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WE WISH YOU MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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Yemeni poets behind Gitmo's bars

By: Amel Al-Ariqi

SANA'A, Dec.19 — Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif, 28, was in Pakistan looking for medical treatment — he had an injury from an accident in 1994, and was looking around the world for affordable treatment. In 2004, Pakistani forces detained him and turned him over to the United States for a \$5,000 bounty, after which he became a Guantanamo detainee.

Latif spent his first weeks at Camp X-Ray in an open-air cage, exposed to the tropical sun, without shade or shelter from the wind that buffeted him with sand and pebbles. His only amenities were a bucket for water and another for urine and feces.

He has also been exposed to IRF, a term used to describe "immediate reaction force."

According to Latif's American lawyer, a group of soldiers wearing body armor rushed into his prison and beat him. After the beating, one of his eyes was swollen shut, the other was black and blue, and he had contusions all over his body. Once he was beaten and sprayed with pepper spray, apparently, he stated, for having stepped over a line painted on the floor of his cell while his lunch was being passed through the food slot of his door.

American lawyer Marc Falkoff described Latif as a small, thin Yemeni man with a scraggly beard. He recalled, "I first met Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif soon after I filed a habeas corpus petition on his behalf in late 2004. We were sitting in an interview cell, really a retrofitted storage container, at Camp Echo in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Across the table, Latif sat with his arms crossed and his head down. The guards had removed his handcuffs, but when he shifted his weight his leg irons clanged and echoed in the bare room. The irons were chained to an eyebolt on the floor. Guards were stationed outside the door, and a video camera was visible in the corner."

Early this year, Latif began a hunger



Adnan Farhan Abdul Latif.

strike, which the military countered by force-feeding him liquid nutrients, inserting a tube up his nose and into his stomach.

Hunger striking wasn't the only method that Latif used to express his pain, and his protests against the mistreatment that Guantanamo prisoners receive. He transferred his suffering to poetry, for example writing:

*They are artists of torture,
They are artists of pain and fatigue,
They are artists of insults
and humiliation.*

*Where is the world to save us
from torture?*

*Where is the world to save us
from the fire and sadness?*

*Where is the world to save
the hunger strikers?*

Latif's "Hunger Strike Poem," one of a collection of 22 poems written in the cages of Guantanamo, was published with great difficulty in August 2007. Six of the seventeen poets have been released to their home countries, but most, including Latif, are now in their sixth year of captivity in conditions harsher than "super maximum" security in U.S. prisons.

The collection, translated from Arabic, was compiled by Falkoff, who got a Ph.D. in English before he went to law school, and he dedicated the book to his clients, describing them in the inscription as "my friends inside the wire."

Writing poetry was both difficult and dangerous for the prisoners, who weren't given pens or paper until 2003. Some of the poems written by inmates were first scrawled in toothpaste on Styrofoam cups or etched into the cups with small stones, since

in their first year of captivity the prisoners were not allowed to use pen and paper.

Any poem found by prison guards was confiscated and usually destroyed, the former prisoners say. According to Falkoff, most of the poetry he is aware of was written by prisoners who had not written poetry before being arrested.

U.S. authorities explained why the military has been slow to declassify the poems in a June 2006 letter to one of Falkoff's colleagues, arguing that inmates could use the works to pass coded messages to other militants outside.

The letter told defense lawyers to translate any poems they wanted into English to release publicly, and then submit the translations to the government for review.

Hundreds of poems remain suppressed by the military and will likely never be seen by the public. In addition, most of the poems that have been cleared are in English only, because the Pentagon believes that their original Arabic or Pashto versions represent an enhanced security risk. But the military relaxed the ban recently and cleared 22 poems by 17 prisoners for public release.

After seeing some of the poems published in a book forum, an editor at the University of Iowa Press approached Falkoff and asked him if he had thought about putting a manuscript together. As a result, *Poems from Guantanamo* was published in August.

The strict security arrangements governing anything written by Guantanamo Bay inmates meant that Falkoff had to use linguists with secret-level security clearances rather than translators who specialize in poetry.

The resulting translations, Mr. Falkoff writes in the book, "cannot do justice to the subtlety and cadence of the originals."

In addition, Falkoff and the publishers have been harassed for publishing a book of poetry by "terrorists."

However, "Poems from Guantanamo" received mostly positive reviews, and is in its second print run after selling out its first printing of 5,000 copies. Robert Pinsky, known in the U.S. as the nation's poet laureate from 1997 to 2000, wrote: "They deserve, above all, not admiration or belief or sympathy, but attention. Attention to them is urgent for us."

Among the more thoughtful reviews was one by Meghan O'Rourke, Slate's literary editor and the author of *Halflife*, though even she found that the poems are less interesting as works of art than in the way they "restore individuality to those who have been dehumanized and vilified in the eyes

of the public."

"Guantanamo was truly a black hole from which no information—and certainly not the voices of the detainees—could escape," wrote Falkoff in the book's acknowledgements.

All of the detainees were decreed "enemy combatants" by the U.S. government, and were described as "among the most dangerous, best-trained, most vicious killers on the face of the Earth" by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Though several hundred have since been released, the rest (about 340) have spent the past six years—more than 2,000 days and nights—in the maximum-security detention center at Guantanamo Bay. Only a few—and none of Falkoff's clients—have been given a trial or charged with a specific crime. According to the military's own documents, only 8 percent of the prisoners are accused of being al-Qaeda, and only 5 percent were captured by U.S. forces on the battlefields of Afghanistan.

Last June, in an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Defense Department spokesman Cmdr. J. D. Gordon commented on the collection by saying, "While a few detainees at Guantanamo Bay have made efforts to author what they claim to be poetry, given the nature of their writings they have seemingly not done so for the sake of art. They have attempted to use this medium as merely another tool in their battle of ideas against Western democracies." Gordon had not, at the time, read the poems.

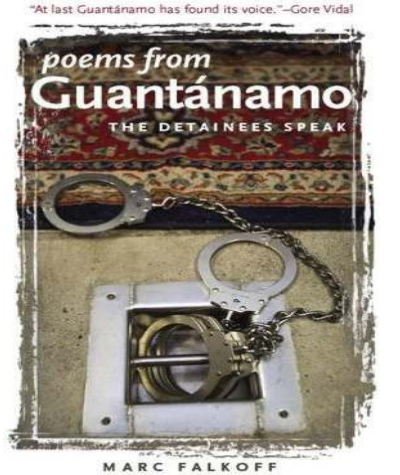
Falkoff, however, commented on the Pentagon's reaction to the publication of *Poems* as "predictable."

"Perhaps the Pentagon's anxiety is justified, for the poems offer the world a glimpse of the profound psychological toll that Guantanamo has taken on the prisoners. They give voice to men whom the U.S. government has detained for more than five years without charge, trial or even the most basic protections of the Geneva Conventions. The prisoners remain entirely cut off from the world: military censors excise all references to current events from the occasional letters allowed from family members, and lawyers may not tell prisoners any personal or general news unless it directly relates to their cases. Indeed, dozens of prisoners have attempted suicide by hanging, by hoarding medicine and then overdosing, or by slashing their wrists. The military, in typical Orwellian fashion, has described these suicide attempts as incidents of "manipulative self-injurious behavior," said Falkoff, who added that many men at Guantanamo turned to writing poetry as a

way to maintain their sanity, to memorialize their suffering and to preserve their humanity through acts of creation.

He noted, "The first [poem] I saw was sent to me by Abdulsalam Ali Abdulrahman Al-Hela, a Yemeni businessman from Sana'a, who had written his verses in Arabic after extended periods in an isolation cell. The poem is a cry against the injustice of arbitrary detention and at the same time a hymn to the comforts of religious faith. Soon after reading it, I learned of a poem by Latif called 'The Shout of Death.' (Both of these poems remain classified.) After querying other lawyers, I learned that Guantanamo was filled with amateur poets."

"Despite these and many other hurdles, 22 poems have now been published, and the voices of the prisoners in Guantanamo may now be heard. As the courts move sluggishly toward granting the prisoners fair and open hearings, and as politicians bicker



First printing of *Poems from Guantanamo* sold out (5,000 copies)

about whether to extend the protections of the Geneva Conventions to the detainees, the prisoners' own words may now become part of the dialogue. Perhaps their poems will prick the conscience of a nation." He concluded.

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Minister of water:

Climate change is a development challenge

SANA'A, Dec. 19 — In order for Yemen to take a pro-active approach to participate as a reliable partner in the CDM; the Ministry of Water and Environment and the Environment Protection Authority have been intensively working over the last 12 months to prepare the relevant legal and institutional framework. This process resulted in several tangible outputs.

In January 2007 the Cabinet approved the Prime Minister's Resolution No. (238) regarding the establishment of a Designated National Authority (DNA) for approval of projects under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol. A Ministerial Decree outlining the country specific CDM approval procedure was endorsed.

Last Wednesday, 144 ministers and high-level government representatives along with 6 heads of state gathered in Bali to begin the high-level segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference - Bali 2007, which is



Minister of Water and Environment, Mr. Abdul-Rahman F. al-Eryani : "Climate change is not solely an environmental issue, but rather part of the larger challenge of sustainable development." Speaking at the United Nations Climate Change Conference - Bali 2007.

expected to launch negotiations on a new global deal on climate change.

Speaking at the high-level segment, Yemeni Minister of Water and Environment, Mr. Abdul-Rahman F. al-Eryani, says: "Climate change is not solely an environmental issue, but rather part of the larger challenge of sustainable development. It is one of the most serious threats to poverty eradication. Developing countries, and the poorest people who live in them, are the most vulnerable to climate change. These countries are least equipped to respond to and therefore most vulnerable to its raising risk. In our region freshwater availability is projected to decrease, coastal areas will be at greater danger due to increased flooding, and climate change is projected to compound pressures on natural resources and public health. In such a setting our tasks become even more complex given the inextricable link between sustainable development and climate change. We are living with the

consequences of actions and decisions of the last generations, and future generations will live with the consequences of ours. Addressing climate change is the moral challenge of our generation. I believe that there is an urgent need for a global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement. Negotiations on such an agreement need to be launched now and completed by 2009."

"The Kyoto Protocol addresses mitigation of the six gases believed to be the main contributors to the climate change effect, which is associated with an increase in the global temperature and disturbed climatic patterns. The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), permits industrialized countries, which have emission targets under the Kyoto Protocol, to invest in sustainable development projects in developing countries that reduce greenhouse gas emission, and thereby generate tradable emission credits, says Lia Sieghart, CIM-Expert within the

Ministry of Water and Environment.

"I am happy to say that significant decisions were reached in Bali on the last day such as a clear agenda for the key issues to be negotiated up to 2009. These are: action for adapting to the negative consequences of climate change, such as droughts and floods; ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; ways to widely deploy climate-friendly technologies and financing both adaptation and mitigation measures. Concluding negotiations in 2009 will ensure that the new deal can enter into force by 2013, following the expiry of the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol," concluded the Minister.

The conference, the thirteenth Conference of the 192 Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the third meeting of the 176 Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, is being attended by more than 11,000 people, making it the largest UN climate change meeting ever held.

Freedom of press more important than social stability, survey finds

By: Yemen Times Staff

A recent survey conducted by international research firms GlobeScan and Synovate for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) showed that freedom of the press is more important than social stability.

11,344 people were interviewed in 14 countries for the survey, including Kenya, India, Nigeria, Egypt, Venezuela, Britain, the United Arab Emirates, Germany, the United States of America, Brazil, South Africa, Russia, Mexico, and Singapore.

56 percent of the people interviewed thought that freedom of the press was very important to ensure a free society. But 40 percent said maintaining social harmony and peace was more impor-

tant, even if it meant curbing the press' freedom to report news truthfully.

The strongest endorsement came from North America and Western Europe, where as many as 70% put freedom first, followed by Venezuela, Kenya and South Africa, with over 60% in support of freedom.

In contrast, people in India, Singapore and Russia favored stability over press freedom. In those countries, around 48% of respondents supported control over the press to ensure peace and stability, while 40% expressed the view that press freedom was more important.

Developed countries criticize their media

The survey noted that some developed countries were critical of their own media's honesty and accuracy.

In the United States, Britain and Germany, only around 29% of those

interviewed thought their media did a good job in reporting news accurately.

Chris Coulter, vice-president of GlobeScan, the company that led the research, said, "Despite the fact that people in Britain really value freedom of the press, when we asked specifically how news organizations are doing in reporting news accurately and truthfully, respondents were quite critical. Only about a third of people in Britain actually gave positive ratings to either publicly-funded news organizations or privately-funded news organizations."

He mentioned that he was quite surprised by this finding, but pointed out that the research was conducted in October, when trust in the BBC and other public service broadcasters in Britain had been hit by a series of phone-in problems and other editorial lapses.

Private ownership of media

The survey also identified concern in some countries over the concentration of private media ownership in the hands of a few large companies.

In Brazil, Mexico, the United States and Britain, more than 70% of respondents agreed with the suggestion that ownership was an issue because the owners' political views emerged in the news.

Germans had a particularly poor view of their private media companies, with just 18% giving them a high rating for accurate news.

But overall, publicly-run news organizations were viewed slightly more negatively than ones run for profit.

Only in Egypt, Germany, Russia and Singapore did people rate the public media higher than privately-owned media companies.



They survey noted that some developed countries were critical of their own media's honesty and accuracy.

Their News

YEMENI BRITISH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

If you have graduated from a UK university, the Yemeni British Alumni Group (in partnership with the British Embassy) offers you the chance to keep you in touch with other graduates. The group also organises social events so you can meet, make friends and network in person.

What is the purpose of the group?

The group is for anyone who has graduated from a UK university or has taken a short course in the UK, including British Embassy Chevening scholars and British Council fellows. The group gives you the chance to share your experiences of living and studying in the UK. It also offers many opportunities for professional networking, and to continue your interest in UK culture with events held throughout the year.

Joining the group

Membership of the group is free. Once you join, you will also become a member of the parent Yemeni British Friendship Association. This offers additional opportunities for networking and social activities. If you have studied or trained in the UK and would like to join the group, simply download the application form at (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/mezyemen-alumni-application-form.doc>), complete it, and bring it along to our centre in Sana'a or send it to our Yemen British Alumni email address (alumni@ye.britishcouncil.org).

Further information

If you would like to know more about the Alumni Group, and any forthcoming events, please e-mail Edrees Al Qadasi (edrees.qadasi@ye.britishcouncil.org).

IWMF COURAGE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS AND LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

The International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) is seeking nominations from around the world for its 2008 Courage in Journalism Awards and Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Courage in Journalism Awards honor women working in the news media who have demonstrated extraordinary strength of character in pursuing their profession under difficult or dangerous circumstances.

These women show a commitment to journalism exemplified by a willingness to continually put their lives or their freedom at risk to produce a body of work in the face of government oppression, political pressure, physical danger or other intimidating obstacles.

The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a woman journalist who has a pioneering spirit and whose determination has paved the way for future generations of women in the media. Recipients also demonstrate a strong commitment to freedom of the press and a solid record of accomplishments in journalism.

The IWMF will present three women journalists with Courage in Journalism Awards and one woman journalist with the Lifetime Achievement Award at ceremonies in October/November 2008 in New York City and Los Angeles. The awardees will spend approximately two weeks in the United States, as guests of the IWMF, making appearances at these ceremonies and other events, and participating in press interviews. Each awardee will receive a cash award of at least \$5,000.

Founded in 1990, the IWMF is a non-profit, non-partisan organization whose mission is to strengthen the role of women in the news media worldwide.

Awardees are selected by a committee of IWMF board members, journalists or others serving at the pleasure of the board.

Eligible candidates

For both awards, candidates can be full-time, part-time or freelance women journalists working in print, broadcast or online media in any country. For the Courage Awards, candidates employed by organizations whose main objective is not journalism will not be considered for this award. Candidates for the Lifetime Achievement Award can be retired journalists.

To nominate a journalist

Please note that self-nominations are not accepted. Candidates may be nominated by colleagues, employers, journalists or others. All nominations must be in English and include:

- Completed nomination forms (available at www.iwmf.org/courage/nominate.php)
- Nomination statement completed by a professional associate
- Brief biography of the candidate highlighting her work as it relates to the Courage in Journalism Awards or the Lifetime Achievement Award
- Resume or CV of the candidate
- Examples of the candidate's work (details on the nomination form)
- Two letters of support from professional associates

Deadline

Completed nominations, including all supporting documents, must be received by the IWMF no later than March 1, 2008. Nominations can be submitted by regular mail, courier service, fax or e-mail. Winners will be announced in May 2008.

FELLOWSHIP OFFERS JOURNALISTS OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY AT OXFORD

Reuters Foundation is accepting applications for fellowships to study at the Reuters Institute for Journalism at Oxford University in the UK. Deadline: January 30.

Journalists with at least five years experience working for any media outlet in any country are eligible to apply. Selected fellows will spend either three, six or nine months studying their proposed topic at the Institute. Fellowships include round-trip airfare, accommodation and a modest living allowance. Some additional funding opportunities are available for journalists from particular regions and countries.

REUTERS FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIPS

The Reuters Foundation Fellowships at Oxford offer a practical form of professional assistance to established and mid-career journalists. Its purpose is to allow journalists to tackle subjects in greater depth than is possible under deadline pressure.

Around 25 journalists from around the globe study in Oxford each year on Fellowships of either three, six or nine months, covering one, two or all three terms of the academic year. Fellows may join the Institute in October, January or April.

The Fellowship has three main facets. Firstly, Fellows are expected to produce a substantial piece of work to an academic standard. They are required to complete a 8,000 - 10,000 word research paper of publishable quality either as part of the Institute's research output or independently (for example, as a survey of an important subject, magazine article or part of a book). Fellows may use multimedia in their work. Fellows have to present their research

findings in a seminar open to the University.

Secondly, the Institute organises regular seminars, debates, lectures and study trips. The RISJ seminar is held weekly during term-time at Green College as is an in-house seminar to which Fellows are expected to read a paper. During Michaelmas (autumn term) and Trinity (summer term) the Reuters Institute also runs a weekly 'Media and Politics Seminar' jointly with the eminent political scientist, Dr David Butler, at Nuffield College.

The Institute's media expertise is also bolstered by the related work of the Oxford Internet Institute (<http://www.oii.ox.ac.uk/>), the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy (<http://pcmlp.socleg.ox.ac.uk/>) and the International Centre for Media and Communications Management, currently being developed by the Saïd Business School. The university also hosts many special events, such as the Oxford Media Convention, that will be of interest to Fellows.

Lastly, each Fellow has an advisor, usually an Oxford academic specialising in the journalists' chosen subject, to supervise their research. Fellows are encouraged to attend relevant lectures, seminars or classes in the University and to use the Bodleian, one of the world's great libraries.

There are numerous specialist facilities within the university, such as regional centres for African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Eastern and Western European, Japanese and Chinese Studies. Fellows can also take advantage of the University's language laboratory and computer services.

UNESCO LAUNCHES WORLD PRESS FREEDOM PRIZE 2008

UNESCO invites Member States and

regional and international organizations, professional and non-governmental organizations working in the field of journalism and freedom of expression to nominate candidates for the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

The purpose of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize is "to honour... a person, organization or institution that has made a notable contribution to the defense and/or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, especially if this involved risk."

The prize is intended to reward journalists who have shown dedication in the name of freedom of expression and information and to afford them the international recognition they deserve. Awarded annually, the Prize is marked by a ceremony and the winner is presented with the sum of US\$25,000.

The prize, which celebrates its 11th year in 2008, is named after the Colombian journalist who died exercising his profession and has become a symbol of the fight against repression of the media worldwide. This year, the prize will be presented in Mozambique, during the World Press Freedom Day conference which will take place on 3 May.

In 2008, World Press Freedom Day will focus on the freedom of the press and the "Access to information and the empowerment of people". More information on the themes and speakers of the conference will be available on the UNESCO website in the near future.

How to submit your nominations

Nominations for the Prize should be submitted by using the form below, which should be duly filled out in English or French and returned by 30 January 2008 to UNESCO, Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace.

Video Threats and Official Headscarves in Austria Islam Creates only Moderate Concern

Was it a real threat from the Al Qaeda network or was it just empty boasting? Ever since the emergence of a video with threats against the government, Austria has had to recognise that it knows little about the Muslims who live in the country.

By: Paul Jandl

The name of the organisation was evidently designed to sound threatening: speaking in the name of a "Global Islamist Media Front", Mohammed M. was clearly trying to frighten the Austrian government. In a video which was made public in spring, the country's politicians were called upon to pull Austrian soldiers out of Afghanistan.

Mohammed M., the 22-year-old son of immigrants from Egypt, told the government that they wouldn't want to damage the security of their own country.

Mohammed M. was arrested in September, but ever since his video message, the question is being asked: what is he? Is he just a show-off, or is he really the first Al Qaeda terrorist on Austrian soil.

The young man with the wild beard had certainly not behaved like a typical "sleeper". He had already offered himself to the media as the spokesman for a radical movement called "Islamic Youth of Austria", and he had occasionally boasted that the CIA wanted to use him as an agent.

Stereotypes of perception

Whatever the truth, he is now being held in prison together with his wife. It could take months before all the material gathered by electronic eavesdropping has been evaluated. It is not yet at all clear whether he was really planning to carry out bomb attacks.

At the latest since the 11th September 2001, the whole world has been interested in Islam, but in Austria the debate only began to be significant after the emergence of Mohammed M.'s video message. No-one had ever heard of preachers of hate in Austria, and the only tough talk came from the representatives of anti-Muslim populism.

With slogans like "Daham statt Islam" ("At home instead of Islam") the Austrian right had been exploiting the customary low-level anti-foreigner feeling in society.

It cannot be denied that there is in Austria a vague fear of a culture which is only known through its stereotypes. Muslim migrants are visible in the cities, but it has become clear in the last few months that very little is known about them.

It is questionable whether this lack of awareness has been helped much by a study by the Institute of Sociology at the University of Vienna, according to which 99 percent of young Austrian Muslims reject violence as a means of spreading religion. At the same time, according to the same study, five percent express understanding for the use of militant methods.

Austria and Islam – a complex history

The relationship between Austria and Islam is historically complex, but not altogether unfriendly. Simply as a result of geography, the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy was a pluralistic institution.

Before 1878, contemporary sources speak of there being just ten Muslims on Austro-Hungarian territory, but the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in that year meant that the state had to deal with the issue of Islam. However, the Islam with which the state was con-

fronted was an Islam with an enlightened tradition, very different from a Saudi-style fundamentalism.

Liberalising tendencies were the consequence and a new law on Islam was passed in 1912. Islam has been one of the country's official religions for far longer than in many other countries, even if it is only one of twelve recognised faiths.

Migrants in today's Austria

Four hundred thousand Muslims now live in Austria; 130,000 of them were born in the country. In many cases they make up closed societies, living in the less salubrious areas of Vienna, such as the fifteenth district, where immigrant families from Turkey, Bosnia, Albania, Egypt and Pakistan almost make up the majority. In the area behind the main railway station in Vienna, 46.2% of the population are immigrants.

But the discussion about Islam and the role of Muslims in society does not take place in such areas, where Muslims are a marginal group which is not integrated into the general population. The discussion takes place in the areas where the Muslims show self-confidence, for example, in the Viennese district of Floridsdorf, close to the Danube, where since 1979 there has been a large mosque, with a minaret which can be seen from afar.

When the local residents felt that the tape with the voice of the muezzin was too loud, it was something which could be discussed. Apart from that, there was scarcely any fuss about a building which had been designed for what was then a small religious minority.

Debates about mosques

Less than thirty years since the first mosques were built in Austria, the new mosques do not have an easier path. Last year there were emotional arguments over a new mosque in Telfs, in Tyrol, with a fifteen metre high minaret. A citizens' initiative has been founded in a suburb on the edge of Vienna to prevent a Muslim religious and cultural centre from adding two storeys to its building. "Moschee ade" ("Adieu mosque") is the name of the activists' website, where they write: "Where the crescent rises, there sinks the golden Viennese heart."

The far right was very much involved in a big demonstration against a meeting place for Turkish Muslims in an old factory (which is anything but a real mosque). And it does not exactly contribute to de-escalation when regional politicians from the Christian conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) say that minarets are "foreign to our kind."

There is a group within the ÖVP which would like to see the Christian God find a place in the Austrian constitution. That would make Austria into a little godly niche in a world filled with much more secular states. For example, in France, Catholic religious education

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Armenians in Syria: Half a home

At the same time as the massacre of the Armenians around 1915, the Ottoman army drove hundreds of thousands of Armenians into the Syrian desert. Today, some 80,000 descendants of survivors live in Syria. Charlotte Wiedemann has visited them



Armenian schools in Aleppo teach lessons in Arabic and Armenian. Under the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad, religious minorities have been granted a relatively large number of rights

In the centre of the town of Deir az-Zour, the "Holy Church of the Armenian Martyrs" with its massive sandstone façade is a memorial to the massacre of the Armenians. It was built with private money, although it is under the protection of the Syrian state. There are glass cabinets with bones and skulls, and labelled containers with Turkish earth from the Armenians' homeland.

Deir az-Zour on the Euphrates was the endpoint of the Armenians' death march. Unknown numbers of people died in the Syrian desert, although many women and children were rescued by Bedouin.

In a school in Aleppo, the doors of the classrooms are open, children's voices can be heard in the corridor, from one direction there's a choir singing in Armenian, from the other a choir singing in Arabic. The school in the prosperous Azizaya quarter, which takes children of primary and secondary age, is one of sixteen Armenian schools in Aleppo.

The 1,400 children speak Armenian in the breaks, as they do at home. The classes follow the state curriculum and are mostly held in Arabic. Armenian is only taught in additional classes, but most Armenian parents still prefer to send their children to an Armenian school.

Aleppo: the Armenian centre in Syria
Aleppo is the capital of the Syrian Armenians. Forty thousand of the 80,000 who live in Syria live here. It is a small part of the Syrian mosaic of religious and ethnic groups, but its history makes it special. It is a history which unites the community towards the outside world; inside the community however they have their own mosaic, both in religion and politics.

Seven of the sixteen Armenian schools in Aleppo are Armenian-Orthodox, four are Armenian-Protestant, three are Armenian-Catholic, two, say insiders, are funded indirectly by political parties. The nationalist Tashnak party is influential in the Orthodox schools.

According to Syrian criteria, the Armenians are well integrated. Others who prefer to see integration as assimilation might say that the Armenians have a perfect parallel society.

The 26-year-old art teacher Maggie Zobian embodies many of these contradictions. She's a good-looking, self-confident woman who speaks five languages, including the Turkish her great-grandmother spoke. Her Arabic sounds so Syrian that she performs from time to time in Arabic television series. Maggie Zobian uses the same form of words to describe herself as many young Armenians: We are the fourth or fifth generation "since".

She is proud that the Armenians have become an important part of Syrian society, and she expresses her patriotism by saying: "We defend Syria as if we were Syrians – for example, when someone

abroad says that it's not safe here."

There's no doubt in her mind that she will marry another Armenian. "I can't imagine anything else," she says. "My children should be Armenians." If she meets Armenians from France, she sees them as French. "They've lost their Armenian-ness, because they don't practice it as a living culture."

She does not feel upset that the Syrian government avoids the use of the term "genocide" out of diplomatic consideration for Turkish feelings: "What the government does is enough for us," she says. "We can talk Armenian on the streets."

The significance of the homeland

A few houses further along is the club of the Armenian youth movement. Opposite is an elegant hairdresser owned by an Armenian, all around there are doctors' plaques with Armenian names. All the same, the secretary of the youth club uses the term "diaspora".

Some twenty young people are attending a leadership workshop for the Armenian scouts. They are fashionably dressed and have stylish haircuts. One participant answers a question as to the particular Armenian leadership virtues: "We have to educate the children not to forget their home towns. That's important because we are so far away from home."

The president of the Armenian protestants, Haroutine Selimian, has little patience with such slogans. He is now middle-aged, and his parents and grandparents always used to say, "We're going back to our historic home", they never referred to it as "Turkey", it was always the "historic home"! "This diaspora psychology has marginalised us," he says. "Spiritually, we've lost two generations as a result."

The temptation of foreign lands

Selimian seems more like a manager than a cleric. He heads the supervisory board of the Aleppo College, an Armenian-owned girls' school. Most of the pupils are Muslims whose parents like the fact that, unlike other private schools, the Aleppo College is not coeducational, and their girls do not have to sit with boys.

According to the law, non-Armenians may not learn the Armenian language at school – to prevent Christian missionary activity. Outside school however, Muslims can take private lessons in

Armenian.

"That's the unique Syrian model," says Selimian. "It maintains the peace between the religions." He is only worried about the number of talented young Armenians going to Europe or Beirut to study. "I want to keep them in Syria," he says. "I want to set up an Armenian university here in Aleppo." So far that is just a dream – and another variety of Armenian integration.

Charlotte Wiedemann
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gtz Office Sana'a VACANCY Announcement

GTZ is seeking energetic, skilled and highly motivated Yemeni National as a translator and technical officer to join its Equal Chances – Women in Development Project implemented with the Ministry of Local Administration, General Department of Women and the Advisory Services on Conflict Transformation Project. Duration of the contract will be from 15th of January – 30th of September 2008.

Key functions:

- provide oral and written translations for the team leader, consultants and visitors during meetings, missions and workshops from Arabic into English and vice versa
- accompany the project team and visiting consultants on missions throughout Yemen
- write reports, minutes of meetings, letters and press releases
- translate reports, minutes of meeting, letters, press articles from English into Arabic and vice versa
- prepare and document training, workshops, forums, meetings, and other project activities together with the partner institution
- go on repeated and extensive field visits to the regions in accordance with the requirements of the project
- observe communication and interaction between government institutions, non-government organizations, and the local community through press evaluation, direct dialogs, participation in forums, seminars, etc.
- ensure a constructive and strategic dialogue with national and international partner organizations

Qualifications:

- Bachelor Degree in Translations, social sciences, journalism, business administration or law
- Fluency in English and Arabic; German language skills are an advantage
- Excellent writing skills in Arabic and English
- Must be able to travel for various days throughout Yemen on short notice
- 4-5 Years of professional experience in a similar position
- Computer literacy (word, PowerPoint, internet)

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Contract will start on the 15th of January 2008 and end on the 30th of September 2008
Applications with 2 recommendations and expectations of salary are to be sent to GTZ Office Sana'a, EC-WID, P. O. Box 692 until the 31st of December.
Only short listed candidates will be contacted. Interviews will be held on the 8th and 9th of January 2008.

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موفنبيك

فندق صنعاء

احتفل معنا بليلة رأس السنة ٢٠٠٨ في فندق موفنبيك صنعاء

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“I embraced Islam freely, without any coercion” - ex-Jewish woman

By: Saddam Al-Ashmouri
For Yemen Times

Nainawa is the former name of a Jewish girl who recently embraced Islam and got married to a young Muslim man. The girl's name was changed into Ammatat-Rahman. She is 28 and lives in Raidah, a city in Amran, 70km away from Sana'a. Ammatat-Rahman traveled to the U.S. to learn Arabic and English. She returned to Raidah to teach in Al-Shabazi School, built for Jewish citizens. Embracing Islam and marrying a Muslim guy raised a large amount of interest; hence, Saddam Al-Ashmouri interviewed her and gave an account for the Yemen Times:

Arriving at Raidah in the afternoon, I found Hamid Seran, a local resident, and his son praying in the village mosque. The mosque was recently built in the form of Al-Sakhra Dome of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine.

Curious to know the name of the mosque, they told me that it is named Jerusalem Mosque. It located in the Jewish and Muslims zone.

"I embraced Islam freely, without any coercion. It had been rumored that I was kidnapped to embrace Islam by force," Ammatat-Rahman said. She did not speak to us directly, but from another room, as she is a Muslim and sticks to Islamic principles as well as Yemeni traditions. She did not appear in person.

Ammatat-Rahman, went on to say that she was convinced to convert to Islam due to the friendly way in which she was dealt by Muslim friends. She

used to listen to Qur'anic cassettes and chants and was completely moved by them. In the month of Ramadan, she always listens to Quran recitations in the mosque or in neighbors' cars.

Her name was changed to Ammatat-Rahman because she loved this name after embracing Islam. She desired to change everything in her life. "Locals in Raidah treated me as a queen. Had I learned they would treat me like this, I would have embraced Islam earlier," Ammatat-Rahman said.

She continued, "I traveled to the U.S. when I was 7, as other Jews do. I studied for four years there. After completing my studies, I returned to Raidah. Then, I traveled again to the U.S. I spent two and a half years studying Hebrew and English in Al-Talmud United Academy. I came back and started teaching in Al-Shabazi School in 2004." This school is funded by U.S. and Jewish organizations chaired by Ishak Hayim. Fayz Al-Jaradi, who is in charge of managing this organization and works in Raidah. Fayz is a Yemeni Jew, with U.S. citizenship.

She was dry-humored, nervous and disturbed as she received reactions demanding her return to Judaism. But she decided not to do so, whatever the cost. She attributed this to her satisfaction with Islam.

Hadi Seran, 19, Ammatat-Rahman's husband, was asked about how he got married to her. He recounted: "During the last days of the past holy month of Ramadan, I was receiving medication in the Modern German Hospital in Sana'a. Ammatat-Rahman was also in the hospital for the same purpose. She was in

the next room. She had drunk poison because of her family, who suspected of her conversion to Islam. They guessed she fasted secretly. One day, her mother entered Ammatat-Rahman's room. She found her daughter listening to Qur'anic cassettes and beat her severely as a result. Ammatat-Rahman resorted to drinking poison. We come from the same area. We stayed together in the hospital, getting acquainted with each other. I gave her my cell phone number. When we returned to Raidah, she used to visit my accessories shop. She explained to me that she wanted to embrace Islam, but needed help. I told my family that I wanted to marry her. My family members encouraged me."

How Ammatat-Rahman announced her conversion

"Ammatat-Rahman came to me on Friday and told me that she wanted to announce her conversion to Islam. I took her to Hamid Seran's house. She requested that we protect her," Hadi said.

He continued: "Fayz Al-Jaradi accused me of kidnapping Ammatat-Rahman and coercing her to embrace Islam. No'man Duwaid, Amran' governor, summoned me and my wife. We met him together with Al-Jaradi, sheik Saleh Seran and my wife's father, Solaiman Dawood, who refused to greet his daughter, saying that Ammatat-Rahman is no longer his daughter, and the Jewish community slaughtered a bull when she embraced Islam. Jews customarily do this when someone in their community converts to Islam, spending one week in mourning."



Yemeni dance from the South performed by Yemeni Jews in Israel. The group of 200 artistes tours the world presenting Jewish arts.

"The governor made sure that Ammatat-Rahman was not coerced to embrace Islam. Fayz Al-Jaradi attempted to tempt her by marrying her to an American man. But she refused to do so, saying: 'I have already embraced Islam and want my husband.'"

"Afterwards Al-Jaradi phoned Saleh Seran, threatening that if Ammatat-Rahman is not returned within one month, she will die by means of black magic."

"Tribesmen carrying firearms gathered when they heard that Al-Jaradi

went to the U.S. embassy in order to bring Ammatat-Rahman back to Judaism. The tribesmen were also told that Al-Jaradi and other parties will come and take her back by force. The tribesmen came from all districts spanning Amran governorate to protect us. I was very happy to see them in huge numbers."

"I will sacrifice my life for the sake of my wife."

Saleh Seran, the area's sheik, said that Nainawa went to the primary court in Raidah and announced her Islam during

the November, 24, 2007, session. Witnesses heard her testimony. The court also confirmed that Nainawa was not under coercion to convert. Consequently, a resolution was issued by the court and signed by its judge, Abdu Ali Al-Awadhi. A marriage contract was also issued by an appropriate party for the couple. However, Khalid Seran, who received and protected the couple, denied that there is intimidation against them, claiming that they have enjoyed friendly relations with Jews in the area for a long time.

A Museum to promote international understanding

The "Museum With No Frontiers" is the largest - and most convenient - museum in the world. It is open 24 hours a day, and doesn't even charge for admission. Anyone can go online and view 18 exhibitions from 14 countries, click their way from Islamic art to Arabic calligraphy and stroll along the exhibition trails. This article contains an interview with the museum's founder, Eva Schubert. In 1994, you inaugurated the "Museum With No Frontiers". This is an unprecedented project dedicated to the discovery of Islamic art. What is your goal?

Our goal is both straightforward and highly complicated at the same time. The idea behind the "Museum With No Frontiers" is to deepen people's knowledge of history, art and culture so as to encourage cooperation between Europe and its neighbors. We believe that works of art, be they museum exhibits, monuments or archaeological sites, are ambassadors of the different civilizations and their history.

Which impression do you wish to give of Islamic art?

One essential feature of Islamic art is the fact that it is an integral part of life. It is not merely decorative or religious, but has an important bearing on everyday life and on the family and its domain. It is to be found in all areas, and is omnipresent. Presenting Islamic art and architecture in its broad-ranging social context is one of the main objectives of the virtual museum.

What can the Western world learn from Islamic art?

The first thing that every European should learn is that Islamic art is not "foreign", but was for many centuries also an integral part of the European identity. Its presence can be strongly felt in Spain, Portugal and Southern Italy; what is more, there are close ties with Christian and also in Jewish art. The distinction between the Orient and the Occident which is so often claimed to exist is merely an artificial one. In the area of culture and art, the two have influenced each other in many cases, and this continues to be the case today. This is what we wish to make clear.

Is it the museum's intention also to

change the image of an Islamic cultural landscape which people today tend to perceive first and foremost as a crisis region?

Yes, absolutely. The problem with all crises is that they are only triggered by a small group of people, yet so many people suffer as a result. Countering this is certainly one of the tasks of the "Museum With No Frontiers". We definitely regard our agenda as being a political one, as we insist that art and culture have a role to play in promoting international understanding, and that we must take advantage of this.

What do the Islamic countries hope to gain from the museum? Is it also a question of saving their art treasures?

For the Palestinians it is doubtless particularly important to document their cultural wealth in the virtual museum, as this allows them to demonstrate that there are important objects bearing witness to the Palestinian history which are at risk of falling victim to the conflicts, and indeed have already done so. Some objects we exhibit no longer actually exist in reality. They have long been destroyed and can now only be viewed in the virtual museum. This is certainly an important aspect. However, generally speaking our primary aim is to document cultural history and make it accessible to people, thereby fostering international understanding.

On your website, however, you not only present museum exhibits, but also offer a program of "exhibition trails".

Yes indeed. Basically, we aim not to transport works of art. After all, every country should have the chance to organize exhibitions of their cultural assets without any major investment. At the

same time, however, we like to present certain exhibits in their respective environments, which is why we created the exhibition trails. These are virtual paths along which monuments and archaeological sites can be viewed in their natural environments. Thematic itineraries covering Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt or the "lights of the Mediterranean" take the visitor on a journey past oases, caravan stations and historic sights. This makes for a more illustrative presentation of the exhibits in their original locations.

Your museum's perspective is always focused on the past. Are you

also interested in modern art?

Absolutely. Our next theme will address the colonial times, bringing us another step closer to the present day. We are of course also interested in contemporary art - the only problem is that it is very difficult to get permission to reproduce current works, so unfortunately our hands are tied.

How is the museum's portal used? Is it a success story?

It certainly is - at the moment, we have around 3,000 visitors to the museum every day. That's a really huge number, and very many of them come from Arab countries. However, people in the West have also shown increasing interest in Islamic art and culture during the years of crisis, and we are constantly trying to attract new groups of visitors. Just now we are in the process of broadening our "Learn with MWNF" program as a platform for schools. Our aim is to give teachers easier access to the virtual museum, allowing them to "work with the museum" and pass on the contents to their students.

What could be better than having teachers encourage their students to acquire knowledge of different cultures at an early age? After all, that must be the basis for any form of mutual understanding.

Sabine Danek is a freelance journalist specialized in the areas of fine arts and film in Hamburg.

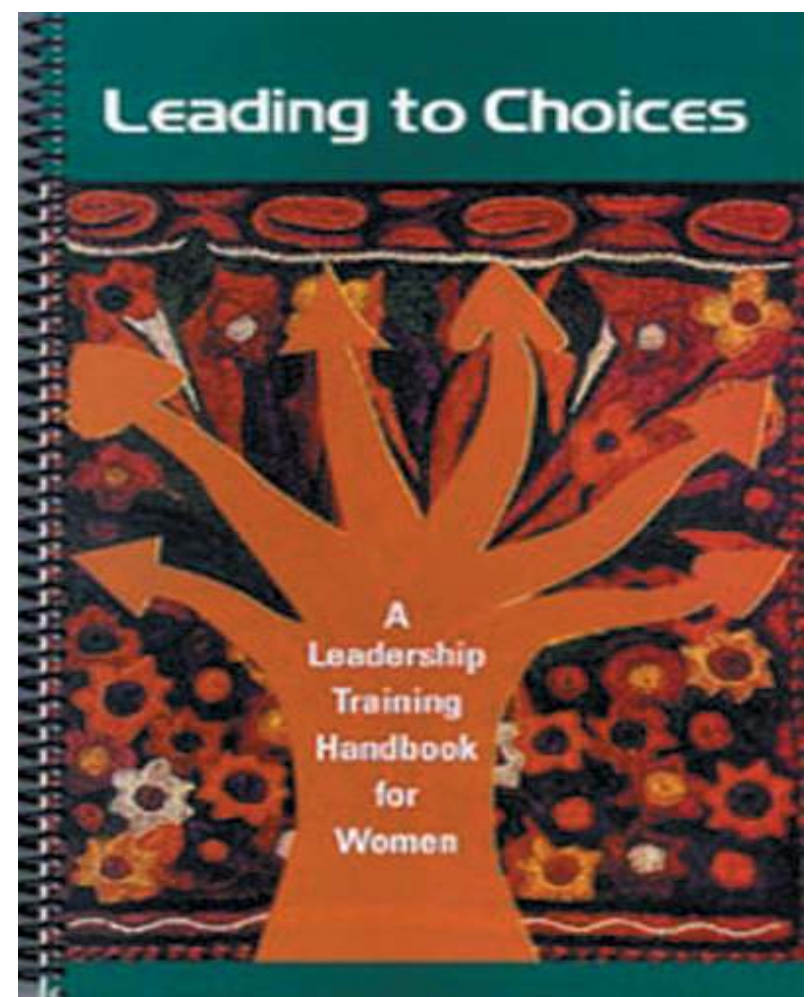
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Leading to Choices: A leadership training handbook for women (English edition)

Book written by: Mahnaz Afkhami, Ann Eisenberg, and Haleh Vaziri

Leading to Choices, developed by the Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) in collaboration with its partner organizations in the Global South, is based on a conceptualization of leadership as horizontal, inclusive, and participatory. WLP views leadership as a process that leads to greater choices for all by fostering communication among individuals who learn from each other, create a shared vision, and reach a common goal forged by consensus. The alternative leadership model presented in the handbook responds to the need for leaders who aspire to create egalitarian, democratic, and pluralistic societies based on collaborative decision-making, coalition-building, and gender equality.

Leading to Choices features a contextual chapter, twelve workshop sessions, and an appendix containing culture-specific scenarios relevant to the cultivation of effective leadership skills. At the heart of each workshop session is a case study or scenario. These scenarios depict individuals who discovered personal leadership skills that enabled them to address a challenging situation in their community. The scenarios also feature the innovative work of organizations from around the world that emphasize participatory decision making and communication, both internally and with their target constituencies. The scenarios span the globe, from Jordan where attorney Asma Khader spearheads the campaign to eliminate gender violence in her country; to Brazil where NGO Communication, Education, and Information on Gender uses communication technologies as a vehicle for women to express themselves and promote gender equality; to Pakistan and Afghanistan where the Afghan Institute of Learning works to educate, train, and empower Afghan women and children living in refugee camps; and to Nigeria, where BAOBAB for



Women's Human Rights employs technology - from the copy machine to e-mail - to share information with women in sub-Saharan Africa and enhance their ability to participate fully in their communities. The sessions are organized as a progression in learning to encourage participants' involvement in decision making processes and to promote a participatory and dialogical leadership style.

Leading to Choices is a prototype handbook with a flexible curriculum that may be adapted and customized to suit the diverse cultural, political, and socio-economic needs of women and men around the world. Designed for use in interactive workshops, the hand-

book includes "Guidelines for Facilitating" that enable the user to create a stimulating environment that promotes mutual respect, dialogue, and collaboration. Leading to Choices has been used in leadership training workshops in Afghanistan, Brazil, Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Tanzania, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Zimbabwe. Participants have included women, young girls, and men; Muslims and Christians; and human rights activists, university students, women NGO representatives, refugees, and domestic workers, among others.

Words of Wisdom



In the final analysis, it is in the hands of the people in charge of this country to make our transformation towards democracy real and meaningful. It would be unfortunate if the change in Yemen remains merely a show or something superficial. Our politicians need to believe in preparing for the 21st century. To do that, they have to internalize some new values.

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

OUR
OPINIONSurvival vrs
independence, the
free media dilemma

As independent media, we have to make sure we are not bending under any pressure whether political from the government, economic from the advertisers, or social from the community.

We would like to say that we have managed to do this, but the truth is that if we want to stay alive and continue delivering our message to the people, we have to make a few compromises here and there.

So far we have not been pushed to compromise in our core values.

We did not allow advertisers to make us write what they want instead of what we believe. We did not surrender to government's obnoxious demands on what to write about and what not to, and we approached some of the very taboo social issues and swallowed hard with every hate letter we received.

However, there had been instances when we turned a blind eye to some of the details we hoped to publish.

But then decided against it in order not to anger someone up there, and consequently be shut down. For example, we had to refrain from publishing a research on organized crime such as drugs and prostitution because we discovered that many persons at very important positions are involved.

For the safety of the reporter and to be able to continue as a newspaper we dropped it. As it is we are occasionally told off and give the "or else" warning in our regular political coverage.

Another example is when we write on female genital mutilation, and sexual abuse in schools. We received letters that told us we have no shame and that we have crossed the ethical and moral boundaries. I am sure we lost some conservative readers somewhere, but our responsibility is beyond all this. We take it upon ourselves to keep pushing the envelope, in order to eventually make a change.

I had a conversation with an editor in chief of a Yemeni newspaper that is currently being sued by the government for ridiculous excuses. He used to be so outgoing and reckless in his writings against the system. Now he says, "If you say it is either the government or I, it would definitely be the government."

He has learnt to choose his battles wisely, something I had been advocating in Yemen Times over the past four years and trying to get eager journalists and editors to adopt. Yes we have to stand up for our rights, but we have to do it wisely, and that is the real challenge for free Yemeni media today

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

No democracy without protection

By: Mohammed Hussein Al-Aidarous

Despite that the fact that democracy grants people a broader scope for rights and freedoms than any other systems or political procedures, but such rights and freedoms may reverse expectations of people unless regimes and the different national systems determine a moral and legislative limit for exercising democracy.

When we contemplate on modern democratic experiences in the region and benefit from the lessons of chaos, violence, and lawlessness, which are the products of excessive democracy, we will find no reason except for the fact that there are certain individuals who exercise democracy without protection. This is a big mistake because the lack of effective regulations, laws and responsible executive bodies means an entire lawlessness letting no chance for anyone to escape their inevitable consequences. This is why democracy in Yemen is based on the slogan "No freedom without democracy, no democracy without protection, and no protection without a rule of law".

But, when we find that there are invisible forces who try to disarm democracy from protection, we then realize how huge the subsequent risk is. And, its negative impact will not be only on the authority, the ruling party or the opposition parties, but it will cover the whole nation and the Yemeni people with their different political affiliations and trends. This realization seems to have originated from vital experiences in the region and not from our personal obsessions and beliefs.

Regrettably, some of the political forces haven't yet understood this fact and turned to look at laws and legislations as if they are enemies threatening their survival and obstructing their political movement. These forces believed that the Law for Regulating Demonstrations, for instance, is a man-made procedure to violate their freedoms, but not to protect democracy from those who make out of freedoms a justification to exercise human rights abuses and transgress values and morals of the society.

It is illogic to consider democracy protection as the job of the authority, the legislative institutions, security agencies or the armed forces, or a particular

party because such matters require an integrative partnership between various government institutions and national forces, including individuals, who are pondered upon as the smallest components of the society.

Consequently, building opinions or attitudes on the basis of participation values and the amount of expended effort will help enhance the democratic development in Yemen, contribute to strengthening the democratic course and enrich the democratic experience with lessons and patriotic work experiences. This matter will be finally reflected on the security of democracy, power of the state and its performance in the various areas of domestic development.

When some people put on democracy much practice more than its capacity and deal with judiciary as being an antagonist, as well as try to exceed the limit of Yemeni privacies, they undoubtedly take the democratic practices into an unsafe state of agitation. On their return, these practices may lead to an unprecedented setback, particularly as the democratic experience is still in the stage of infancy, or have not yet reached the level of immunity like some European and Asian countries

that led Yemen in the democratic transformation.

Remorsefully, such matters occur under the umbrella of freedoms, democracy and human rights while some people forget about the fact that such institutions, agencies and forces, which are hostile to one another, had been among the sparks of national liberation revolutions, as well as pillars of the national

unity. These institutions and forces remained a rigid shield on the face of those targeting national security and the economic interests of citizens. They also worked hard on protecting foreign guests in Yemen, be they tourists or workers in foreign companies.

Source: Almotamar.net

SILVER LINING

Time management value

Most of my colleagues were surprised to hear that I was awarded the PhD degree in English literature last week.

Others who knew previously while working on the thesis "A Study of Womanhood in the Novels of George Eliot" used to question my ability to find time for finishing it. This is because I am working as a correspondent for the Saudi-based al-Riyadh daily, writing the "Silver Lining" column for the Yemen Times, teaching at the university and carrying out other freelance tasks here and there. I think this busy schedule has given them the reason to get surprised and question my ability to manage time and be available everywhere.

I have really worked very hard and sometimes sacrificed attending some of the meetings with journalists and politicians, mainly this year. But, I have accepted the challenge and decided to do my journalistic work and continue my academic pursuit, being a teacher at the English Department, languages college at Sana'a University. It is true that I had to work sometime more than my energy, but one feels quite delighted and thrilled with joy when he succeeds and wins, forgetting the pain he goes through.

Now, I am done with it. I feel very much relieved and that hard working days brought up good fruits. However, the most important thing I have learnt from this experience is that everything is possible when one is committed and devoted. Most of our Yemeni people complain they do not have enough time to do whatever they want. Nevertheless, I do not think our problem is insufficient time. It is rather lack of a strategic thinking and planning of time. I have learnt from my company and work with Western people how to work hard and under time pressure and how to plan well for the future. According to this Western culture, not only countries but also individuals set up their new year plans by the end of each year. It is a good opportunity to review what they have done and how to plan for the New Year. Unfortunately, neither the government nor the people in Yemen have learnt this culture of time planning and management which is very crucial for success and prosperity. This is why we find that the challenges of some years ago are still the major headaches of the years to come. If everybody thinks of the shortcomings of the past year and sets a plan for how to overcome in the New Year, addressing problems would not be delayed every time and then. Do not you think so?

Merry Christmas and Happy Eid to everybody.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Qadhi (mhalqadhi@hotmail.com) is a Yemeni journalist and columnist.



By: Dr. Mohammed Al-Qadhi

Weak governance

By: Dr. Abdullah Al-Faqeeh

Hadi Al-Asfahani, who is a Professor of Economics in Ailoney University in the United States of America came to Yemen in early 2006 in an attempt to give an answer to a question about Yemen, as required by the World Bank. The question is, "Why did the Republic of Yemen fail to achieve economic growth at a time the country had all the necessary requirements for economic development?"

According to Al-Asfahani, the Yemeni economy had at hand, by the advent of the Third Millennium, multiple opportunities and conditions, which were all implying that the economic situation is due to improve.

During the final decade of the Second Millennium, Yemen's economy absorbed the economic effects that resulted from Reunification of the country, repatriation of expatriates and the Civil War, and reached an annual growth rate estimated at 2.5 percent.

Several reforms, related with trade and economic stability, have been implemented while the country was about to carry out many partial reforms, believed to help increase the country's capacity to reach high economic growth rates and alleviate poverty.

Yemen's returns from oil grow greatly thanks to price rises of oil at the international markets. And, thanks to increasing returns of hard currency, the country has become more able to import several commodities from abroad.

At the political level, Yemen experienced much more

liberalism and openness, as well as stability, thereby allowing leaders and ruling political forces to stay in power for many years.

Under those conditions, Yemen was expected to attain prompt improvements in the investment climate and attract a great deal of foreign investments into its territory, Al-Asfahani said. Consequently, the Arab country was projected to attain an unprecedented economic growth better than it did during the first decade of the age of the Republic of Yemen or the Unity State. But, what had already happened is that performance achieved within the new circumstances was disappointing by all means.

Such a failure to achieve a projected economic growth raised international concerns about the status of the poorest country and its opportunity to maintain stability.

The international concern about Yemen originates from the fact that the country's national economy heavily depends on oil exports while, according to geological studies, oil in Yemen is expected to deplete within the coming few years.

In event the current economic situations continue, depletion of oil, according to experts, will lead to a collapse of export revenues, and consequently, the state's general budget will collapse too. Then, social conflict over limited resources will force both the political and social systems to collapse. This is usually referred to as failure of the state.

The poor youth, who are also illiterate and jobless, will constitute a barefooted army in the conflicts, which are due to break out as a result of a mistake committed by one of the political

forces that rule the country. From Al-Asfahani's viewpoint, Yemeni peoples need not weapons, as they are available in abundance.

Al-Asfahani agrees with his predecessors of the researchers that Yemen's failure to achieve a high economic growth rate under suitable circumstances is primarily attributed to weak governance in the country.

This is obvious in several aspects, the most prominent of which are lack of transparency and accountability, rampant corruption and weak interaction between government officials and the private sector, coupled with the absence of good institutions that help enhance the role of market economy such as courts, and the government's poor performance.

Source: Al-Ahali Weekly

Arab Nation celebrating Eid Al-Adha



By: Samer

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We must all reach out

By: Ezrinal Azis

As a Muslim who loves Islam, I certainly feel sad knowing that my religion is misunderstood, feared and even hated by many in the West. I feel the frustration of a child who sees his or her parent falsely charged as an adulterer or a thief. While he or she knows the labels are not true, there is little the child can do about it.

However, in an episode of the *Oprah Show* last year, I gained some insight on resolving this dilemma in an interview with Queen Rania of Jordan.

Oprah Winfrey asked Queen Rania honest, straight-forward questions, ones that were on the minds of millions of Westerners who are full of curiosity about Islam.

"Do you pray? How many times a day?"

For how long?"

Queen Rania answered that as a faithful Muslim, she conducted all Islamic rituals completely.

The audience in the studio looked surprised that the beautiful, smart and modern queen is a pious woman. It certainly shocked them, because in the West a modern attitude or appearance is usually considered incongruous with someone who observes religious rituals, especially Islamic ones, which to the Westerner are often associated with closed-mindedness, tribal customs and terrorism.

Oprah's next question was also probing: "Why don't you wear the *hijab* (headscarf), while other Muslim women wear it?"

Queen Rania answered sympathetically, "The *hijab* is a choice — a woman wears *hijab* because she believes in it and she has the right to wear it, not because she is forced to."

She further explained that many in

the West see the *hijab* as a symbol of conservatism and suppression of Muslim women. Queen Rania's appearance, with her hair hanging down freely like that of a Hollywood actress, demonstrated that Islam is not synonymous with the *hijab*, yet her defence of women who wear *hijab* showed that Islam cannot be reduced to the issue of attire.

She expressed her longing for the discussion to be elevated to what is inside Muslim women's heads rather than what's on them. She talked about her hope for continuous dialogue between the West and the Muslim world to continue in order to dispel misunderstandings. The Queen suggested that such open discussion should be part of every school curriculum so that children around the world develop global perspectives and respect for different nations and beliefs.

At one point in my life, I was

exposed to similar reactions of surprise. When I worked in Japan, many of my Japanese colleagues were amazed that an educated person like me still took part in religious rituals. One day, some of them asked to watch the Friday prayers held by our Muslim group in the office, a request that can be viewed as an attempt to further understand Islam and Islamic culture. Through this simple action, something that was previously regarded with curiosity and suspicion became a shared human experience, making the unfamiliar familiar.

These examples demonstrate how societal assumptions and projections can shape the perception of the other without any real understanding or exchange, and also how some unique individuals are able to breach the divide, opening themselves to questions and dispelling the mystery that sometimes surrounds the unknown.

The blind fear and misunderstanding that exist between Western and Muslim societies must be countered by stories of those individuals who live in harmony, side-by-side, despite the stereotypes and labels.

For example, earlier this year, I read an article in an Indonesian newspaper about a love story between a Muslim man, Usama, and a Jewish woman, Jasmin, in Israel. Though their families supported the relationship, Israel was building a 750 km wall separating them and those of their respective faiths, and motivating them to get married immediately. Their marriage was conducted according to Islamic tradition, but in a Jewish home.

Now, they live happily in an apartment in Berlin, sharing a union that extends across the divide that exists in their homeland.

I am not an expert of Muslims-

Western relations, but I agree with Queen Rania that the only way to eliminate distrust is through global education and continuous interfaith and inter-civilisational dialogue. This is essential especially among younger generations, and must be conducted in a sincere spirit. Forums that broach religious, cultural or civilisational dialogue in a constructive and balanced way — such as television talk shows and facilitated workshops and camps — are integral to this process.

It may take time, perhaps even several generations, but the seeds must be planted now in order to reap the benefits of the harvest in the future.

Ezrinal Azis is the chairman of the East Borneo Fertilizer Company's Employees Corps (Korps Karyawan Pupuk Kaltim-KPKPT) and author of Heart Stories, (Cerita Hati, 2006). Source: www.commongroundnews.org.

Spy games

By: Henry Kissinger

The extraordinary spectacle of President George W. Bush's national security advisor obliged to defend the president's Iran policy against a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) raises two core issues: How are we now to judge the nuclear threat posed by Iran? How are we to judge the Intelligence community's relationship with the White House and the rest of the government?

The unclassified "Key Judgments" released by the Intelligence community to the public begin with a dramatic assertion: "We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Teheran halted its nuclear weapons programme." Inevitably, this sentence was widely interpreted as a challenge to the Bush administration policy of mobilising international pressure against alleged Iranian nuclear programmes.

It was, in fact, qualified by a footnote whose complex phraseology obfuscated that the suspension really applied to only one aspect (and not even the most significant aspect) of the Iranian nuclear weapons programme: the construction of warheads.

That qualification was not restated in the rest of the document, which continued to refer to the halt of the weapons programme repeatedly and without qualification.

The reality is that the concern about Iranian nuclear weapons has had three components: the production of fissile material; the development of missiles; and the building of warheads.

Heretofore production of fissile material has been treated as by far the greatest danger, and the Iranian production of fissile material has been taking place at an accelerating pace since 2006. So has the development of missiles of increasing range. What appears to have been suspended is the engineering aimed at the production of warheads.

The new Estimate holds that Iran may be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon by the end of 2009 and, with increasing confidence, more warheads by the period 2010 to 2015. That is virtually the same timeline as suggested in the 2005 National Intelligence Estimate. The new Estimate does not assess how long it would take to build a warhead, though it treats the availability of fissile material as the principal limiting factor.

If there is a significant gap between these two processes, it would be important to be told what it is. Nor are we told how close to developing a warhead Teheran was at the time it suspended its programme or how confident the Intelligence community is in its ability to learn when work on warheads has resumed. On the latter point, the new Estimate expresses only "moderate" confidence that the suspension has not been lifted already.

It is therefore doubtful that the evidence supports the dramatic language of the Summary and, even less, the sweeping conclusions drawn in much of the public commentary. For the past three years, the international debate has concentrated on the Iranian effort to enrich uranium by centrifuges, of which some 3,000 are

now in operation.

The administration has asserted that this represents a decisive step towards the acquisition by Iran of nuclear weapons and has urged a policy of maximum pressure. Every permanent member of the UN Security Council has supported the request that Iran suspend its uranium enrichment programme.

The various countries differ on the urgency with which their recommendations be pressed and in their willingness to impose penalties.

The NIE then highlights, without altering, the underlying issue: At what point would the nations which have described an Iranian nuclear military programme as "unacceptable" agree to act on that conviction? Do they wait until Iran actually starts producing nuclear warheads? Does our intelligence assume that we will know this threshold? Is there enough time then for meaningful countermeasures? What happens to the growing stock of fissile material which, according to the Estimate, will have been accumulated? Do we run the risk of finding ourselves with an adversary who, in the end, agrees to stop further production of fissile material but insists on retaining the existing stockpile as a potential threat?

By stating a conclusion in such categorical terms — considered excessive even by the International Atomic Energy Agency — the Key Judgments blur the line between estimates and conjecture. For example, the document explains the halt of the Iranian weapons programme in 2003 as follows: "We judge with high confidence that the halt . . . was directed primarily in

response to increasing international scrutiny and pressure resulting from exposure of Iran's previously undeclared nuclear work."

It is to be hoped that the full Estimate provides more comprehensive evidence for these conclusions. A more plausible alternative explanation would assign much more significance to the regional context and American actions.

When Iran halted its weapons programme and suspended efforts at enriching uranium in February 2003, America had already occupied Afghanistan and was on the verge of invading Iraq, both on the borders of Iran.

It justified its Iraq policy by the need to remove weapons of mass destruction from the region. By the fall of 2003, when Iran voluntarily joined the Additional Protocol for Nuclear Non-Proliferation, Saddam had just been overthrown. Is it unreasonable to assume that the ayatollahs concluded that restraint had become imperative?

By the fall of 2005, the American effort in Iraq had shown signs of bogging down; the prospects for extending the enterprise into Iran were diminishing. The Iranian leaders could have therefore felt free to return to their previous policy of building up a military nuclear capability — perhaps reinforced by the desire to create a deterrent to American regional aspirations.

They might also have concluded that, given the fact that the secret effort had leaked, it would be too dangerous to undertake another covert programme. Hence, the emphasis on renewing its enrichment programme in

the guise of a civilian energy programme. In short, if my analysis is correct, we could be witnessing not a halt of the Iranian weapons programme — as the NIE asserts — but a subtle, ultimately more dangerous, version of it that will phase in the warhead when the fissile material production has matured.

The Estimate does not so much reject this theory; it does not even examine it.

A coherent national strategy toward Iran is not a partisan issue, for it will have to be implemented well after the present administration has left office. I have long argued that America owes it to itself to explore fully the possibility of normalising relations with Iran. We do not need to tranquilise ourselves about the danger in order to pursue a more peaceful world. What is required is based on a specific vision linking assurances for Iran's security and respect for its identity with an Iranian foreign policy compatible with the existing order in the Middle East. But it must also generate an analysis of the strategy to be pursued should Iran, in the end, choose ideology over reconciliation.

The Intelligence community has a major role in helping to design such a vision. But it needs to recognise that the more it ventures into policy conjecture, the less authoritative its judgments become.

I have often defended the dedicated men and women of the Intelligence community. This is why I am extremely concerned about the tendency of the Intelligence community to turn itself into a kind of separate branch of the government, as a check on, instead of a part of, the

executive branch. When Intelligence personnel expect their work to become subject of immediate public debate, they are tempted into the roles of surrogate policymakers and public policy advocates.

The executive branch and the Intelligence community have gone through a rough period. The White House has been accused of politicising Intelligence; the Intelligence community has been charged with promoting institutional policy biases. The Key Judgments document accelerates that controversy.

Intelligence personnel need to return to their traditional anonymity. Policymakers and Congress should once again assume responsibility for their judgments without involving the Intelligence community in their public justifications. To define the proper balance between the user and producer of intelligence is a task that cannot be accomplished at the end of an administration. It is, however, one of the most urgent challenges a newly elected president will face.

Dr Henry Kissinger is by far the most admired Secretary of State in US history, a diplomat par excellence, and a top intellectual of our times, informed as he is by a 'deep historical knowledge, wit, a gift for irony, and a unique understanding of the forces that bind nations'. He had injected a new dynamism to the US foreign policy during his term between 1973 and 1977, that among other things, effected a major turn-around in Sino-US relations. He continues to hog limelight, unveiling refreshing thoughts about the state of the world. Source: /www.khaleejtimes.com

It's America's time to once again be a 'smart power'

By: Joseph S. Nye

The United States needs to rediscover how to be a "smart power." That was the conclusion of a bipartisan commission that I recently co-chaired with Richard Armitage, the former deputy secretary of state in the Bush administration. The Smart Power Commission, convened by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, comprised Republican and Democratic members of Congress, former ambassadors, retired military officers, and heads of non-profit organizations. We concluded that America's image and influence had declined in recent years, and that the US must move from exporting fear to inspiring optimism and hope.

We are not alone. Recently, Defense Secretary Robert Gates called for the US government to commit more money and effort to "soft power,"

including diplomacy, economic assistance, and communications, because the military alone cannot defend America's interests around the world. Gates pointed out that military spending totals nearly a half-trillion dollars annually, compared to the State Department's budget of \$36 billion. He acknowledged that for the head of the Pentagon to plead for more resources for the State Department was odd, but these are not normal times.

Smart power is the ability to combine the hard power of coercion or payment with the soft power of attraction into a successful strategy. By and large, the US managed such a combination during the Cold War. More recently, however, US foreign policy has tended to over-rely on hard power, because it is the most direct and visible source of American strength.

But, while the Pentagon is the best-trained and best-resourced arm of the government, there are limits to what hard power can achieve on its own. Democracy, human rights, and the

development of civil society do not come from the barrel of a gun. True, the American military has impressive operational capacity, but turning to the Pentagon because it can get things done creates an image of an over-militarized foreign policy.

Diplomacy and foreign assistance are often under-funded and neglected, in part because it is difficult to demonstrate their short-term impact on critical challenges. In addition, wielding soft power is difficult because many of America's soft power resources lie outside of government in the private sector and civil society, in its bilateral alliances, multilateral institutions, and transnational contacts. Moreover, American foreign policy institutions and personnel are fractured and compartmentalized, and there is no adequate inter-agency process for developing and funding a smart power strategy.

The effects of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks have also thrown us off course. Since the shock

of those attacks, the US has been exporting fear and anger rather than the country's more traditional values of hope and optimism. Guantanamo Bay has become a more powerful global icon than the Statue of Liberty.

The CSIS Smart Power Commission acknowledged that terrorism is a real threat and likely to be with us for decades, but pointed out that over-responding to extremists' provocations does more damage to the US than terrorists ever could. Success in the struggle against terrorism means finding a new central premise for American foreign policy to replace the current theme of a "war on terror."

That premise should be a commitment to invest in the provision of public goods that people and governments worldwide want but cannot attain without American leadership. By doing so, the US could rebuild the framework that it needs to address tough global challenges.

Specifically, the Smart Power Commission recommended that

American foreign policy focus on five critical areas: first, restoring alliances, partnerships, and multilateral institutions, many of which have fallen into disarray in recent years, owing to unilateral approaches.

Second, elevating the role of economic development to help align US interests with those of people around the world, starting with a major initiative on global public health.

Third, investment in a public diplomacy that focuses less on broadcasting and more on face-to-face contacts, education, and exchanges that involve civil society and target young people.

Fourth, resisting protectionism and promoting continued engagement in the global economy, which is necessary for growth and prosperity at home and abroad, while seeking inclusion for those left behind by changes that an open international economy implies.

And fifth, shaping a global consensus and developing innovative

technologies to meet the increasingly important global challenges of energy security and climate change.

Implementing such a smart power strategy will require a strategic reassessment of how the US government is organized, coordinated, and budgeted. The next president should consider a number of creative solutions to maximize the administration's ability to organize for success, including the appointment of senior personnel who could reach across agencies to better align resources.

This will require innovation, but the US has been a smart power in the past, and it can become so again.

Joseph S. Nye teaches at Harvard University and is the author of "Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics." source: The Yemen Times publishes this commentary in collaboration with Project Syndicate (c) (www.project-syndicate.org).

Thousands of Yemenis exposed to rabies due to stray dogs

By: Hamed Thabet

Five thousand people in Yemen received rabies through being bitten by stray dogs this year, said experts.

Ahmed Al-Wared, director of the National Program for the Eradication of Rabies, confirmed that "the number of deaths every year are 30, and it is increasing." He noted that there are about a million dogs in Yemen, and only 10-20% of these are owned, while the rest are stray dogs.

Dr. Ahmed Al-Muthna, coordinator for the rabies disease program, noted, "All of the 965 rabies patients that we have in Ibb are men." He added, "Rabies has spread in many governorates, like Ibb, Jibla, Yarim and Al-Qaed'a. The reason behind this is that dogs are attracted to the trash found near butcher shops in these governorates, which are not often hygienic."

To date, only 2,000 dogs out of one million have been caught and destroyed. According to Al-Muthna, "There is a program in order to destroy these dogs. And the most important part of the program was a campaign in these areas to distrib-

ute vaccines for rabies."

The Ministry of Health provides 100 doses for the center every month, but in fact, Al-Muthna stated, "100 doses are not enough, as the center provides more than 240 doses and the price of each dose is \$15."

In the current year there were 4 deaths due to rabies in Al-Faqer governorate. Consequently, the Ministry of Health immediately asked to form a special anti-rabies committee there.

Dr. Abud Al-Kahim Al-Kohlani, the Director General of contagious diseases and epidemiological observation, stated to the press that "there must be cooperation between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture in order to limit the numbers of dogs which are causing death for hundreds of residents." He also explained that there should be a special plan for the eradication of rabies and the annihilation of all stray dogs in Yemen.

Patients should theoretically receive five free injection doses over the course of seven to 28 days. "However, we only give patients three of the five injections because the hospital isn't able to treat all of the cases, which sometimes come to us from other governorates. In this case, patients must buy the two extra injec-



Many stray dogs feed on garbage drums, which make them prone to variety of diseases, rabies to count one.

tions, which costs a lot," confirmed Dr. Abdul Jabar Al-Muhia of the Yemeni-Swedish Hospital's anti-rabies unit in Taiz.

There were also reports of rabies cases in the governorate of Taiz. However,

these numbers, based on medical sources at anti-rabies units, may not reflect actual statistics, as many patients living in remote areas aren't able to reach such units to receive medication.

In case treatment cannot be obtained,

Al-Muhia explained first-aid measures that can be taken: "The wound should be treated by cleansing with hot water, an antiseptic solution like iodine and a sterile dressing." However, he insisted that "the patient must be given the daily vaccine injection course according to a doctor's schedule, as rabies is always fatal if the vaccine isn't administered."

Rabies is a virus that is usually transmitted by a bite from a wild infected animal, such as a bat, raccoon, skunk, or fox. If a rabid animal bite goes untreated, an infection can develop and lead to brain damage or even death.

An infected animal carries the rabies virus in its saliva and can transmit it to a person through biting. In rarer cases, an animal can spread the virus when its saliva comes in contact with a person's mucous membranes (moist skin surfaces, like the mouth or inner eyelids) or broken skin such as a cut, scratch, bruise, or open wound. After a bite, the rabies virus can spread into the person's surrounding muscle, and then travel up a nearby nerve to the brain. Once the virus infects the brain, it can cause severe, possibly permanent injury.

Dr. Al-Muhia described rabies symptoms, noting that, "There also may be a

tingling or twitching sensation around the area of the animal bite, which is one of the most specific rabies symptoms at this stage of infection."

After this initial period, a second stage begins with symptoms similar to those of encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). There may be fever as high as 40.6 degrees Celsius (105 degrees Fahrenheit) with any of the following symptoms: irritability, aggressiveness, confusion, hallucinations, bizarre or abnormal thoughts, excessive movement or agitation, muscle spasms, abnormal posture, seizure (convulsions), weakness or paralysis (the person can't move some part of the body), extreme sensitivity to bright light, sound or touch and increased tears or saliva production.

Patients are extremely thirsty but experience spasms of the larynx when water is presented or even mentioned, hence the disease's original name, hydrophobia [Greek hydro = water, phobos = fear]. There also may be an inability to speak as the vocal cords become paralyzed.

The individual infected with rabies can slip into a coma and stop breathing. Without life support measures, death usually follows within four to 20 days after the onset of symptoms.

Meat consumption and cancer risk

People who eat a lot of red and processed meats have a higher risk of developing several types of cancer, including lung cancer and colorectal cancer, according to a new study from the National Cancer Institute.

By: Jeanine M. Genkinger, Anita Koushik

The large international variation in incidence rates of cancer, together with findings from migrant studies, suggest that environmental factors such as diet are associated with cancer risk. The intake of meats, such as beef, varies 3-fold across the world—consumption is highest in developed countries (23 kg/capita) compared to less developed countries (6 kg/capita). Based on Richard Doll and Richard Peto's work in 1981, it has been estimated that approximately 35% (range 10%–70%) of cancer can be attributed to diet, similar in magnitude to the contribution of smoking to cancer (30%, range 25%–40%).

Meat consumption in relation to cancer risk has been reported in over a hundred epidemiological studies from many countries with diverse diets. The association between meat intake and cancer risk has been evaluated by looking both at broad groupings of total meat intake, and also at finer categorizations, particularly intakes of red meat, which includes beef, lamb, pork, and veal, and also more specifically processed meats, which includes meats preserved by salting, smoking, or curing.

Although the association of cancer and meat intake may be partially explained by high-energy or high-fat ("westernized") diets, of greater interest is a possible direct role of potentially carcinogenic compounds that are found in meats, including N-nitroso compounds, heterocyclic amines, or polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. N-nitroso compounds are broad-acting potent carcinogens in animal models and include nitrosamines, which require metabolic activation to be converted to a carcinogenic form, and nitrosamides, which do not require activation. Similarly, heterocyclic amines are classified as mutagens and animal carcinogens. These compounds and others present in meats (salts, nitrates, nitrites, heme iron, saturated fat, estradiol) have been theorized to increase DNA synthesis and cell proliferation, increase insulin-like growth factors, affect hormone metabolism, promote free radical damage, and produce carcinogenic heterocyclic amines, all of which may promote the development of cancer.

Colorectal Cancer

The malignancy most extensively studied in relation to meat intake has been colorectal cancer. In ecological studies, correlations between international per capita meat intakes and colon cancer incidence ($r > 0.85$) and mortality ($r > 0.70$) rates have been high. Similarly, raised colorectal cancer risks in relation to both red and processed meat intakes have been observed in case-control and cohort studies. A 1997 review of these studies, sponsored by the World Cancer Research Fund and the American Institute for Cancer Research, concluded that the intake of red meat probably increases the risk of colorectal cancer, while processed meat possibly increases colorectal cancer risk. A similar consensus was reported by the Colon Cancer Panel at the World Health Organization consensus conference and the Working Group on Diet and

Cancer of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food and Nutrition Policy.

In recent meta-analyses of colorectal cancer that included studies published up to 2005, summary associations indicated that red meat intakes were associated with 28%–35% increased risks while processed meats were associated with elevated risks of 20%–49%.

Other Types of Cancer

Additionally, a large number of studies have examined the association between meat intake and stomach cancer risk. In a recent meta-analysis, positive associations were observed between processed meat consumption and stomach cancer risk, although the results from case-control versus cohort studies were heterogeneous. Fewer studies with less consistent associations have been reported for cancers of the bladder, breast, endometrium, glioma, pancreas, prostate, and renal cell. There has been even less research on the association between meat intake and cancers of the lung, esophagus, oral cavity, ovary, cervix, and liver. Most of the studies examining these sites have been case-control, and some of the earlier studies lacked adjustment for energy intake or body mass index, two key potential confounders.

A New Study of Multiple Cancer Sites

In this issue of PLoS Medicine, Amanda Cross and colleagues present their findings from a large prospective cohort study on the association between red and processed meat intake and cancer at several sites. Their analysis is based on the prospective National Institutes of Health (NIH)-AARP (formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons) Diet and Health Study and includes almost 500,000 men and women in the United States, among whom over 53,000 incident cancers occurred.

For colorectal cancer, a 24% increased risk with red meat consumption of 62.5 g/1,000 kcal and a 20% increased risk with processed meat consumption of 22.6 g/1,000 kcal was observed among both men and women, which is similar in magnitude to the summary relative risks observed in previous meta-analyses. The researchers also found that increasing intakes of red meat were significantly associated with elevated risks of 20%–60% for cancers of the esophagus, liver, and lung. For processed meats, a 16% increased risk of lung cancer was

observed. Red and processed meat intake was associated with an increased pancreatic cancer risk in men only.

The results from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study corroborate previous findings for colorectal cancer. However, a positive association with stomach cancer, which has been seen mostly in previous case-control investigations, was not observed in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. Relative risks for stomach cancer have been primarily null in previous cohort studies compared to case-control studies, and thus the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study results for stomach cancer are consistent with previous cohort studies. In Cross and colleagues' study, higher consumption of meat was positively associated with risk of cancer of the lung, liver, esophagus, and pancreas, similar to the findings from some but not all previous case-control and cohort studies. An inverse association with endometrial cancer was observed in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study, which is in contrast to the positive association reported in the recent meta-analysis by Elisa Bandera et al. [1]. This meta-analysis was based on 16 case-control studies, among which recall and selection biases cannot be ruled out.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the New Study

The NIH-AARP investigation is based on high-quality prospective dietary information obtained using a validated food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) with 124 items [59]. The analyses were conducted using only baseline FFQ data covering recent intakes; thus, changes in intakes of meat and other nutrients over time, as well as lifetime consumption patterns, could not be evaluated in the NIH-AARP study. Additionally, because the NIH-AARP study measured adult red and processed meat intake, it may not have captured the relevant exposure time for carcinogenesis, which may have occurred in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood.

Nonetheless, in this study, diet was measured prior to diagnosis of cancer; thus, a cancer diagnosis would not have influenced the reporting of meat intake, minimizing the potential for recall bias. Additionally, the potential for selection bias was minimized as the cohort follow-up rate was very high (more than 95%). Furthermore, the NIH-AARP investigation is based on high-quality prospective measurement of other important environmental factors (e.g., smoking, body mass index), a long follow-up time (8.2 years), and a large number of cases of cancer.

Because of the large population size, the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study was able to prospectively analyze several rare cancer sites, including brain, laryngeal, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, pancreatic, pharyngeal, renal, and thyroid. The great variation in red and processed meat intake among the NIH-AARP population allowed for the examination of these specific cancer sites to be conducted with relatively sufficient power, thus greatly adding to the dearth of prospective literature to date on these rare cancers.

In interpreting the findings from studies of meat intake and cancer, it should be noted that individuals who consume a diet high in red and processed meat typically also consume large amounts of foods such as butter, potatoes, refined grains, and high-fat dairy, all components of a westernized diet. Thus red and processed meat intake might not be solely responsi-

ble for higher cancer risk. Additionally, meat intake is usually correlated with higher energy intakes and obesity, so residual confounding may be present. Research aimed at understanding how foods and nutrients interact to promote or prevent carcinogenesis may provide a better understanding of potential etiological pathways and may explain some of the heterogeneity of published results.

Next Steps in Research

Further knowledge would be gained from research examining differences in particular subtypes of specific cancers. For example, different histologies or cancer subsites, such as estrogen-receptor-negative breast cancers or cardia gastric cancers, may be more strongly associated with dietary risk or preventive factors. Similarly, risk variation according to specific genotypes at polymorphic sites, for instance in genes involved in the metabo-

lism of carcinogenic compounds in meat, may add further to our understanding of the role of meat consumption in cancer risk.

In addition to investigating intakes of food items or groups (i.e., red or processed meat), future research should also examine particular nutrients within meats (e.g., iron) or carcinogenic components (e.g., heterocyclic amines, nitrosamines) that are created as a result of certain cooking techniques, particularly among the rarer and less studied cancers. Other factors, such as animal raising and feeding practices (exogenous sex steroids are used in farm-raised animals in the US and banned in the farming industry in the European Union), may also contribute to cancer risk. Few studies have examined these practices in their analyses, which may explain some of the inconsistency in results across studies.

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- ▶ To ensure documentation for receipt and issues and posting them in the system
- ▶ Must have identification knowledge of material and ensure their safe housekeeping
- ▶ Carry out periodic physical stock checking independently
- ▶ To brief his supervisor on day to day activities seeking guidance and approvals in order to streamline the work
- ▶ To have effective liaison within Procurement and Logistics Department and end users
- ▶ To maintain complete records and filing system in a proper manner for Audit trail and control purposes
- ▶ The incumbent is required to maintain highest degree of Integrity, Ethics and Discipline which is the prime requirement of the Job
- ▶ Required to follow HSE standards and policies issued from time to time
- ▶ Any other duty assigned to him

Your profile:

- ▶ BA or Diploma in Engineering Mechanical/Chemical/petroleum/industrial
- ▶ The incumbent Must have a minimum 5-7 years experience working in Drilling and Engineering warehouse in computerized environments with a reputable E&P Company
- ▶ Fluent in English reading and writing and should have ability to control the inventory management, handling of materials, identification knowledge of materials

Warehouse Supervisor

Your responsibilities:

- ▶ To manage an engineering warehouse having high value inventory items in a controlled manner following the computerized inventory control system
- ▶ To coordinate with the Rig management for day to day requirements on a regular basis
- ▶ To prepare and update records of inventory on daily basis and have effective communication with the stores accounting section
- ▶ To ensure documentation for receipt and issues and posting them in the system
- ▶ Must have identification knowledge of material and ensure their safe housekeeping
- ▶ Carry out periodic physical stock checking independently
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- ▶ The incumbent is required to maintain highest degree of Integrity, Ethics and Discipline which is the prime requirement of the Job
- ▶ Required to follow HSE standards and policies issued from time to time
- ▶ Any other duty assigned to him
- ▶ Candidate must have hands on experience working with Inventory management software

Your profile:

- ▶ MBA in Finance/IT or Bsc Engineering Mechanical/Chemical/petroleum/industrial
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- ▶ Evaluate Tenders and Quotations and recommend vendor for order/contract placement
- ▶ Supervises preparation of Purchase/Service Orders
- ▶ Advise Logistics Supervisor of any contractual conditions with vendors that could impact shipping of materials/ equipment
- ▶ Preparation of procurement documents prior to submission to the Operating Committee and PEPA for approval, P&L Manager to approve submission
- ▶ Follow up on approval of procurement documents with the Operating Committee and PEPA
- ▶ Be proactive, identify and bring to the attention of the P&L Manager, any potential problems which could delay purchase of materials/equipment and could have an adverse effect on Operations by non placement of orders/contracts
- ▶ Development of subordinates
- ▶ Conduct negotiations with vendors through to order/contract award
- ▶ Identify new sources of supply for materials and equipment
- ▶ Liaise and follow up with all vendors on contract performance
- ▶ Monitor the Procurement processes, to ensure cost effective and timely acquisition of equipment/materials and services for Operations
- ▶ Prepare reports and inform P&L Manager on procurement related activities
- ▶ Develop and maintain work schedules and personal resources planning for Procurement personnel

Your profile:

- ▶ BSc Engineering or MBA with Finance/IT
- ▶ Minimum 10 years Oil and Gas industry experience in the field of Procurement and Logistics with E&P/Service Companies with 5 years in a supervisory position
- ▶ PC Literate in MS-Windows, MS-Office and Computerized Materials Management Systems, ideally experienced with the Maximo System
- ▶ Fluent in Arabic and English, written and oral
- ▶ Proven ability to interact with people, clear fluent expressive use of verbal and written language to convey information and ideas
- ▶ Proven track record in supervising all Procurement functions with experience in Logistics functions required to support Company Operations
- ▶ Ability to optimise teamwork with both subordinates and managers
- ▶ Excellent man management and communication skills, proactive approach to problem solving
- ▶ Should be commercially astute and have excellent negotiation skills
- ▶ Candidate must have hands on experience working with Inventory management software

Accountant (General Ledger)

Your responsibilities:

- ▶ Ensure timely booking of entries in the Sun Accounting system. Ensure that the transactions are recorded in right account codes and correct accounting period. Posting of all adjustment and accrual entries in Sun system. Update and control Fixed Asset register and reconcile with GL and physical record
- ▶ Invoice/payment posting in Sun accounting system
- ▶ Posting of adjustment and accrual journal entries in the system
- ▶ Assist payable section in preparation of bank reconciliation statements for all bank accounts in a timely and accurate manner
- ▶ Booking of monthly inventory movement in Sun General Ledger based on inventory report received from field warehouse
- ▶ Accurately maintain the fixed asset register and reconcile it with GL and physical records
- ▶ Ensure proper record and filing of Journal vouchers for audit purposes

Your profile:

- ▶ Accounting Graduate with minimum 2 years of experience in General Ledger section
- ▶ Timely and accurate posting of data in Sun accounting system
- ▶ Ensure accurate actualization of Fixed Assets register with physical records
- ▶ Fluent in English

What can a Yemeni NGO do?

The Health and Culture Center (HCC) is a local non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Sana'a which aims to serve deprived people and help improve their skills. It also provides free psychotherapy for patients. **Hamed Thabet** visited the center and interviewed patients who frequently visit the center, as well as officials and staff.

Many psychological problems in Yemen are between couples. According to Muhammed Amer, a psychologist at the HCC, "About 70% of the psychological patients who come to the HCC are married, especially the women. Their problems include: sexual problems, dealing with their husbands and also problems related to misunderstanding between couples."

Amer noted that some patients have mental illnesses, such as a college graduate girl who had a phobia of germs, and washed herself for more than 6 hours daily. Problems such as this are very difficult to be cured. However, he confirmed, "consultation is free, but medicine has to be bought."

In Yemen there is a common belief that those who go to a psychologist are mentally ill. But people are becoming aware that these clinics exist to serve people. Amer expressed that many patients who came to the clinic were cured, which caused the public to learn the advantages that such clinics bring to people. There is even a hot line for people who are too shy to come in person to talk about their problems.

Besides the health sector, there is a special place in the center for music instruction. Ali Ghazi, the manager of the music sector, explained that in addition to Yemenis who come to the center to learn music, foreigners come in order to learn Yemeni music, espe-

cially the 'ud (lute) and keyboard.

Rowidah Reyath and her sister Rowinah, Yemeni female singers with 4 years experience in singing, had their talent discovered while at the center learning music. Rowidah said, "Learning music is very important; I wish to play music in order to be an accomplished singer. From the very beginning I chose this center to learn, as Nazar Ghanem offered us free lessons."

They added, "We recommend that any girl who is talented in singing or music not suppress it, but face all obstacles that come her way fearlessly. It is a fact that the Yemeni community doesn't allow its girls to go out or to sing. From the beginning we faced many difficulties from the community before we became a singer, but we continued and our family supported us, especially our mother." They added, "The main problem in Yemen is that the mass media pays no attention to such talents and talented citizens, as there are many singers here but no one knows or hears about them. There must be some improvement in this section."

Aesha Yaya, in charge of the women's gym at the center, explained that facilities for women's fitness includes exercise equipment and guided aerobic exercises. The program runs daily from 4 - 6 pm and is exclusively for women. However, there is a nominal fee of 2,000 YR per month.

Nazar Ghanem, HCC Chairman, expressed, "Although the Center is in



Nazar Ghanem HCC Chairman.

PHOTO BY HAMED THABET

dire need of financial assistance and opportunities to expand, it relies on itself for 42% of expenses, with 58% from donations, mainly from Yemeni and Kuwaiti businessmen."

He continued, "We have many plans and projects for development, but because of budget shortages, we have to limit our work. For instance, if we had enough money we would provide medicine for psychological patients on a cost recovery system. Also, we used to have branches in Dhamar, Ibb and Aden, but we closed them because we couldn't afford the expenses."

Particular attention is paid to the psychological status of patients through counseling, psychotherapy and social guidance offered by young Yemeni University female graduates. There is an emphasis on removing the stigma associated with mental illness. Consequently, the center is pushing for a family doctor module to fit Yemeni culture, rather than a sophisticated medicine module, but it also operates a competent referral system.

Noting that the HCC is a nonprofit

organization which only aims to serve people, Ghanem added, "Of course, we have very low charges for some activities, and only in order to cover our expenses. We have some donors who give regularly, and some occasionally, to help us continue our activities and add training facilities for youth who are in need of gaining skills that empower them and enable them to fight unemployment and poverty."

He commented, "I wish that people who care about art and psychotherapy would give us their support to enable us to serve our people."

According to Mr. Abdullah Salim, Executive Director of HCC, "We have many goals to achieve. One of these is setting up an out-patient department to provide mental health counseling by a clinical psychologist in liaison with psychiatric charity hospitals. In addition to this, we strive to eradicate the social stigma attached to mental illness by advocating a broader understanding of human well being."

Another aim of the HCC is to get women and youth in particular

involved in innovative leadership roles, whether within the organization or in sister organizations. It also seeks to give practical examples of successful partnerships for development between organizations and the private and government sectors.

The center is currently involved in a literacy campaign in the performing arts, with particular focus on music and the fine arts.

The Health and Culture Center

The Health and Culture Center (HCC) was founded in 1992 as a registered NGO in Sana'a to promote the health of the Yemeni community through cultural and health services. It began at a time when Yemen itself was moving towards democracy and pluralism. Since its establishment, the HCC has grown into a motivated, innovative, and pioneering NGO that is directed by a board of trustees, of which the majority are women. The HCC was established with a special interest in the psychological and medical health of artists and creative Yemeni personalities from the occupational point of view. It also embraced the challenges arising from a radically changing Yemeni society by offering a multitude of services aimed at providing a creative venue for Yemenis with special attention to marginalized communities such as women and youth.

The Center's focus on social development moved into three main categories: mental health, the arts, and women's empowerment. Since the beginning, the center has provided many services and activities that have fluctuated greatly due to donations and budget changes. In the beginning, the services provided were: free psychological treatment with walk-in hours, an anonymous hotline, English lessons, music lessons on the 'ud, violin and guitar, aerobics/fitness facilities for

women, computer/electrical training, herbal medicine consultations, and calligraphy/fine arts lessons. Activities included weekly lectures on different topics featuring the Creative Works and ideas of the intellectual and artistic community of Sana'a. The Center saw a burst of activity at this time mainly due to the generosity of enthusiastic Yemeni businessmen. The other main source of funding comes from the contribution of the Kuwaiti Princess and poet, Dr. Suad Al-Sabah.

By 2000, the HCC saw a dwindling of contributions from the Yemeni community and after continuously providing the aforementioned services and activities for four years, much of its services and programs were stopped. Music lessons, the women's fitness program and the free mental health treatment program continued on. New establishments included the inauguration of the center's newsletter, *Shuraka*, a monthly newsletter with a focus on human rights and development. It is a bilingual newsletter (Arabic/English) with more than 3,000 copies distributed free of charge to all relevant audiences and partner organizations.

Moreover, the HCC produces cassettes hailing the increasing participation of women in elections, and engages expatriate and foreign visitors in Yemeni society through performing arts programs and liaising the efforts of foreign visitors through a cultural and intellectual exchange.

The center is now no longer capable of continuing all the programs it once had, and while running strongly despite financial limitations, it is now limited to only six programs: music lessons, women's fitness facilities, mental health treatment, the newsletter *Shuraka*, CD series on various topics pertaining to Yemeni society, and intercultural exchange with expatriate and foreign visitor communities.

Culture Boom in Abu Dhabi

Until recently, Abu Dhabi wasn't exactly noted for special cultural ambitions. These seemed to be left up to Sharjah, which was long regarded as the undisputed cultural center of the United Arab Emirates. In 1998, Sharjah was even the UNESCO cultural capital of the Arab world. But it is now well known that, with the Cultural District on the island of Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi wants world-class ranking in this area, too. The question is the degree to which this goes beyond mere tourism marketing and image building.

The cultural sites on Saadiyat are part of a gigantic development project that aims to make the "Island of Happiness" the most important destination and motor of tourism in Abu Dhabi. Accordingly, they too lie in the purview of the Tourism Development & Investment Company (TDIC). The latter not only ordered a Guggenheim Abu Dhabi from the Guggenheim Foundation in New York, but a master plan for the entire Cultural District. As commissioned, the team under Foundation Director Thomas Krens conceived a "critical mass" of museums and other cultural facilities for which money was apparently no object and whose announcement triggered the desired media hype.

If one talks with insiders of the political and cultural scene in Abu Dhabi, one learns that the Saadiyat Culture District is tied to expectations that go beyond an increase in the number of tourists and an enhancement of reputation. Without a doubt, operating the diverse cultural sites will have far-reaching effects on the emirate, the country, and the region - which apparently corresponds exactly with the initiators' intentions.

The historian Frauke Heard-Bey, who has lived in Abu Dhabi since 1967, elucidates the new openness as a consequence of a change of generations and power after the death of Sheik Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in November 2004. In the almost four decades of his rule over the emirate, he accompanied



Exhibition at the Emirates Palace, February - April, 2007

all modernization with the cautious effort to avoid exposing the self-understanding of the local population to all-too-great challenges. The new concept, by contrast, is oriented much more intensely toward interacting with the world.

Zaki Nusseibeh, under Sheik Zayed and today still the personal advisor of the ruler of Abu Dhabi, who is simultaneously President of the UAE, confirms this assessment. As Vice Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Culture and Heritage Authority (ADACH) and head or executive board member of several deliberative bodies, Nusseibeh is one of the protagonists of the emirate's cultural development. For him, the point of the Cultural District on Saadiyat is not revving up tourism or polishing an image, but a much broader vision, a new educational, cultural, and civilizational approach. He says that Abu Dhabi, whose oil reserves will last more than another hundred years, has no need to think about financial profit from such cultural projects. "The project is part of Abu Dhabi's plans for the cultural and educational development of its young people, and its goal is to build bridges to the world, balancing its traditions and heritage as an Islamic and Arab country

with a truly global cultural outlook that embraces the world." The emirate is prepared to make quite substantial contributions to join in a universal world civilization in which it makes no difference whether someone comes from the East or the West, what cultural roots he has, or what religion he professes.

The planned cultural sites are not the only means Abu Dhabi wants to use to bring together people and institutions that want to collaborate on realizing such a vision. In parallel, there is also an educational offensive in every imaginable area: the humanities, the natural sciences, medical research, new technologies, etc. The aim is for specialists from all over the world - and in particular those of Arab descent - to be drawn to Abu Dhabi and to make a new home there. Sorbonne University in Paris has already founded a campus in Abu Dhabi, and Nusseibeh is on its administrative board. Yale University in the United States plans to open an Art Institute in the city in September 2008, and New York University wants to begin instruction at a Middle Eastern Campus in 2010.

Zaki Nusseibeh says, "Art is openness to the world," which means that fostering the arts does something

against the concept of a clash of cultures and against various strands of fundamentalism. He adds that a worldview can be better reformed through culture than through politics. The cultural highlights imported to Abu Dhabi from outside, which will also offer educational programs, are needed to set standards and to provide impetus to other institutions and experts. But Nusseibeh notes that it is extremely important to avoid simply steamrolling local traditions; they should be integrated and strengthened instead.

This is also underscored by Omar Ghobash. He is a co-owner of Third Line Gallery in Dubai, currently probably the most interesting commercial gallery for contemporary art in the United Arab Emirates. Ghobash is presently working in Abu Dhabi as Deputy CEO of the Emirates Foundation, which was founded in 2005. He says that the foundation's strategy focuses on individuals, "to understand things from the ground up and working back from that to develop policies", that is, listening to people and finding out what moves them. In comparison with the globally oriented major projects, the Emirates Foundation works on a more "human scale". Since 2007, it has granted stipends to cultural workers of all disciplines who live in the UAE. "I personally feel much more comfortable on a human scale, because from our perspective, that's from where the problems are going to be solved."

Ghobash feels that the meaning and purpose of the Saadiyat Cultural District and its effects on Abu Dhabi and the entire country have not yet been adequately conveyed to the local residents. Possible dangers and opportunities have not been publicly considered and discussed enough. But he hopes this will happen; after all, there is still plenty of time before the new cultural institutions are opened.

Even among the artists who live in the Emirates, who ought to take a vital interest in the cultural projects in Abu Dhabi, a certain skepticism seems widespread. According to Ebtisam AbdulAziz, many find it hard to imag-

ine that, without corresponding traditions, Abu Dhabi could be developed to surpass Sharjah as the country's new cultural metropolis. Most people working in cultural areas are surely much more closely connected to Sharjah, due to the Emirates Fine Arts Society located there, its Art Museum, the Sharjah Biennial, and other exhibitions, events, and cultural institutions.

Local artists are aware, of course, of the astronomical sums being spent on the museums on the island of Saadiyat. And they have also heard of the intentions to build up independent art collections that also include the country's own contemporary art - which ought to be a matter of course. But so far, the country's institutions do not seem to have made any efforts to secure important works by purchasing them. They are being pre-empted from elsewhere, as Mohammed Kazem reports: "We have noticed lately that museums, galleries, institutions, and individuals from outside the country have purchased many of the works of local artists, from both the first generation of pioneers and the new generation. The process of reacquiring these works would be difficult, of course, and we therefore hope that our local institutes become more aware of the importance of these works."

Despite all their misgivings and their disappointment at not being more fundamentally involved, the artists seem to fundamentally approve of the cultural plans for Abu Dhabi. A few days before our talk with Zaki Nusseibeh, we astonishingly heard similar opinions from Hassan Sharif in Dubai. An artist, theoretician, and leading figure in a scene in the Emirates interested in experimental art, he sees a deep cleft between East and West that has substantially expanded in recent years. He says the rulers and institutions in the UAE should be aware of this and should work to build a new civilization that is sorely needed and that could grow here. Such a civilization would be of use to both East and West and could bridge the distance between the two sides. This would indeed be forward-oriented thinking. But if one wants to use contemporary art for this,

one must give the artists more freedom and not only tolerate current art practices, but also value and foster them. This necessarily depends on further developing and modifying a still strongly traditionally anchored understanding of art.

Ebtisam AbdulAziz warns that the new museums must not become storage depots for something that no one really wants. In a certain way, a country is reflected in an art museum; such a museum conveys something of the country's history, development, and inhabitants, and for this reason it should be open for the widest possible range of artistic approaches in the Emirates. One can only hope that she is not disappointed in this and that the policy of the Guggenheim in Abu Dhabi is more open than in Bilbao. There it took 10 years before local artists were recognized with exhibitions.

It is astonishing how few concrete details of the Cultural District on the island of Saadiyat are known even to emirate circles interested in art. This could soon change. As recently became known, the Tourism Development & Investment Company is delegating further planning and realization of the cultural projects, which surely also includes publicity, to a Cultural Council. A Deputy Director was not hired until October 2007: Charles Merewether, an internationally renowned curator and art historian who was also artistic director of the Sydney Biennial 2006. First he will have to build up the infrastructure of the Cultural Council and recruit and train a staff. And of course there is a wealth of conceptual details to clear up, among them such tricky ones as what works of art a society molded by Islam will endure in the Louvre of Abu Dhabi, and how to answer this question without provoking accusations of censorship. Exhibitions and events should make the profile and program of the museums recognizable before they open. As Merewether emphasizes, alongside all the visions of the future, it is high time to face up to reality and its complex implications.

Source: *Nafas Art Magazine*

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Rubat Tarim: The spring of knowledge

By Mohammed Ahmed Bin Shihab
For the Yemen Times

It is like the sun sending its rays to purify and give light to the earth, removing the darkness of night and giving vitality and liveliness. This is Rubat Tarim, and since its establishment, its mission has been to enlighten and purify minds, to eradicate ignorance and to revive the movement of knowledge. It is prevalent everywhere in the world, so you can find the knowledge of Rubat Tarim in every country, whether by those who studied in it or by their students.

For years people frequented Tarim, the city of knowledge and scholars, to drink from its abundant spring and equip themselves with useful knowledge. At that time, the azz'awiyas (rooms built beside the mosque or above it to hold lessons in the Islamic sciences), and the houses of scholars were the places of teaching and learning. Knowledge seekers coming from outside Tarim suffered from a lack of accommodation, so some were housed in mosques, others in azz'awiyas, while still others lived with relatives or friends.

After the end of the ancient era, the number of knowledge seekers coming to Tarim increased, which is why a group of notables from Tarim thought to build a religious institution to be a place of study for foreign and domestic students in Tarim, and to house foreign students. Those notables were Mohammed Bin Salem Assri, Ahmed Bin Omer Al-Shatri, Abdul-Qader Bin Ahmed Al-



Tarim is famous for its Islamic architecture.

Haddad, Ahmed Bin Abdul-Rahman Al-Juneed and sheikh Mohammed Bin Omer Arfan. They bought land on which to build the Rubat and endowed real estate in Singapore to invest in the institution.

The construction of Rubat Tarim began on the 25th of Thulqa'adah, 1303 A.H. and finished on the last day of Thulhejah in 1304 A.H. Rubat

Tarim was inaugurated in 14 Muharram, 1305A.H., during which ceremony the biography of the prophet Mohammed was read. General supervision of teaching was ascribed, since its opening, to the mufti of Hadramout, Abdul-Rahman Bin Mohammed Al-Meshoor. Among the first teachers in Rubat Tarim were Alwi Bin Abdul-Rahman Bin Abibaker Al-Meshoor, Hussein Bin Mohammed Al-Kaf, sheikh Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al-Bekri Al-Khateeb, Hassan Bin Alwi Bin Shihab, sheikh Abubaker Bin Ahmed Bin Abdullah Al-Bekri Al-Khateeb and sheikh Mohammed Bin Ahmed Al-Khateeb. These teachers were delegated to teach when Abdullah Bin Omer Al-Shatri was appointed to teach upon his return from Makka, where he had studied for four years previously. The founders of Rubat Tarim gave Al-Shatri the leadership of Rubat and its educational administration. He spent most of his life teaching and serving Rubat Tarim voluntarily. He would spend six hours with his family, with the rest spent in Rubat Tarim. He continued in this manner until he died in 1361A.H. After his death, his four sons (Mohammed, Abubaker, Hasan and Salem) succeeded him in the task of teaching. Economic supervision and foreign student affairs management was ascribed to Omer Bin Ahmed Al-Shatri, the father of Abdullah Bin Omer Al-Shatri, who volunteered to serve in the Rubat for more than 35 years.

The system of teaching in the Rubat is a traditional one, in which classes are held at three times: after fajr (dawn prayers), before 'asar (mid-afternoon prayers) and between maghreb (sunset prayers) and 'isha (evening prayers), in addition to additional lessons at other times. The students study various sciences such as law, grammar and etymology, prophetic narration, Islamic creed, prophetic biography, etc. They proceed gradually from less to more

advanced, as well as memorize some core texts. Besides these lessons, public lessons are held on Saturday and Sunday mornings which scholars, students, notables and common people from Tarim and neighboring villages and cities attend. Visitors to Tarim also try to attend this lesson, in which they read books on Qur'anic interpretation, prophetic narration, law, mysticism (Sufism) and the sayings of contemporary scholars and righteous people in Hadramout. The chief scholar of Tarim presides over this lesson.

Many students have come to study in Rubat Tarim from Yemen and outside Yemen, from Southeast Asia to Africa. A lot of scholars graduated from Rubat who later traveled abroad to spread Islam. Some have even established religious institutions, while others went to the jungles of Africa, where Allah honored them by causing people to become Muslims as a result of their work. An example of this is Ahmed bin Meshoor Al-Haddad, who brought approximately 70,000 Africans to Islam.

According to statistics, the number of scholars who graduated from Rubat Tarim has reached more than 13,000. Rubat Tarim continued performing its mission until 1400 A.H. when it was closed down at the hands of communists, who were dominant in the southern part of Yemen before unification. But it was reopened after the unification of Yemen in 1412 A.H. and continues to function. The number of foreign students in Rubat Tarim is about 300, with 1,500 Yemeni students.

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