

Hope and fear of the folklore house

By: Nisreen Shadad

“I wish I felt secure and safe towards my Folklore House without locks and alarms that this House may one day be replaced to a shop rather than an association,” says Arwa Othman, the director of the Folklore House.

Folklore House is a cultural, nonprofit NGO. It is also a small-scale museum that conducts research and studies, collect documents of Yemen's spiritual heritage.

The Folklore House

Since the establishment of the Folklore House, in April 10, 2004, Othman has gone full steam ahead with her plan to document Yemeni traditional heritage



Arwa in her Folkloric library.

especially the verbal one that includes songs, fables, adages, jokes, riddles, fairy tales and myths. Nevertheless she finds herself in a tight spot. She was the only worker there, she was conducting research, traveling to collect more stories and cleaning the Folklore House after the visitors left. The real obstacle, however, that put a spoke in her wheel was the absence of the finance and working group to help her. "I

invited some of the movers and shakers to this House, not to give me money, but to endow me a building. They all promise, but no one fulfills," she said. Before several months, Mr. Yahya Al-Shoa'ibi, the governor of Sana'a, cooperated with our center and got the responsibility of giving salary to my new workers; a secretary and a guard." She noted.

The Folklore House is divided into four sections: a. an administration, b. Folkloric library, c. documentation and recording unit, and d. a Mini Museum. The administration's tasks range from enacting the cultural and research activities of the House to contacting Cultural centers and organizations. Folkloric library is a first step towards establishing a grand and comprehensive library for folklore. It contains a hundreds of books and periodicals that are completely or partly dedicated to national, Arab and foreign folklores, along with audio, photo and TV archives. In Documentation and Recording unit verbal heritage is recorded and archived through conversations with old people, Othman visited several areas in Yemen to record the stories and tales. The last section is the Mini Museum which contains a number of collections. It is divided into; the traditional kitchen, traditional costumes (men's, women's and children's).

Expectations Othman working for Othman was born in 1965 in Taiz. She has received her Bachelor degree in fac-



Qaraqeesh, a cover the single woman put over her head.



Women rubbed Al-Eqal plant around their eyes to prevent sun burning.



Yemeni kitchenware.

ulty of Art, Philosophy department, Sana'a University. In her childhood, she was eager to keep material heritage like silver jewelries and ornaments." When I was a child, I used to collect my pocket money which is actually fifty rails to buy silver nickels. I lost two dearest partners, the first was my grandma and the second was her irreplaceable priceless fables and tales that will never come back. Therefore, I give Yemeni verbal heritage my best shot so as to not to die as my granda did. In a cultural competition of short stories in UEA, she participated with "Happening in Tanka, the country of misquotes" and as a result, she got the first prize in 2001. This short story talked about Tanka, a country where all its visitors disappeared.

Last year, Othman conducted a distinctive cultural project called Al- Madraha, or the swing celebration that took place and aimed to revive one of the most important local and traditional custom that vanish and gradually become extinct without documenting. Al- Madraha is important in preparation for the pilgrimage. When someone declared his/her intention to perform Hajj, his/her family, friends and neighbors would build the swing. In the swing would be set up in a public area called (Al-Aqma). It is made usually from the wood of solid trees like acacia and its pillars are tied firmly by special ropes called (As-Salb) which are considered the strongest. These ropes were sometimes made of leather and braided; the pillars should be tightly fixed

to prevent rupture- an ominous sign for the pilgrimage

Despite the several obstacles Othman has faced, she has stars in her eyes to go on and think of her future expectations. Soon enough, she said, the first edition of Al-Thakera (Memory) magazine will be published. It's a cultural, anthropologic and folkloric magazine. Besides, it will introduce, for the first time, a special subject about Al-Dawshina; particular group of people exist in different region of the country interested much in Yemeni traditional heritage. Add to that, she dreams of publishing an encyclopedia that involves all traditional fables and tales and the Reading on Yemeni traditional narrating book that introduces 70 stories is considered an introduction of encyclopedia.

Reflecting on traditional fashion:

Yemen as a creative country

By: Yemen Times Staff

Yemeni women nowadays wear clothes that are universal somehow. In Eid, they wear skirts, semi-skirts, trousers; blouses and dresses. These come from catalogues preferred by women presenting fashion designs from around the world. Therefore, the worldly designs dominate and rarely do we find a woman wearing a traditional fashion design in her daily life, unless they are from the older generations.

The gap between modern and traditional fashion designs has its own historical roots. Jahaf said, "With the Yemeni

revolution of 1962 against the Imamate rule took place, people began to establish a new society. The circle of isolation was broken and as a result to poverty, ignorance, injustice and a series of deadly diseases that prevailed in the country, Yemenis were ready to overthrow everything that related to the Imam in order to change their lives. Even those traditional and heritage conscientious people, considered the remains of the Imam's influence should be ignored and forgotten.

Many materials were imported and consequently home-grown handcrafters became jobless. These immigrated to various Gulf countries to find other jobs hoping to improve their outcomes. At the beginning of nineties, Yemenis and several neighboring countries were interested in the re-flourishing of heritage; however, I don't know the real reason beyond this. Even the companies of more worldly acclaimed fashion designing were inspired in their modern designs with those of eras past. Even though this spoke of a flowering trend, wearing these old designs only emerged upon occasion."

Yemeni women have historically received a new dress yearly for those special occasions or ceremonies such as Eid and wedding parties. The art of constructing clothes from patterns goes back much further. The old design patterns which predominated for centuries, however, are a far cry from the newer ones. The older designs depended on geographical environment of a given city and the raw materials available in each region. Now most of the fashion designs have a non-Yemeni identity where most have been imported. "In the past all the whole process of producing clothes; from harvesting and cleaning the fiber or wool to designing, cutting and sewing the cloth into clothes, took place in Yemen. And that clearly reflected the economic condition of Yemen", says

Amat Al-Razzaq Jahaf, the head of the Woman Development Center for Traditional Heritage.

The traditional design pattern

Materials: Cotton, flax, wool and silk, are the natural raw materials that are commonly used.

Features: The natural environment in its diversity of plains, mountains, hills and deserts make for variations on how people wear clothing and the quality of the woven fabric and the patterns of the embroidery.

In Heights

1. The quality and the fineness of the woven fabric are vital.
2. Textiles mostly used are cotton, flax, and wool; silks and other textiles are imported from India.
3. Women's clothes cover all parts of the body with a neckline that can be fastened with buttons. The sleeves are wide as well as long reaching, in many cases, the knees. The sleeves end with cuffs that can be fastened with links.

The Plains

1. Softness and lightness of the woven fabric is important.
2. Textiles mostly used are cotton and flax.
3. The women's dress has a wide neckline, usually in a rectangular or four-fold shape.

The Hills

1. Textiles used are silk, cotton and imported velvets.
2. *Kodma* and *Thail* (Front and Tail) is a style where the dress is short in the front and long in the back.

Artistic Features

Yemeni dresses are unique in their pat-

terns and embroidery. They are smartly stylish as well as modest. Threads commonly used in sewing the cloth are of gold, silver, silk or cotton. The embroidery patterns are inspired from nature, shaped as plants or geometrical motifs.

Types of clothes:

Women normally wore two pieces of clothes; *Qamees* - a loose robe was worn over a dress. *Qamees* were usually worn when leaving the house, while the dress was worn for special occasions such as 'Eid, or in their daily lives.

1. Qamees

In Sana'a, the *Qamees* was usually made of *Jerz* or black velvet with a narrow neckline with the top of the sleeve that is wide until its lower segment that reaches the women's knees.

In Taiz, the *Qamees* is tight at the top; similar to older French designs. The sleeve is cut narrow from the top and widens until it reaches its lower part in a bell-bottoms design. Normally, we can easily see stitches in both sides against the fabric, but usually stitches in the front turned triangular shape.

In Sa'da, the most popular *Qamees* is called *Aqeeda* that is similar to Sana'ani version in terms of its design, but *Aqeeda* is stitched as a whole with the embroidery containing old coins, shells and buttons. The sleeve's lower end has a triangular shape. Such *Qamees* existed also in Al-Jawf and Marib.

2. Dress

In Shabwa, Hadhramout and Al-Mahara women wore a popular dress called *Thail and Kodma* (Tail and Front) where the tail back end is longer than the front. The length and shortness of the dress depended on custom. For example in Shabwa, the length of the tail was longer (10 cm) than the front. In Hadhramout, the length of the tail is longer (1 meter) than the front; and in Al-Mahara the tail



Embroidery of Jahaf's bag inspired from Sana'ni pants.

is even longer (2 or 3 meters) than the front. In Shabwa the front is above the heels, in Hadhramout and Al-Mahara, the front is under the knees exactly. The tail, for the woman in Al-Mahara, is firmly secured to her waist with a silver belt.

Jahaf has stated the designs of such

dresses are too old. One of the past's poets, Imro'o Al-Qais, one of the most famous poets on the Arabian Peninsula, mentions this kind of dress in one of his poems. (A Yemeni from Hadhramout, he was born in Najd in 105 CE). "One of the reason for making the tails long was due to traditions; another was to hide a woman's footprints," Jahaf added.

In Tihma, one of the hotter cities, women wore a brassiere like shirt and a skirt made of light fabrics. Jahaf had to say about such designs, "This particular type of design is extremely different from others and rarely found anywhere else in Yemen. According to my studies and investigations, such designs have an Indian influence, similar to the Sari that consists of a blouse and petticoat."

Arabian styled dresses are the most popular dress form in Sana'a. "Though it was worn only in Sana'a and several locations, I don't know why they call it Arabian", Jahaf commented. It's designed in two pieces cut in semi circles, then stitched midway from the sleeve to the waist. This piece is then joined with the skirt piece through pleats.



Sana'ani Kamis



Sana'ani dress



Women nowadays wear modern clothes.



Thail and kodma dress

Journalists in war zones: A deadly grey area

With military conflicts growing increasingly complex, the safety of journalists in battle zones and troubled areas is becoming a major issue. More and more, journalists and media workers are moving in a deadly grey area.

By: Petra Tabeling

It was a dark day for the media and for freedom of the press when relatives of slain journalists gathered last week in the French city of Bayeux to dedicate Europe's first memorial for journalists, commemorating more than 2000 media workers who have lost their lives worldwide since 1944.

On this very weekend the news was dominated by the murders of three journalists: two German employees of the Deutsche Welle were killed in Afghanistan, while Russian journalist Anna Politovskaya was murdered in her Moscow apartment. As globalization progresses, creating ambiguous interests, actors and hostilities, the issue of journalists' safety is becoming more urgent than ever before.

No Certainties

The conflicts in the Middle East have shown that journalists are not immune to the anarchy and violence they report on. The situation in Iraq, where more than 100 media workers have died since the war began in 2003, makes this especially

clear.

Media workers are caught in the cross-fire - from Western armies as well as guerilla groups. "Embedded" journalists, i.e. those who work within the ranks of the army, can be certain neither of their physical safety nor of their journalistic independence. On top of everything, kidnappings have become a serious threat.

The killings of French journalists and the kidnappings of French correspondents such as Florence Aubenas and Christian Chesnot were major factors in the French Parliament's decision to propose a law strengthening the status of journalists in military conflicts on the international level.

For example, it calls for an expansion of the Geneva Conventions, which define journalists in battle as civilians who, as such, must be protected; the UN Security Council must guarantee the right to gather information without any restrictions. In addition, NATO should adapt the so-called "Green Book" used by the British Army, which was the first to recognize the independence of journalists in battle zones early this year.

In addition, the law would make it possible

for crimes against journalists to be brought to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, and suggests that a financial fund for journalists in crisis situations would be helpful.

Robert Menard, Chair of Reporters without Borders, who played a crucial role in drafting the law, praised the politicians' commitment: "If the French government adopts the proposal, we hope for corresponding adaptations by German and other European governments, reaching all the way to the United Nations Security Council."

Supporting independent media workers on location

At this year's conference for war journalists in Bayeux, Middle East correspondents discussed the parliamentary report, not without criticism:

"The Taliban, Al Qaeda and the Hamas won't read a text like that, you can never feel safe. Nowadays it's virtually impossible in Iraq or Afghanistan. The larger problem is the situation of the independent journalists and Arab employees on location; often they don't even have insurance and get no financial support from their clients," says Emmanuel Razavi of the Kabul-based Hamsa Agency. "We give our native employees monthly wages and insurance. That's our philosophy, but few do the same. An Iraqi employee isn't worth less than a Western journalist!"

This is also criticized by Robert

Menard: "For example, just two New York Times journalists have over 80 Iraqis working for them, from drivers and translators to informants. I doubt that enough financial resources are available for them. Yet they're the ones with the greatest risk."

A drop in the bucket

Now, though, there are initiatives to finance the necessary security training for journalists and media workers on location, who often lack the financial or organizational resources to pay for such training. The International News Safety Institute (INSI), founded four years ago to address media workers' security concerns, offers on-location security training sessions funded by donations from Western media companies such as the BBC.

"It's a drop in the bucket," says Sarah de Jong of INSI, "but still, it's important for the international community to understand that the killing of a journalist is always an attack on the truth. And we need lots of journalists, especially in war zones such as Iraq, to find out the truth. We are supporting people's human right to information when politicians, governments, the military and other actors have absolute respect for journalists."

How difficult it has been to accept this is shown by the American military's bombardment of the Hotel Palestine in Baghdad in 2003 and of the offices of the Arab TV stations Al Jazeera and Abu



France unveiled on 7 October a memorial to journalists killed while doing their job, with monuments bearing hundreds of names in the northwestern town of Bayeux.

Dhabi TV, in which several journalists died. James Miller, a British documentary filmmaker was killed in the Gaza Strip, targeted by an Israeli soldier despite being clearly identifiable as a journalist.

The memorial to slain media workers in Bayeux displays an especially large number of names of journalists from the Middle East, including the French-Lebanese journalist Samir Kassir. The columnist for the daily "An-Nahar" was killed in Beirut in 2005 when his car was bombed. He had repeatedly pilloried the "Lebanese police state".

At the dedication Robert Menard,

Chair of Reporters without Borders, described the memorial as a message and a defiant symbol of those who, despite all the risks, try to find out the truth.

The little park features a marble stone with a quote from the French philosopher and journalist Simone de Beauvoir stating that one can only enjoy freedom when others are free. Now three new names must be carved into the white marble stones. The question of security remains.

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By: Fuad Al-Hasri

Shares of the poor wholesaled by zone chiefs

Most of the poor learn nothing about functions and activities of charitable societies scattered throughout the country. Some of these societies sleep throughout the year and wake up in Ramadan to collect donations for the poor while others double their activities during the holy month, as this month is considered a chance for giving charities to the poor and the needy. This article sheds light on activities of charitable societies during Ramadan, as well as on whether these societies exercise any activities in any other months of the year.

Briefing us on the activities of his society, Wasim Al-Qubati, Manager of Public Relations and Media at Al-Hekma Al-

Yamania Charitable Society, said: "the society implements many charitable projects that target the poor and the needy. It constructs mosques, drill wells, sponsor orphans, in addition to implementing other projects such as the sacrifice and faster feeding projects."

Ramadan's charity seeds

Ramadan's charity seeds is reflected by the lavish support offered by the will-to-do people during the holy month. Receiving support from philanthropists, the society held open tables to mosques and hospitals. In addition, the society deliver foodstuffs to poor families to their homes such as rice, sugar, flour and dates, meanwhile the poor families that benefited from this project numbered up to 77,125 in Taiz last year.

Not only in Ramadan

There are other projects held in Ramadan, as well as in other months, like the successful project launched last year, represented by the distribution of foodstuffs and other consumptive commodities to the poor and the needy. 302 food baskets, worth 7,000 Yemeni Riyals per basket, were delivered to poor families last year.

As part of its projects, Al-Hekma Al-Yamania Charitable Society delivered foods to 15 mosques, but this year it distributed meals to more than five mosques, in addition the criminal investigation bureau for prisoners, according to Salim Al-Qubati.

Eid Wears Project

Al-Qubati mentioned that the society provides the poor and low-income fami-

lies with Al-Eid wears. Also, it provides orphans with monthly aides and helps them get an access to education and healthcare.

To verify that charitable societies give aids to marginalized people, we asked some of those marginalized about the fact. One of the marginalized people said that they only receive the iftar meal occasionally and not daily as some societies claim.

Distributing meals in mosques causes chaos

"Charitable societies exercise good deeds in Ramadan, however distributing meals to people in mosques causes chaos due to the huge crowds," Haj Abdu Ismail said. "those societies are supposed to plan how to distribute meals in an organized way in order to avoid chaos by the poor, who

constitute huge masses and crush with one another."

"The one who hears that charitable societies support us during Ramadan may believe that people nationwide live in good conditions. Two years ago, we learned that the zone chief took all the foodstuffs, given by charitable societies to the poor, to sell most of them in the wholesale market. He gave the poor only what remained," Fahmi Abdullah, one of the marginalized people complained.

Another marginalized guy, under the name of Wafi Abdullah, who lives behind Al-Thawrah Hospital, said they receive no aides from charitable societies. He added: "we go to philanthropists to have Iftar. Sometimes, we go to the nearby mosque to have Iftar there. We eat, but never receive foodstuffs to be cooked at home."

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The Heinous Israeli Carnage: Another Act in the Mizrahi-Palestinian Tragedy

Abarjel, co-founder of the Black Panthers, and Lavie, a Mizrahi Feminist activist, discuss the reasons for Mizrahi (Arab Jewish) compliance with the present atrocities inflicted on Lebanon and and Palestine by the Ashkenazi-Zionist regime
Operations "Summer Rains" and "Adequate Pay": Another Act in the Mizrahi-Palestinian Tragedy.

By: Reuven Abarjel & Smadar Lavie

On January 25, 2006, Hamas won a landslide victory in the democratic Palestinian legislative elections. The elections were conducted under tight U.S. supervision. Immediately thereafter, Israel's general attorney, Menny Mazouz, started exploring the legal procedures to jail the movement's leadership. Soon the IDF started executing the Gazan leadership of the movement by air strikes. Several dozen innocent Palestinian civilians were casualties in the process. On June 24 the IDF land forces entered the Gaza strip and kidnapped two Hamas men. As a response, on June 25 Hamas captured Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier. The IDF immediately launched "Operation Summer Rains," to inflict large-scale destruction and to press for Shalit's release. On 12 July, Hizbollah captured two more Israeli soldiers--Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser--in the Lebanese border zone. From then on, IDF's "Operation Adequate Pay" has been inflicting heinous carnage and destruction all over Lebanon.

And now here we are, in front of the Israeli TV screen, bombarded by the discourse of experts. The channels are broadcasting live from studios and battlefields. Commercial interludes are part of the show. By default the majority of experts are Ashkenazi (European Jewish) males. They are flanked by a handful of Mizrahi men (Oriental Jews who immigrated to Israel mainly from the Arab World). These men climbed the public service ladder within the nationalist hegemonic confines. Together, they are Israel's knowledge mercenaries. Through the tube -- Israel's tribal campfire -- they dictate the national agenda. The viewers are convinced it must be humanistic, because it is calmly narrated by handsome neckties. They use professional lingo and have the standardized, de-Semitized Hebrew accent. These talking heads say this war is not only for our own good, but is also for the civic betterment of Palestinians and Lebanese. Their sober discourse facilitates public compliance with IDF's shift of tactics--from a warplane "surgical killings" to a combination of marine, air and land forces, to destroy the Hizbollah using the massive weaponry that the U.S. allocates to the IDF.

The three Israeli TV channels bombard us with metaphors like "crushing Hizbollah," "the return of Israeli deterrence," and "the rehabilitation of the Israeli soldier's fighter image." Such imagery enables us to peer into the blood, smoke and devastation the IDF sows. Veiled by the fuss over Lebanon, Israel concurrently continues to plan and execute the socio-cide of both public and intimate spheres of the West Bank and Gaza. The present results: reaping the temporary unity of the Jewish victim-turned-warrior nation-state.

When the cannons roar, the Mizrahi communities fall silent. Like servants before the master, the Mizrahi habitually comply. They are the generations flowing from the Jews who were in Palestine from time immemorial, as well as descen-

dants of those brought here from the Arab World and other non-European countries during the previous century. They are the local hosts for those fleeing the New European anti-Semitism. Mizrahim provide the demographic majority on whose civic docility the Eurocentric Israeli regime rests. Mizrahim have been the Jewish labor turning the cogs of the European-Zionist colonial project ever since its inception, with the Yemeni-Jewish labor migration of 1882. Mizrahim freed Zionism from its total dependency on indigenous Palestinian labor. Mizrahim were the Zionists' "natural laborers," employed in near-slavery conditions. In order for Mizrahim to work with efficacy, the Zionist hegemonic patriarchy ruptured Mizrahi extended families. For themselves, they used the appellation "ideological laborers," and went on to found Israel's socialist-liberal Left. It is this very Left that is now fighting yet another self-righteous Israeli war. The Zionist movement's leadership has always conducted itself, in front of the Mizrahim, the Palestinians, and the citizens of the Arab World, through the tools of occupation, oppression and humiliation. Yet Mizrahi communities keep silent. Along the way, the US-European minority has co-opted the Mizrahi moral, economic and cultural power to resist.

Israel has always compartmentalized its occupation into different categories, as if Gaza, the West Bank, the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the Palestinian Diaspora were not all consequences of the 1948 Nakba and 1967 Naqsa. Yet even such a divisive strategy has failed to diminish the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle for a homeland. Despite the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan, this strategy has nevertheless resulted in an almost across-the-board refusal of the Arab body of citizenry to normalize Israel into the region. The Ashkenazi leadership has repeatedly evoked the image that Israel is a European villa, planted in the midst of the regional jungle, from Bible times to the present day.

Mizrahi communities are intricately positioned along the Israel/Palestine divide as a result of the hegemonic sophistication of the Ashkenazim. Historically, under Menachem Begin, it was the Right who offered the Mizrahi a political home of sorts by not forcing them to secularize in imitation of the Labor party regime. Mizrahim are situated between the rock of economic-cultural oppression caused by the US-European capitalist Israeli rule, and the hard place

of Palestine's war of independence. Zionism was superimposed on Mizrahi communities, yet they welcomed it with open arms. Many still believe in its deceitful vision of an integrationalist inter-racial utopia, even though they are systematically excluded from the centers of power due to Zionism's intra-Jewish racism. Those few who succeeded in securing high-ranking positions in the Ashkenazi regime have long since erased their own past, as they adopted their masters' worldview. Rebuilding the ruptured Mizrahi families was difficult, because they were denied access to the financial and cultural resources necessary to facilitate an equal participation in



A demonstration in Haifa.

the Zionist patriarchy. Mizrahi men's feminism is epitomized in their struggle to mimic handsomely crested Sabra masculinity, hoping it might provide them with equal opportunities. Even with the arrival of South Asian maids in the 1990s, Mizrahi women continue to occupy the lowest-paying scale of the Israeli job market. Having lost their production line and house cleaning jobs to Filipinas, they work as lower level secretaries and service providers, and they constitute the majority of the unemployed.

Most of the Palestinian suicide attacks have occurred in the public spaces of the economically deprived and legally disenfranchised Mizrahi communities: bus rides taken by people who can't afford to have a private car, markets frequented by those who can't afford to shop in air conditioned malls and supermarkets, and 'hoods too poor to afford to purchase the patrol services of private security companies, and where the police avoid entering except during drug raids. The majority of the dead and wounded have been Mizrahim, destitute immigrants from the former Soviet Union, and foreign guest workers.

The majority IDF casualties of the al-Aqsa intifada since October 2000 have been Mizrahim, Druze, Russian immigrants, and Ethiopians -- the marginal groups that comprise the majority of Israel's social fabric. Since the 1982 Lebanon war, frontline military service is out of fashion among the Ashkenazi elite, who no longer find it necessary for upward mobility. Due to the historical conjunction of ethnicity and poverty typical of Mizrahi communities, young Mizrahi men are excluded from avenues of upward mobility that would require a major capital investment. Alas, combat zone service is one of the few routes for socio-economic mobility -- an integrationist phantom of sorts.

Sderot, a borderline Mizrahi town often bombarded by Qassam missiles, has a high percentage of Ethiopian and Russian immigrants, and high unemployment rates. It is the Israeli town closest to Gaza. The same demography is true of the development towns and agricultural co-ops on the Lebanese border, and even of some of the Haifa 'hoods hit by the Hizbollah Katiushas.

Mizrahi communities were pushed into the West Bank and Gaza post-1967 settlements through the back door. Both the Right and Left wing Israeli governments prevented any reasonably priced housing solutions for residents of Mizrahi slums. The mass Soviet immigration of the 1990s transformed Israel's center, the source of most decently paying jobs, into a real estate bubble. This prohibited Mizrahi families from leaving the ghettos, unless for subsi-

dized houses in the settlements. These were built by the housing ministry on the pristine West Bank hills and virgin Gaza beaches. They made the Israeli dream of a single-family dwelling come true. The superior public school system was an additional benefit. The Judaization of the Galilee project was designed for Ashkenazim who could not afford single-family dwellings in central Israel -- gated communities with strict admission committees, whose majestic mansions overlook Palestinian villages situated within the 1949 Rhodes armistice agreement.

In the mid 1980s, when the welfare state disappeared from Mizrahi communities' lives (if it had ever been there), ultra-orthodox Sephardic Judaism entered the scene in the form of the SHAS party. At its height, during the 1999 elections, SHAS won 17 seats in the Knesset. Four of them were ministers of influential government offices, and four were deputy ministers. SHAS offered an apparatus of education and food to rehab Mizrahi honor, either by preaching the return to the forefathers' pious morality or by exposing the racism in the disenfranchisement and poverty. Eventually, such an intrusion was destructive. In fact, the ultra-orthodox Mizrahi new sages adopted the old Ashkenazi method of discipline: a controlled dispensation of charity so that the very act of dispensing becomes a shock absorber against any possible social upheaval. Since SHAS's entry into the public sphere, even the feeble resistance of Mizrahi ghettos has ceased to exist.

The centrist walls of the Arab nation-state cracked during the Infitah with Anwar Saadat's Opening-to-the-West policy. Multinational cultural and market globalization forces entered the Arab World's civic sphere. Forming alternative societal institutions, the Islamist movements started substituting for the state. Like SHAS, these institutions were constructed on the premise of injecting pious morality into the civic sphere. The communalist power of both SHAS and the Islamist movements rested in part on a reformulation of strict religious familial patriarchy as a liberating feminist praxis. Concurrently, the Islamist movements, as in the cases of Egypt and the Occupied

Territories, have integrated women into all spheres of their public activism but fighting.

We do not wish here to judge Arab society. Yet to the best of our understanding, the impact of Islamist movements in the Arab public sphere has been diametrically opposite to that of SHAS in the Mizrahi ghettos. With a middle class professional core, the Islamists presented the Arab world with a new agenda. All the while, the Mizrahi ultra-orthodoxy imposed the forefathers' morality as yet another strategy for integrating the Mizrahi into the bosom of the Zionist lived reality. But how could they not? SHAS sensed it had no other option. Its middle class emerged from the rank and file of party apparatchiks. The Question of Palestine was one of the unifying themes of the Islamist movements. During the 1980s, Sabra and Shatila reverberated into the First Intifada. Palestinian nationalism gathered constituencies in the West. Hoping to counter Palestine's secular nationalism, the worried Israeli regime nurtured the Islamist movements in Lebanon and the Occupied Territories. Assuming that these movements would be nothing but SHAS-style charities, the Israeli regime hoped they might also serve as its tools to deny yet again the Question of Palestine. As the PLO welfare apparatus relocated from Lebanon to Tunis, the Islamist movements patched the cracks and flowered forth. The 2006 democratic elections in the Palestinian authority ended in a sweeping Hamas victory, which of course disappointed Israel's expectations. This time around, the Zionist regime preferred the necktie and conventionally handsome Mahmoud Abu Ma'azan over hennaed and long-bearded Muhammad abu-Tir. Henceforth Israel, backed by the US, sweepingly refused to recognize and negotiate with the legitimate government of the Palestinian people.

These days the Mizrahim are the ones who pay the high price required to join Israel's "family of blood," a key concept in the Zionist discourse of national honor. They fall like ripe fruit into Ashkenazi-Zionist militant adventurism. The Western pro-Israeli lobby, with its Israeli branches, does not pay the price. On the

contrary, it shares the profits with the G-8 superpowers. This axis of evil will come to an end only if Mizrahi communities are able to conjoin the memories of their Arab past with a vision for a future that will be shared with the people of this region--not just the Palestinians, but the rest of the Arab World as well.

As long as the Arab World's public discourse does not differentiate between Yahud (Jews), Sahyoniyyin (Zionists), and Yahud-Arab (Arab Jews), and as long as all Israelis are considered Yahud-wa-bas (just Jews), such a process is impossible. As long as the Western peace discourse does not designate separate categories for Mizrahi Jewry, the majority of Israel's Jewry, for the Ashkenazi peace movements, and for Zionism, Mizrahi communities' processual reworking into the region will lack the transnational aura necessary to render it possible. As long as the Arab leadership, not to mention the Palestinians, prefers talking peace with the ruling Ashkenazi minority -- be it Zionists, post-Zionists, even anti-Zionists -- Mizrahi communities will continue to view the peace discourse as part of the repertoire of exotic antics that the Ashkenazi cosmopolitan elite perform for the West. At the same time, they will continue to conceive of the Arabs, particularly Palestinians, only as lethal enemies.

Those who present themselves as seekers of peace -- Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin -- are actually supporting the present destruction of civil society in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. They are the spokesmen explaining the necessity for the atrocious measures

taken by the Israeli government. Mizrahim remember them mainly as those who started the move to privatize and outsource labor from their community into the globalized economic wonderland that the peace dons termed "the New Middle East." For Mizrahi communities, unemployment and debt were the most immediate results of the Oslo agreement's peace festival. These days the peace dons also brandish a Moroccan defense minister, Amir Peretz, to execute their policies, even though they are the ones who publicly dissed him and failed him along his political career. No wonder this discourse of peace is so alien to Mizrahi communities.

The majority IDF casualties of the al-Aqsa intifada since October 2000 have been Mizrahim, Druze, Russian immigrants, and Ethiopians -- the marginal groups that comprise the majority of Israel's social fabric.

Those who present themselves as seekers of peace -- Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin -- are actually supporting the present destruction of civil society in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza.

These talking heads say this war is not only for our own good, but is also for the civic betterment of Palestinians and Lebanese.

The Coalition of Women for Peace

The Coalition of Women for Peace has become one of the leading voices in Israel advocating for a just and viable peace between Israel and Palestine ever since its founding in November 2000, just six weeks after the current Intifada began.

The Coalition brings together independent women and nine women's peace organizations, some newly formed and others promoting coexistence since the founding of the state of Israel. We are a mix of Jewish and Palestinian women (all citizens of Israel), and we take action to amplify the voices of women calling for peace and justice for all inhabitants of the region.

Reuven Abarjel, co-founder of the Israeli Black Panthers, reuven_4@bezeqint.net
Smadar Lavie, Professor of Anthropology and Mizrahi Feminist Activist, sinaia5@netvision.net.il
Source: coalitionofwomen.org

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Road to taiz: Yemen's green belt

By: Moiz Ali
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My visit to the lush green Taiz valley was a breath taking experience. After a drive of almost two hours from Sana'a, there is a place named Hammam Ali, near the city of Dhamar. The specialty of this small town is natural hot water springs collected in caves. Occasional bath in these is a cure of many skin diseases.

On the road to Taiz is the city of Ibb. Regular heavy rains throughout the year have turned this city in the heaven



Tasbeeh of Queen Arwa.

on Earth. A beautifully developed hill top 'Jabal-e-Rabbi' gives a picturesque view of the lush green valley. Jiblah, famous for its historical heritage is twenty minutes drive from Ibb. The thousand year old mosque and the palace of Queen Arwa are its centre of attraction.

The mosque still has the

original wooden roof scripted with Quranic Verses. The hand written scripts of the Holy Quran by the Queen and her Sandal Wood Tasbeeh of thousand beads (needing four people to hold) are well preserved.

The ruins of the palace having 360 rooms can be seen from the mosque.

The lush green mountains of Udain at half an hour drive from Ibb are a treat for nature lovers. Good quality honey is available throughout the route fresh from the farms.

If you continue on the road to Taiz just before the main city is the mosque of Hazrat Ali (A.S). It has two Qiblas, one built by Hazrat Maaz bin Jable (R.A) and the other one was later on built by Hazrat Ali (A.S). The center of the open space still has a Sun clock. It is said that Queen Arwa built a channel from her palace to this Mosque for continuous supply of water.

At fifteen minutes drive from the mosque is the valley of Taiz. The natural landscaping has been well developed. The main tourist spot is 'Jabal-us-Sabr.' On this hill is the palace of Sheikh Zaid bin Sultan. It is now converted into a grand hotel with the view of the whole city in the background.



Road to Udain.



A view of Taiz city from Sofitel Hotel.



The tomb of Queen Arwa



The author.



Hand written script of Holy Quran.

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Shirts repel mosquitoes, if you have the scratch

By Daniela Desantis

ASUNCION, Paraguay (Reuters) — Young entrepreneurs in Paraguay say they have a new weapon against pesky, and potentially dangerous, mosquitoes — cotton shirts soaked in lemon-scented citronella oil.

The woven, collared shirts typical of this landlocked South American nation were launched this week by the surfer-inspired Pombero brand. Citronella oil comes from a perfumed grass and acts as an insect repellent.

"This is a product aimed at people who enjoy being in the fresh air and in contact with nature, but who want to maintain a sophisticated style," said company owner Rodrigo Jacks. He added the shirts can be washed up to 40 times before losing their power to repel mosquitoes and other critters, like fleas.

Insect repellent apparel sold in the

United States is coated in permethrin, a manmade derivative of the chrysanthemum plant.

But in Paraguay, the shirts are a novelty. Government scientists are interested in finding out whether they could provide extra protection from ailments like malaria or dengue, an infectious disease transmitted by mosquitoes.

"We want to give people information about whether this is really effective," said Blanca Cousino, an entomologist at Paraguay's National Service for Malaria Eradication.

Even if they do work, at about \$50 apiece the garments would cost a small fortune for many in this country, where nearly 4 in every 10 people are poor.

"I'd have to be crazy to buy one of these shirts because they are beyond my budget. I prefer to buy to repellent and call it quits," said Jose Martinez, a 30-year-old public employee.

Rush to marry ends in tragedy

KARACHI (Reuters) — A Pakistani man has committed suicide outside his fiancée's home after he thought he accidentally killed her while trying to persuade her to get married early, police said Saturday.

The man, Ahmed Ashraf, was shooting a gun in the air outside his fiancée's home in the southern city of Karachi on Friday as part of his efforts to persuade her to get married two months early when a stray bullet accidentally hit her, police said.


"He was so eager to get married he stood in front of his fiancée's house and started firing shots in the air to catch her attention," said investigating officer Ghulam Hussain.

The young woman was coming downstairs when a bullet ricocheted off a wall and hit her. She fell down screaming "I have been shot," Hussain said.

"He thought he had killed her and within seconds shot himself. The girl is fine," Hussain said.

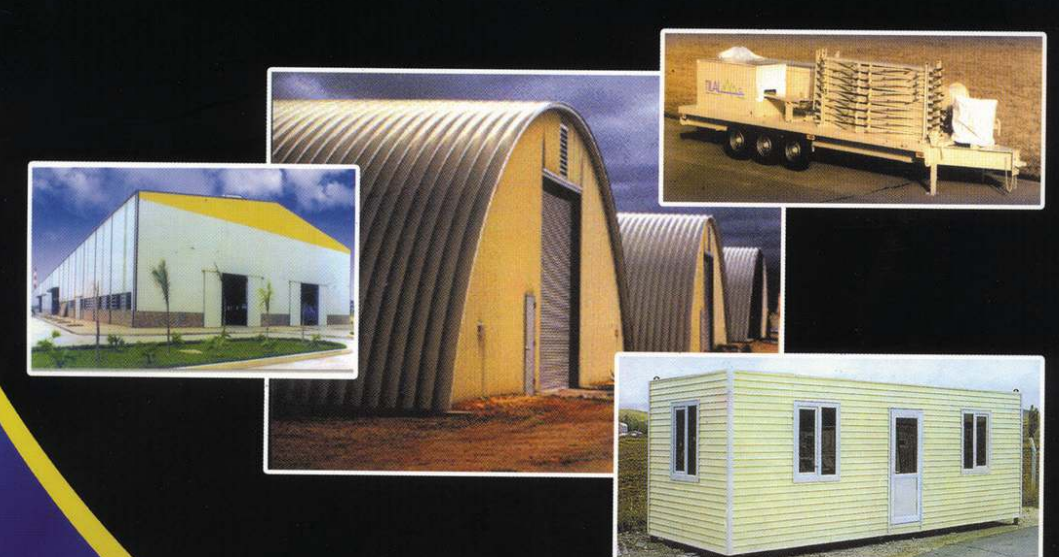
"It is a tragic accident. They were engaged to be married with their parents' consent on December 25. He was insisting they get married earlier."

Ashraf had told his fiancée, Naureen, he would do something drastic if she didn't agree to get married straight away. The woman insisted the marriage date had already been set and there was no need to hurry, Hussain said.

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