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# Eight year old kidnapped child returns home but still in shock



Ali (left) happy to return home and be with his best friend Essa.

**By: Enas Ahmed Alawami and Ali Saeed**  
 SANA'A, Jan 4 — Ali Mohammed Al-Odaini, 8, was able to celebrate the New Year with his family after spending almost one month as a hostage of the Bani Dhabyan Khawlan tribe.  
 "I missed my family so much and especially missed my best friend Essa. I never want to go to that place again," said the child.  
 He was released on Wednesday Dec 31, 2008 after an intensive media campaign triggered by the child's family

who complained that the state was not interested in their child's safety.  
 "I wished my son was a German or of any other nationality so that our ordeal would be of concern to someone. But now I am only glad that he is back although I fear he might have developed some kind of emotional set back," said Ali's mother Afrah Mohammed Saeed Al-Kamel, a widowed and mother of eight — Ali being her youngest.  
 Another clan of the same tribe had kidnapped three Germans for three days before enormous efforts by the government, tribal mediators and the German embassy in Yemen got them released.

neighbor," the mother explained.  
 "We contacted the Ministry of Interior and the German ambassador through Nabeel Al-Basha, a member of parliament. The government promised to free my child," she said.  
 The kidnapers agreed to let the child go on condition that the government will solve their dispute with Al-Khamiri.  
 During his stay at Bani Dhabyan, Ali remembers falling ill, and the kidnapers bringing in a doctor to see him. His mother has no way of finding out what really happened with him during his ordeal although he assured her that the kidnapers took care of him.  
 "I used to tell him not to wander in the streets because the bad man will come and take him and do him harm; I never knew that one day my threats would come true. My poor child must have been so scared when they snatched him, he must of thought they were the bad men I kept telling him about," his mother said through her tears.  
 Gradually he is readjusting to his normal life he had before being kid-

napped, although he keeps reflecting on how different the tribal men were and how "tough and rough and full of guns" they were.  
 Ali comes from a poor family originally from Ibb but now living in Sana'a. The family lived in a small house with two rooms that was offered to us by a charitable benefactor.  
 "I had gone to school early that day because Essa challenged me on who would reach the school first, when I was near the school around seven in the morning a group of armed men grabbed me from the street and shoved me into a car, I thought they will kill me," remembered Ali with a sad look.  
 His friend Essa was one of the highlights of his return home although he still suffers from insecurity and the fear of being taken again.  
 He remembered the kidnapers and how they pushed him under their feet in the back seat of the four wheel drive car so that he would not be noticed by the police in the check points as they sped away.  
 "When we reached the country side they let me come out from under their shoes and sit beside them, when they realized I was not the boy they wanted they were angry but then they told me not to be afraid gave me candy and told me to say that my name was Ali Al-Khamiri," the child recalled.  
 Sheikh Abdul Qawi Shareif, the deputy of the Aldhalae governorate, and the head sheikhs of the Bani Dhabyan tribe convinced the kidnapers to return the child through the Ministry of Interior. He was also the same person behind the release of the German hostages.  
 Ali's family has taken him to see a psychiatrist to help him overcome the shock but she commented that her son is not his usual bubbly self.  
 "He has become very timid, and accepts anything without questioning or even speaking up. He used to be much more outspoken sometimes even rebellious," his uncle Faraj Abdulbaqi Kulaib observed.  
 He returned to school on Saturday Jan. 3, 2008. His classmates applauded him when he showed up in class and the administration is organizing a welcoming back party for him soon.

## Yemen Times Person of the Year 2008

Shada Mohammed Nasser

See page 5 for interview

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## While Gaza crisis cause more hostility against Yemeni Jews, Murdered Jew family demands transferring trial to Sana'a

By: Mohammed bin Sallam

SANA'A, Jan. 4 — During the second court session of the trial of Abdul Aziz Al-Abdi, who is accused of murdering Jewish citizen Masha Al-Nahari this past December 31, journalists and lawyers said that "the court session was full of chaos and quarrels. A soldier was attacked by one of the family members of the accused. In addition, the Jewish family received death threats from the murderer's relatives."

Advocates of Al-Nahari demanded to transfer the case and trial to Sana'a due to lack of proper security at the Amran Court and dominance of Al-Abdi's relatives who "control the events of the session and create chaos inside the court hall," said Abdul Rahman Barman, a lawyer from Allaw Law Foundation which volunteered to defend Al-Nahari's case in the court.

"Amid lack of security and the chaos that Al-Abdi's relatives created, the trial will not be safe," Barman said.

Today, the Yemeni Jews in Amran, some 70 kilometers northwest of Sana'a, are living in a state of horror after receiving threats from some Salafia supporters. The threats are increasing with the ongoing aggression in Gaza by the Israeli occupants.

Although the government took security precautions to protect relatives of Al-Nahari from any potential aggression particularly since the situation in Palestine has escalated, the Jewish community expressed their apprehensions that Al-Nahari's case may not be taken seriously by the court. They also refuted



Children of deceased Masha Nahari, playing in their front yard. Because of hostility against them and fear of harm they remain indoors as much as possible.

Al-Abdi's family's assumption that he is mentally sick by saying that he had threatened to kill them if they don't embrace Islam or leave the country, which a mentally ill man cannot do or plan. During the recent court session, head of the court ordered to imprison three of Al-Abdi's relatives and transferred two others to the General Prosecution for investigation. The session was adjourned until January 12.

### Crazy or fanatic?

Al-Abdi confirmed during the previous hearings that he killed Al-Nahari to be closer to God. He maintained that he had warned the Jews a month before he carried out his threats. He further said that

he had warned the Raida district security six months before he murdered Al-Nahari demanding that the Jewish community in Raida be relocated from the area as they arouse concerns and have relations with Israel.

While relatives of Al-Abdi say that he suffers from mental and psychological problems, he confirms that he killed Al-Nahari because he rejected to embrace Islam. Al-Abdi's tribe had threatened to avenge from the other Jews if the court issues a death penalty against him.

The judge had ordered a mental check to identify whether the killer is truly crazy or not. However, the mental health check has not taken place so far.

"Someone who carries weapons in

public, who follows the news, and who knows who is who, is certainly not crazy," commented Khaled Al-Anisi executive director of HOOD, the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms who had volunteered to represent Nahari's family.

Five lawyers on the other hand volunteered to defend Al-Abdi, accusing Al-Anisi of not being a good Muslim and of defending a Jew.

"They told me that Muslims should stick together and not do as we are doing in HOOD by defending a Jew, and recited a verse from the Quran saying the same. I answered by another verse from the Quran which means that a murder is a murder and killers must be punished whatever they are," explained Al-Anisi remembering a verse exchange debate happening in court between him and his opponents. Al-Anisi explained that the lawyers demand to refer Al-Abdi to mental check is not valid since he, Al-Abdi, refused their attorney, and hence they should not be allowed to defend him. According to the law, only those who are absolutely insane are exempt from legal liability. In Al-Abdi's case, he is a normal man who acts based on his fanatic beliefs, explained the lawyer.

"There are so many complications and mishaps in this trial, this is why we want to transfer it to Sana'a," explained Al-Anisi.

### Regional events turn local

The Jewish community is intimidated in the neighborhoods where they live and the markets where they have been working many years. They also say that some

conservative Muslims enter the Jewish synagogue and chew qat inside in an attempt to provoke them. They say that some people intimidate Jewish women on the streets and demand them to embrace Islam so that they can marry them. In addition, anonymous groups close the houses of the Jews from outside, throw stones at them and threaten them to kill them.

With the aggravation of the Israeli aggression in Gaza, the Yemeni security apparatuses caught a man late last week after he entered to the Tourist City, with the aim of reaching the area where around 40 Jewish citizens live since they were transferred from Sa'ada two years ago.

Many Jews who earn their living as carpenters or silversmiths question how they can continue to do so without leaving their homes. Barman maintains that they are no longer able to practice their life normally and most of them have stopped work after they received death threats.

The Jewish citizens in Raida expressed their eagerness to be moved into secure areas such as Ibb, Taiz and Sana'a. "People in those areas are educated and don't bear grudges against the Yemeni Jews," they said. But they maintained that they don't want to leave their villages quickly as they are afraid that they may lose their property as happened to the Sa'ada Jews in 2007. They said that they cannot leave their houses and lands unless they are given guarantees and decent compensations.

Malikah Ya'ish Al-Nahari, one of Masha's sisters who have come from

Israel as soon as they learned their brother's death, said that going to court without protection endangers the life of the family as "Al-Abdi's relatives carry weapons". "We had to reach the court through alleys. We received threats from Al-Abdi's relatives who told us that they will claim the lives of every Jew and kidnap the Jewish women," said Malikah. "They say that if Al-Abdi is killed by the court, they will kill 20 Jews, instead."

The Jewish minority live in Amran and Sa'ada governorates. Thousands of them traveled to Israel in 1948 and the years after. Around one thousand Jews currently live in Amran. Some of them travel to Israel, the US and Britain to visit their relatives and come back.

Some efforts have been exerted during the last few days to accommodate the Jews of Amran after the recent threats. The sources said that Yahya bin Ya'ish, son of the ex-rabbi of the Jewish community in Yemen, received death threats through text messages to his phone. The rabbi demanded the government provide them with proper security.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh promised to grant a piece of land and YR one million to every family of the Jewish community. However, the government may prepare private apartments to accommodate them until the situation becomes clearer in the future with regard to the devastating situation in the occupied lands.

Al-Nahari, who had two sisters who live with their husbands in Israel, was an only son. He left behind nine children and his father suffers from a stroke.

## Physicians strike in solidarity with attacked doctor

By: Khaled Al-Hilaly

SANA'A, Jan 4 — Doctors in both government and private hospitals in Sana'a have been on a partial strike for three days since Saturday in protest against the attack on Dr. Derhem Al-Qadasi and demand the arrest of the attackers.

Since the medical practitioners started the strike they have gradually increased the number of non operating hours until they assume a full strike in protest and in solidarity with Al-Qadasi.

The full strike is expected to start on Tuesday unless the government captures the aggressors. "Today I met with the Prime Minister and the Head of Al-Shura Council and they promised to take action and bring the attackers to justice," said Dr. Yahya Al-Thawr the head of the legal committee following Al-Qadasi issue.

"There is absolutely no justification to commit such a crime against a doctor," he added.

On Saturday, Dr. Al-Qadasi who was in charge of head of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Science and Technology Hospital in Sana'a was victim to aggression by a group of 18 tribesmen.

Upon being informed of their father's death by Al-Qadasi, sons and some relatives of the patient Ahmed Al-Maflahi, 85, stormed into the hospital and threatened the unarmed security. The attackers



Doctors and staff of the Science and Technology University Hospital standing guard on Sunday to protect the hospital and Dr. Derhem Al-Qadasi who is still in a critical condition.

went to the ICU, found the doctor and stabbed him with a knife.

They damaged his right lung and main arterial vessels.

"The cameras of the hospital recorded the whole criminal attack on Dr. Al-Qadasi. We have the evidence and we are waiting for the authorities to arrest the attackers to submit our evidences to the court," said Ameen Al-Salahi at Science

and Technology Hospital director office.

Al-Qadasi underwent four operations but remains unconscious.

Last week, Head of Physicians and Pharmacists Syndicate Abdul-Qawai Al-Shamiri threatened to organize a sit-in if the criminals were not caught and subjected to punishment. "The government knows what we can do," said Al-Shamiri.

## South African hostages released

By: Aqeel Al-Halali  
And Yemen Times Staff

SANA'A, Jan. 3 — Yemeni tribesmen have released a South African woman and her two sons, which they abducted on Friday in Abyan 150km east of the port city of Aden.

A tribal mediation committee conducted negotiations with the kidnapers who demanded that "one of their relatives who is imprisoned in Sana'a central Prison for a criminal case" in return of freeing the African hostages.

Local tribesmen confirmed that the trio was released on Saturday Dec. 3, but refused to further elaborate on the mechanism of releasing the tourists or the government's commitment toward the kidnapers' demands.

Pierre Smith, an accountant who works in Sana'a, was able to contact his wife and sons aged three and six and has been assured that they are safe and have not been harmed in any way.

John Davis, the South African ambassador and honorary consul to Yemen, who is based in Saudi Arabia, said, "I believe that Mr. Smith was able to speak to his wife on more than one occasion and is assured that they have not been harmed in any way."

According to Davis, the Smiths were on their way to Aden, after a holiday on the coast, when their car broke down. The husband then sent his wife and children home with a driver in another vehicle. They were stopped on a road in a remote area and kidnapped.

This latest kidnapping comes after two weeks of a similar operation in December. Three Germans - a female aid worker who had been in the country for ten years and her parents - were held hostage for five days, after being seized in the mountainous Bani Dhabyan region east of Sana'a.

They were released after a tribal dignitary acted as mediator.

Some Yemeni tribes resort to kidnapping foreigners "to exert pressure on the government release prisoners or provide essential services". Most of these operations in end in the release of the hostages without harm. However, in 1998 four foreign hostages who were part of a group of 16 tourists were killed when the security apparatuses attempted to break into the location of the kidnapers to release the hostages.

The Yemeni government established recently special courts to consider the cases of kidnapping tourists. According to the new legislations, kidnapers are

sentenced to death as punishment.

Mohammed Al-Dhahiri, professor of political science in Sana'a University, said that kidnapping phenomenon in Yemen "needs scientific treatment based on researching the reasons through modern research institutions that track down the phenomenon and demands of kidnapers until it is ultimately eradicated."

Al-Dhahiri confirmed yesterday that "kidnapping will continue if the problem is tackled thoroughly and scientifically". He said that security measures taken so far have not been successful.

He demanded the government to enhance the judiciary and law authority "and put a strategic view for the development process in the country to rid all the negative phenomena including kidnapping".

Observers say that the strategy of the Yemeni government has taken a different way as it forms tribal mediation committees to release foreign hostages without any conditions instead of considering the kidnapers' demands. They say that the government uses force to release hostages if mediation fails.

About the past 15 years, tribes have abducted more than 200 foreigners in an attempt to extract concessions from the central government.

## Gender-responsive budgeting needed for women's development

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Jan. 3 — A survey on the extent and understanding of gender-responsive budgeting among governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations revealed that only 33 percent of the surveyed sample had taken gender into consideration while drawing up their budgets.

Dr. Abdulqadir Al-Banna a researcher with the Strategic Development Center surveyed 31 government organizations, 17 non-government, and 14 international organizations whose work is related to gender issues and women's development.

"Some of the interviewed people claim to integrate gender in their budgets, while in fact they do nothing more than allocate finances for women related projects," he said.

The Women National Committee, whose advocacy work for women's development in Yemen included this survey, and which was an Oxfam-GB Yemen Program Good Governance project funded by the Netherlands, hosted a seminar on Sunday to discuss the survey's findings.

"Gender responsive budgets are simply budgets created while keeping in mind that women exist, and represent at least 50 percent of the beneficiaries of those budgets," said Houria Mashour, Deputy Chairperson of the WNC at the seminar.

According to indicators from the survey, the masterminds behind national budgets, and even organizational budgets, create them in such a way as to target only men, with women's interest coming as an afterthought. Examples of gender-insensitive budgets are those where funds are allocated for building girls' schools adjacent to boys' schools.

Because Yemen is a conservative

society, parents would rather not enroll their daughters in schools where a large male population is present nearby.

Therefore, gender-responsive budgeting is an effective way to evaluate how committed governmental, and non-governmental, establishments are to addressing women's needs, which is the state's general approach.

"The idea is a redistribution of spending which does not necessarily require an increase in budgets, or require additional financial support to be made available for women's issues, in such a way as to suggest that they fall outside the national budgeting picture," said Al-Banna.

### Continuous Efforts

The Women National Committee has worked on integrating gender consideration into the principle development projects in cooperation with development partners in Yemen.

These efforts aim to progress the implementation of the national strategy for women and gender development's two phases (2003-2005, and 2006-2010).

"A need to have gender responsive budgets appeared as a necessity and a solution to many of the obstacles standing in the way of integrating women's issues into existing development plans, in order to direct resources to both women and men's needs simultaneously," said Tahani Al-Khaiba, Gender Officer of Oxfam's Good Governance project in Yemen.

This trend received significant support from some of the donors such as Oxfam-GB Yemen's program which we could say was one of the early starters, if not the first international organization that took interest in this issue and supported the promotion of gender-responsive budgeting in Yemen.

In 2003, Oxfam adopted a number of projects paving the way for serious demands to be made regarding integration of gender into the national budgeting strategy.

### Findings

Government organizations' surveys show an inkling of support for gender integration in planning and budgeting, due largely to the creation of women's departments in all the ministries, even if the actual role of these departments is quite unclear.

Many officials have indicated that are several projects for targeting women's development currently in the pipeline, however, in reality around 55 percent of women related projects did not receive the financial support that was originally pledged, and were not prioritized in the various governmental plans.

On the other, surveys of the non-government organizations show an improvement in gender integration when compared to government organizations, as many NGOs have been seen to support and interact with gender issues in a bid to close the gender gap. Indeed, over 70 percent of the surveyed NGOs had a dedicated officer for gender and women's issues.

Results from surveying international organizations show that they provide continuous support for women's projects and gender related development programs, with 92 percent of such organizations confirming their support for developing women in Yemen, often using their influence to exert pressure and push for gender-responsive policy-making.

Moreover, 50 percent of those organizations provide conditional grants and support to the government, such as fair distribution of resources among beneficiaries from both genders, and so on.

Table: Companies showing past or present evidence of gender-responsive budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting	Organization						Total	
	Government		NGO		International		No	%
	No	%	No	%	No	%		
Yes	13	41.9	6	35.3	2	14.3	21	33.9
No	18	58.1	11	64.7	12	85.7	41	66.1
Total	31	100	17	100	14	100	62	100

## Their News

## Social Marketing Initiative in Yemen

Social Marketing Project for Reproductive Health Services is one of the Ministry of Public Health Projects funded by the German Development Bank (KfW) started in the last Saturday mobile cinema shows for youth in boys and girls secondary schools in the governorates of Lahj and Abyan. This activity is part of the family planning awareness campaign launched by the project in 2007 in 7 governorates and expanded to 14 governorates in 2008 based on the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Study (KAP) undertaken in 2006 in Six Governorates. The aim of the behavior change campaign in family planning is to improve knowledge, attitude and practices of population regarding family planning issues. The Social marketing Project and in cooperation with many local partners and implementing agencies conducted this campaign through various types of activities like producing and broadcasting TV and Radio spots, distribution of IEC materials, theater shows, health education session for women and men in the rural areas, and mobile cinema shows. We have to notice her that the project will run another round of the KAP Study in the third quarter of 2009 to measure and assess the impact of the Behavior Change Campaign in Yemen.

## Doha center launches petition for Al-Zaidi

The Doha Centre for Media Freedom is launching a petition on behalf of Muntazer Al-Zaidi of Al-Baghdadiya. "The Iraqi courts have the duty to ensure that Al-Zaidi has a fair trial and that his physical safety is guaranteed: revenge has no part to play in his treatment. The shoe incident should be regarded as what it was: an insult without consequence", the Centre said.

A groundswell of support has emerged in Arab countries for Iraqi journalist Muntazer Al-Zaidi, who threw a pair of shoes at US President George W. Bush at a press conference in Baghdad on 14 December.

The reporter, who works for the television station Al-Baghdadiya, should be made a symbol of resistance against the occupation of Iraq, some commentators said.

Both official sources and the general public in the Arab world praised Al-Zaidi for his act. Hitting someone with a shoe is regarded as the ultimate humiliation in Iraq, and many sources felt that Bush deserved the insult because of the devastating impact of his policies since the invasion of the country by coalition forces in 2003.

More than 4,200 American soldiers and tens of thousands of Iraqis have died in the conflict. Iraq remains a country torn apart by deep divisions. It has been ruined despite its wealth and the massive spending devoted to the war effort by Washington. Relatively little has been spent on rebuilding the country.

The support for Al-Zaidi points to resentment which is obviously felt more keenly in the Middle East, but which is also recognised elsewhere. One striking example is that the American people have just elected a new president whose foreign policy is totally opposed to that of his predecessor. The comic aspect of the shoe incident has been eclipsed by the worldwide media coverage it received, which is on a par with the scale of that resentment.

Allegations of a security lapse cannot excuse the excessive physical violence inflicted on Al-Zaidi since his arrest, and they certainly do not justify the cursory justice still in force in Iraq, especially as regards public freedoms. The promises of Baghdad's new leaders to strengthen democracy have done little to improve matters.

Nevertheless, Al-Zaidi has contravened the profession's standards of conduct and his insulting gesture should not be taken as a model for protest by journalists as a whole. His behavior was reprehensible because it was offensive to the dignity of others, and it can in no way be regarded as a valid means to express an opinion.

Nor should the incident be allowed to obscure other cases that are much more damaging to justice and individual freedoms: torture at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, the Americans' Guantanamo detention camp, and the 222 journalists killed in Iraq since the war began. To ensure this does not happen, the Iraqi courts have the duty to ensure that Al-Zaidi has a fair trial and that his physical safety is guaranteed: revenge has no part to play in his treatment. The shoe incident should be regarded as what it was: an insult without consequence.

According to Brand Republic,

Guardian News & Media will launch a news wire service for Arab speaking countries next year. The service will be provided through Saudi newspaper, Al Sharq, which is based in Qatar. The paper will translate up to 15 stories per day for media in the region.

According to Tim Brooks, managing director of Guardian News & Media, the launch of the new service is an effort to build upon the company's goal of becoming the "the world's leading liberal voice," building on the launch of the Guardian America website in October 2007.

Brooks also stated that the introduction of more services is scheduled for 2010 in order for Guardian N&M to expand into "Anglophone markets, growth markets and those with no strong tradition of free press."

Earlier this month, Guardian News & Media appointed Caroline Little as chief executive of its North America operations. The appointment followed a series of moves strengthening the GN&M brand in the US.

In July, GN&M acquired ContentNext, owner of digital media news site paidContent, for an estimated £15m. And in October 2007, it launched Guardian America, a news website dedicated to its growing US audience.

Iraq shoe-thrower trial postponed  
Iraq's Central Criminal Court decided on Tuesday to postpone the trial of an Iraqi journalist who won global fame for throwing his shoes at US President George W. Bush, a court spokesman said.

"The postponement came after Zaidi's lawyers presented an appeal to a higher court," Abdel Sattar Beyraqdar told AFP.

"The Supreme Criminal Court decided to postpone the trial of journalist Muntazer al-Zaidi until the higher court issues its decision," he said, adding that a new trial date would be set later.

The 29-year-old journalist for the Al-Baghdadiya television channel had been

due to appear in court this Wednesday on charges of "aggression against a foreign head of state during an official visit."

He faces up to 15 years in jail if convicted.

Zaidi's lawyer, Dhiya al-Saadi, told AFP that he had requested that the trial be cancelled because his client's actions fell within his constitutional rights to express himself freely.

"Our appeal is based on the fact that Zaidi simply expressed his rejection of the occupation and the policy of repression against Iraqis. Zaidi's action falls within the framework of freedom of expression," his lawyer told AFP earlier this week.

"If the court rejects our request for cancellation, the defence will appeal to a higher court," Saadi said.

Zaidi threw his shoes at Bush during the US president's farewell visit to Iraq on December 14, an action considered a grave insult in the Arab world.

He also insulted the American president, shouting: "It is the farewell kiss, you dog."

His action was hailed across the Arab world as an ideal parting gift to a president widely unpopular in the region.

## Visiting scholar program to bring foreign journalists to Berkeley

Experienced journalists and editors around the world have the opportunity to apply for one-year of advanced professional training and academic study at the University of California - Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism. Deadline: March 1, 2009.

The university's International Visiting Scholars' Program is a non-degree program aimed at enhancing participants' reporting skills, expanding their intellectual horizons, and providing a break from the newsroom for in-depth research in their area of interest.

Although the program covers tuition fees, scholars must have at least

US\$16,000 for accommodation and personal expenses in order to obtain a J-1 visa.

Candidates must have a good command of English. Classes begin in mid-August and end in mid-May.

For more information or to apply, contact [jvsadmit@berkeley.edu](mailto:jvsadmit@berkeley.edu) or visit <http://journalism.berkeley.edu/program/vsp/>.

## Grants to support investigative reporting projects

Reporters who work outside the protection of major news organizations are eligible to apply for the Fund for Investigative Journalism for grants to work on investigative journalism stories. Deadline: February 1, 2009.

Established by the late Philip M. Stern in 1969, the fund helps finance investigative pieces on corruption, malfeasance, incompetence, societal ills, and investigative media criticism. Grants range from US\$500 to US\$10,000.

Applicants must write a letter outlining the story idea, what he or she expects to prove, how this will be done, and sources to be used for the proof.

For application guidelines or more information, visit <http://www.fij.org>.

## Youth essay contest to award cash prizes, publication

Students and young professionals ages 18-30 are invited to enter a youth essay competition that encourages youth around the world to get involved in a global civic discussion on issues that concern them.

The contest, being sponsored by the U.S.-based Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), features three general topics: Citizenship in a Democratic Society, Educational Reform and Employment Opportunities, and Entrepreneurship & Leadership.

Essays should be 2,000-4,000 words in length and must be submitted by March 1, 2009. CIPE is offering a US\$1,000 honorarium for the winners, and will publish the top three winning essays via its Economic Reform Feature Service, which is distributed to more than 3,000 subscribers.

Visit [www.cipe.org/essay](http://www.cipe.org/essay) for more information. For questions, e-mail [essay@cipe.org](mailto:essay@cipe.org).

## Galileo GDS in Yemen

Travelport GDS, one of the world's leading global distribution system (GDS) providers operating both the Galileo and Worldspan brands, announced that it has signed an agreement with Universal Travel, to distribute the Galileo GDS in Yemen from January, 2009. The partnership follows Travelport's recent announcement of a multi-million dollar (US) investment in the Middle East, to set up a new, highly efficient direct support network for travel agents in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt and re-define distributor relationship in selected countries, including Yemen.

Galileo has established itself as the leading GDS provider in Yemen over the past 17 years, with a market share of 54 per cent (MIDT data, July, 2008). The partnership with Universal Travel, part of the Universal Group, will begin when Galileo's contract with Yemen Airways, its current distributor in the country, expires at the end of 2008.

"The partnership forged today marks an important milestone for Travelport as we set up our new operations in the region," Rabih Saab, Travelport GDS' Vice President of the Middle East and Africa. "With a 25 year track record and unrivalled knowledge of the Yemeni travel market, Universal Travel is uniquely qualified to help us to serve our customers in this market more efficiently."

"Galileo is the leading GDS system in the market, and we are very much looking forward to partnering with Travelport to serve travel agents and suppliers who rely on the efficiency of Galileo," stated Omar Mohammed, Vice Chairman and Group Managing Director for Universal Travel. "We look forward to a long and successful partnership and to rolling out new and innovative products in the region."

Over the past year, Travelport GDS has increased its presence in the Middle East with the acquisition of Worldspan, which has a well-established and successful business in several key markets



and a wholly-owned operation in Egypt. Travelport GDS has also opened a new, state-of-the-art office in Dubai and has made several key management appointments across the region.

"The Middle East is a dynamic region for travel and one which will continue to grow considerably over the coming years. We firmly believe that by enhancing our relationships with effective distributors in select markets such as Yemen coupled with building more substantial, wholly-owned operations across the region, we will be well positioned to augment our business in this important region," continued Saab.

21 December, 2008: Official launch ceremony was conducted in the Movenpick Ball Room, in the presence of Jennifer D'souza, Travel Port Regional commercial Director, who summarized the introduction of Travel Port and new commercial strategies. Ending a clever speech, Hari Kumar, the Regional Product Manager, concluded the new services offered in the renovated GDS systems provided for Travel Agencies in Yemen. Halim Amman, Universal Travel General Manager wrapped the presentation by a raffle draw, distributing valuable prizes among the invitees from major travel agencies, media and many delegates, then invited everyone to enjoy a lovely lunch and socialize.

## إعلان مناقصة

تعلم منظمة CHF الدولية في اليمن عن رغبتها في شراء سيارة دفع رباعي، فعلى الراغبين تقديم عطايتهم إلى مكتب المنظمة صنعاء شارع حدة أمام سوبر ماركت الجندول جوار المطعم الهندي نمسكار.

تلفون / ٠١-٤٢٧٤٢٥ / فاكس / ٠١-٤٢٧٤٢٦

الموعد النهائي لتقديم العروض / ١٤ / يناير / ٢٠٠٩.

## Tender Announcement

CHF Yemen intends to award a supply contract for one 4 WD vehicle – for its office in Sana'a. Please submit your proposals to the CHF Yemen, Sana'a Office (Haddah, near the Al-Jandool Supermarket)  
Phone: 01 / 427425 - Fax: 01 / 427426  
The deadline for submission of tenders is 14th January 2009.

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REPUBLIC OF YEMEN  
THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND POPULATION  
YEMEN-HEALTH POPULATION PROJECT (Y-HPP)REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR CONSULTANCY FIRMS  
to conduct

## Environmental and Social Impact Assessment- (RFP # 1)

The Government of Republic Yemen has received a grant (PHRD No. TF093103) from Japan, and intends to apply part of the proceeds of this grant to payments under the contract to conduct Environmental and Social Impact Assessment. (ESIA) in Aden, Sana'a & Reimah governorates.

The objective of the ESIA is:

- 1- Ensure all environmental consequence of rehabilitation and operations primary health care facilities are evaluated and addressed as part of the mitigating measures incorporated into the project design and to ensure compliance with World Bank operating policy OP 4.01 on environmental safeguards.
- 2- Analyze the social context and social issues, as well as the distributional impacts of the intended project services on the different stakeholder groups, in particular Component 1, at the service delivery level;
- 3- Initiate a process of stakeholder/beneficiaries consultation and participation which will feed in Component 2 in terms of the impact evaluation process and results-based monitoring system to be put in place and
- 4- Provide guidance for project design and implementation arrangement that enhance equitable access to the project benefits and community participation in project implementation and monitoring.

The Ministry of Public Health & Population (MOPHP), through the Grant Management Unit (GMU) now invites eligible international consultancy firms to indicate their interest in providing the services.

Interested consultants must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc). Consultants may associate to enhance their qualifications.

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

Interested consultants may obtain further information at the address below during office hours from 9:00 to 14:00 hours.

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below by 25 January 2009.

Ministry of Public Health and Population  
Grant Management Unit  
4TH Floor - Al-Hassaba – Sana'a  
Tel: + 967- + 1 252224  
Fax: + 967- + 1 251622  
E-mail: [hrrsp@y.net.ye](mailto:hrrsp@y.net.ye)



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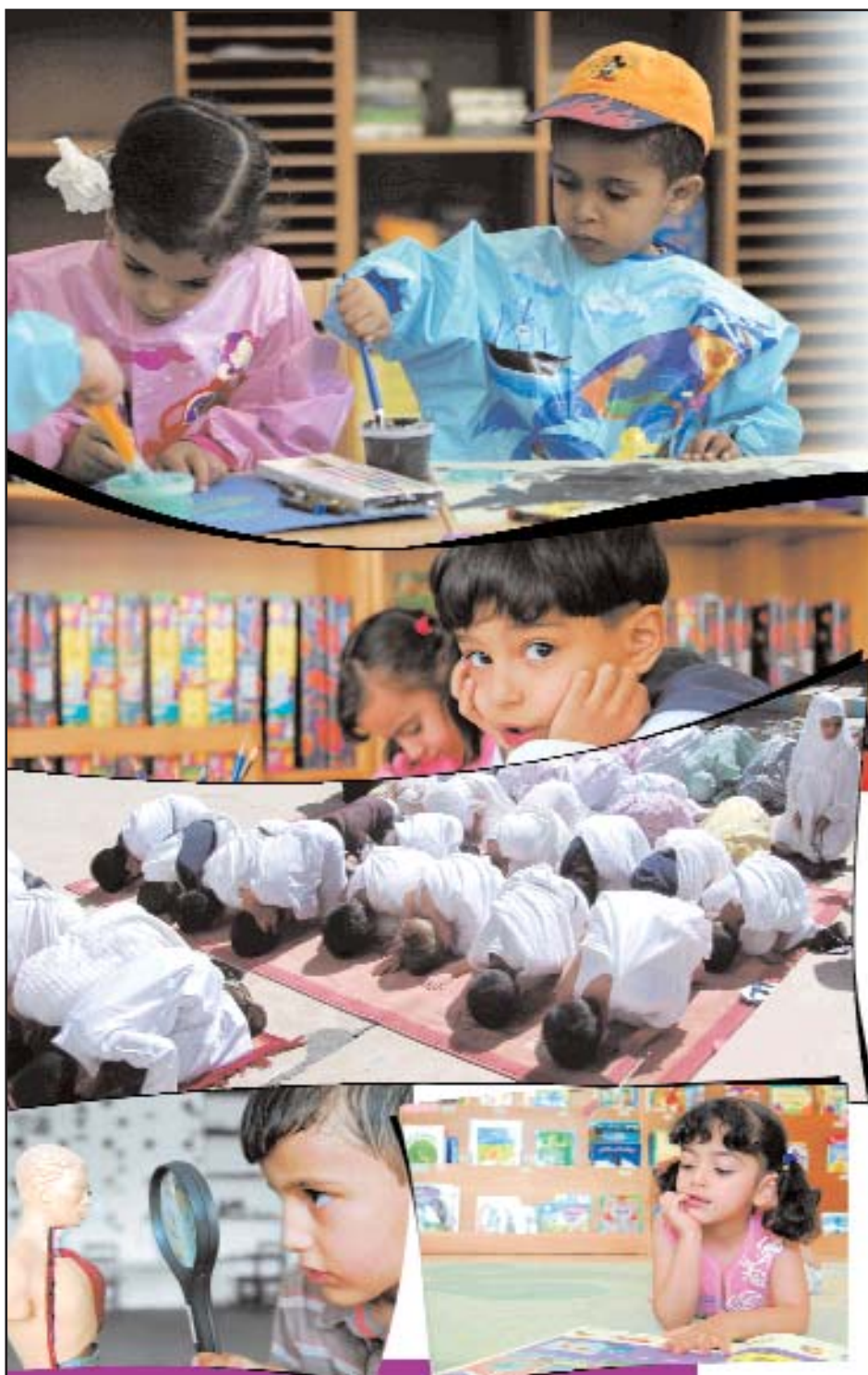
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The language medium for teaching English, Math and Science is English and Standard Arabic for teaching Arabic, Qur'an and Islamic Studies. Teaching materials for English, Math and Science are from UK publishers and are recommended on the Cambridge International Examination website. They include the renowned Oxford Reading Tree, New Heinemann Mathematics and Explore Science. All students must participate in Arabic class, but Qura'n and Islamic studies are optional for non-Muslim students (supplementary activities provided).



Other subjects include arts, crafts and sports. We provide each Primary-level student with a personal lap-top, for interactive-educational CD programs and online lessons/activities. The school offers Pre-nursery (2-years) through Grade-3 (adding one level annually).

We take educational field-trips and host special events throughout the year ("Sports-Day", "Yemen-Day", parent-teacher conferences, student recitals etc.). Recently, we held a "Hajj and Eid Celebration"; it highlighted the importance of proper etiquette and moral character. It was a fun-filled day and a nice cross-cultural experience, one grand-mother recalls: "I learnt many things about Islam and the Hajj that I had not known before. It was amazing to see such young children cooperating and performing in front of an audience".

As always, it is our pleasure to warmly welcome you to contact us at (01)410 011 (coming soon: www.manaratschool.org)



YT Person of the Year 2008, lawyer and human rights advocate Shada Nasser:

# “I wish for Yemenis to take more care of their children because they are the wealth of our country”

Shada Mohammed Nasser has been working in the field of human rights and advocacy since 1996 when she established the first legal office for female practitioners in Sana'a. She is also a researcher and had participated in observing the 1997 parliamentary elections. Despite her heavy schedule as a well established lawyer, she takes many pro-bono cases – especially when the victim is a woman or a child. She has been chosen as Yemen Times Person of the Year 2008 because of her extensive advocacy work for women's rights, especially women prisoners, and children's rights, especially with regards to early marriage. She is a member of the Arab Thought Forum based in Amman – Jordan. Nasser was awarded the Glamour Magazine women of the year 2008 award, and was chosen as one of CNN heroes in the last quarter of 2008. She is married and has two children.

### Exceeding expectations

Born in an educated family, Nasser was found to have a bright career, yet her family and friends say she has truly exceeded expectations. Her father was a journalist and a diplomat and her mother was a school principle.

“My father was one of the freedom fighters who fought against the British occupation,” Nasser remembered. “He established Al-Tareeq newspaper, which my brother runs today, and he established Aden News Agency before he became an ambassador in Lebanon. Even there he could not help be a journalist and established a magazine called Democratic Yemen which was published from Beirut.”

Nasser was a student of law at Charles Carlova University in Prague on scholarship. She completed her JUDR degree, which is equivalent to a masters, in 1990, and returned to work Yemen. After the unity in 1990, she moved with her family from Aden to Sana'a, where she worked at the Sana'a University until she opened her own law office

along with another two other female lawyers.

“We called our office ‘The pioneers for legal consultancy.’ It was out of the norm for women in what was known as north Yemen to work in such public jobs,” Nasser related.

She decided to become a lawyer after she lost her father in a plane crash in 1973 in Shabwa. “I wanted to defend those who have lost their rights or have been victimized by others and to find the truth and overcome injustice. I felt [the plane crash] was not just an accident and I wanted to know the truth,” she said.

“I met my husband who is also a legal advocate by chance at the commercial court. We married one year later,” Nasser said of her husband Dr. Mohamed Al-Saqqaf, a Sorbonne University graduate. They met in Sana'a as lawyers on different cases and married one year later. Today, Al-Saqqaf is working as a columnist.

In 1997, Nasser was the first Yemeni lawyer to sue international cigarettes companies through their agents in Yemen for encouraging people to smoke. Marlboro and Montana cigarette companies had launched an advertising campaign promoting a smoking competition by which the person who collects the largest number of empty cigarette packs gets a prize. She won the case and the competitions ended.

### Human rights advocate

Shada Nasser has experience in all fields of legal work, whether civil, personal, criminal, or political.

“But I refuse to represent the accused in drug related crimes because they cause so much damage to the society, or child rape defendants because I will be fighting against a child who has already gone through much,” she noted.

In the past five years Nasser dedicated much of her time to human rights cases, especially that of detainees. She defended a number of political prisoners as well as provided continuous legal consultations to women inmates in

Sana'a's central prison.

It fulfills her, she said, to go after criminals and those who violate the rights of others just because they can. During her years of work in Yemen she realized that much of the injustice done towards vulnerable groups such as women and children is done by powerful and merciless men who are in the position of being caretakers. That is when she met and defended Amina Al-Tuhaif, the young woman who was in jail for murdering her much older husband, and Fatima Badi, who was accused of murdering her abusive husband.

Over the past five years she worked in several contexts such as through a project of an Italian organization funded by the European Union. This project provides legal consultancy for children in conflict with the law.

In April 2008, she met Nujood, the first Yemeni girl who demanded divorce in court because of being married when she was nine years old, in court, took up her case and started her fight against early marriages.

“My advocacy against child marriages is targeted against the guardians such as the parents who marry their girls while they are little, and against the legislators who endorse such inhuman practices,” she confirmed.

She has also represented Reem, the girl who was forced by her father into marrying her cousin when she was 12 years old, and who is to date still struggling to get the divorce.

“When the father promised the judge in court that he would get Reem divorced once he had the 25 thousand Yemeni riyals he owed to his son in law, I thought everything will go fine, but just last week Reem's mother called me and said her daughter slit her wrist in an attempt to commit suicide because her father did not keep his promise,” Nasser explained about Reem.

She said that because the family sought to solve the problem amicably and outside the court rooms, she would

back off a little and allow for such settlement to happen. But after she saw the slit marks on Reem's wrists, Shada Nasser promised to help the girl attain her freedom no matter what.

“She told me that she wants to live a normal life, like any other girl her age, and I am afraid that is not possible yet,” she said, referring to the unsettled state in which Reem lives, and how she can not go to school and has conflicted images of herself.

“Sometimes she just wants to play and enjoy life like a young girl, and other times she is talking about things like a mature woman who has been married for long. This marriage experience has made her neither a girl nor a woman. Reem needs expert help in order for her to restore her life,” Nasser insisted.

When asked why Nujood had turned against her after their joint award by Glamour Magazine in New York, she said that some people did not like Shada Nasser's name to rise, and those were jealous of her success must have pressurized the girl to do what she did.

“I don't hold any grudge against the girl per say because she is only a child. I had helped her and taken care of her, I even combed her hair and dressed her with nice clothes when we were together in the USA. I am a mother and could not think of harming anyone, let alone a child that had suffered from early marriage. Her father wanted money and he thought the award was in the form of money, so when Nujood did not return with any cash from New York, he was angry,” she explained.

Nasser feels there is someone else more cunning behind this, because she was received well by Nujood's family when they came back; the family even gave her flowers. Only a few days later did the attitude change dramatically. It is particularly suspicious considering that Nujood's father is not well educated or sophisticated, otherwise he would not be living in such miserable conditions, marrying two women and getting his nine year old daughter married off to a

thirty something old man. Nasser referred to their meeting the German ambassador and the demands placed on her not to travel with Nujood to Germany, where they were going to appear on TV.

“Nujood told the embassy she would not travel to Germany if I did. The embassy simply called me, took my passport, and canceled my visa before returning it to me. I was greatly offended – they treated me as a terrorist who wants to enter their country,” she said.

She added that anyone with the right sense would read behind the lines and understand that this is an attempt to stop Nasser from pursuing her work. But she promised that this incident will not stop her from advocating for child rights or from helping little girls who are victims of early marriages. “I know there are many children who need my help,” said Nasser. “And even if Nujood comes back to me years later and asks for my assistance I will not withhold it from her.”

### Protecting the children

Nasser has worked on a number of personal cases, and she explained that the worst types are when the children are used as pawns by the parents. “There should be some sort of measure within the legal system that takes children away from their abusive parents,” she said. “Some sort of child welfare or social services to protect the children.”

“The Yemeni system is so child unfriendly, parents can get away with even murdering their children,” Nasser continued. “I have seen cases of torture and brutal beating. Just one month ago,



Shada Mohammed Nasser

I was involved in the case of Jihad, an eight year old child who lost her eye because of a brutal beating from her father and step mother.

She further explained that during the last few months she came across three similar cases where children are abused because of the bitterness between divorced parents or because of the ignorance of very young mothers. She had seen cases where teenage mothers allow their small kids to wander in the streets just to get rid of them for a few hours. The children are subjected to enormous danger in the streets such as car accidents, abusive children, infections, or even rape and sexual molestation.

“I wish for Yemenis to take more care of their children because they are the wealth of our country,” she said.

She hopes that one day she will have the time and the resources to create a civil society organization and to dedicate more time to advocating for policy change. Through her work, she wants to help give Yemen a better future where there is democracy and safety. Where the environment is protected and the children are happy.

“I want the developed nations to take Yemen's hand and guide it to a better future, to help Yemenis correct their negative practices and to endorse their positive ones,” she said.



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- Needs to have advanced knowledge about automotive repair, tools, and diagnostic equipment.
- Should be familiar with computers, repair manuals, and data entry.

#### E. Skills

- Must independently troubleshoot, locate, diagnose/identify, and solve automotive problems of all degrees.
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**\*Note: All ordinarily resident applicants must be residing in YEMEN and have the required work and residency permits to be eligible for consideration.**

## Words of Wisdom



One of the key differences between a dictatorship and a democratic system is the role of the media in general, and that of the official media, in particular. If those individuals in charge of the media feel they are more responsible towards the public than towards the politicians, and perform their job on that basis, then that is a sign of a democratic structure.

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



## OUR OPINION

## Gaza in our hearts

There is a chapter in the Holy Quran called Sutar Al-Fateh, which could be translated as the chapter of conquer. In the last few days, many received text messages inviting Muslims to read this chapter and dedicate it to our brothers and sisters in Gaza, fighting for their lives and land.

The starting verses of this Surah read:

"Surely We have given to you a clear victory. That Allah may forgive your community their past faults and those to follow and complete His favor to you and keep you on a right way.

And that Allah might help you with a mighty help. He it is Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith-- and Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth, and Allah is Knowing, Wise--

That He may cause the believing men and the believing women to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein and remove from them their evil; and that is a grand achievement with Allah.

And (that) He may punish the hypocritical men and the hypocritical women, and the polytheistic men and the polytheistic women, the entertainers of evil thoughts about Allah. On them is the evil turn, and Allah is wroth with them and has cursed them and prepared hell for them, and evil is the resort.

And Allah's are the hosts of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is Mighty, Wise."

These verses were sent to our prophet Mohammed (MPBH) when he was faced by the forces of non Muslims who chased him away and tortured his followers. Today, the Muslim people feel with their brothers and sisters in Gaza. We pray for them and read such verses of the Quran pleading to Allah that he will support them and grant them victory over the enemy.

This is what we can do as people, as citizens and not decision makers. We can contribute with our thoughts and prayers, with our donations and our demonstrations. But the rest remains upon the shoulders of those who can make a difference such Arab and Western leaders. But let them remember that history will write down what decisions they make and how they have let down their people and humanity as a whole. How 2009 will always be remembered as the year of massacre and defeat of humanity.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

## A cursory review of the Chinese-Arab relations

By: Dr. Ali Saleh Musa

Since China became an oil importer in 1993, the Arab states, particularly those lying in the Arabian Gulf, turned to represent the largest crude exporters and their exports accounted for nearly 46 percent of the total crude imported by China in the same year. In 2005, 44 percent of China's imports came from Arab states.

The mutual trade volume between China and the Arab states reached the value of \$ 65.5 billion by the end of 2006 with an increase rate of 41 percent when compared to that of the previous year. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sultanate of Oman, Sudan and Yemen top the list of Arab states exporting crude and products to China.

The Arab states witnessed an active movement due to presence of Chinese investments in their territories. Therefore, the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) established the Modern Collection Center in Kuwait, and is currently working on developing some oil blocks in Syria.

In addition, the Chinese companies are conducting studies with the aim of developing mature oil blocks and exploring new ones. In 1995, CNPC and the Government of the State of Kuwait signed an agreement, under which \$ 400 million shall be invested in establishing oil installations in the Gulf sate. The year 1999 saw cooperation between a Qatari

private company and Chinese firms to drill as many as 42 wells in Qatar for a total cost of \$ 18.4 million.

The Asian Giant benefited from hesitation of big Arab firms to invest in Sudan within the international competition for oil resources, and therefore began investing in the early 1990s and its investment volume notably increased in 1996. CNPC owns 40 percent of shares in the Nile Petroleum Firm, and is also working in partnership with other companies from Sudan, Malaysia and India.

Both Hejlegh and Al-Wahda oil blocks in Sudan, which are operated by the Firms Union, produce 350 thousand bpd. The CNPC also owns the largest portion of Malut Oil block in the Arab state while the Chinese investments in Sudan are estimated at \$ 7.8 billion.

In Yemen, the Chinese firms started their businesses in 1956 with the construction of Sana'a-Hodeida Highway. And, during the time period (1979 - 1995), nearly 12 Chinese construction contractors implemented projects in Yemen. In the final days of 1995, China signed contracts with Yemeni firms for a total value of \$ 800 million, and currently there are more than 16 giant firms in Yemen.

## Arab League's role

Through an initiative by its Secretary General Amro Musa, the Arab League created an effective and sophisticated mechanism to strengthen Arab states' relations with China. Musa and Chinese

Foreign Minister signed Declaration of Inception of the Chinese-Arab Cooperation Forum, which turned to function as a frame for mutual cooperation and dialogue between both sides.

We saw several meetings and forums for Arab businesspersons and their Chinese counterparts, at which both sides discussed development of bilateral relations and means to overcome any difficulties facing their businesses.

The primary issue of Chinese-Arab relations, as viewed by some experts, is that of continuing dialogue between both sides' civilizations, which may help establish mutual understanding of common interests in a world full of changes. The issue, however, requires that the Arabs exert unified efforts to change their image in the eyes of Chinese citizens.

The Arabs also need to understand that China strongly rejects any interventions in its domestic affairs, even those trying to prevent violence practiced by the armed minorities with a total population of 8 million souls. These minorities occasionally announce their disagreement with China's official position about the so-called war on terrorism, and the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, as they are only accustomed to seeing a Chinese official position that supports freedom of practicing religious rituals, and at the same time, doesn't allow anyone to hurt the national security.

Source: Al-Thawra State-run Daily

## An appeal to the ruling elites:

## Please sympathize with homeland and citizens

By: Mohammed Sare Shayea

The 1962 September 26 and 1963 October 14 revolutions constituted an important turning point to change the reign of oppression and tyranny and liberate citizens from occupation. They are still remembered as a turning point of entering a new promising future to compensate citizens, who tolerated long-time oppression and backwardness in almost all the areas.

After both revolutions, citizens turned to enjoy social justice and equality in rights and duties, plus application of the equal opportunity principle. Individual citizens were also liberated from all the types of oppression and tyranny and complete guarantees for respecting human dignity and feelings were provided. Therefore, all the strong and weak

citizens received equal treatment.

For the sake of citizens' prosperity, the revolutions' objectives were set up as binding approach and reference for all citizens. The homeland sacrificed thousands of martyrs, who let their blood water every hill and part of the nation in defense of the revolutions.

All the Yemenis had the same issue and the same concern, which is the Republic as the newborn after the revolution. They worked hard to render the best for their homeland. They adored their homeland and gifted it the most precious things they had.

That was the way of Yemeni citizens in both the North and South parts. They were racing to sacrifice for the sake of their homeland. Some of them died while others recovered. Nobody of them thought about any personal achievement, looting, status or money. They left their relatives and families behind them and devoted their time to liberate their homeland. They left behind memories for those, who are currently enjoying blooms and achievements reached by the revolutions.

The most important achievements reached by the revolutions are the unification and bringing peoples together after fragmentation and division. Another achievement is that of the democratic approach as decisive option and safe road to achieve expectations, dreams and ambitions of all Yemeni people, most notably as the elites in society cared a lot about preparing homeland and building a new Yemeni citizen purified from all the types of complexities, malice and greed.

## Minimum acknowledgement:

Following the revolutions, the ruling elites at that time built a new citizen armed with science, knowledge, loyalty with homeland and sublime morals, via

which the nation could reach growth, prosperity and renewable civilization. As a result, all Yemenis are needed to respect spirits of martyrs, who sacrificed themselves for their sake, which is the minimum level of loyalty and acknowledgment.

Undoubtedly, the democratic action experienced in Yemen's political arena in the form of presidential, parliamentary and local elections truly reflects positive interaction of the involved political parties and civil society organizations to express their different and renewable visions according to national principles ensured by the Constitution of the Republic of Yemen.

All the electoral practices are pondered upon as the real mechanism and tool to train citizens and help them know about how to practice their constitutional rights by selecting the best candidates to represent them in the elected councils and sponsor their interests.

The repeated electoral rounds gives a golden chance for citizens to polish and develop their concepts about the significance of practicing their constitutional rights by participating in the elections and casting their ballots freely without any form of pressure or nepotism with candidates.

The Yemenis demonstrated their serious will for change through the good turnout and effective participation in the various electoral processes. Therefore, it is people, who impose on everyone the most applicable option for change and transfer of power through peaceful means.

The ruling elites, who were elected by voters to represent them, should have sympathy with homeland and citizens as a kind of reward for their efforts and contribution to change.

Source: Al-Wasat Weekly

## SILVER LINING

## Yemen's major 2009 challenges

I remember that I wrote the beginning of 2008 about the challenges ahead of Yemen's government in 2008. It seems to me these challenges remain the same during 2009.

The situation in Sa'ada remains to be tense despite the declaration to stop the war mid July. During the last few weeks, there have been reports on on-and-off clashes between government troops and the rebels in some areas. Reported clashes between al-Houthi and Al Alhamati tribe which also demonstrate the situation is not completely stable over there.

The al-Houthi supporters were for the first time publicly and without government harassment able to celebrate last December al-Ghadeer festivals which mark the day in which the fourth Caliph Ali Bin Abi Taleb, took over power.

They had a very big festival in Sa'ada in which they fired different sorts of arms to celebrate the occasion but the same time show their strength and they are still powerful. This time the celebration extended to other provinces like Tamar, al-Jawf, Amman Hajja which is also a good message that al-Houthi supporters are everywhere and in case there is any eruption for the fight again, the confrontations will not be limited to Sa'ada only but can go beyond to other places as what happened in the last round where the fight went further to Harf Sefian in Amman and Bani Hushaish in Sana'a.

Al-Houthis have come from the war stronger and their confidence in their power has grown bigger for the government has not been able to crack them down by force. They have stopped the election commissions from working in some areas for some time and then allowed them; this shows that they are still in control of a big part of Sa'ada. Their leader has even warned that no election will be run in Sa'ada without clear and concrete evidence that the government will implement peace agreement and construct the destroyed houses and farms.

It seems that regime wants to keep the situation there as it is where the situation will develop into confrontations between some tribes and the al-Houthis and the government will keep watching. And here lies the problem.

Similarly, the situation in the southern part remains very tense. Following the protests in the last few months and the arrest of the leaders of protests, the enthusiasm remained high; we could see protests here and there every now and then; the elections commissions were stopped from doing their work at the registration phase in many centers; some even were attacked by hand grenades like in Abyan.

Now, the situation is clam due to the Eid vacation and it seems this break gives the people in charge of the protests a chance to prepare for the next phase; they have even announced they have set their agenda for the coming days.

This shows a tense situation which will exacerbate further if the ruling party decides to go ahead with election alone without the opposition.

The government also continues to face the threat of al-Qaeda. There have been a number of threats to attack Western interests and some government agencies during the period before the Eid. The US embassy said that it had received threats recently. This means that the al-Qaeda is still strong. Following the US embassy attack, the government of Yemen came back to the frontline in terms of fighting terrorism and had to somehow restore the US confidence it in fighting terror. Before that, the security forces succeeded in killing Hamza al-Quaiti and some of his friends in Tarim, Hadramut.

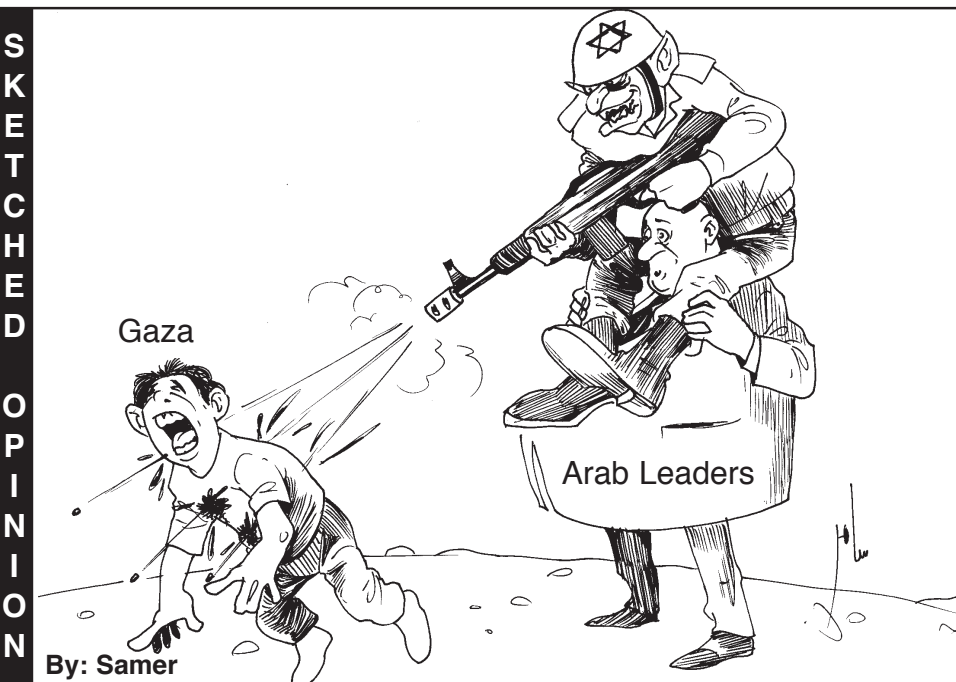
The government, therefore, announced last November that 60 al-Qaeda suspects will be presented to court in batches. Eight of them appeared before court and were accused of plotting to carry out attacks against government and foreign interests as well as tourists to take revenge for al-Quaiti. This means the threats of al-Qaeda remain high and possible attacks are likely.

Another important challenge is the political deadlock due to the failure of the ruling party and the opposition coalition to reach an agreement over the parliamentary elections due next April. It has become certain that it is going to be difficult for the opposition coalition to take part in the election for the time is not enough. The opposition has raised the momentum of demands that have to be met in order for them to take part in the election. Similarly, the ruling party is in a fix; it wants to go into election before the consequences of the international financial crisis starts to appear. Again, it can accept the delay of the elections for longer period of time so that it has enough time to handle the consequences of the financial problem. However, the donors have clearly voiced concern over the current political impasse and advised the government to postpone the election until agreement with the opposition on the pre-conditions and make-up of the electoral committee had been reached. They, therefore, can understand a postponement for a couple of months.

All in all, the economic hardship, on the top of these challenges, is expected to worsen due to the consequences of the international crisis. The government tried to mislead the public by belittling the consequences of this problem hitting all countries. The reduction of the budget is a concrete example on this impact. We cross our fingers in the hope the people in charge will realize the seriousness of these challenges and work accordingly.

Happy New Year to all.

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



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# Yemen Press Review



**Al-Sahwa.net, affiliated with the Islah party**  
Thursday, Jan.1, 2009

**Top Stories**

- Yemenis escalate protests against Israeli attacks on Gaza
- Aden Refinery workers investigated over storing diesel supplies
- IFES Director slams Yemen's current election system and commission

Country Director of the International Foundation for Election Systems in Yemen (IFES) Peter Williams has slammed Yemen's democracy saying that welfare usually leads to democracy and vice versa, but Yemen lacks both, the website reported in one of its main stories.

In a symposium on democracy held last Thursday in Sana'a, Williams said that Yemen has no government which represents the Yemeni people and that there is elite which believes that it has the right to control the power via buying votes.

"Perhaps, you do not see the spent money, but there are many who receive funds in order to draw the voters, either with using merchants' money or public resources," he added. "Buying votes is not to provide services, but to have easy access to the state's resources, tenders and personal wealth through illegal earning."

He explained that Yemen can't shift

into a real democratic state given that merchants and the influential elite buy voter's wills.

According to the website, IFES top official in Yemen further demanded Yemen to form an independent election commission, pointing out that the best way for Yemen is to achieve a package of reforms on election systems.

He further criticized the current election commission, pointing out that it is free of corruption and corrupt individuals, especially those persons who were politically appointed for certain political purposes.

On a side note, the website reported that Chairman of Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) Sultan Al-Atwani said that president Saleh has the keys of solutions to Yemen's current political crises, adding that the ruling party would commit a big mistake if it holds the upcoming parliamentary elections individually.

In an interview with Alsaedah Satellite Station, Al-Atwani affirmed that any elections without the opposition parties' participation, and solutions for crises created by the ruling party would be invalid.

"If the ruling party can stick to the Constitution and Law, and abandon using the state potentials for its own favors, then we will win elections," he went on to say.

He further stressed that the opposition has the ability to overturn the regime via fair and free elections, advising, in the meantime, the president to make reforms inside his party and understand the risks of obstinacy and arrogance.

"What is going on in the South and

Saada governorate is clear evidence that the state suffers a real crisis that require reasonability" said Al-Atwani.



**Al-Motamar.net, affiliated with General People's Congress (ruling party)**  
Thursday, Jan. 1, 2009

**Top Stories**

- Public rage escalate over Israeli aggression against Palestinians
- SCER refers cases of repeated names and underage voters to Public Prosecution
- IFES denies alleged suspicion about SCER honesty

IFES Country Director Peter Williams denied all what has been attributed to him by some partisan newspapers and website's reports that his organization is suspicious about SCER's honesty and accuses it of corruption. He confirmed that what have been attributed to him in this regard are merely false and baseless allegations that were never made by him.

Williams expressed his sorrow about behavior of news websites that fabricated such false statements, published incorrect reports and attributed to him what he never said.

The international official praised efforts so far expended by SCER as part of its preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections. He also commended the successful processes

of voter register review and modification.

Williams also praised the SCER's declaration that it referred 125 thousand cases of repeated names and underage voters in the voter registers to Public Prosecution. He called on all political parties and organizations to cooperate with SCER, most notably as it's work in the various technical and legal areas progresses well and according to the Constitution and law, as well as principles of neutrality, independence and integrity.

Williams confirmed his organization's continued support for SCER and any decisions and procedures it takes ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. He expressed his deep sorrow for behavior of some party-affiliated newspapers and websites, which allegedly quoted him as saying that there is financial corruption in funding political campaigns.

According to Williams, the workshop held by IFES for SCER trainers and other relevant agencies was organized with the aim of setting ground rules and instructions for the process of campaign funding and determining role of responsible agencies in this regard.

He clarified that the political funding project aims to train SCER and Supreme National Anti-Corruption Committee (SNACC) staff on how to oversee campaign funding.

IFES Director commended SCER and SNACC's interest to play effective roles in fighting corrupting and interacting with his organization in this regard.

During a meeting with SCER

Chairman Khalid Abdulwahab Al-Sharif, Williams discussed with Al-Sharif the memorandum of understanding between SCER and IFES on preparations and arrangements ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections. The meeting was also attended by SCER Secretary General Sultan Mohammed Hajeb.



**Al-Sharea.net, an independent news website**  
Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2008

**Top Stories**

- Six ministers resign to run for upcoming parliamentary elections
- President Saleh sends new mediators to JMP for dialogue on electoral issue
- International expert: GPC and Islah spent between YR 70 and 40 billion on vote buying in 2003 elections

Campaign Funding Advisor at IFES Dr. Marten Walki said that GPC spent between YR 40 and 60 billion for the sake of increasing the possibility of its candidate's win in the past parliamentary elections in 2003, the website reported.

It added that the international official also indicated that the Islah party spent nearly YR 10 billion on the same purpose. He expressed sorrow over the illegal use of funds, which he described as a process of political and electoral corruption, pointing out that

such funds were supposed to be spent on development such as the construction of schools, hospitals, roads and other infrastructure.

The website also reported that IFES Country Director in Yemen Peter Williams called for forming an independent SCER free of corruption and politically-appointed persons in order to help conduct democratic elections in favor of people's luxury.

During a symposium organized by Yemeni Center for Civil Rights on Wednesday and Thursday, Williams said that Yemen still lacks the kind of democracy that improves people's conditions. He expressed curiosity about Yemen's political elites' confusion between the two concepts of democracy and elections.

He added, "I hoped to hear one of the participants in the symposium may ask about the difference between the two concepts of democracy and elections, however, the discussion focused on forming the SCER and participating in the elections or boycotting them."

According to IFES Representative, democracy leads to luxury and not the otherwise, ruling out that Yemen's democracy made something for Yemeni people, attributing this to his statement that "Yemen doesn't have a government that represents people. The Yemeni government is comprised of influential people, businessmen and traders, who buy votes."

He said addressing the participants that votes are bought not for the sake of providing services, but for the sake of reaching state's resources and getting tenders to make money.

## Before our very eyes Israel's attempted endgame in Gaza

By: Jennifer Loewenstein  
amadea311@earthlink.net

The intensity of the bombings on Saturday, which left over 230 people dead and 800 wounded, many seriously, was what struck one witness, R., who claimed never to have heard so many explosions so close together and for such an uninterrupted period of time inside the Gaza Strip. One after another, the explosions sounded, most of them near heavily populated areas; and in one case only 30 meters away from his daughter's elementary school.

The bombings were timed to cause the maximum number of "enemy" casualties. They occurred at approximately 11:20am on a bustling Saturday morning, just as schools were changing shifts and many children were either leaving for home or coming to afternoon classes; when offices were filled with their employees, and streets busy with the late morning crowds out getting lunch or on quick errands of one sort or another. The day before, Israel had opened some of the crossings into Gaza to let in another trickle of humanitarian aid. "See how generous we are to our enemy!" they proclaim with straight faces to the international media. Each time Gaza reaches the brink of starvation and ruin, they let in just enough food and supplies to silence potential critics. Then the next round begins. It is hardly surprising. After all, this policy was outlined publicly by Dov Weisglass not so long ago when he promised that Israel would put Gaza on a punishing "starvation diet" until it saw reason and evicted its democratically elected government. Many people, including members of the Hamas government, believed that reopening the crossings to international aid signaled another brief lull in military activity, as it usually had, while the IDF General staff prepared its next offensive. In this way were the people and government of Gaza unprepared for the next day's slaughter.

The deliberate ploy to strike at midday when the collective population of Gaza had let down its guard for a few

short hours had its intended effect. One of the deadliest massacres in the history of Israel's occupation of Palestine followed as F-16 fighter jets, helicopter gun ships, tanks, armored vehicles and pilot-less drones closed in on the Gaza Strip. By Monday morning over 300 people were dead and 1000 injured. Hospitals were overflowing with the seriously wounded; the morgues with the dead for whom they had insufficient refrigeration. Insufficient medical personnel, equipment, supplies and services raised the likelihood of many more dying in their overused beds waiting for the help and attention they would never get. The taxi driver R. hailed to get him to his daughter's school as quickly as possible after those first strikes had begun initially refused, staring in shock as columns of smoke rose from brand new layers of debris.

The sound of F-16s flying overhead dropping bombs is not a sound one ever forgets. In other words, 750,000 children—or half the population of Gaza—have it ingrained in their memories for the rest of their lives. Another equally unacceptable percentage of this group will have had images burned into their minds' eyes of the devastation and death wrought by these sounds as well, a factor that partially explains why more than 50 per cent of Gaza's three-quarters of a million children suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder: it isn't easy to see piles of the dead or their blown apart body parts without some kind of reaction. Violent, action-packed Hollywood war and terror films may provide us with virtual reality, but when the severed jaw of a woman is lying at your feet only a few inches away from her bloody and disfigured head, or when the bare leg of a man is lying by itself in a room, the rest of the body blown outside the house, the illusory atmosphere of the virtual world is quickly replaced by the raw, heavy emotions that accompany real world sequences. This is when paralyzing fright grips you so firmly that your legs forget how to move; how to flee the gruesome nightmare scenarios. You can't run away.

In the course of a few short hours

American-made, Israeli-flown fighter jets had successfully blotted out the lives of more than 230 people and by the end of the weekend over 300, the rough equivalence of two fully packed IMAX theaters. At least 70 of the victims were civilians, a number of them young children. A mother in Rafah bent over the corpses of her three dead children screaming, unable to stop, horrified eye witness T., who wrote up the day's events as if the formal documentation of an overpowering human event could serve as a form of catharsis.

Most of the dead were young men training to become police officers, or newly on the job, because it is one of the only ways left to acquire paid work today in the Gaza Strip. With the siege of Gaza and the subsequent withering of its civil society and infrastructure, its industries, shops and restaurants, banks and social services, came the skyrocketing unemployment figures and the controlled collapse of an economy kept 'alive' by the slow drip of international humanitarian aid allowed in on that generous whim of the occupation officer: perhaps one more time so that the wasting body of Gaza can take in another breath. Just the right place to build a Dubai on the Mediterranean, an American journalist once put it, just as the 'disengagement' phase of the siege kicked in.

That same journalist and his buddies in the overseas Western press offices will have been the first to confirm for you in today's 'respectable' news Israel's interpretation of the events, mentioning as if in a footnote to the weekend's activities, Israel's recently announced Public Relations' push intended to make any major military offensive into Gaza palatable to the outside world by sucking the humanity out of the 230+ bodies before they were even dead: the strikes on Gaza were taken as necessary 'security measures' after repeated attempts to maintain a 'ceasefire' had failed when 'Hamas operatives' fired rockets into 'civilian areas' in Israel. This myth will be left unchallenged because there is too much power behind it to jeopardize whole careers; and because it is much easier to accept the fact that your government



just backed the pre-meditated murder of over 200 terrorists—and a few wannabes—than it is to realize that the overwhelming number of dead were completely innocent; that they had died for wanting a job, a paycheck and a sliver of dignity.

"HAMAS"... the word that, in this case, renders any action taken by the other side, no matter how barbaric or sadistic, legitimate. Couple any noun with the preceding adjective "Hamas" and it will be immediately quarantined as if tainted by some infectious bacteria. This is how to dehumanize a million and a half people overnight; how to render them different from us and dangerous to us. While it is true that a poll showing what the average American knows about Hamas might be cause for concern; a poll showing what the average elite-educated American knows about Hamas would reveal immediately how effective voluntary indoctrination in democratic societies has become and why those with the power to stop crimes against humanity overnight refuse to do so even after they understand that what they're doing is wrong.

From the 7th floor of his high-rise apartment building looking out over Gaza City on Saturday night, S. describes the view as "a sea of blackness". The familiar twinkling of lights that defines the contours of a city after dark is missing, as if the place itself had been erased from the earth. Without

electricity, without cooking gas or automobile fuel; without heat to warm the winter-chilled flats across this stretch of land, or generators to back up the hospitals and clinics; without supplies for schools and universities, for personal and collective health and hygiene, or for repairing any part of this broken down hovel of a strip; without water to drink or cook with or bathe in, without reading lamps and, lately, without the candles or other substitutes used for light, people are making haste to adjust yet again to the latest set of conditions imposed upon them as the US-backed siege of Gaza closes in on another dying December day.

Their resilience is inspirational but painful. Tomorrow S. will head down to Rafah, to the border city, where kerosene is still available albeit for quadruple the normal price—or more: A system of nearly 800 smuggling tunnels running from Rafah, Gaza to Rafah, Egypt, controlled by a few savvy black-marketeer families and up to now tacitly supported by Israel, appears to be nearing collapse as well as everything else. Rumors of an Israeli Air Force strike that would doom the last remaining big business venture in the Strip have helped shut them down, even the ones licensed by the Hamas government, which got its share of goods for the best prices as the once-illegal smuggling industry turned for a brief period of time into Gaza's only

reliable all-purpose supply-line. On Sunday the rumors caved in on the tunnels as bulldozers and bomber jets blasted them flat. Now the supply line has been cut, the siege persists, the US condemns Hamas, refusing to ask for Israeli restraint. In Rafah, the demise of the tunnels—like the recently re-fortified border closure on the Egyptian side of the Crossing—has an ominous finality about it that should give us pause before we turn our faces away.

Major General Yoav Galant of the Israeli Southern Command declared Saturday that an attack on the Hamas regime must 'send Gaza decades into the past' militarily and decide the "maximum number of enemy casualties" (Haaretz, 12/28/08; by Uri Blau. By "enemy" he means "Palestinian" as the evidence overwhelmingly shows; and if Galant is to be taken seriously according to his own perceptions of the "enemy" and of the time frame within which an operation of this sort is possible, we have reached a milestone in the history of the Palestinian National Movement and in the life of Gaza that bodes ill for the dream of Palestine while sharpening the regional fault lines that have crystallized beneath the Rafah sands.

Jennifer Loewenstein is Associate Director of the Middle East Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

# Yemeni women and the Pill

By Jamal Al-Najjar and Almgad Dahesh Mojalli

**Y**emeni women increasingly make an effort to make informed choices about their reproductive health and make use of family planning methods, also known as birth control. Although many women choose the hormonal pill as their contraception method, several complain about the side effects.

The side effects include breast tenderness, headaches, dizziness and fatigue. And they often push women to quit the pill and seek alternative contraception methods. Other women are driven to forsake birth control all together as they are discouraged and mistakenly believe that other options will not work for them.

Doctors agree that to compound the troubles associated with the side effects of pills, wrong practices like their irregular use can trigger a number of health problems. To further add to the problem in Yemen, many prescription contraceptives are sold over-the-counter, so many women don't consult gynecologists to conduct the necessary check-ups and get the appropriate contraceptive method prescribed to them.

Dr. Arwa Al-Rabe'e, the deputy of the Health Ministry for the population sector stated the ministry announced in the beginning of in 2006 free birth control services, available to 85% of the country. However, there are still many obstacles against the effective implementation of this service.

Afraid that alternative contraception methods may have the same side effects as the pill Najat Saleh Ali, 25 of Sana'a said, "I began to use contraceptive pills a year ago but I don't think I can continue anymore because they constantly cause me stress, dizziness and migraine," said. "I went to the doctor to seek other alternatives such as intrauterine device; she told me that it doesn't fit me as I have uterus inflammation. I am now hesitant to use other kinds of contraception," she added.

A study conducted by Mari Stops in 2007 revealed that only 32% of Yemeni married women use some method of birth control, though 96% of both men and women are aware of at least one type of birth control.

Women reported that the major reasons why women stop using FP is either because of the adverse health effects of FP (37%), or because they want more children (28%), and 11% were told to stop by their spouse. Others noted that the cost of methods was also an issue. One woman put it succinctly that the woman stops: "When her husband asks her to because he is the decision-maker". Women also stop FP to protect their marriage "when her husband wants to marry another woman because his financial status becomes better".

The report, which covered 1,400 men and women ranging from 15-49, aimed to know the background, education and usage of both women and men regarding birth control methods and sexual transmitted diseases, particularly HIV and AIDS. The report revealed that 34% of women in urban areas use birth control, in contrast to 14% of rural women. Contraceptive pills are the most commonly used method with 13%, followed by the IUD with 6% and injections with 4%. 7% of married women use traditional methods of contraception such as periodic abstinence, withdrawal and breastfeeding.

The main reasons given by women for discontinuing contraceptive use was: it is bad for their health (37%), they wanted to get pregnant (28%) and they were told to stop by their spouse (11%). The reasons for non-use were: not wanting to use family planning (FP) (36%), their spouse not agreeing with family planning (24%), not knowing family planning exists (10%) and perceived bad side effects (6%).

Belief in myths and lack of awareness about birth control also hinders women from making informed choices. Najla Ali Musleh, 30 of Ibb governorate, said that she and her husband decided to control childbirth for health reasons and also to raise their three children with more resources. However, she suddenly stopped taking the pill after two-days because she suffered from a constant migraine. She was surprised that she conceived although she had been using pills for five months. "Apart from their negative effects on health, I believe that pills are not safe because if a woman forgets them for a day or two, she may conceive. I don't want to use the other ways of contraception because they may be unhealthy," said Musleh.

Some women prefer to conceive despite doctors' warnings that their health cannot tolerate a pregnancy. "Since my wife has heart problems and hypertension, doctors advised her against getting pregnant. However, she used pills for two years and then refused to continue," said Sa'ad Al-Raimi. "As soon as she stopped pills, she conceived. When she was in her sixth month of pregnancy, doctors had to conduct an operation to expel the fetus to save her life as she suffered from pregnancy complications," added Al-Raimi.

Dr. Arwa Al-Musbahi, a gynecologist working at her private clinic in Sana'a, said that around 60 percent of women opt to use the pill for contraception. She said that although there are different side effects, the main reason of most health problems that result from using contraception is associated with a lack of education and awareness with regard to the importance of consulting doctors. She pointed out that some women who suffer from certain diseases may endanger their lives if they use contraceptive pills randomly. In addition, these effects vary based on the quality of pills.

"People should be aware that using any kind of birth control method should be based on a consultancy of the gynecologist who determines the most suitable contraceptive method," said Dr. Al-Musbahi. "For example, if a woman suffers from hypertension, anemia or a cardiac

stroke, then she cannot use hormonal pills as they may endanger her life. However, other methods of contraception can work such as intrauterine device but in all cases, women should consult doctors."

Dr. Al-Musbahi said that there are more advanced types of contraceptive pills that cause fewer side effects. However, because they are expensive, not many people can afford them. "The newer pills are better for women's health but they are unaffordable if we consider the living standard of Yemeni people. The price of 30 pills is around YR 2500, which is too much compared to the other kinds of pills that are sold at only one hundred riyals," she said.

While some Yemeni women believe that contraceptive pills cause infertility, Dr Al-Musbahi said that pills never cause infertility, noting that society should be made aware of the means of family planning and the importance of consulting gynecologists before and during the use of any contraception to avoid potential health risks. "There are rumors that pills cause infertility. On the contrary, pills help to organize menstruation due to the hormones they contain," she said.

The reasons stated in the mentioned study for not using a method was 36% not wanting to use family planning, 24% because of spouse not agreeing with family planning, 10% not knowing about family planning and 6% not using because of negative side effects of FP in the past.

Dr. Mohamed Al-Obaidi, a medical specialist working in Al-Aqsa Medical Center in Sana'a, said that in addition to the side effects that pills cause to women, some doctors don't conduct medical checks-up before they prescribe these pills, which may bring about health problems. "Women suffer from side effects of pills because they are of poor quality," he adds.



New mothers bring their children for vaccination at a local health care center in Sana'a. Yemen has one of the highest fertility rates in the world although interest and awareness about family planning is gradually increasing.

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# Cultural Arguments on Pre-marital Medical Checks

By: Ola Al-Shami

Pre-marital medical checks seem to be one of the necessities to guarantee a healthy family as indicated by the Saudi Arabian research paper during a conference commemorating the Arabic Day for Family last week. According to the paper, based on these medical results, the engaged couples would either be encouraged or discouraged to continue their relationship.

However, different cultures look at this concept from their common point of view or cultural point of view. Yemen, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have different opinions on dealing with this concept based on whether it is acceptable and how it could be applied in these cultures.

There are many challenges for applying this pre-marital step in Yemen. The family is the main challenge. "We don't agree with this point



in Yemen because we don't have to be afraid of any inherited diseases. When we accept the man we asked first for his behavior and second his origins so we avoid any possible dangers," said Om Abdolwase'e Al-qadhi, 30, a housewife from Sana'a. She added that if a man requests this from any family the parents will definitely refuse his request and they might break up the engagement.

"As far as I know, none of my friends have done medical checks before marriage. I believe that this idea isn't acceptable here in Yemen even among couples who are close relatives. Some traditions are unchangeable," said Ashwaq Abu Talip, an MA student at Sana'a University.

On the other hand, pre-marital checks have been supported and obliged in many other countries. "All the families and couples agree to perform the necessity medical checks and none reject it. Some families agree to continue the marriage celebration even if the results were discouraging. The decision then is regarded to the couples and their parents either to keep up with the relation or to break it," said Basima Mohammed Al-jo'a, a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Saudi Arabia.

"Hurt me an hour rather than the whole life. So, it is now an obligation to commit the marriage and all people do it among the kingdom," said Abdullah Al-Eliwat, a family guide and researcher at the Happy Home-Al Dammam. He added that civil society organizations had done considerable work to convince the Saudi society of the importance of the pre-marital checks.

The social rejection is one hinder on accepting this idea. However, this is a process done in a safe way. "The pre-marriage medical check is an important technique because the principle of marriage doesn't oppose it. It is to reveal any inherited diseases which would definitely affect the coming generations. Another promising point is that this medical check is done in a complete secret by a medical institution. So, society should accept it," said Mahmoud Soliman, a researcher in the National Council for Childhood and

Motherhood (NCCM) in Egypt.

Government has a vital role in applying this idea as a rule. "The pre-marital medical check should be obliged by all the governments. Some people in Egypt didn't accept the idea at first, but were convinced after the media investigated and supported this issue. As a result, many concepts were changed and are continue to change because of the active role of the media," said Ahmed Amin, a researcher at (NCCM)-Egypt.

Regarding Al Jeri culture, this concept is supported by the government. "I

agree with this medical check and it has no problem with Arabic law. Al-Jeri law made this check obligatory for both couples. Our law established a formal application form to fill it by the couples. This form includes the data concerning the couples' health," said Zoubida Saharaf Al-Deen, Head of the Supreme Council for Judgment, Al-Jeri. She also hopes that Yemen Government would apply this concept.

All in all, there are certain differences among different cultures. Yemeni culture seems to be the main reason why the idea is rejected.

## Marriage Compatibility Rating Test

There are many complex pre-marriage questionnaires available. This simpler test was devised by Institute for Social Invention.

### Instructions

When completing the test give marks out of 10 to the questions ('10 = Very True' down to '0 = Not True At All'). Answer the questions as honestly as possible since you do not have to show the results to anybody else - there is nobody to deceive but yourself. Decisions about who to marry and have children with are likely to have more effect on future happiness than any other decisions in life, so they are worth considering as soberly as possible, given that we can be so easily misled in the first flush of love. About half the following questions derive from academic research findings about long-term success and failure in marriage and human relationships. If both you and your partner are trying this test, it might be diplomatic not to show your marks on individual items to your partner, but simply to discuss your final marks together. Please answer these questions and answer them honestly using the instructions below and then evaluate your score.

Question	(0=NOT TRUE, MAYBE=5, 10=VERY TRUE)	Score /10
1 There is very little conflict in our relationship		<input type="checkbox"/>
2 When there is conflict we handle it very satisfactorily.		<input type="checkbox"/>
3 I find myself agreeing with my partner far more often than disagreeing.		<input type="checkbox"/>
4 If my partner ended up developing a similar character to his/her parents, or became like them in old age, I would be very happy about this.		<input type="checkbox"/>
5 I feel that I can share all my feelings, good and bad, with my partner and that he/she does the same with me.		<input type="checkbox"/>
6 My partner is very similar to me in cultural, social, intellectual and economic background and probably in intelligence.		<input type="checkbox"/>
7 We share similar philosophies of life or spiritual beliefs		<input type="checkbox"/>
8 We share the same sense of humour		<input type="checkbox"/>
9 My partner's health is good, I would describe them as a happy person & I don't think he/she is likely to suffer from depressions, obsessions, eating disorders, excessive anxieties or mental health problems.		<input type="checkbox"/>
10 My partner is sensitive and kind and not selfish or self-obsessed.		<input type="checkbox"/>
11 If I lived in a society where parents arranged marriages for their children, my partner is just the kind of person my parents might have chosen for me.		<input type="checkbox"/>
12 We have a lot of conversational interests in common, I enjoy his/her conversation on a variety of topics and I like his/her friends		<input type="checkbox"/>
13 Judging by track record to date, my partner is monogamous when in a serious relationship.		<input type="checkbox"/>
14 We agree on the extent of freedom within marriage as regards other relationships and I therefore don't think jealousy will be a problem for either of us.		<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Our sexual relationship is extremely good.		<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<input type="checkbox"/>

### Scoring

Take away 10 if you have lived together for less than six months. Add the scores together and divide by 150 and multiply by 100 to get a percentage figure. If you are less than 70% compatible you may well have to struggle hard to maintain a long-term relationship and might be well advised to delay having children for several years until you are sure that the relationship will work out. Less than 50% compatibility could be a sign not to rush into marriage.

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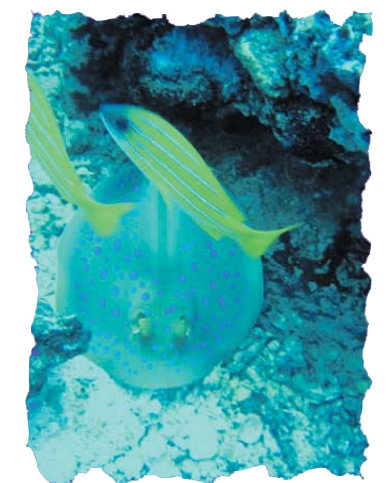
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# Scuba diving in the land of Queen Sheba

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Ed lock is a young British civil servant living in London. He and his friend David Wilkes, an accountant also living in London had read about Yemen and were intrigued, so they gave it a shot especially as they imagined that there would be some excellent scuba diving, given the location and the lack of other divers.

Their journey started in Sana'a where they stayed for a couple of days.



Then they flew to Socotra where they spent a week scuba diving and trekking. Next stop was Mukalla in Hadramout, where they did some more diving before taking the bus to Sayoun and Shibam. From there they flew back to Sana'a before driving to Al Hudiedah from which they hoped to visit Kamaran Island and get to experience diving in the Red Sea, then a bus to Aden and Taiz before returning to their final stop in Sana'a and heading back home.

Because of the good time they had in Yemen, Ed and David have recommended Yemen to others, especially those who crave unusual diving experiences. And they hope to come back again, but next visit must include Kamaran Island.

Another attraction for them was the cost: compared to other diving holidays they were able to travel more widely and do more dives, whilst still keeping enough money to buy Jambiyas to take home for their families. Ed and David speak Arabic and were very impressed by the purity of the spoken language on the mainland. They have recommended Yemen as a possible destination for those studying Arabic in London.



The Red Sea is one of the world's top 18 coral hotspots. Its colorful reefs are home to an abundance of marine life, including the venomous red lionfish.



Ed and David with farming hats on.

## Before and after

Ed explained that much of the coverage of Yemen in the European media emphasizes the security risks in the country. So they were slightly nervous before setting out.

"I'm happy to say that we didn't have any serious troubles when we were in the country. We were also expecting a very different culture to that in Europe. It was, of course, very different," he said.

Ed and David were particularly impressed by the natural beauty of the country. They enjoyed wandering around the Sana'a market, which they thought of as one of the great pleasures of the Arabic world. The Haraz Mountains were beautiful and excellent for trekking. But the highlight of their trip was scuba diving in Socotra.

"Socotra was fascinating. Above ground there is an enormous number of very unusual plants. Under the water the diving was fantastic- lots of fish, beautiful corals and excellent visibility. And of course, no other divers," Commented Ed.

They were slightly concerned about whether the rules of the nature protection zone were being observed, as on one dive they came across a dead dolphin which had been tied to a ship wreck so as to encourage more fish for the fishermen.

"It was a disturbing sight" said



David and the scuba diving guide Muhammad.

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of this unique island is not successful" said David.

## Something to remember

Ed remembers a funny story from their visit to Sayoun. When they arrived they discovered that it was the day of the local football match. There were hundreds of people sitting around a pitch marked out of the sand. So Ed and David spent an interesting hour and a half fending off questions from bemused locals who were understandably curious to find out why two British people were watching their local football match.

"Some of them seemed to think that we were Manchester United scouts looking for the next David Beckham" recalls David. "We were also keen to stay out of the way of the local man who kept the boys away from the pitch by threatening them with an enormous stick!" laughed Ed.

They also had an interesting run in with the police when we arrived in a small town in the south of the country hoping to visit (what the guidebook described as) a beautiful nature reserve and famous hammam. The locals were clearly not used to seeing westerners and before long they were surrounded by thirty or so people each asking them to take their photographs. Whilst there was much smiling and fun, no one had ever heard of a nature reserve anywhere nearby, and the hammam was shut!

"After about 10 minutes two vans of heavily armed policemen arrived with their lights flashing. We were worried that they might give us trouble or even arrest us, but in the end they were just as interested as the others to find British people in their town. Amazingly two boys opened the hammam for us so that we could bathe. But we never found the nature reserve."

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