Corruption deprived Yemen of the Millennium Fund support. MP Faisal Amin Aburas presents a working paper on parliamentarians' role in combating corruption

Economic experts believe Yemen's suspended qualification to the Millennium Fund is connected with its failure to achieve millennium goals since their declaration in 2000. The Yemeni government had hoped fund support would greatly assist in alleviating poverty by including it in new economic programs.

Experts believe the first and second plans, spanning more than a decade, did not accomplish any positive indicators regarding economic growth as a whole or as to improving per capita income levels. Experts also point out that the poverty alleviation strategy failed because it was nipped in the bud due to wavering external support, in addition

to not possessing information and data on poverty causes in all areas of Yemen.

Ali Al-Faqieh, an economic researcher at the Studies and Research Center, says poverty reasons differ from one region to another. The reason "Yemen was excluded from the millennium project is attributed to many causes. The main cause is continuing failure in government performance regarding economic growth indicators. Other causes are government failure in so-called economic reforms and floundering of all human development programs in education and training, health and illiteracy eradication."

He said these factors are behind deterioration in all walks of life, which led

to destruction of everything that could have been described as positive. He also pointed to foreign indicators and negative reports published about Yemen, the latest of which categorizes Yemen among those countries where corruption constitutes a basic component in the failure of all government and civil activities.

Yemen was last in UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) statistics and social indicators concerning advancement achieved by those countries toward millennium development goals. Concerning removal of abasing poverty and starvation, statistics indicated that the percentage of the population whose income is less than \$1 to \$2 a day, until

2001, was 29 percent to 63 percent. The percentage of the population not gaining minimum food energy consumption, until 2000, was 33 percent, among which 46.1 percent were underweight children under age 5 and 19 percent were infants less than a year old. Statistics also pointed out that opportunities for gender equality and improvement were the least improved indicators among ESCWA countries. As for the percentage of girls in education, 60.6 percent were in primary education, secondary education 60.4 percent in secondary education and 60.3 percent higher education.

Member of Parliament Faisal Amin Aburas called for establishing a national coalition to combat corruption and determine of disorder in administrative laws, legislations and regulations. He demanded the government present a clear and effective national strategy to combat corruption and form an independent organization to fight corruption, to be run by independent and spe-

cialized jurists and legislators characterized by decency and trustworthiness. Aburas said the organization should possess legal and constitutional authority enabling it to verify and decide corruption issues and refer to court the files of those involved in corruption.

In his working paper presented at a World Bank workshop recently held in Sana'a regarding parliamentarians' role in fighting corruption, Aburas mentioned the main reasons for tendering his resignation from Parliament were the following:

- almost total absence of parliamentary transparency and accountability
- government's continued behavior in doubling citizens' suffering and going too far in pursuing killing policies, which increased poverty and unemployment, under the nose of legislative power
- dissemination of corruption, squandering, domination, despotism, nepotism and mediation
- association of Parliament's presiden-

tial body in unconstitutional relationships with authorities, which contributed to non-separation between powers and led to confiscating the right to hold government accountable; Parliament's failure to perform monitoring tasks or control performance of executive power, contenting itself with simply criticizing the government, thereby approving government's killing laws. This contributed to allowing the government to deviate from its right course.

Meanwhile, Nasserite MP Sultan Al-Atwani, Secretary-General of the Nasserite Unionist Organization, discussed Yemen's role in fighting corruption mentioning that it participated in founding the regional network, establishing a Sana'a branch. He affirmed that corruption is threatening the country as an entity and called for following the United Nations Agreement as a guide to combat corruption, since Yemen is one of the nations that endorsed it.

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وظائف شاغرة... مطلوب طبيب أسنان للعمل في جيزان/السعودية براتب ٥٠٠٠ ريال سعودي + سكن لها وللحرم + ٥٪ من الدخل

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عقارات... للبيع: أرضية بمساحة ٤٦٠ قسمة عشاري في منطقة الجندية - الجندية - تمز

باحثون عن وظيفة... حاصل على بكالوريوس مختبرات طبية - الأولى على الذفعة + شهادة خبرة بدورة تدريبية في مجال المختبرات + شهادة تقدير من نقابة الطب التشخيصي المختبري - يجيد اللغة الإنجليزية يرغب في العمل في مجال مناسب أو في مجال تخصصه

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مراكز تدريب وتعليم الكمبيوتر... معهد ابنت... معهد ابنت... CMT House... Infinit Education... NIIT

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ارسلوا اعلاناتكم المجانية على تلفون: ٧١٦٦٠٦٥ / الفاكس: ٢٦٦٣٧٦ / اوص. ب. : ٢٥٧٩ صنعا

When children plead: "Please, just give me 10 Riyals. I am hungry!"

By: Adel Al-Haddad
adelhaddad@hotmail.com

Men, women, boys, girls and even infants surround mosques every Friday during the Jum'ah prayer congregation requesting help and money. There are beggars all the time, but Friday is special because mosques tend to fill with Muslims offering their prayers and asking for forgiveness. In Islam, Friday prayers are compulsory for men and optional for women, yet even men who do not pray regularly make a point to attend the Friday congregation. It has become a social practice and many people plan their Friday around this holy event, as do beggars. Muslims feel charitable during prayers, especially if the Friday preaching is about giving to the poor and taking out sadaqa (charity money).

Begging in Yemen is one of the most widespread phenomena. It takes many forms and is a profession inherited generation after generation. In fact, mosques and streets are divided into zones and districts and beggars abide by a strict code of conduct governing their activities. On Fridays, one can see varying types of beggars, some handicapped, blind, semi-crazy, extremely poor, etc. They pile on in groups, and if you give one beggar money, get ready for a mass attack by the rest of the gang. They will follow asking for help, sometimes in a hilarious way that makes you laugh. Some beggars insist you give them money and are very angry if you don't. Walid Mohammed, one Friday



Woman begs with her infant.

PHOTO BY SADDAM AL-ASHMOORI

attendee, commented on this, saying, "It is not good when many people come together asking for money. They keep demanding, saying, 'Please, just 10 riyals. Please!'"

Some beggars begin asking for money immediately following Friday's sermon. Some men join the prayer and once it is over, they immediately start yelling and asking people for help inside the mosque before attendees disperse. Some beggars make up sad stories such as they don't have transportation costs to

return home, or their parents are dying or their eight children are hungry.

Poverty

Yemeni citizens' per capita is less than U.S. \$2 per day. Although government has tried enhancing the economy through reform programs, the situation is not improving much yet. Due to rapid population growth, the country's population is expected to double within 10 years. However, infrastructure and basic services such as water supply, electrical power, telephone, education, health care, etc., are not growing as fast. This makes the cost of living unbearable to many Yemenis and today, a little more than half the population lives below the food poverty line. As a result, when poor families cannot find enough sources of income, they are forced to beg, asking others to help them.

Unemployment

Unemployment is another reason why some poor families must beg. The unemployment rate is more than 35 percent, one of the world's highest. One poor tearful woman begging in front of a mosque said, "My husband cannot find any job to keep supporting us, so I am compelled to ask people to help me and my kids." Another woman pointed out that if she does not beg and ask people to help her, she will sell herself. In this regard, poverty leads some girls to prostitution. There is a common Yemeni proverb that says, "When poverty enters through the door, morals fly out the window."

The Islamic religion has created

solutions for poverty in society through socio-economic sharing and zakah. Zakah states that some specified money be taken from rich people and given to the poor. This way an economic balance is created, in addition to the rich person's social responsibility toward the poor in terms of supporting them in a certain aspect, such as education, health care, etc., whereby a rich person readily takes responsibility to ensure

a good life for a number of poor people, whether relatives, neighbors, etc.

The worst sight of beggary is when we see some women with their babies begging in the hot sun and the coldness of winter. When small children beg saying, "I am hungry. Please help me with 10 riyals only." So the children, instead of going to school, go on the streets to get money for their poor families.

A matter of choice?

Many beggars are forced to practice beggary due to personal conditions and social circumstances. However, we can find some beggars asking people for money although they are not in need. They want to get money easily without any work or effort.

Fouad Mus'ad, a young man from Sana'a, said some beggars exploit Fridays by asking people for help when they are not in need. Mus'ad

decided to follow his instinct when giving to beggars. "Begging is an easy way of getting money. Some beggars become rich because they collect money and hardly spend it," he noted. To the contrary, Mus'ad's friend Mohammed commented that he does not care if the beggar is in need or not; he helps people regardless of their need for the money.

The number of poor people, particularly beggars, is rising dramatically. Government should take practical steps to combat beggary and reduce poverty. Not only does this phenomenon mean that a large group in society is living in miserable conditions, it also means the other more well-off groups will not be able to live easy lives knowing their friends or neighbors are suffering. Moreover, such a sad phenomenon will affect the tourism sector and perhaps social security and the country's stability as a whole.



Women begging outside mosques on Friday.

PHOTO BY SADDAM AL-ASHMOORI



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