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# YEMEN TIMES

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**Inside:** ▶



**5**  
The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights Executive Manager speaks to Yemen Times



**12**  
Gem science in Islamic and eastern traditions



**14**  
Yemeni traditions in treating eye problems

## World Bank assesses the state of Yemen's education

By: Salma Ismail

SANA'A, July 5 — Although public spending for education increased by up to 125 percent between 1997-2007, it seems that support for the vital sector will dwindle in the future, according to the World Bank's county status report on Yemen released today.

The country has made significant strides in education, in terms of girls' enrolment and quality, but lags behind on a regional and international level.

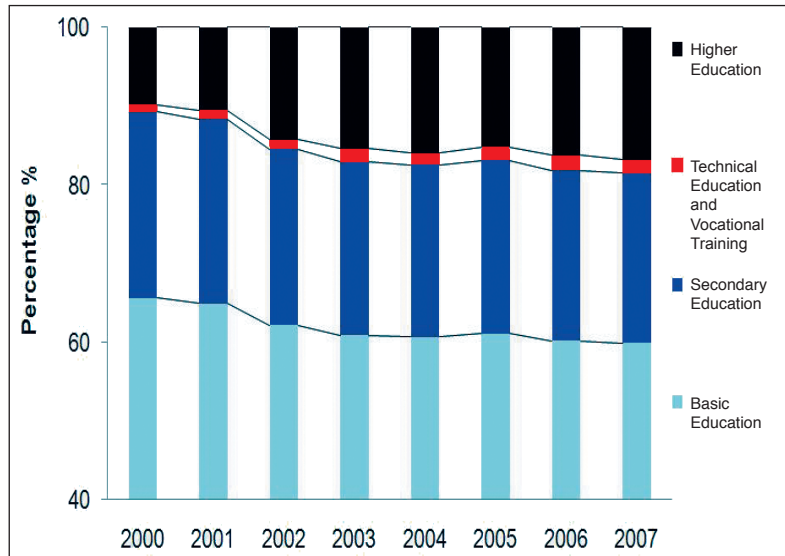
"Education is the business of everybody," stresses Benson Ateng, World Bank country manager.

The government's spending has shifted from education to other sectors, according

to the report. In relation to GDP, total education expenditure dropped from 6.8 percent in 1997 to 5.3 percent in 2006, before a slight increase to 5.8 percent in 2008.

Moreover, the country's oil resources, which largely fund the public budget, are widely expected to run out by 2017.

"The purpose of the report was to spark a debate by putting the numbers in front of us," said Ayesha Vawda, Senior Education Specialist in the Human Development Sector of the World Bank in Yemen. The rationale of the report is to provide information for the government's vision for education, and to uncover the most important areas for its policy development.



Basic and secondary education account for the largest proportion of public education spending, but their shares declined between 2000-2007.



Despite the government's compulsory basic education policy, 1.8 million children on basic education age were still out of school in 2005.

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"If education is improved, the state of the whole country will improve," said Minister of Technical Education and Vocational Training Ibrahim Omar Hajri.

The labor force is growing by 3.5 percent which is equivalent to 200,000 job seekers annually, according to the World Bank. However, demand for labor is low. Unemployment has continuously increased during the past 15 years, especially among educated youth and women, leaving an oversupply of over educated workers.

"At this period of time, it is imperative that Yemen focus on the sectors that will have the most economic benefit," said Susan Ayari education donor coordinator from USAID. "This is an opportunity to see so much information in one place."

"There is definitely a problem with education, partly due to higher demand and rapid population growth," said Hajri.

"This report is the cornerstone to solving the education problem in Yemen," Ali Gasim, deputy minister for the Ministry of Education.

### Three ministries for education

Although there are three ministries in Yemen that address education, not enough is being done to address the education woes of the country. The World Bank calls for more coordination between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

The three education ministries differ in their mandates and experience, but they share important constraints in exercising their core functions, according to the report. Authorities have suggested merging the three ministries into one, although discussions are ongoing between researchers and policy makers as to how to solve the issue.

"If three ministries can't meet the demands of education, how can one ministry do so," asked Al-Hajri. "Demand for education is increasing and something needs to be done to address this."

"There's evidence that there is no coordination," Vawda said. "Some people

suggest merging the ministries, but a bigger minister only means bigger problems."

"There needs to be coordination inside each ministry, consolidating the three ministries is not the solution," said Vawda. "There are examples in many countries where this has failed."

"The government has held many meetings regarding the issue of three ministries to try to solve it, says Hajri, who agrees that there should be one government vision with regard to education.

### Brain drain vs. brain gain

Unlike many countries in the Middle East and North Africa suffering from a brain drain in which skilled workers leave the country, Yemen enjoys a brain gain, because possibilities of emigration push more youngsters to complete higher education. Those that do not make it abroad, are better qualified members of the workforce in Yemen.

Under the worst case scenarios, skilled emigration appears to reduce income per capita in Yemen by 3 percent. However, the impact of remittances and positive externalities offset this loss.

"We study the job market in Saudi Arabia to expand our chances of employment," said Mazin Al-Ashraaf, who studies telecommunication engineering at the private Science and Technology University in Sana'a. "I know people who studied in Yemen and now work in Saudi Arabia in positions with good salaries."

Many Yemeni skilled graduates make up to 3-4 times more money than they would if they worked in Yemen.

"Yemen is overeducated and over skilled for its economy. Yemen pays low wages for expatriates and it turns it into low productivity. There's a system that is producing employees but there's no way for the national economy to absorb its skilled labor," says Professor Zafiriz Tzannatos, a former advisor to the World Bank.

"The problem isn't limited to the education system, but also includes an economy that cannot absorb its skilled workers," said Tzannatos.

"Yemen does not have a brain drain, it has a brain gain. Because people strive to become more educated, so that they can leave," Tzannatos adds.

Continued on page 2

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# Yemen LNG Company Scholarship Programme

In support of the ongoing professional development of the citizens of Yemen, Yemen LNG Company is pleased to announce the launch of its scholarship programme. The programme aims to provide a range of scholarships which will

- deliver world class university education to recently graduated young high school students
- equip fresh college graduates with additional qualifications such as diplomas and master's degrees
- enhance the skills of professionals already working in occupations which directly benefit the country

The scholarships are open to all citizens of Yemen, and the programmes which will be offered each year are detailed below.

## Undergraduate Programme

### Majors:

- Civil Engineering
- Mechanical Engineering
- Environmental Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Electronics & Communication Engineering
- Electrical Engineering

### Requirements:

1. Yemeni national residing in Yemen and aged between 18 and 21 years
2. A certificate from a secondary school in Yemen, recognized by the Yemeni Ministry of Education
3. A grade average of 85% or higher - Science section
4. Good English language skills and the willingness to undertake additional training to reach the required level
5. Commitment to complete a four-year study programme and to return to work in Yemen

## Postgraduate Programme

### Master Majors:

- Masters of Public Administration
- Tourism Development
- Tourism Management
- Water Regulation and Management
- International Health Care
- Environmental Law and Policy
- Executive MBA
- Finance and Investment Management
- Energy Law and Policy
- International Dispute Resolution and Management
- Mineral Law and Policy
- Petroleum Law and Policy
- Petroleum Taxation and Finance

### Diploma Majors:

- Energy Law and Policy
- Environmental Law and Policy
- Finance and Investment Management
- International Health Care
- Petroleum Law and Policy
- Petroleum Taxation and Finance
- International Dispute Resolution and Management
- Mineral Law and Policy

### Requirements:

1. A TOEFL score of at least 450 in English and the willingness to undertake additional training to reach the required level
2. A pre-existing BA/BSc degree with a grade average of at least "good"
3. At least one year's postgraduate work in Yemen
4. A clear personal career objective after the completion of the Master's degree or Diploma

## Professional Certificates

### Majors:

- Strategic Management
- Financial Management
- Project Appraisal and Management
- Environmental management
- Managerial Control and MIS
- E-government
- Certificate in HR Administration
- Certificate in Recruitment & Selection
- Certificate in Purchasing & Supply
- HR Management
- Contracts Strategy and Management
- Human Resource Planning & Development
- International Diploma in Educational Planning & development
- General Management for Senior Executives
- International Training Programme on Management Systems for Developing countries
- International Training Programme in Standardization & Quality Assurance for Developing Countries

### Requirements:

1. A TOEFL score of at least 450 in English to reach the required level
2. A letter from the current employer which must state the professional need for the candidate to undertake this training and the benefit that the individual and the employing Organisation will gain from it
3. A reference letter from the current employer, supporting the candidate's application and giving clear reasons for this



For more information about the programmes and how to apply, please visit our Website

[www.yemenlng.com/scholarships](http://www.yemenlng.com/scholarships)

All applications must be submitted no later than 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009. Additional scholarships will be advertised annually.

The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights Executive Manager Mohammed Al-Maqtari to Yemen Times:

**“We do not receive funding from any political party and the observatory’s financial records will be on our Web site for all to see.”**

The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights is one of Yemen’s prominent civil society organizations and has been active in supporting rights-based issues since its establishment in 2004. This year, the observatory issued its fourth annual human rights and democracy report for Yemen in 2008. Nadia Al-Sakkaf interviewed Mohammed A. Al-Maqtari, general manager of the observatory.

**The observatory has been quite active despite its small number of staff and limited resources? How did this happen?**

The Yemeni Observatory for Human Rights is a non-governmental civil society organization that focuses on democracy and human rights issues in Yemen. It is active in monitoring violations against human rights and freedoms in Yemen and issues annual reports on the situation.

A group of four lawyers and activists, including myself, agreed in 2004 that we should create an entity to document and report violations and recommend courses of action in Yemen. We depended solely on our personal financing, as we are established lawyers and professionals and have our own sources of income. The observatory started with a group of six people and we started expanding two years later.

Only then did we start working with donor organizations for specific projects or reports. You must understand that the most important issue any civil society organization can achieve is credibility. And we are proud to say that we have done this despite the accusations from others that we are being funded by this party or that. The hard work of the observatory’s staff and friends who support us on volunteer basis are behind the achievements of the observatory.

**Although you claim to be a neutral, you are seen by the state as opposition especially with the strong affiliations of members of the board of trustees to the socialist party. How do you explain that?**

Why must the personal affiliations of any of the members extend to cover the observatory itself?

People who claim we are not independent fail to understand that the observatory is its own entity, defined by its

policies, mission statements, and activities. I challenge anyone who claims this to present evidence of bias. Even the reports on which we deal with state issues such as national strategies are based on official data and analysis from national and international accredited organizations.

I was member of the socialist party until 1983, when I left because of my desire to abstain from political work. At that time the party, was not active and I decided I was better off without it. After the unity in 1990, the party regained some of its momentum, yet I decided I would remain independent. I continued my law career until 2004 until my friends and I decided to establish the observatory.

Today, the observatory’s staff, board of trustees and advisory board includes 31 individuals from all political lines and geographical allocations and obviously gender. We maintain a balance to protect our neutrality and objectivity of our work. The board of trustees especially is mostly independent. And we create measures to ensure that the personal political convictions of any of our affiliates do not interfere with work produced in the observatory’s name. We do this through cross-checking information and creating teams of people with different political affiliations.

If our work was not credible, it would not have been sought after by national and international organizations.

We do not receive any funding from any political party, national or international organization. We did and do not receive any funding from the socialist party, not even one penny. The donor organizations work with us on projects and our financial records are transparent. In fact, they will be placed in our Web site soon, for all to see.

As for viewing us as opposition, that is actually natural considering that we docu-

ment violations against human rights that are mostly committed by the state. In Yemen, it is like you are with me or against me. But we try to stick to the middle path representing the best interest of the people, whom we feel are the main body we should answer to.

**How do you maintain the sustainability of the observatory?**

After over four years of establishing ourselves, today we find that projects come to us instead of us seeking them. We work on a diverse set of projects whether on local level such as our interest in fighting slavery in Hajja, or national level such as analysis of the presidential and local council elections in 2006. We do our research with the help of academic researchers and volunteers.

We have focal points in 12 governorates, including Taiz, Aden, Lahj, Dhale, Abyan, Hadramout, Shabwa, Amran and Hodeidah.

We also maintain a democratic environment within the observatory and this helps keep staff and volunteers committed. For example, we are regularly expanding the board of trustees and we went from four people in 2004 to seven in 2006. Also the observatory’s leadership is designed to be on rotational basis. So next year, there will be an election to select a new director from the board of trustees and, the year after, my position as executive manager will be re-appointed after an election.

We are trying to establish an institutional environment that does not depend on one or a group of persons so that the observatory sustains itself throughout generations.

**Which international organizations have you worked with and what were the topics?**

We had worked with several donor organ-

izations such as Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, the United Nations Development Program, the International Development Research Centre in Canada, the Future Foundation, and many others. We are working with the National Endowment for Democracy on our annual report, which we have been producing since 2006.

The projects include documentation of specific incidents or nation wide reports. It focuses on our field of interest which is human rights and democracy.

**An observatory’s role is documentation without taking sides, you do more than that. You lobby, you advocate and push for certain directions. Don’t you think this affects your credibility?**

Well, the truth is that the name of the organization is somewhat narrower than the scope of work, which is defined in the mission statement and objectives. Yes, we are an observatory but we do more than documentation. We do campaigning, advocacy and carry out events to support the country’s development and human rights.

On the contrary, this has enhanced our credibility because we have been clear from the very beginning as to what we do. Every year we issue an annual report and produce a set of recommendations on how the situation of human rights in Yemen can be improved. So you see we are not a passive observatory we are rather a proactive kind with initiatives.

And all the information we produce and the reports are available in Arabic on our Web site. We have a library and a database program that processes numbers and transforms them into meaningful tables. We use this program in our annual reports in order to go beyond just documenting statistics to making them into informative tables. But we do not manipulate or control the information, or use it to serve the interest of certain groups.

**Considering the observatory’s outspoken opinions and strong critical reports, have you or any of your staff received threats?**

Our aim from the beginning was to create



Mohammed A. Al-Maqtari

a human rights institution to support the democratic transition, build a state of law through awareness, defend the rights of the people and expose violations in an authentic and credible way. I don’t know of anyone who would openly oppose to that. I have neither personally received direct or indirect threats not heard of any from my colleagues or staff members.

Our work aims at drawing the attention of the public and leadership regarding legislative problems. We analyze and identify issues in the institutional infrastructure and look at what can be done to create a fair judiciary system. Therefore, we work with all parties, including state institutions and are in direct communication with offices of the government on regular basis. They know what we are doing and we inform them of our findings. And although we don’t agree most of the time, at least they know we are credible and have the best interest of the country in our hearts. Perhaps this is why we have been quite successful, and still going strong.

**Do you think Yemen’s civil society is ready to take up the role that you just mentioned?**

Let us consider it this way, there is no

other alternative. The state is always worried about civil society organizations because they challenge official state reports. In other words, our role as civil society is to provide another point of view to what the state is reporting.

Yemen’s civil society needs strengthening, and its capacity needs to be built. More importantly, it needs to have confidence that it can create change and derive its strength from the people’s best interest.

We need to know that we are strong enough to question any entity does not match the country’s interest. There are issues in the country’s strategies that we know of because of our work but the people do not.

For example, we know that the state will lift the fuel tax subsidies in 2010, and there will also be an increase in sales tax by 10 percent. There will be a reduction in government employee wages by .6 percent of the GDP. This year, the oil revenue will shrink by 30 percent, and by 2015, Yemen will start importing oil. In 2018 Yemen will stop oil production all together.

It is our responsibility as civil society to make this information public and back it up with analysis and background information.



**INSTRUMENT TECHNICIAN**  
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**Basic Function:**

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**Job Duties:**

- Installs, repairs, calibrate, troubleshoot and maintain all instrument control systems in the plant and field facilities. Covers control valves, electronic pneumatic transmitters, electronic flow measuring devices, electronic and pneumatic pressure controlling devices, chemical injection facilities from small to medium size pumps, and PLC/data acquisition equipment.
- Provides on-the-job training to instrument technician trainees in any of the areas covered in (a) above.
- Troubleshoots and repairs other equipment such as office equipment, fire & gas detection systems, etc. within the scope of skill and training.
- Carries out other similar or related duties and preventative maintenance work as deemed necessary to support the Plant and Field activities.

**Minimum Requirements:**

- Completion of secondary education (12 years) followed by at least 2 years’ full-time formal training in Instrumentation and 6 years experience related to the Instrumentation trade.
- Good knowledge of English, good computer skills with familiarity with Microsoft Word & Excel.
- Valid Yemen driving license.

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**Job Duties:**

- Loads and lifts items of equipment in a safe and efficient manner. Includes lifting generators, power transformers, piping materials, etc. and transferring warehouse materials and mechanical equipment to various locations; up to 7 tons with the picker, up to 50 tons with crane. Operates equipment in a safe and efficient manner.
- Carries out daily checks and minor maintenance work on heavy equipment. Includes inspecting wire rope, lubricating, inspecting and lubricating sheaves and hoists, checking tire pressures, testing safety overloads, inspecting for hydraulic leaks, checking engine oil levels and brakes, etc.
- Carries out other similar or related duties such as instructing trainees in loading, operating and carrying out minor maintenance work.

**Minimum Requirements:**

- Completion of secondary education (12 years) followed by 2 years full-time formal training in mechanical trades and 6 years of related experience as a HEO.
- Fair knowledge of English.
- Valid heavy equipment operator certificate or license.
- Valid Yemen driving license.

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# The Middle East conflict in the schools

## The history of the others

In a jointly written history textbook, Israelis and Palestinians attempt to understand 60 years of hostility. Arnfrid Schenk reports on a unique project of reconciliation.

**S**ami Adwan has a story to tell that has a surprising twist. It is his own story. The short version goes like this:

Born in 1954 in a village near Hebron on the West Bank, he spends his childhood under Israeli occupation. He works hard and makes it into the university in Jordan. For a long time he thinks of the Israelis the same way everyone in Palestine thinks of them: "They are the reason for all my misery, for all my suffering." Adwan is still thinking this way when he goes to the USA to study education – he avoids lectures and seminars where he knows he will encounter Jewish students.

At that point, he has never spoken to an Israeli; he doesn't know them at all as civilians, but only as soldiers at the checkpoints. He doesn't want to know them.

A few years later, Adwan is co-director of an Israeli-Palestinian peace research institute and is working together with Jewish teachers and historians on writing an Israeli-Palestinian history book on the Middle East conflict. He is one of the people we like to call a bridge-builder. But how did he get there?

### Unexpected helpfulness of an Israeli

Sami Adwan, professor of education at the University of Bethlehem, continues recounting his story,

and supporting the book project from the start. He is tired, but there is still so much to tell.

He returned from the USA in the late 1980s, taught at Hebron University, became a member of Fatah and was swiftly arrested by the Israelis. At that time, Fatah was still considered a terrorist organisation. During his first week in prison, he didn't know what he was charged with. His image of the enemy was confirmed.

But then the helpfulness of an Israeli made Adwan think again.

Something happened that didn't jibe with his worldview. He overheard two Israeli soldiers getting into an argument over him. It was supposed to sign. We can't force him to sign something he can't read, said the one. Adwan understood just enough Hebrew to realise that a Jew was standing up for his rights, for the rights of a Palestinian. Later he saw an Israeli soldier bringing the prisoners water, although his superior had forbidden it.

### A time when peace seemed possible

"These experiences changed my life." It became clear to him that not everyone was the same. He wanted to find out more about the Israelis. He wanted to talk to them. When after six months Sami Adwan was released from prison, in 1993, he did everything he could to launch a



The year 1948 means for the Israelis the war of independence and the founding of their state, but for the Palestinians a year of catastrophe, the nakba, or expulsion from their homeland

from Ben Gurion University. Bar-On had caused a worldwide sensation by setting up meetings between Holocaust victims and children of Nazi criminals. Together, Bar-On and Adwan founded the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) and began work on their concept for an Israeli-Palestinian history textbook.

"What is taught in the schools can either foment conflict or contribute to finding a solution", says Adwan. The hope is that this history book will help to break down prejudices on both sides.

Bar-On and Adwan were not so presumptuous as to try to find a mutual interpretation of the Middle East conflict. They merely wanted to place the Palestinian point of view next to that of Israel. This would help to open the eyes of the other side. The texts were to be written not only by scholars, but also by teachers – after all, they are the ones who have to present the material to the pupils.

### Two ways of looking at the facts

The three volumes now look like this: on the left side is the Israeli view of things and on the right side the Palestinian standpoint. In the middle there is space for notes, room for the pupils' own thoughts. This is how the book treats 20th-century Israeli-

Palestinian history. This includes for example the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which promised the Jews their own nation, the period of uprisings against the occupiers known as the Intifada, and the wars of 1948 and 1967.

The facts are the same, but there are two ways of looking at them. The year 1948 for example means for the Israelis the war of independence and the founding of their state, but for the Palestinians a year of catastrophe, the nakba, or expulsion from their homeland.

It was not difficult to agree on the dates, but it was hard to accept the others' interpretation of them. "One person's terrorist is another person's hero", comments Adwan. Dan Bar-On, who died in autumn 2008, was interested in the "disarming of history".

The fact that this disarming must begin at school is something Adwan is more convinced of than ever after his analyses of Palestinian and Israeli history textbooks. He notes that:

"There is no acknowledgement in these books of what the others have suffered. No recognition of their rights, their history, their culture. The Holocaust hardly appears at all in the Palestinian books, while the Israelis ignore the expulsion of the Palestinians. In the maps the cities and villages of the other side are nowhere to be seen." No one knows anything about the others. "Schooling is therefore part of the problem", says Adwan, "and not part of the solution."

### Neutral ground in Germany

"Learning each other's historical narrative": this is the title of the new textbook, designed for upper school pupils. A dozen teachers in Israel and a dozen more on the West Bank are now working with the texts at selected schools. But not during regular classroom instruction, as the history book is not part of the official curricula. The respective ministries ignore it but tolerate it. The project is being funded by American foundations, the EU, the German Foreign Office and others.

It wasn't easy to arrange meetings between the writers – one never knew if all participants would make it through the checkpoints in time. The

Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig finally offered neutral ground on which the Palestinian and Israeli teachers and scholars could regularly meet for seminars stretching over several days.

Before work on the content began, the teachers spoke with each other about their everyday lives. Some told of their fear of suicide attacks, others about the humiliations of occupation.

### Emotional strain

What motivated the teachers to take part in the project? For example, Maysoun Hussein al Tal, who wears



Together, Sami Adwan (left) and Dan Bar-On founded the 'Peace Research Institute in the Middle East' and began work on their concept for an Israeli-Palestinian history textbook

a white headscarf with black ornaments. She teaches history at a girls' school in East Jerusalem. When a colleague asked her if she would like to work on the project, she realised that she had never before spoken with an Israeli.

She hesitated for a long time, she says. Her feelings told her no, you can't do it. But her head said: this is one way to speak with the Israelis, to set something in motion, to change things – go ahead and do it. She joined in, although her husband has a hard time accepting it.

Yiftach Ron, who teaches at an Israeli school, says he has a problem with how Israeli society treats Palestinians. He thought that working on the project was the best way for him to solve this problem. Some of the Palestinian teachers received threats from parents when they found out what their children were learning at school. Friendships have grown

between some of the participants, such as between Adwan and Bar-On, but some have had to withdraw because they could no longer bear the emotional strain.

Like the teacher whose blind cousin earns his living with a kiosk. Israeli soldiers bulldozed the kiosk into the ground. The teacher said: "I can't work with you all anymore; otherwise I won't be able to look him in the eye." Another reports that one of his pupils was shot.

During the latest war in Gaza people on both sides were speechless. All work was suspended, meetings cancelled and conferences postponed. In the meantime, the participants have pulled themselves together again.

### A more cautious assessment of the "others"

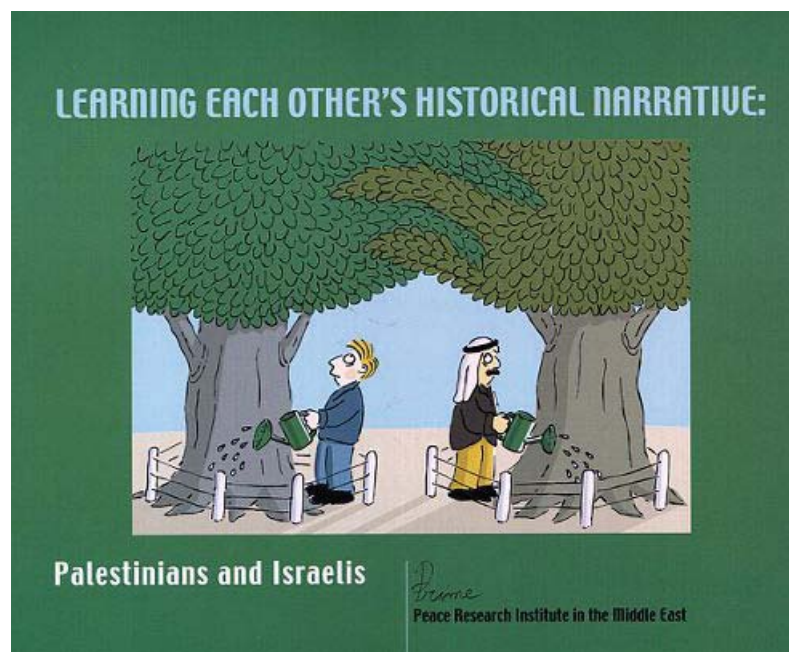
And what about the pupils? Maysoun Hussein and Yiftach Ron have for the most part had good experiences in their classrooms. Others report that the pupils in Israel often find the Palestinian interpretation of history in the book too emotional, verging on propaganda. Many Palestinian pupils say that, even if they do develop more understanding for the Israeli view of history, it will hardly change anything about their situation.

The evaluation is still in progress, and at the end of July the project is to be presented at an international conference. Adwan remarks that most of the pupils are now less sweeping in their judgements, more cautious in their assessments of the "others". It's a start. "All we can do is hope", he says.

### Setting a precedent

Until there is a political solution to the conflict, the project will not be able to emerge from its niche. But the mere fact that the joint project was able to get underway and be successfully concluded, despite escalations in the conflict, is already a promising sign. And it's setting a precedent: Skopje University in Macedonia has published an Albanian-Macedonian history book based on the same principle.

Asked if he thinks the history



The Georg Eckert Institute in Germany offered neutral ground on which the Palestinian and Israeli teachers and scholars could regularly meet for seminars

talking fast now. It is a late spring evening in Braunschweig, Germany, and he has had a long day at a conference at the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, which has been advising

dialogue. The Oslo talks between Israel and the Palestinians had begun; it was a time when peace seemed possible.

He met with Israeli academics, got to know the psychologist Dan Bar-On



The "disarming of history": Learning each other's historical narrative is the first Israeli-Palestinian history book on the Middle East conflict

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# MTN Yemen Organizes The Third Group Wedding For 32 Employees



**A** significant change has been introduced to the image of Commercial Organizations in our modern days. These Companies besides focusing on delivering services and generating profits, they tend to aim at making positive and effective contributions to their societies.

It is well known that one of the major obstacles that stand in the way of the young generation in Yemen is to start a family life. This obstacle is represented in the high cost of weddings. MTN Yemen, being one of the major telecommunication companies, in which a large number of young men and women are working, and being conscious of its obligations towards the society, has in an attempt to pave the way of its employees to start their family lives with the least burdens possible, organized an annual event in which a large number of its employees are given the opportunity to celebrate their wedding night with their family members, friends and colleagues in a festive large group wedding.



On June 26th the third Group Wedding was organized at one of the biggest halls in Sana'a. The event was attended by over four thousand invitees. A number of Government Officials attended the wedding.

Mr. Raed Ahmad, MTN Yemen Chief Executive Officer, headed the reception committee and in his speech at the event, paid tribute to all those who participated in making the event a success. He extended his congratulations to the Grooms and wished them happiness and prosperity. He also thanked all those who attended the event and encouraged all other companies working in Yemen, especially in the private sector, to organize similar events which would have an impact on the community as a whole. "We encourage all bachelors to seek their happiness and welfare as they have now approached the beginning of their new lives with their partners, we will provide our support by all means available with regards to your marriage" said CEO of MTN Yemen.



Mr. Ali Abdelwareth, MTN Yemen Deputy Chief Executive Officer, directed his congratulations to the newlyweds and wished them a prosperous life with their partners. He also added: "Modern Administration calls for investing in human capital to achieve both success and profits." He also emphasized that MTN Yemen recognizes the importance of development of its employees through various effective training programs and sessions.

Mr. Mohammed Nasher, MTN General Manager of Human Resources, also addressed the importance of the issue. He added that MTN Yemen is making incessant efforts to become a leader in Modern Administration; this takes place through the partnership of the company with both its' employees and community.

In order to increase the level of happiness that winged the event MTN Yemen announced special gifts that will be awarded to all the 32 grooms, the gift included an amount of 100,000 YR directed towards the cost of marriage, in addition to the previous gift that was presented to all the grooms at the amount of 100,000 YR.

A honeymoon cannot be complete without a romantic getaway location with a romantic environment; thus, the 32 grooms along with their brides received full accommodations, for the duration of 7 days, at Aden City on the South beach of Yemen.

The glamorous event featured all aspects of Yemeni culture through traditional music, dances and unified traditional Yemeni customs.



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# Gem science in Islamic and eastern traditions

Throughout history people have been fascinated by gems. The fields of Astrology, Numerology, Gemology, and other related sciences have been dedicated to solving the mysteries and conceptions behind gems and their relation to man's temperament. Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany attempts to study and analyze the science of gems in both the eastern tradition and in Islam.

By: Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany  
For the Yemen Times

**H**istorians of eastern and Islamic history indicate that the science of gems has been of interest to Muslim scholars and rulers since the very beginning. The fourth Caliph Ali bin Abi Taleb discussed fifteen minerals and gems in his writings and the ninth Fatemi Imam Ahmad Al-Mastur discussed more than 900 varieties of mineral in his research on the creation of minerals entitled 'Risalah Takwin al M'adin.'

Dr. Robert Frost, a doctor of medicine in Basle, Switzerland, recently studied the scientific properties of gems which revealed their remedial properties in scientific terms. In his clinical research, Dr. Frost revealed that wearing the appropriate gems can reduce pain, prevent allergic reactions, improve coordination and even increase muscle strength.

## Ruby

The beauty of the Ruby is discussed in the Qur'an as a blessing: "As though (in good looks) they are like rubies and coral." (Surah Al-Rahman 55, Ayah No. 58)

Rubies have been claimed to remove both poverty and tension. Imam Ahmad Al-Mastur explained that the ruby is the most superior gem, mentioning that

the ruby is a very hard stone and will not break even if hit with a hammer. A flawless ruby is more valuable than a diamond. Rubies are said to change their color according to the health of the wearer.

A ruby with the color of dark red blood symbolizes courage and bravery. Two centuries ago, Syedi Ibrahim Saifi, the celebrated brilliant scholar of Muslim sciences, recorded a unique narration regarding the birth of ruby. He wrote, "When Adam was placed down on earth from heaven, he arrived at Serendip (Sri Lanka) and stayed at mount Serendip. Due to the blessed touch of his feet, the ruby was created."

Saifi also discussed numerous benefits of the ruby in his valuable work 'Marefat al Jawahir, writing that the ruby "prevents blood loss, helps to stop bleeding and cures blood and heart diseases." According to the Prophet's family, the ruby negates poisons.

Arab warriors who could afford to wore rubies, which when touched by bare skin provide energy and courage in battle. Rubies are also rumored to stimulate the libido and extend the time of pleasure. This gem was additionally thought to attract and maintain love and friendship.

## Sapphire

The finest Sapphires are deep blue and fall under the influence of the planet Jupiter. The wearer of this gem seeks

enlightenment via devotion and wisdom via harmony. Genuine sapphires are said to help ease heart and stomach problems. Under the influence of Jupiter, sapphires give abundance but also warn against self-indulgence.

Eastern literature holds that if a sapphire is put on the chest of someone who is feverish, by the order of Allah, the fever will decrease. Sapphires also turn poverty into prosperity in a short period of time for those who wear them. They additionally provide protection from the evil eye and from illegal sexual desire.

## Silver

There are many metals available today such as gold, white-gold, platinum, titanium, steel, silver and many more, but only silver is recommended in Islam for men to wear. Scientific research has proven today that gold can absorb many women-specific diseases and helps them regain the loss of their blood in their menstrual cycle, a point that was mentioned by the Prophet nearly 1,430 years ago.

Wearing fake jewelry was strictly forbidden by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Once a person came up to the Prophet wearing a brass ring. The Prophet told him to take it off immediately, saying that it gave off a negative aura. The man removed the ring and the next time wore a ring of steel. He was given the same warning. The third time, the man wore a golden ring and was scolded yet again. He asked in exasperation what sort of ring he should wear. The answer was silver.

Imam Jafar Assadiq recorded that the Prophet used to wear a ring on his first finger and prohibited wearing a ring on the middle finger. A ring should be worn at the very end of the finger, where it joins with the palm. The ring should be fixed in such a manner that the lower portion of the gem should touch the finger. Rays can thus pass through the gem and enter into the body, giving off its properties and energy.

A suitable gem helps to make positive changes in a person's life and improves his or her situation. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed never to wear a ring on the left hand. He also prohibited wearing a ring on the center finger or witness finger, further stating that a new gem should never be fixed in an old used ring.

## Emerald

Emeralds have recently been grown in the laboratory and have begun to appear in the market, causing controversy. Scientifically speaking, manufactured emeralds are identical to natural ones in color, hardness and bril-

liance. Only a gemologist can distinguish between the two, but while the industry knows the difference, the consumer does not.

Islamic Tradition states that wearing an emerald ring will make a poor person rich, and whosoever wears a ring set with a yellow ruby will never become poor.

According to Ali bin Abi Talib, emeralds eradicate difficulties and nightmares. They also help protect against poison from animal bites and toxic food. Emeralds dispel anxiety and heal leprosy, increase the power of vision, calm tempers and heal disputes.

## Pearl

Pearls are associated with purity and motherhood. Some Islamic scholars claim that wearing pearls generates magnetism and psychic development. Pearls are supposed to encourage a sense of responsibility and duty, yet it is warned that one should avoid wearing used pearls as they have the power to absorb the non-healthy influences of the previous wearer.

## Coral

Many rosaries are made of coral. Coral is acclaimed to have several benefits,



A two hundred and twenty five years old Yemeni Aqiq necklace.

wrote that white agate helps to increase memory, yellow assists in solving problems and red agate promotes dignity.

Jews, Christians and Muslims unanimously agree on the spiritual, medicinal and supernatural values and importance of this gem. Historian Syedi Ibrahim Saifi wrote that agates have

Mufaddal to wear a ring encrusted with turquoise gem, saying, "It gives strength to the eyes, joy to the heart, improves eyesight and strengthens the brain and heart." In other writings, Assadiq remarked, "Those who wear a ring of turquoise will never become dependent or see poverty."

According to Islamic gemologists, turquoise protects against magic, evil, serpents and the evil eye. It also protects against a miserable death, especially death from calamities, and provides protection from assassination. Turquoise improves vision and protects against heart problems, malaria and depression.

## Yellow Sapphire

A true yellow sapphire is golden yellow and comes under the influence of the planet Jupiter in its capacity as counselor, optimist and idealist. According to several accounts, in the presence of poison, it changes color. According to Islamic tradition, whoever wears a yellow sapphire will never become poor.

In eastern literature, yellow sapphires create the power to inspire someone and strengthen self-expression. They also boost energy and intelligence.

Medicinally, yellow sapphires help to cure skin diseases, particularly leprosy. They also cure blood diseases, particularly cancer, and cure piles of all kinds. Yellow sapphires increase body heat, help decrease the influence of poison, and dissolve kidney stones through urine. For pregnant women, when placed under the tongue, yellow sapphires help ease labor pains.

## Jasper

In the Bible, jasper was associated with Jerusalem. Some historical accounts provide information about the use of the jasper among Fatemi sovereigns. The famous historian Muqrezi in particular discussed the various items used by Bani Fatemah which were made of jasper, mostly large vessels for drinking.

Jasper utensils were first crafted for the monarchs of Bani Abbas and later reached the Fatemi Treasury when Fatemi forces conquered Baghdad. Its medicinal value attracted the elites of society to use it regularly. Mughal Emperors in particular used jasper for its therapeutic values. It is noteworthy to mention that in the present era, heart patients use jasper as a cure for cardiac problems in Europe, especially in London.

According to eastern literature, if one regularly wears a jasper necklace, the wearer will be protected from brain diseases and disorders. Jasper also prevents heart problems, and if used after heart problems have already occurred, it helps control further cardiac troubles. Jasper can regulate high blood pressure and remove piles. It also helps to cure liver and stomach problems. Jasper can help reduce labor pains in pregnant women and is helpful during the delivery process.

Dr. Shaikh Abbas Borhany, PhD (USA), NDI, Shahadat al A'alamiyyah (Najaf, Iraq), M.A., LLM (Shariah), Mushir: Fed. Shariat Court of Pakistan, Member: Ulama Council of Pakistan. He can be reached at: qazishk-borhany@hotmail.com



Well crafted Fatemi era's gold ring inlaid with a blue turquoise.

the chief of which is that it protects against evils. Mothers in the Arabian Peninsula still today place corals on their children's necks to protect them.

Those who wear coral send out vibrations of harmony, friendship, beauty and unity. A coral ring cures and protects against heat stroke, increases vision and is helpful for achieving success in whatever the wearer wishes.

## Agate, Cornelian

Historical scholar Hatim Mohiyuddin wrote that wearing agate improves the riches of the wearer.

The famous Greek philosopher Plato

many benefits, such as that regular use controls anger and calms the temper. He also wrote that agates provide protection from difficulties and trials, help to lessen sorrow, and provide quick relief from labor pain.

Agates have been further reported to boost one's charm and improve one's sense of humor. They bring luck when traveling, strengthen concentration, and help to heal kidney, bladder and liver problems.

According to Sahih Bukhari, an Ethiopian carnelian was fixed in the signet silver ring of the Prophet. He used to wear it on the smallest finger of the right hand and wore it so that the gem faced towards the palm.

## Amber

Amber is pleasing to the the sight, smell and touch and is light, warm and pleasant to hold in the hand. It was Queen Arwa Al-Suleyhi of Yemen who promoted the use of amber among the people of the Arabian Peninsula after examining its medicinal values. Credit for the usage of the amber rosary in Arabia largely goes to her.

Around the world, Muslims carry rosaries with them. Along with remembering Allah, rosaries are also used for curative purpose. A rosary is a well-liked gift from one Muslim to another, as this gift could be physically and spiritually uplifting. According to Biblical literature, Israeli prophets used it.

According to eastern literature if one uses a rosary made of amber, the user will remain safe from various diseases from the neck to the navel. It also protects from poisons. Wearing amber is especially beneficial in curing headaches, toothaches and rheumatism. More specifically, wearing an amber necklace is said to help goiter sufferers and also helps defend against magic. Amber helps save pregnant women from miscarriage and increases the prestige and honor of the user.

## Turquoise

The best Turquoise is sky blue, but is inclined to fade.

According to Islamic tradition, Abi Abdillah Imam Jafar Assadiq advised



Amber Rosary of 46th Fatemi era during the rule of Mohammad Badruddin

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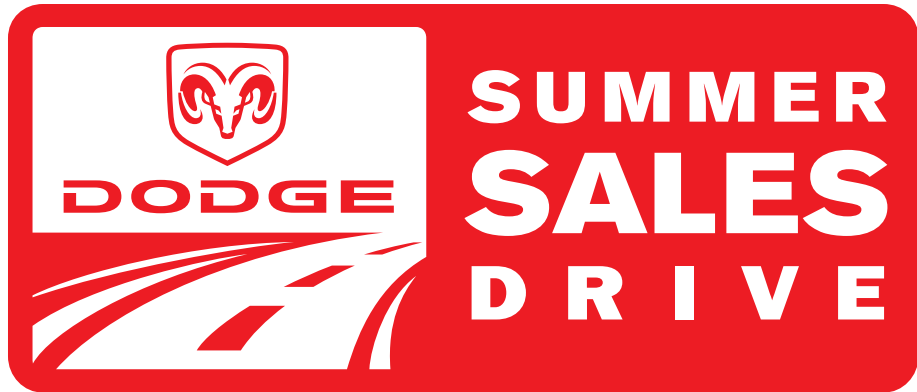
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# Yemeni traditions in treating eye problems

By: Ola Al-Shami

Elders use potatoes and tomatoes to purify their eyes, women lick eyes that are hurt to cleanse them, and even needles might help in curing eye diseases. Or so some Yemeni traditions say.

People in the past suffered as today from eye diseases and complaints. According to eye doctors, dry eye and eye sensitivity are the most widely spread complaints from Yemenis all around the country.

"Nowadays we cannot say that people from a specific area are exposed to eye diseases any more than others. However, dry eye is widely spread among educated people because of the popular use of computers and the internet," said Dr. Walid Ibrahim Al-Gorafi, an ophthalmic surgeon.

Eye sensitivity is also spread due to air pollution from diesel combustion and dusty winds. However, farmers in particular face eye cancer because of poor farming practices. "Farmers over-use pesticides without recognizing the extent of the damage these pesticides cause," stated Al-Gorafi.

The main causes for blindness and eyesight weakness in Yemen were revealed by the first phase of the National Field Survey for Blindness and Causes of Low Vision in Yemen.

The main causes for blindness in Yemen are cataracts, trachoma,



cataract and glaucoma. Cataracts are the clouding of the lens of the eye which impedes the passage of light according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Although most cases of cataracts are related to aging, occasionally children are born with the condition. Cataracts can also develop due to eye injuries, inflammation, or as a result of other eye diseases.

Trachoma, which is the most common infectious cause of blindness, is caused by Chlamydia Trachoma. Children who have active stages of the disease are the main carriers of the disease while blindness, which occurs after repeated episodes of infection,

primarily affects adults.

Trachoma is frequently passed from child to child and from child to mother, especially where there are shortages of water, numerous flies, and crowded living conditions.

### Controversies over traditional eye treatment

There are a number of practices that ancient Yemenis used to cure some eye diseases. "When your eye hurts because there is something in it or the like, you can go to a woman whose job is to use her tongue to clean your eye," said Om Abdulwase'e' Al-Qadi a local woman from Sana'a. However, there is

no specific place to find this woman who licks eyes.

Vegetables also are of great importance, especially among welders who frequently suffer from eye pains. There is a traditional remedy by cutting a potato into pieces after which a welder will open his eyes and put each piece on one eye. "The potato should not be hot. Cold potato pieces purify eyes. Tomatoes can do the same to eyes by cutting it into pieces too," said Ibraheem Sanad, a welder.

Another tradition is that when any one feels an irritating sensation in his or her eye, he or she can go to a woman called Al-Monaqishah who checks his

or her eye using a needle. "When you feel that your eye hurts, you can go to Al-Monaqishah, as we call her. She has a needle and cotton or other soft material handy, and she starts checking your eyes to purify them by using a needle," said Nabilah Al-Khaat, a house wife. She added that this can be done by any mature member in the family.

However, medicine opposes these traditions and provides many alternative scientific solutions to eye problems. "Using the tongue to pick up strange objects from the eye is not a solution.

It hurts the eye more than it helps," said Al-Gorafi. He added that an irritating feeling in the eyes is not necessarily the result of an object in the eyes.

"Al-Monaqishah can check your eye but can also increase your pain. Moreover, she can bring a new disease to your eyes such as cancer or any other disease because of using a needle which is mainly made to sew clothes, not to check people's eyes," said Mohammed Abdullah Ibrahim, an ophthalmic surgeon.

Ibrahim added that even the substances known as 'Kohl,' a black substance, and 'Ethmed,' a brown substance, are proved to include the amount of lead in the body which may cause eye cancer. Ethmed was mentioned in the hadiths, or the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. "Old Ethmed was known to purify the eyes and

strengthen the eyesight, but today's Ethmed is different and includes dangerous substances," stated Ibrahim.

Although doctors oppose using popular methods, still many believe that they relieve eyes or even purify them. "Ethmed is the best solution when you have any object in your eyes. People also popularly use it to cure eye sensitivity because when your eyes become red due to being sensitive, by using Ethmed your eyes will be cleaned. The more you use it, the more your eyes are purified," said Al-Khaat.

Kohl is believed to have certain aspects to relieve tired or sensitive eyes as well as make them more beautiful. "Kohl increases your eyelashes and strengthens your eyesight. We use it every day. Also, brides use it to beautify their eyes and increase their eyelashes," said Al-Qadhi.

### Nutrition helps poor eyesight

Apples are recommended for poor eyesight because of their abundance of vitamin A. "A lack of vitamin A is the leading cause of blindness," said Al-Gorafi. "Apples aren't just good for the body as a whole, but they also improve and keep the eyes strong, and they may even help with night blindness."

Almonds are also recommended because they include vitamin E which helps in fighting against poor eyesight. It is also a powerful antioxidant that protects cells against damage by free radicals.

# Yemen wracked by malaria despite grants

By: Heather Murdock and Khaled Al-Hilaly

Ten-month-old Younis stared listlessly at his mother as an intravenous tube dripped a clear liquid medicine into his cheek and the sole of his left foot.

Zahara Ahmed, his mother, rubbed his belly softly with her hand. Her baby's eyelids drooped lazily, until she removed her hand and wrapped her arms around her knees. Younis's eyes opened and his right arm pumped in frustration at the loss of his mother's touch.

He released a pained gurgle, and began to breathe rapidly. He did not cry.

Zahara, tired from three days on a cot with her baby at Al-Kuwait Hospital, was hopeful.

### "He's better," she said.

Younis will recover from malaria after seven days on the Quinine drip, according to Dr. Haikal Abdulwareth.

But as many as 9,000 other malaria patients may die this year in Yemen, according to government statistics, even though the disease is preventable, curable and practically nonexistent in the rest of the Middle East.

And even though about 160,000 cases were reported in Yemen in 2008, officials estimate that as many as 900,000 people fell ill with malaria. Pregnant women and children under five are the most vulnerable.

One major problem is communication, according to National Malaria Control Programme director Dr.

Adel Nasser Al-Jasari. The government does not know how many patients contract malaria every year, or exactly where they are infected.

As a result, projects designed to prevent or treat malaria, like spraying houses or distributing mosquito nets, suffer from poor planning. Nobody knows the exact scope and location of the problem, so it they don't where to go to fix it.

"Now it's just an estimate," said Dr. Abdul Hakeem Al-Kuhlani, director of combating diseases and epidemic observation at the Ministry of Health, "We go everywhere."

The current reporting system also does not generate enough accurate information to design successful anti-malaria programs.

"It's built," said Al-Jasari, "but it's fragmented."

Some doctors report that their patients have malaria when blood samples have not yet been tested. Others misdiagnose patients, and report other diseases. Many don't report at all. And these flawed numbers don't account for the vast amount of Yemenis who do not have access to modern health care.

In the next few weeks, however, the government plans to recruit and train 465 people to collect data from health facilities. The goal is to build an information network that "generates accurate and comprehensive malaria data," Al-Kuhlani said.

This project was expected to begin after the Gulf Cooperation Council countries pledged USD 48 million to fight malaria in Yemen in November 2006, according to Al-Jasari. The funds, however, did not begin to become available until March 2009, and the program is scheduled to begin this year.

And, he said, despite expectations from the Global Fund and the World Health Organization, the project was delayed because infrastructure needed to be built from scratch.

"When you are living and working in Yemen, it's not easy," he added.

Al-Jasari plans to hold training sessions for the recruits in Aden, Sana'a and Hadramout within in the next few weeks, he said, adding "inshallah, inshallah."

Some experts and families, however say the problem goes deeper than failed information systems.

About 70 percent of the people in Yemen live in the countryside, where only 20 percent of them have access to health care, according to 2006 government statistics. Sixty percent of the people in Yemen live in areas with



Because of stagnated water and unhealthy practices around water sources as many as 9,000 other malaria patients may die this year in Yemen, according to government statistics, even though the disease is preventable, curable and practically nonexistent in the rest of the Middle East.

elevations low enough to contract malaria.

Even when care is available, it is often not good, according to Dr. Abdullah Al-Taisar of Sana'a University's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. For instance, labs with overused or dirty slides can make it hard for doctors to diagnose malaria correctly.

And sending medical staff to workshops in the cities does not solve the problem because it takes the work out of context, he said.

"You should go to the labs [in rural areas] to train, and say, 'Look, this is dirty. Or, this is not going to work because of this.' Not to a clean lab in Sana'a, where everything is already perfect."

Rural areas are also largely left out of outreach programs, he added. "I don't see any effort to approach people in remote areas."

Beyond the lack of good, available

treatment, many people also have no idea how to prevent infection. Most people know that mosquito bites cause malaria, but according to Al-Taisar, many people also think malaria can be contracted through breast feeding, missing breakfast, eating uncovered food, drinking contaminated water, or through contact with flies.

"Villagers think they can't avoid it," he said. "How can you protect yourself from flies? Simply, you can't."

As a result of the confusion, people fail to protect themselves against the single cause of malaria infection: mosquitoes.

"Avoiding mosquitoes means avoiding malaria," he added.

Additionally many rural doctors still prescribe chloroquine, he said, even though 56 percent of malaria cases in Yemen are now resistant to the drug. According to the ministry, the drug is no longer recommended or used to treat

resistant strains. Rural doctors, however, do not always know about this development.

"No one knows at the local level," Al-Taisar said.

In some parts of Yemen, where avoiding mosquitoes is nearly impossible, the malaria problem is not always a lack of treatment or the kind of treatment given, according to Ghalib Hijab, the Al-Kuwait Hospital head of inspections and control.

Hijab grew up in Al-Khebt, a hot and humid village in the Mahwit governorate. Malaria in Al-Khebt is common, and his sister, Fatima, found out she had the disease during a pregnancy test.

Fatima refused malaria treatment because like many of her neighbors, she believed the medicine was dangerous for her baby. Instead she opted to eat bitter leaves from wild dandelions, which are sometimes considered an herbal anti-

biotic. According to doctors, however, it is dangerous to use herbal remedies alone to treat malaria.

The treatment "may cause harm if patient takes this plant and delays seeking help from doctors," according to Al-Taisar. "Malaria is rapidly progressive and should be treated immediately."

But some villagers still fear the medicines more than the disease.

"There are rumors that malaria medicine kills people," said Hijab.

But according to Abdulwareth, the baby Younis' doctor, these rumors have no merit. Proper malaria treatments are not dangerous to adults, children or pregnant women, he said.

And for Younis, the treatment is curing malaria while his body and his doctor fight rickets and pneumonia.

"Inshallah, he will leave in good health," the doctor said.

## 4U

### Peak seasons for malaria transmission:

- \* Winter: October through April in coastal or other areas with elevations below 1000 meters
- \* Summer: in areas with elevations between 1000 and 2000 meters
- \* Malaria is not found in areas with elevations over 2000 meters

Doctors recommend that parents with small children in at-risk areas take the following precautions:

- \* Put mosquito nets over children's beds, and over open doors and windows.
- \* Kill mosquitoes in the house with insecticides.
- \* Dump or drain stagnant water in and around the house.
- \* Bring children that have flu-like symptoms to a health care center for malaria testing.

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## Camping in Socotra

By: Mohammed Ghouth  
For the Yemen Times

A visit to Yemen is not complete without seeing the island of Socotra. Located almost 700 km east of Al Mukalla on the mainland, the island had been isolated for thousands of years since the end of the frankincense trade.

Its people are descendants of the people of the Sabaeen and Himyarite kingdoms, and they speak indigenous Soqotri languages unique to the Arabian island.

Small villages bordered by palm groves dot the countryside and violet,

crimson beaches seem to be around every corner.

Tourist agencies offer a variety of activities from hiking up mountains and camping to simply resting on the beach.

Socotra is most famous the dragon blood tree, or in Arabic "shajara dam al ahwain," which means blood of the two brothers, so called after the bright red color of its sap. These trees are widely scattered about the island's high plateaus.

Along with hospitals and roads, government schools have been brought to the island, teaching solely in Arabic, leading to the local language to being spoken less and less.

Aside from its fascinating history, the

island offers the modern visitor an equally fascinating world of fauna and flora to explore. An afternoon snorkeling in the turquoise waters just off the coral strewn beach at Dihamri offers a glimpse into only one aspect of the island's diverse wildlife.

The fish are literally close enough to touch, and they come in a spectrum of colors ranging from bright green to lipstick blue.

From Dihamri it is also possible to hire a guide on a hike to see some of the island's famous caves.

Soqotra is thought to have one of the largest cave systems in the world, much of which remains unmapped. A cave close to Dihamri can be reached after

about an hour-long hike up a hillside.

A favorite spot for postcard photographers, from the cave entrance, it is possible to enjoy a sweeping view of the countryside stretching to the wide expanse of turquoise sea.

But inside the cave is a world of complete darkness. It is necessary to bring a good flashlight in order to appreciate the stalagmites, both living and dead, which extend across the entire length of the cave. To the modern visitor the island of Socotra can be explored from two distinct perspectives.

To those who are interested in its long and storied history, the remnants of its ancient culture are still established in the distinct languages spoken there.

To those more interested in its legendary beauty, the island offers a number of unique experiences both on and by the sea, on the land itself, and even underneath it.



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