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World – ECSSR 11th Annual Conference



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CJP special report 2006



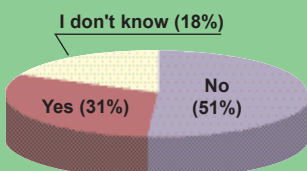
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\$100 million in profits from Yemeni communication centers

Readers' Voice

Last edition's question:

In their recent meeting, NGOs claimed that the government issued amnesty to end bloodshed in Sa'ada. Do you think the government is serious enough to apply amnesty and settle the issue?



This edition's question:

The Yemeni government exerts efforts to give women judicial posts. Do you think that Yemeni women are qualified for running judicial affairs?
 Yes
 No
 I don't know

Go to our website at: yementimes.com/#poll and have your voice heard

Hamas in Sana'a seeks support

Hamas Political Office head Khalid Misha'al visited Yemen this week and met with President Saleh to discuss several issues, including financial support. The support issue yielded much discussion, leading Yemen's government to decide on regulating the donation process through government banks, thereby preventing collecting funds for Palestinians by any other means.

By: Yasser Al-Mayasi

SANA'A, March 22 — Hamas Political office head Khalid Misha'al concluded a short visit to Sana'a during which he met President Saleh and a number of state officials.

Observers attributed the Hamas movement's visit to obtaining support and backing following its win in Palestinian elections and dissatisfaction of many Western and European countries at this success.

The European Union and particularly the U.S. are the prominent opposers to Hamas success and hence to its becoming the rulers, going so far as to threaten suspending donations to

Palestinians. According to Hamas leaders' statements, they now seem to depend on Arab and Islamic aid.

In a press conference, Misha'al confirmed his meeting with President Saleh, mentioning that Palestinian developments were discussed as well as Palestinian support issues on the Beirut Arabic Summit agenda. Misha'al said Saleh confirmed Yemen's support for the Palestinian cause, affirming that Jerusalem should be the Palestinian capital. However, he also confirmed that Palestinians' poll choice should be respected.

Misha'al said the Yemeni president also called for providing support to the Palestinian Authority to fulfill its obli-

gations to its people. Saleh also urged Hamas to move ahead in the peace process pursuant to Arab initiative at the Arabic Summit, as it represents the Arab option for the good of Palestinians.

Misha'al affirmed that coming to power does not mean abandoning struggle, as there will be struggle as long as there is occupation. He pointed out that such struggle is legal because it is the Palestinians' option to deter occupation.

However, Misha'al considers such struggle a means and not an end, saying the Hamas government is to face the tasks of reform and reordering the Palestinian community. He confirmed that Hamas is not ready to abandon Palestinians' principles, which is recognized by the international community. Misha'al said this also was confirmed by last year's Cairo agreement as a basis for Palestinian dialogue.

Asked about Palestinian factions' refusal to participate in the Hamas government, Misha'al replied, "We wanted them to participate in power, as we

used to be partners in struggle, but they refused. However, it is their right to do so." He confirmed that Hamas set forth all options to Palestinian factions to form a coalition government, whose duty is to serve Palestinians. However, he believes outside pressure likely warned them from participation.

In a related incident, Yemen's government announced opening a special bank account to receive donations for Palestinians from individuals and private institutions. Such donations will be deposited into assigned bank accounts for that purpose.

This decision followed government and General People's Congress accusations of some Islah leaders, among them Sheikh Al-Zindani, collecting YR 70 billion from mosques. Funds were collected from 50,000 mosques out of the 83,000 mosques spread throughout the country; however, such sums were used for unknown purposes.



Khalid Misha'al.

The government announced that any donations to Palestinians should go into special accounts. It banned any collection of sums outside the institutional system, as the destination of such sums is unknown; besides, it raises much skepticism.

Job seekers to form voter register committees

The Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum surprised political parties by announcing electoral committees without party participation for the first time since declaring the multi-party system.

By: Mustafa Ragih

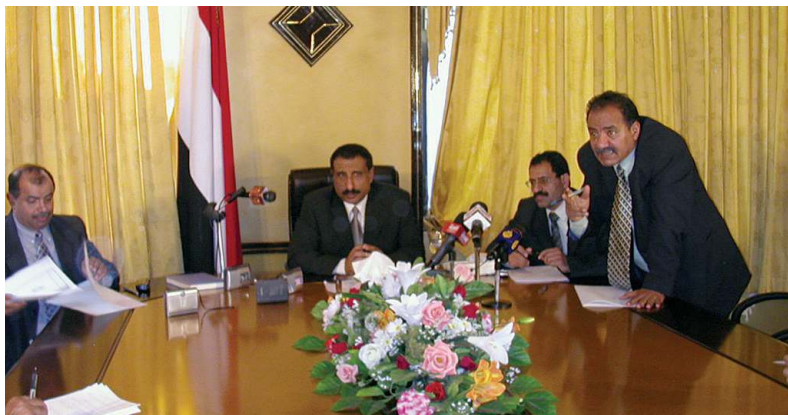
SANA'A, March 22 — The Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum (SCER) announced the names of electoral committees responsible for voter registration and checking voter lists in preparation for September 23 presidential elections.

Audiovisual media and the official Al-Thora newspaper published names of potential committee members culled from civil service job seeker lists given to the SCER last Monday. This step followed failure of dialogue between the SCER and opposition parties to reach a compromise on committee allotments

are deputy committee head Abdullah Al-Akwa', considered an Islah party member, and Salim Al-Khamabashi, thought to be a Socialist party member.

The conflict was over whether the SCER should be dissolved or three names from the Joint Meeting Parties be added to it. This is in addition to differences over subcommittee allotments, which will run elections at 5,000 electoral centers.

SCER members announced that allocations that would have been their responsibility — which constituted one-third of the committees — were cancelled and transferred to job seekers as a source of forming all of the committees. As



SCER members.

PHOTO BY YASSER AL-MAYASI

and the SCER itself.

Opposition parties demand the SCER be cancelled, following its proven bias to the ruling party in previous elections. An opposition source confirmed that two SCER members considered opposition sympathizers will not resign. They

stipulated by law, this step should begin six months before the president calls on voters to vote, which will be in July. Abdulmomen Shoja'a Al-Deen said the committee only began work a month before.

This procedure prevents ways for speculation about an agreement between the ruling party and opposition during the few moments before the SCER starts the registration process. In addition, it opened confrontation prospects between the government and opposition, which threatened public protests, sit-ins and demonstrations if the ruling party did not respond to their demands to cancel the SCER and run elections via a fair and impartial electoral administration.

Prosecution demands Yemen Observer be closed



Editor-in-Chief of Yemen observer during the trial.

PHOTO BY MOHAMMED AL-SHARA'BI

By: Yemen Times Staff

SANA'A, March 22 — Prosecution lawyers yesterday demanded that the English language Yemen Observer be shut down permanently and all the newspaper's property and assets be confiscated, saying the newspaper insulted and mocked Islam and the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) by repub-

lishing caricatures of him. They also demanded that Editor-in-Chief Mohammed Al-Asaadi be forever banned from newspaper writing.

"We demand punishment of its Editor-in-Chief, permanent closure of the newspaper and for Mohammed Al-Asaadi to be banned from writing for newspapers forever.

Continued on page 2

Al-Hamdi younger brother makes bid for presidency

By: Yemen Times Staff

SANA'A, March 22 — Engineer Abdurrahman Mohamed Al-Hamdi, younger brother of Yemen's former President Ibrahim Mohamed Al-Hamdi, declared his intention to stand in upcoming presidential elections this September.

"The miserable conditions experienced in the country, including corruption and embezzlement of public property, forced me to make a bid for the presidency," Al-Wasat weekly quoted Al-Hamdi as saying. "There is nothing more than silence and no will for change, despite deteriorating situations in political, economic and social areas.

"Corruption by the irresponsible authority has helped the rich become richer and the poor poorer, coupled with the absence of social equality," Al-Hamdi added. "Unwise government policies force citizens to seek protection from the tribe, tending to be fanatic toward their tribes at the



Abdurrahman Al-Hamdi.
 Photo: www.alwasat-ye.net

expense of the law's status."

According to Al-Hamdi, ordinary citizens' living standards are going from bad to worse as current officials continue committing persistent errors in an attempt to transform their failure into success and their corruption into commendable achievements.

He attributed his absence from the previous presidential race to the fact that political parties boycotted the poll following the Civil War. However, Al-Hamdi said he stood in 1993 parliamentary elections.

Asked whether his nomination was influenced by being a relative of Ibrahim Al-Hamdi, he replied, "Being a relative of Ibrahim or not has nothing to do with my bid for president, as I receive great support from Yemenis who trust me." He added that former President Al-Hamdi left behind a good reputation earned during his rule.



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LNG assesses livelihood impacts

SANA'A, March 20 — Preparing for a major project expected to produce 6.9 million tons of natural gas annually, Yemen LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) Company has conducted a thorough assessment of the project's potential social and environmental impacts.

The project is considered one of Yemen's most promising sectors in future decades. Yemen LNG organized a press conference at the Taj Sheba Hotel in Sana'a to discuss findings of the Environment and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA).

Applying the best international standards and practices, Yemen LNG attempted to prevent and mitigate any possible damage, as well as fulfill its obligation of ensuring social and environmental sustainability.

The ESIA aimed to provide authorities, shareholders and communities with careful analysis of livelihoods that might be affected by the project and a Yemen LNG management response to address socio-economic and environmental concerns.

To fulfill its commitment to its social and environmental



The LNG press conference.

responsibilities, Yemen LNG has conducted a range of surveys and studies since 1997 along the future pipeline route that will connect processing plants near Safir in Marib with the export hub in Belhaf on the Shabwa coast.

National and international experts carefully selected the final pipeline route and the LNG plant site from among a number of alternatives.

Selection was made in order to minimize impacts on livelihoods and natural habitats by choosing a route passing mainly through deserts and sparsely populated areas.

Studies covered a wide spectrum of issues ranging from soil and groundwater issues, marine and terrestrial biodiversity to economic, infrastructure, tourist and archeological potential.

Move to qualify women judges praised

SANA'A, March 22 — Yemeni women's groups praised a recent government decision to begin qualifying women to become judges.

"This is an excellent decision, which we consider a good step toward improving women's positions in a male-dominated sphere," said Huryah Mashhoor, deputy chairperson of the Women's National Committee. "Women's presence as judges in the judiciary system has become a necessity."

The Ministry of Justice announced March 18 that women will be accepted for the first time in the Supreme Judiciary Institute (SJI) to become qualified as judges. This term's prospective new class of 104 students includes four women, Mashhoor added.

"There's no legal constraint

anymore for women to join the SJI. Four women have applied this year," explained Judge Taha Al-Ansi, SJI manager for educational affairs. "There are criteria for final admission, which all students must meet. There's no problem having women work as judges."

Women frequently worked in judiciary positions in South Yemen prior to 1990 unification, with women's empowerment featuring high on the Yemeni Socialist Party agenda, the south's then ruling party. "Qualifying women judges stopped after 1990 due to a conservative and religious culture that doesn't recognize women as judges," Mashhoor said.

She added that previously there were 34 women judges in the south, but they now perform administrative

duties at the Justice Ministry.

Lawyer Fathia Abdulwase, head of the Ministry of Information's legal department, said South Yemen was a pioneer in its appointment of women judges. "Women ran courts and prosecution there with distinction," she said, "They even outperformed men in handling public lawsuits."

SJI students expressed varying opinions about the move to accept women. For example, Naser Shmasan objected to the decision: "Some clerics say women aren't born to become judges. This is a very challenging task requiring strong people."

However, Shmasan's colleague Mohammed Al-Houthi held a different view: "I don't have a problem with women joining us here. They're even better than men because women don't take bribes."

State dress and identity exhibition launched in Mukalla

MUKALLA, March 20 — A State dress and identity exhibition was launched Monday, March 20 in the Hadramout governorate capital of Mukalla.

The exhibition was organized by the Cultural Development and Program Foundation (CDPF) under the patronage of Hadramout Governor Abdul-Qader Ali Hilal.

The exhibition, which continues until March 30, displays leaders' dress, pictures and coins from different epochs in Yemeni history.

"We aim to create an optical memory for a new generation through which they can view Yemen's modern history. We also aim to study civil community's historical developments by analyzing the symbolic meanings of costumes and dresses worn by the Yemeni State from 1948 until 2004," CDPF head Raufa Hassan said.

She added that a second exhibition will be held in Aden December 20-30. This exhibition was preceded by last August's first "National



Part of the exhibition.

Exhibition of Yemeni State Costumes 1948-2004" at the Culture House in Sana'a.

CDPF is an independent nonprofit organization focusing on searching the evidence of leaders' and politicians' costumes — for both men and

women — and attempting to discover the reasons for such national costumes' current absence. Founded in the late '80s, CDPF officially registered with the Ministry of Culture in 1995 and the Ministry of Social Affairs in 2003.

Teachers strike continues amid governorates arrest campaign

SANA'A, March 22 — As a teachers strike continues in most governorates, security apparatuses resorted Monday and Tuesday, March 20-21 to an arrest campaign of syndicate activists and discharging others from their posts.

In a press statement, teachers' syndicate head Ahmed Al-Rubahi said Aden and Shabwa security authorities arrested a number of striking teachers in an effort to break the strike. Approximately 25 Shabwa teachers were taken from their schools and interrogated at security offices. Teachers also were arrested at Al-Buriqa, Sheikh Osman, Al-Mansora and other Aden governorate schools. Aden political security and governorate police arrested Ali Mohamed Al-Doais, Abdullah Moqbel, Habeeb Mahadi and Jalal Isa.

Teachers in several governorates conducted sit-ins and processions to education offices in response to calls by teachers and education professionals syndicates. The teachers' demands are summed up in their call to set their job situations according to teachers' law, not according to the recently implemented wage strategy which offers them lower salaries than those under teachers' law.

The strike in Hajja governorate schools led education authorities to arbitrarily fire many of those striking. In a statement, the syndicate



Teachers in their sit-in last week.

PHOTOS SADDAM AL-ASHMORI

attributed security and education procedures to the strike's success, describing such procedures as arbitrary and resulting from authorities' hysteria concerning the teachers. They went on to say that such actions, constituting all sorts of job terrorism against them, violate teachers' rights.

In a press conference, the two syndicates confirmed the broad response from teachers to their call, thereby revealing their refusal of government procedures. The syndicates affirmed that the teachers

strike will continue until all their legal demands are fulfilled.

Education Minister Dr. Abdulsalam Al-Jufi defended the government's refusal of the teachers' demands, alleging that political parties are seeking to exploit the teachers and their case at the advent of elections. Al-Jufi advised the teachers to resort to the judiciary instead of striking.

The teachers' strike has paralyzed most schools, halting instruction in some while others operate only half the time.

Motorcyclists continue protesting Cabinet ban

SANA'A, March 22 — Hundreds of motorcyclists marched to Parliament Tuesday insisting the Yemeni government ease their difficult situation after banning them from work in the capital city.

Protestors appealed to Parliament to launch field visits to learn about their sufferings and give them cards to get food from the government on a monthly basis or provide them alternative work.

Riot police besieged the demonstrators in front of Parliament, preventing them from assembling there. The Capital Secretariat began implementing Cabinet decision No. 77 stipulating that cyclists be banned from working in capital streets along with their motorbikes.

Dozens of cyclists released statements, organized sit-ins protesting the ban imposed on them and sent

letters to officials and organizations concerned with human rights and freedoms.

Lawyers demanded the government reverse its decision, which harmed and damaged hundreds of motorbike owners. They also called on human rights organizations to advise the Yemeni government to lift the ban, thereby allowing motorcyclists to provide for their families.

Maldivian foreigners in Yemeni custody

SANA'A, March 22 — Maldives Foreign Minister Dr. Ahmed Shaheed strongly criticized Yemeni authorities, accusing them of running a "chaotic" country which has resulted in the arrest of five Maldivian nationals, Yemen News web site reported.

"Many of these types of things happen in states like Yemen," Shaheed stated in a press report.

The Maldives demanded the Yemeni government release the five Maldivians arrested February 25 while visiting a friend.

According to Ahmed Sareer, Foreign Ministry Assistant Director General, who traveled to Yemen and was allowed to meet with the five arrested Maldivians, the reason for their arrest remains unclear.

"As of now the Yemeni government has not revealed the

reason for their arrest. The Yemeni government said those arrested were arrested by Yemeni security forces. Since there were security issues involved, the reason for their arrest cannot be disclosed yet," said Sareer, who returned to the Maldives March 14.

Sareer confirmed that the identities of those arrested have not been revealed, upon their families request, because they have been proven of no crime. He also confirmed that they had experienced no harm and were being treated humanely.

The issue of the five Maldives citizens has raised the question of the poor track-record of arbitrary arrest and detention in Yemen. Yemeni Interior Minister Dr. Rashad Al-Alimi recently confessed the existence of five Cameroonians in custody since 1995. They remained

detained in political security prisons for more than 10 years, accused of "counterfeiting, money laundering and forming a gang to attack the national economy," however Yemeni authorities have not brought the men to trial yet.

The Organization for Human Rights stated that it received a letter from four of the men in 2004 complaining that they had been picked up in the street in the middle of the night while staying at Hotel Sana'a Plaza.

The five imprisoned men stated that they needed "a respectable authority to listen to their case with impartiality and to consider their suffering before passing any judgment." They said the conditions they live in are disgusting and the food is so bad "that even animals refuse to eat it."

Continued from page 1

Prosecution demands Yemen Observer be closed

We also demand financial compensation, as we were hurt and harmed to the extent that it has hindered us from performing our daily tasks. The case has deprived us of making profit in our work," Prosecution lawyers alleged.

Prosecution lawyers also recounted a story in which a woman was killed during the prophet's lifetime after she insulted him, with the prophet then praising her killer. They said they want the same punishment applied for "those who abuse the prophet (pbuh)."

Defense lawyer Khalid Al-Ansi from the National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD) reiterated Al-Asaadi's innocence on the charges, in that a crime is defined by the intentions in which it was committed. He said an act can only be considered criminal if it was "done intentionally" and with "full knowledge of the consequences."

However, Al-Ansi said, by placing a cross over the caricatures, the newspaper clearly condemned them. He said anger was caused by what the Danish newspaper deliberately did: "The mockery happened in Denmark and my client is being punished for it," adding that Al-Asaadi faces trial not only in the courtroom, but in the

mosques as well.

"There was no criminal intent. No one can say the Yemen Observer was mocking the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). The elements of crime are not there.

"The Observer's intention was the opposite of the Danish newspaper. Anyone who looks at the paper would not have come up with the charges that Prosecution has charged my client with. It's clear that the Editor-in-Chief did not want to commit a crime. His intention was just to defend the prophet (pbuh)," Al-Ansi explained.

Al-Ansi also argued that printing the caricatures must be seen in the context of the accompanying article condemning it, claiming that there was therefore an "absence of a crime." However, both the Attorney General and the Prosecution team claimed that the charges rest on the depictions alone and that the accompanying articles are therefore not part of the case.

Prosecution argued that there are "different rules" for a 'media crime' than a normal case. In the media, a crime can occur even without criminal intention, they claimed. They also claimed that Al-Asaadi knew what he was doing when he printed the images.

According to an independent Prosecution team statement read aloud in court, "When the Yemen Observer published the pictures, they were aware of the anger caused by them."

One prosecution lawyer accused Al-Ansi's HOOD organization of receiving "millions of dollars" from abroad to defend journalists, claiming he has phone recordings as proof. In reply, Al-Ansi demanded Prosecution tell the court who is funding them and whether media claims that they've received YR 5million to prosecute Al-Asaadi are correct.

Al-Asaadi's trial, which is taking place in the General Southwest Court in Sana'a, adjourned until April 19. This is the third time the trial has adjourned.

Both Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders have called for criminal charges to be dropped, while Amnesty International sent representatives to the trial.

The New York-based Freedom of the Press Committee of the Overseas Press Club (OPC) sent a letter to President Saleh calling for charges to be dropped, saying the trial violates Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

WHO launches new strategy to combat TB

SANA'A, March 21 — The World Health Organization (WHO) today launched a new strategy to combat tuberculosis in an effort to limit deaths caused by the disease, which have reached 1.7 million.

The WHO's new strategy is part of a basic plan to prevent TB's spread. The \$56 billion plan covering the years 2006-2015 will treat 50 million patients and halve the disease's spread. If fully implemented, it will lead to

saving 14 million lives.

An international plan aims to end TB by presenting medicine to all patients, thereby achieving a Millennium Goal. At the same time, the strategy also is directed at AIDS.

World – ECSSR 11th Annual Conference

Current transformations and their potential role in realizing change in the Arab world

The conference explored current trends, changes and developments in the Arab countries from a regional and international perspective, with particular focus on the political and social issues of present and future concern.

Reported by: Khairaldin Mohammad

Suwaidi in the welcome speech addressing the gathering.

The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) concluded its 11th annual conference held at the Center's premises between 12th and 14th March 2006.

The Conference was held under the patronage of H.H. General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces and the President of the ECSSR, and under the supervision of His Excellency Dr. Jamal Sanad Al-Suwaidi, Director-General of ECSSR.

The conference has been organized at this particular stage in response to growing pressures aimed at effecting change in a number of spheres-political, economic and social- at a time when several emerging transformations in the Middle East region are leaving their impact on all Arab countries. Policy-makers, analysts, researchers and academics from around the world gathered here yesterday to examine political developments and the nature of reform in Arab countries.

His Excellency Abdel Rahman bin



Some of the speakers on the conference.

Hamad Al-Attiah, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), delivered the inaugural speech, while His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, delivered the keynote address, reflecting his vision on the role of education in development and its contribution for boosting the current process of transformation in the Arab world.

The gathering addressed the changes and developments affecting the Arab

This is a point at which Arab countries can either choose to continue along the path of progress by implementing fundamental and far-reaching reforms, or allow the process that has commenced across the Arab world to freeze

a point at which Arab countries can either choose to continue along the path of progress by implementing fundamental and far-reaching reforms, or allow the process that has commenced across the Arab world to freeze. "It is time for a region-wide reassessment of the current transformations being witnessed by Arab countries and an investigating of their potential role in ringing about a qualitative change in the region." Said ECSSR director Dr. Al-

Topics and main themes of the conference

The conference identified four main factors that have helped to forge the transformations discussed in this conference:

1. The impact of globalization and its "affiliates." As represented by the processes of economic and cultural integration has been obvious. The effects of the rapid spread of information and ideas through greater access to technology should not be underestimated.

2. The recent changes in political leadership within the Arab world and the resulting impact on political trends in the region.

3. The third important factor is closely linked to the second, and it concerns the changing

An essential prerequisite of human development is creating conditions that allow people to realize their full educational and creative capacity. People in the Arab world are generally disadvantaged in terms of education and employment.

and a number of dignitaries and diplomats.

The keynote address by H.E. Abdulrahman AL-Atiyab – Secretary General, Gulf Cooperation Council approached the impact of the regional crises on the stability of the region. "Regional crises have had a significant impact on the stability and various development programs in the Middle East region. The crises included: Palestinian-Israeli issue, the escalation of the security situation in Iraq, the presence of WMDs in the region, and the increase of terrorism." He said.

He emphasized on solving these problems through finding a way to effectively implement a policy of modernization and to combat social phenomena such as poverty and illiteracy, while embarking on a path towards democratization and activating the role of civic society organizations. At the same time there should be an effective commitment to international laws in order to solve the current political crises in the Middle East.

He also highlighted the importance of the process of democratization and that it should be associated with comprehensive development

process which faces several challenges such as illiteracy, unemployment, limitation of women contribution to the labor market. "The political and economic progress of the Arab people cannot be achieved without a political system which is based on transparency, accountability and the participation of all citizens in the decision-making process" he said.

The first panel of the conference was under the title: "New and Future Leadership: Implications for Change" It was run by the Honorable William S. Cohen- former secretary of defense USA.

"I was browsing through a book, by Thomas Friedman entitled 'The World is Flat.' What he was suggesting was that when the Berlin Wall came down, Bill Gates 'Windows' came up. Internet, outsourcing and globalization allowed the world to meet and collaborate without emigrating. You can remain Abu Dhabi and have access to the same information as those anywhere else." He said in his paper. The other message was about the intersection of terrorism and technology. Previously the only concern was about state-sponsored terrorism. Now a single individual like Timothy McVeigh can bring down a federal building. Now it is a different kind of terror because information is more readily accessible. Technology has the power to destroy everything and take us back to the "Stone Age" to quote Churchill. From a defense background, each country has to strengthen national security and consequently will need just laws.

The second Panel was under the title: "The problem of reform in the Arab world" by Dr. Bourhan Ghalioun- Director, Center for Contemporary Oriental Studies, Sorbonne University, Paris, France. His paper discussed the issue of civil societies and that reform was launched from USA originally, yet today it seems that this project has been aborted. "There are two types of reform: partial reform in which the system answers some of the demands such as hospitals and schools. And the holistic reform and in which revision of the whole system is done and the whole social system as a whole." He said.

He emphasized on the fact that any

Information is a double-edged sword and can be used to inform or to harm and that is where leadership will come into the equation. Effective management of the distribution of information and appropriate mode of education will require constant engagement.



Part of the panel of the 11th ECSSR conference.

partial change or reform is an enhancement of the current system and this would prove as a failure and would endorse the same or current system. "The main issue in the change process lies in the businessmen and rich class of the society who control most of the third world country's resources and who reject change and not in the religious scholars or others." He said.

He added that we can not bet on the external pressures to endorse reform. In fact there is need to reform the international organizations such as the UN in the international frame and not for the sake of the western countries only. And for reforming the Arab world we have to work on three terms:

- On the long term we have to work on changing the cultural and value system infrastructure of the Arab world.

- On the medium term: we have to focus on the businessmen and rich people and the social layers related to the reform process interest wise.

- On the short term we have to work on creating a new system around the current ones to force them to engage in a dialogue within the societies probably through sincere international pressure by the UN and so that these systems give up some of their authorities.

The other working paper was titled: "Arab political reform and the middle east peace process" by Dr. Clovis Maksoud, director of the center fro the

global south American university Washington, DC USA. On behalf of him the speech delivered by Atef Qubrosi. The working paper conveyed that the UN's Arab Human Development Report was a great privilege that allowed the Arab world to look into the mirror. The point that is really crucial in this report is the absence of freedom in the Arab world. Freedom

will allow the Arab people to attain their full potential.

An essential prerequisite of human development is creating conditions that allow people to realize their full educational and creative capacity. People in the Arab world are generally disadvantaged in terms of education and employment.

"The Arab world is rich, but it is also undeveloped. It is important to tie the labor market to the education system and improve tertiary systems." Mr. Qubrosi said.

The final working paper of the first day was about "Modernity and political transformation: the Turkish experience" It was given by professor Metin Heper, chairperson, department of political science, Bilkent university, Ankara, republic of turkey.

In the second day three more working papers were discussed as follows:

1. Protecting Sovereignty in an Age

of Regionalism, Dr. Amitav Acharya, deputy director and head of research, Institute of Defense and Strategic studies, Nanyang Technological University, Republic of Singapore

2. The role of non-state actors in promoting change, Dr. Marina Ottaway, senior associate, Carnegie endowment for international peace, Washington, DC USA

3. Encouraging the independence of state institutions, Dr. Gary Hart, former us presidential candidate, former co-chair of us commission on national security for 21st century, former senator for Colorado, USA

In the same day the second panel discussed two more working papers:

1. The role of external pressure in encouraging Home-Grown reform, H.E. Yasser Abed Rabbo, former minister of culture and information, Palestinian national authority,

2. Iraq as an example of the "spread of Democracy" through the Arab

"The main issue in the change process lies in the businessmen and rich class of the society who control most of the third world country's resources and who reject change and not in the religious scholars or others."

Nahyan, minister of higher education and scientific research, UAE. The sixth panel included three working papers on the position of education as a Catalyst for social change: the Arab

world as a case study, H.E. Dr. Faisal Al-Rufouh, deputy dean of faculty of humanities and social sciences, university of Jordan, former minister of culture, the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan. It also included a working paper on losing talent to other countries: halting the Arab "Brain-Drain", by H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Guidr, director general of the Arab Labor Organization, Arab republic of Egypt. And "One goal and different agendas: expanding the scope of education in the Arab world and addressing the needs of the labor market" by Dr. Raffia Obaid Ghubash, president of the Arabian gulf university, kingdom of Bahrain.

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Former US Defence Secretary William Cohen during the conference.

world, Dr. Adnan Pachachi, former Iraqi representative at the United Nations, former president of the Iraqi governing council, republic of Iraq.

The fifth panel addressed two issues: "Political transformation in the

Arab world: the role of Islamist actors", Dr. Amr Hamzawy, senior associate, Carnegie endowment for international peace, Washington, DC USA. And "Causes of terrorism and ways to combat it in the Arab world", H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Ali Kouman, secretary general of the Arab interior ministers council, Tunisia.

The final day included the keynote address under the title: the importance of education in regional development, H.E. Sheikh Nahyan Mabararak al

The political and economic progress of the Arab people cannot be achieved without a political system which is based on transparency, accountability and the participation of all citizens in the decision-making process

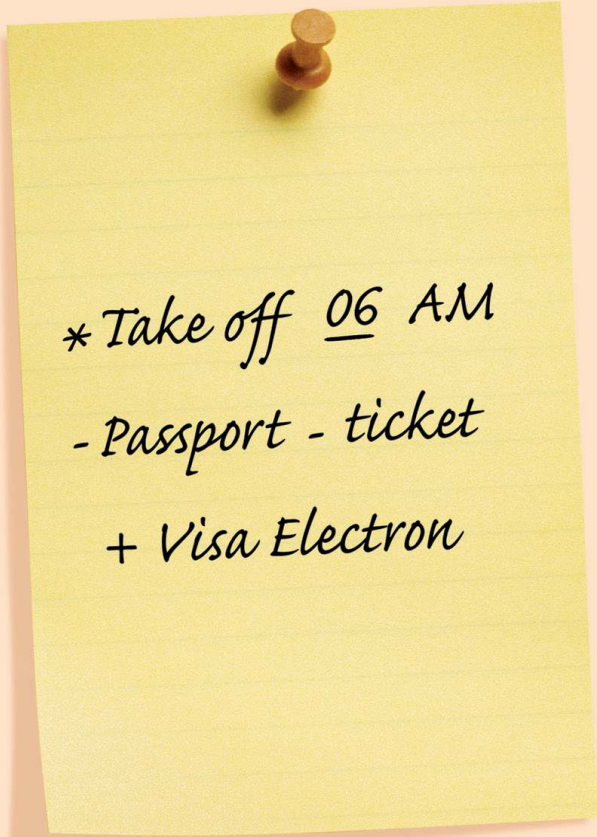
The seventh panel included two working papers on activating the role of women in development: current and future prospects A case study of Kuwaiti women, by H.E. Dr. Massouma Al-Mubarak, minister of planning and minister of state for administrative development affairs state of Kuwait. And International emigration and population composition in the GCC countries, by Dr. Matar Ahmed Abdullah, program specialist, united nations development program (UNDP), UAE.

Finally the concluding remarks: assessing change

and development in the Arab world, by H.E. Dr. Massouma Al-Mubarak, Dr. Ibrahim Guidr, Dr. Raffia Obaid Ghubash, and Dr. Ahmed Jameel.







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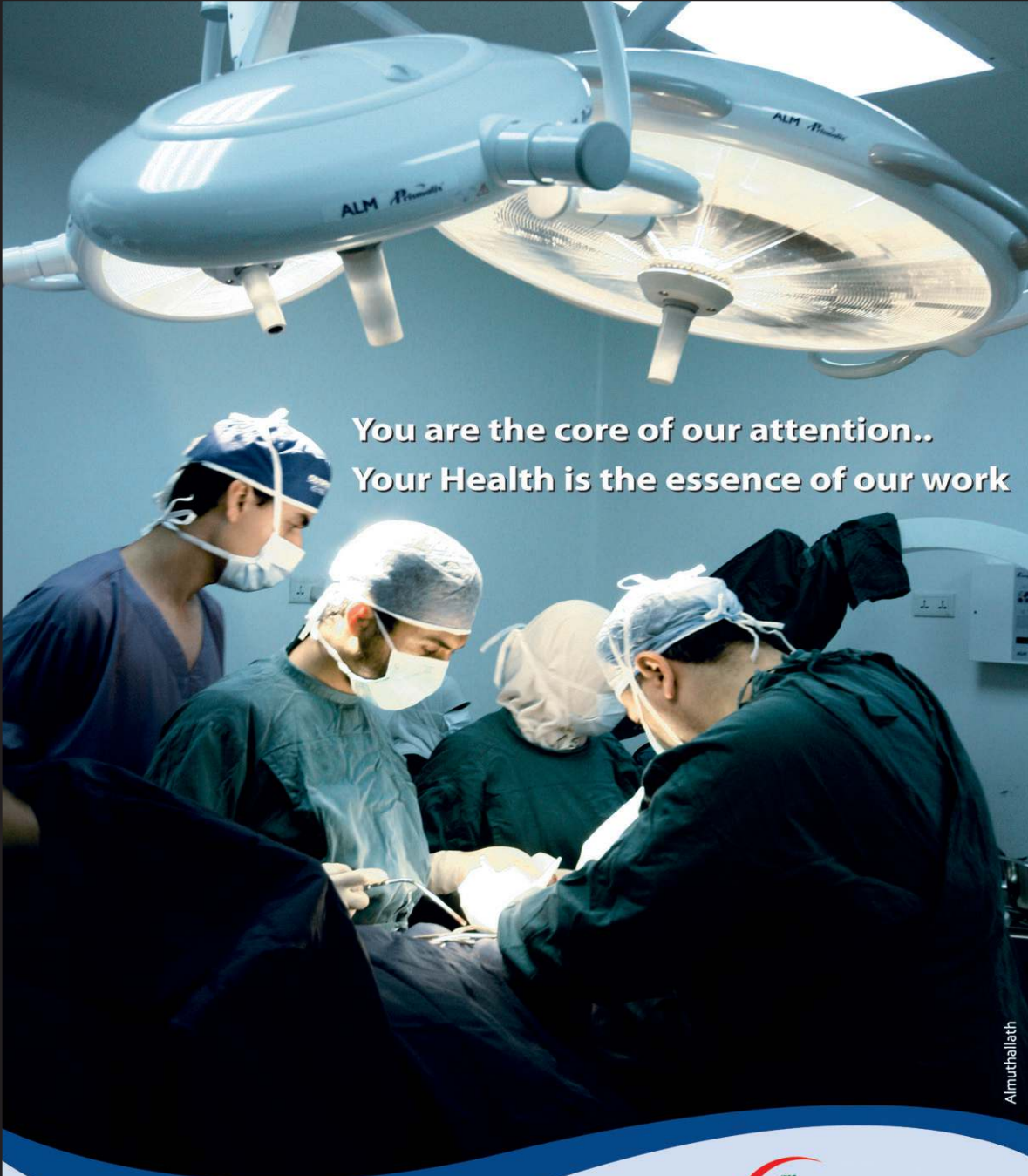






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CJP special report 2006 (part 1 of 2)

Attacks, censorship, and dirty tricks In Yemen, the press climate is deteriorating

Newspaper editor Jamal Amer arrived home just before dawn last August 23 after closing the latest edition of his independent weekly, Al-Wasat. A shout pierced the morning calm as Amer got out of his car, and, within moments, a man in a military jacket and traditional head scarf bundled the editor into a nearby Toyota pickup.



By: Joel Campagna

Three men inside blindfolded Amer, bound his hands with cloth, and pistol-whipped him. After switching cars, they took him to an isolated area high in the mountains surrounding Sana'a, Yemen's capital, where for nearly six hours they beat him, accused him of being an "American agent," and threatened to kill him. "They told me they would throw me off the mountain, and they fired their Kalashnikovs in the air to frighten me," the 38-year-old Amer said in an interview with the Committee to Protect Journalists. Before dumping the bloodied and badly bruised editor in a remote suburb, they left Amer with these warnings: Don't criticize high-level government officials or "symbols of the state."

The assailants apparently didn't notice that one of Amer's colleagues was in the back seat of the editor's car when the abduction began. The witness spotted the distinctive "11121/2" license plate on the kidnappers' vehicle. The tag's numeric configuration, with the numeral 2 following a slash, indicated that it belonged to the Yemeni Republican Guard, a branch of the military controlled by Ahmed Saleh, son of Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Yemen's Interior Ministry acknowledged to Amer that it was a military plate, but initially asserted that it belonged to a vehicle stolen during the country's 1994 civil war. When Amer later discovered that the plate wasn't issued until 2004, the ministry offered a different account: The tags belonged to a deceased military officer whose family sold them with the officer's car.

For many Yemeni journalists, Amer's abduction signified a dangerous escalation in the government's crackdown on Yemen's independent and opposition press—one that has grown bolder in exposing high-level corruption and tackling sensitive political issues. Over the last two years, at least two dozen outspoken Yemeni journalists have been victims of assault, imprisonment, or spurious criminal lawsuits, while others have faced intimidation by security agents and smears in the state-controlled press, a CPJ investigation has found. In the last year alone, at least seven newspapers have been shuttered by government or court order, CPJ found.

At the same time, Yemen's Parliament is debating a new press law that sets out harsh restrictions on the media. Journalists fear the law could be used to silence critical voices in the run-up to presidential elections scheduled for September.

Compounding problems for the press, several journalists have fallen victim to a wave of government reprisals related to the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that have caused outrage across the Muslim world after they first appeared in the Danish daily Jyllands-Posten. At least four journalists have been detained and three newspapers closed for publishing some of the cartoons. The journalists face prison terms.

A CPJ delegation, including board members Clarence Page of the Chicago Tribune and Dave Marash of Al-Jazeera International, traveled to Sana'a in late January to assess the worsening press situation. Journalists, human rights lawyers, and civil society activists described a climate of intimidation and mounting restrictions on Yemeni journalists.

In six cases of violent attacks documented by CPJ in the last six months of

2005 alone, the Yemeni government failed to conduct serious investigations or bring perpetrators to justice, and its leaders conspicuously failed to denounce the assaults. Witnesses and evidence point to involvement by government forces and suspected state agents in a number of assaults.

Targeted have been journalists who covered protests, reported on official corruption, criticized the president or government policies, or discussed the possibility of Saleh's son becoming president.

Yemen's press crackdown has international implications. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the Yemeni government has emerged as an important U.S. ally in the war on terrorism in the strategically important Arabian peninsula. While U.S. military and economic aid is modest compared with that of other regional allies—projected U.S. assistance is \$41 million for 2006—aid allocations have steadily increased since 9/11, as has counter-terrorism cooperation. Saleh has been a frequent visitor to Washington since 9/11, having met with U.S. President George W. Bush and other U.S. officials. Yemen also receives considerable economic and development assistance from the Netherlands, Germany, and multilateral donors such as the European Union and World Bank.

For his part, Saleh has banked on foreign aid to bolster his regime and has adopted the rhetoric of an aspiring democrat. "Democracy is the choice of the modern age for all peoples of the world and the rescue ship for political regimes, particularly in our third world," he declared in speech delivered at a human rights conference in Sana'a last year. Saleh said that "human rights are tightly connected to democracy and the state of law and order ... (and) we should remove anything that contradicts them and stand against all forms of discrimination, oppression, and exploitation for the human being and his rights."

One of the world's poorest and least developed nations, Yemen is also one of the least stable. Last year, it placed eighth on the Fund for Peace's "Failed State Index," which measures political and economic factors that threaten central authority, including a state's ability to provide basic services, government corruption, economic development, and human rights. Yemen's recent human rights record has been criticized by groups such as Amnesty International, which cited arrests without trial, torture, and press freedom violations. That has given international backers pause. The Millennium Challenge Corp., a U.S. government aid agency, suspended Yemen from its program last November, citing the absence of democratic reforms and a lack of press freedom among many things. The program could have amounted to hundreds of millions of dollars in future aid over four years. The World Bank, too, recently cut aid to Yemen from \$420 million to \$280 million, citing fiscal irresponsibility.

How the Yemeni government responds to the challenge will be closely watched in the coming months. With presidential elections approaching, Saleh seeks to extend his nearly three decades in power by another six years. The press, one of the country's most important centers of dissent and political debate, is bracing for the worst.

The unification of North Yemen and South Yemen in 1990 was followed by a remarkable proliferation of private newspapers and a new vigor in public discourse. Yemen's print media earned a reputation as one of the most boisterous in the Arab world; a range of independent and opposition party newspapers criticize government policies with varying degrees of objectivity and professionalism. Since 1994, when civil war broke out between north and south,



In Aden, an ice cream vendor pedals by a poster of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

AP/HASAN JANALI

authorities have exerted pressure sporadically on journalists through criminal prosecutions and other sanctions contained in the country's 1990 Press and Publications Law.

But veteran reporter Khaled Al-Hammadi traces a sharp deterioration in press freedom to the beginning of 2004—a perception shared by many journalists. Al-Hammadi, who reports for the London-based daily Al-Quds Al-Arabi, was detained for 30 hours last September by Yemeni air force officials after he reported on the incidence of military plane crashes. He was released only after pledging not to write about the military without permission. Al-Hammadi said that it is no coincidence that attacks on the press have spiked during a period when Yemeni journalists have been increasingly bold in their writings, crossing unwritten "red lines." "Perhaps the government is upset by the hard-line many writers have been taking," he told CPJ. "During the last two years

Yemenis have written very strong articles about the president, the president's family—articles we have not seen before."

In power for 28 years, Saleh is the second-longest tenured Arab leader behind Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. Newspapers have questioned the wisdom of Saleh staying in power after his current term expires, and they challenged the grooming of the president's son, Ahmed, as his successor. Some criticized Yemeni officials for supporting religious militant groups at the same time Saleh cast himself as an ally in Washington's war on terrorism. Others criticized the president for harshly combating a regional insurgency led by tribal and religious figures in the northwestern Saada region, which began in 2004.

Coverage of the fighting in Saada, where rebel cleric Hussein Badreddin Al-Hawthi had taken up arms against the state, struck a particular nerve with the government. The government hit

back against the opposition weekly Al-Shoura, which had taken a harsh line against Saleh's response to the insurgency. In September 2004, a Yemeni court sentenced Abdelkarim Al-Khaiwani, Al-Shoura's editor, to one year in prison for incitement, "insulting" Saleh, publishing false news, and causing tribal and sectarian discrimination. One of the opinion pieces that led to Al-Khaiwani's conviction called Saleh's military action against Al-Hawthi a "crime" and alleged that Saleh had obtained a "green light" from the United States before launching the attack. A second article condemned the government's actions as "state terrorism" and warned that "terrorism begets terrorism." A third criticized the army for the "ferocity" of its attack and authorities' failure to resolve the problem through "dialogue."

Jamal Jaabi, a human rights lawyer who frequently defends journalists, said Al-Khaiwani was the first Yemeni journalist to be imprisoned for his work since the unification of north and south Yemen in 1990. Yemeni journalists and international press freedom groups such as CPJ waged an intensive campaign on behalf of Al-Khaiwani, who was eventually pardoned by Saleh in early 2005.

More aggressive coverage about government nepotism and financial misappropriation has also made government officials anxious. "A big reason behind the [crackdown] is that journalists have been exposing corruption," Jaabi told CPJ. "There was a marked increase in coverage of corruption beginning in 2004 to the present. The press started naming names."

The emboldened coverage, Yemeni journalists say, reflects wider public anger about corruption at a time when public services are in decline, and the gap between rich and poor continues to widen. "I think the economic situation forced journalists to write in a strong way," said Ahmed Al-Haj, an Associated Press correspondent. "The

government is talking all the time about fighting corruption, but then it does nothing."

Despite a high illiteracy rate and small newspaper circulation—the leading daily, the Aden-based Al-Ayyam, distributes around 40,000 copies daily in a country of 20 million people—newspapers are one of the few public avenues to scrutinize government action. "The newspapers are the only outlet [for people] to vent their frustrations," according to Bashraheel Bashraheel, an editor at Al-Ayyam, whose newspaper's office was visited in December by elite Republican Guards in an apparent attempt to intimidate the newspaper after it had published critical coverage of the government. "Television is controlled by the government and the political parties are weak."

Throughout this, the Yemeni government has been under increasing domestic pressures with a debilitated economy, a restive rural population, and declining living standards. Public services such as health and education and infrastructure such as electricity are deteriorating, but the latest budget reportedly calls for defense spending to vastly outpace expenditures for those services. Unemployment is at 36 percent. In July 2005, a government move to cut fuel subsidies triggered violent protests that claimed dozens of lives in the worst civil strife since 1992. "Before 2002, press criticism didn't touch the president," said Amer, the abducted editor. "Now, the economic crisis is worse, the tribes are starting to revolt, and there is discontent on the street. [The regime] doesn't need someone stirring up these issues."

Joel Campagna is senior program coordinator responsible for the Middle East and North Africa at the Committee to Protect Journalists. He led CPJ's mission to Yemen in January 2006. Ivan Karakashian, CPJ research associate, provided research for this report.

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Sectarian conflict in Iraq

The last thing we needed was a sectarian war breaking out in Iraq like the one we now witness. It is true that stagnant stability during Saddam's dictatorship covered all this, but what is happening now goes beyond imagination. What happens in Iraq



By: Mustafa Ragih

place in a democratic regime based on institutions and joint partnership resolutions. The regime entered into a long war with Iran, which we now see as sectarian proxy war between Iran's Shiites, supported by Syrian Alawis, and Iraqi Sunnis, supported by Wahabis centered in Saudi Arabia.

The regime came out of the Iranian war and entered the adventure of invading Kuwait. And from there, he entered a 13-year blockade that ended in giving up Iraq to occupation. This removed the iron grip and the field opened to all hidden hostilities because stability was only an illusion. It was not based on persuasion, content or balance of interests. It is clear that Iraq returned to its preliminary elements: Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

The conflict is over traditional Shiite and Sunni (particularly Wahabi) legacies. It was unimaginable that a day would come when these Sunni Muslims would allege that the Shiite creed is a semi-new religion through which the Persians are trying to recover their usurped empire destroyed at Muslim hands.

On the other hand, Sunnis went to the extent of saying that a Shiite scholar said via satellite channels that Fatima was the Prophet Mohammed's only daughter, while the others were adopted. Is it sensible that this should be the basis for difference at the beginning of the 21st century, the era of globalization and the international village? Let's go back to the '60s. Did the Shiites and Kurds use to boast about being Shiites or Kurds? The answer is a definitive no. National identity was strong and used to dominate over ethnic and sectarian relations. So what's next?

There came a dictatorial Ba'athist regime that concentrated power in the Sunni sect. Inside the sect, power was confined to Al-Awajh clan and it was confined within this clan in Al-Majeed family. Al-Majeed family's power was in the hands of absolute ruler Saddam. Citizenship was wiped out and armed forces were built on sectarian domination and loyalty to the absolute ruler. The regime entered into ventures due to unilateral resolutions that couldn't take

place in a democratic regime based on institutions and joint partnership resolutions. The regime entered into a long war with Iran, which we now see as sectarian proxy war between Iran's Shiites, supported by Syrian Alawis, and Iraqi Sunnis, supported by Wahabis centered in Saudi Arabia.

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Did Muslims prove their love of the Prophet or extremism?

During protests against the Prophet Mohammed cartoons by Danish artists, some insisted that Muslims not tolerate disgracing their prophet (pbuh), bearing in mind that Muslim indifference may encourage Westerners to disgrace Allah.

Such thinking does not seem to recognize the status of religion. Did anyone hear of any criticism or insult against a religion in the West? If Western societies' relations have been transformed into spiritual relations, they tend to gravitate toward art by architects and artists in Christian culture or interpretations of the Bible's Old and New Testaments. This is manifested in the form of geometric shapes in churches and holy shrines, coupled with wonderful paintings by such great artists as DaVinci, Michelangelo's statues and Bach's music. Otherwise, churches may break their relations with society members, demonstrating traditional relations on particular occasions.

In light of primary education, society's culture turns secularist based on respecting the human mind and freedoms of ideology, intellectualism and expression. Some people don't know that there are numerous Western faculties and institutes specialized in studying religion without making a distinction between Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism. Some of these faculties and institutes are devoted to studying a certain religion. Any visitor to a comprehensive and specialized library will see thousands of books in this area.

There are many books by intellectuals, one of which is Nietzsche's on God's death, which earned a reputation in the West. Many years ago, a book entitled, "Christ: Reality or Myth?" was translated into Arabic by a number of researchers.

According to most studies worldwide, Allah is the only one in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. So, what about prophets, the presence of which has been doubted?

The West currently defends Christianity and Judaism. No destruction of a single church is accepted since the church is considered an aesthetic sight no less important than DaVinci's portrait or Michelangelo's statues.

As for what is debated by Muslims concerning skepticism about the Jewish Holocaust, it is a political issue created by whimsical conditions through which Europeans expiate their acts against Jews. Nevertheless, research and criticism by intellectuals and researchers like France's Roger Garudi and Britain's David Erving never stopped and the issue was handled legally. Despite this, the firm law can be always amended if it was seen as a restriction of people's freedom.

Can one compare between extremism regarding dealing with the Holocaust issue and the extremism in the way Muslims reacted to the cartoons? Where is the distinction of Islam that attracted

large numbers of non-Muslims? Garudi considered Islam and Hinduism the most important world religions for supporting the rights of religious multiplicity and respecting one another.

Protests against the Prophet Mohammed cartoons reflected his holy and prestigious status in the eyes of Muslims. Consequently, they opposed any disgrace or insult against him. From another perspective, the protests expressed political attitudes through extremist religious groups that refuse the modern era's culture and do not accept dialogue with any party.

Thus, we find that Arab and Islamic media never shed light on the Danish newspaper's apology, except at an earlier time, when it apologized immediately after the incident. Religious scholars set conditions beyond the debated matter, particularly as the issue concerned a single individual and a single newspaper. The issue had no relation to any government, Europe, or the West in general necessitating an apology by everyone in the required way.

The Danish paper renewed its apology on its web site (www.jp.dk) in Arabic, English, Danish, French, German and Spanish. The media never published such apology, except after the first week, while some newspapers cast doubt on its authenticity and clarity in the six languages. Here is the translated Arabic version of the apology to Muslims:

"Dear Muslims, Al-Salaam alaikum wa rahmitullah wa barakatu. Let us first confirm that our newspaper Jyllands-Posten believes in and values freedom of religious affiliation, backs democracy and respects every individual. We apologize for the misunderstanding about the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) cartoons which inflamed Danish people's feelings and caused Muslims to boycott Danish products. So please allow me explain to you some points, in the hopes of ending any misunderstanding on the matter.

"On September 30, 2005, Jyllands-Posten newspaper published 12 cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) produced by Danish artists. It is of crucial importance to indicate that these cartoons were not meant to disgrace the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh). They were meant to serve as an approach to dialogue about freedom of expression, in which our country takes pride. At that time, we never perceived that Muslims living in Denmark and other Muslims worldwide would be sensitive to the matter. Publishing the caricatures does not contravene Danish press laws.

"The caricatures seemed to have sparked tension among millions of Muslims across the world. So, we do not apologize for what happened, as the



By: Ali Al-Moqri

newspaper had no malicious intention to disgrace Muslims or their prophet, particularly as it received an award from the European Union after publishing many articles in a supplement calling on people to enjoy peaceful living and establish mutual respect between Danes and other minorities in the country. The supplement included many subjects highlighting the positive points of Islam and Muslims.

"What later happened is that caricatures and drawings disgracing Muslims and their prophet were published in the Muslim world. Our newspaper never learned of these cartoons. We care for high morals and values based on respecting principles. So, we express deep sorrow for the misunderstanding; however, some still believe we have connections with these cartoons.

"Coming back to the 12 cartoons we published, they were misunderstood due to cultural differences. They were believed to be a campaign by us launched upon Muslims in Denmark and other parts throughout the world. We denounce such an idea and reject it, since we believe in freedom of religions and adore freedom of an individual to practice any religious rituals he or she likes. We never had an evil thought to assault any religion and we are sorry for the misunderstanding.

"As part of a series of attempts to end such misunderstanding, we held many

meetings with representatives of the Muslim community in Denmark. Meetings proceeded in a positive atmosphere and dialogue was constructive. By all means, we worked on bringing about a spirit of relationship and dialogue with Danish Muslims. Enjoying peaceful living worldwide is the be-all and end-all of our desire at the newspaper and we hope a spirit of dialogue will dominate the nation, even if viewpoints differ.

"Last but not least, on behalf of Jyllands-Posten, I announce my apology for what happened and denounce any attempt to disgrace religions, minorities or nations. By this, I hope I put an end to the misunderstanding. Good luck," Carsten Juste, Jyllands-Posten Editor-in-Chief.

From this perspective, if people believe (and I am one of them) that Muslims have the right to express their rejection of any disgrace to their prophet through peaceful demonstrations then the burning of embassies and other acts of vandalism have somehow justify the wrong image about Muslims.

The last question, which the Muslims did not ask, is whether if the Prophet PBUH were living, would he be angry at these cartoons or exploit it to his benefit? Indeed, he would not as forgiveness was one of the principles he championed.

Does the situation necessitate overreactions which reject even apologies, or were there other reasons that incited them into that reaction?

Ali Al-Moqri is a Yemeni poet and journalist. His interests include religion and the future of globalization.

Public money belongs to every citizen

Public money is one of the most important tools for developing and activating the economy, as well as the country's source of development and progress. It is each and every one's responsibility to keep it safe and it should be utilized in a way befitting the people's general interest. Yet the case is almost the opposite and public money is subject to all sorts of robbery, stealing and waste. It is in fact the role of religious individuals and preachers to continually tell citizens that seizing public money is prohibited and not permissible in Islam.

Wherever you direct your sights, you will find that public money is subject to theft, robbery and illegal possession. It is the tendency among government officers – whatever their posts and positions – to exploit public money for their own interests. Yet it is time to say the word for government to adopt anti-corruption programs and activate the role of the Central Administration for Control and Auditing (COCA), in addition to having specialized courts to follow public money issues. Above this lies the fact that such steps should be initiated by the president, followed by government seriousness and indecisiveness in order to tackle and eradicate this disease called "corruption." Procedures should include many aspects like enacting the law, suing those proven to be convicted, issuing regulating laws, etc. Only then will honest Yemenis support the government and stand behind it until the end.

It is time to respond to the calls of faithful national advisors and International Bank and IMF warnings in order to avoid the country's collapse, whereupon it will be difficult – much too difficult – to get it standing on its feet again. Hands should be



By: Moneer Al-Omari

joined to fight this cancer that progresses very quickly exploiting all life aspects. Something should be done now before it gets out of control.

Corruption has slowed the pace of development and our economy has deteriorated. Living standards have fallen remarkably; they are among the lowest worldwide, with approximately 70 percent of citizens living below the poverty line. Such circumstances serve none but those corrupt officers whose only concern is to build villas, have foreign bank accounts, fill their pockets and keep their positions as long as they can.

Another point lies in the fact that religious personalities and preachers' role completely is absent. They continue telling citizens many things they already know, overlooking primary issues such as the one at hand. Exploiting public money should much more interest citizens, especially the uneducated, who think seizing public money is not prohibited. In fact, they consider it a type of cleverness and skill. Such people should be told constantly that having public money is a great sin for which Allah will give a great torment and those corrupt practitioners should give it up now. They should know that exploiting public money is prohibited more than stealing or seizing special property or money. Public money is not someone's property – it is the possession of all Yemenis. Approximately 20 million or so will ask you about their part in it in the Hereafter, where there is no way of escape – just in case you escape punishment in life.

Moneer Al-Omari is a Yemeni writer. He is currently pursuing his Master Degree in Linguistics.

Letter to the Editor

Hodeidah's tears

Hodeidah is one of 21 governorates in the Republic of Yemen; however, Hodeidah is different. It is not like other governorates, as it is like a body without a soul. It looks like a ghost city because it is destroyed.

In the summer, temperatures rise above 40 degrees in Hodeidah and wet weather is more difficult than in other seasons. Imagine if the electricity goes off, especially while sleeping or at midnight. Can you guess how hot and sweaty the weather gets? But that's nothing compared to the electricity going off more than five times a day, which creates many problems like rotting food, breaking refrigerators and air conditioners and students failing their examinations. All these difficulties and more come out in the

summer and their causes are due to only one thing: there is not enough money to buy other dynamos for Hodeidah.

There are other difficulties in Hodeidah; for example, broken roads, wastewater in streets and alleys, disease, joblessness and poverty. Each problem is linked to the other: wastewater is in streets and alleys due to broken roads, there are diseases because of the wastewater and there is poverty because of joblessness.

There is a very dangerous reflection in Hodeidah. That is, there are many beggars and starving people – both young and old – spread throughout Hodeidah. They knock on each door asking for money or some food to eat, creating different ways to ask. They sometimes ask for money to feed their children while the next day

they ask for it to cure a relative. They bring their children or sheets of paper, enter mosques and stand up after they finish praying. They weep and swear by the Holy Qur'an that they need some money. People sometimes believe them or sometimes don't believe them at all. With all these problems, Hodeidah and its population look forward to a better future.

Mohammed Ismail Al-Ansi
Hodeidah

National school in Yemen

Undoubtedly, there are many national schools all over Yemen. But the question that tried to put itself forward many times is: In which direction do such schools move? Do these schools move toward progress and prosperity or toward racism and

deterioration?

As far as I'm concerned, national schools are places where students stand on teachers' shoulders to get some of their ridiculous wants. Teachers in national schools are like a football team going to play with the team of students, while the headmaster is the compromise who knows nothing about the rules of this match.

The government has no clear educational policy toward such schools, although the most prevalent students are those from public schools. As a teacher in a national school, the main purpose in sending students to such schools is merely to obtain a certificate of success.

So folks, be ready. We will land on the moon's surface two years later.

Faiz Ahmed
Sana'a

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Annual Report 2006 (1/2)

Global Governance Initiative

The third Annual Report, released 17 January 2006, provides comprehensive analysis of the world's progress towards realizing the UN's Millennium Development Goals, endorsed by leaders of 189 countries in 2000.

The year 2005 proved that the world can make real progress towards achieving its most fundamental goals. It got slightly better at reducing hunger and extreme poverty, improving global public health, ensuring peace and security and providing access to basic education. New and badly needed roadmaps emerged, thanks to the extraordinary reports of the UN Millennium Project, the UK Africa Commission and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. Under the leadership of UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and the powerful pressure of a heavily mobilized transnational civil society, the G-8 governments agreed to provide substantial new funds to promote development. Large developing countries, notably China, India and Brazil, took major strides, and Asia in general exuded new confidence and excitement.

But 2005 also demonstrated the power of inertia and shortsightedness. At the World Summit of almost all nations in September, political leaders had the opportunity to commit themselves to a "grand bargain" that could have led to real breakthroughs on much of the global agenda, from development to security to

"While global efforts to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals improved on some fronts in 2005, the world is still investing less than half the effort needed. While there was progress in the areas of peace and security, poverty, hunger, health, and education, efforts in the environment and human rights slipped backwards."

Global Governance Initiative



human rights.

They largely wasted the chance to dramatically improve how they run the world, taking only small steps—not meaningless, but far from the major strides that are both needed and possible. The new aid promised by the rich countries is significant, but even if the promises are met in full—a rarity in the history of such promises—they still fall far short of what is needed. The fight against AIDS alone could use most of the new money.

And on such key issues as human rights and the environment, the world actually did worse than it had in previous years. That matters not only because of the inherent importance of these issues, but because progress in one area depends so heavily on progress in the others.

Global public health, for example, requires access to clean water and sanitation. Climate change is already exacerbating malaria, malnutrition and diarrhoea throughout the world. The world's poorest people need sustainably managed ecosystems to preserve their livelihoods, and the scarcity of natural resources can fuel violent conflict. Yet 2005 also demonstrated how much nontraditional actors are starting to do. Civil society groups mobilized on an unprecedented scale to force governments to get more serious about their commitments to the world's poor. Local and regional governments did more than their national counterparts to reduce greenhouse gas mis-

sions.

Private business grappled with notions of social responsibility, and private foundations and pharmaceutical firms now account for an enormous share of the progress on global public health.

Overall, therefore, 2005 was a mixed year of grand opportunities and inadequate actions,

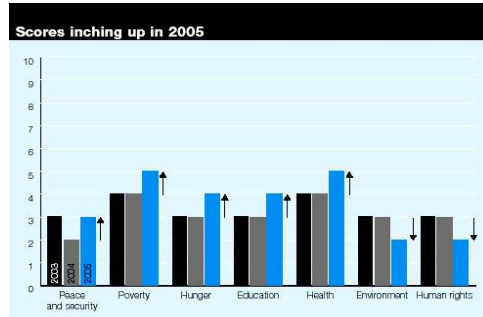
leaving ever more riding on what the world can muster the courage to do in 2006. We do not yet know whether the slight improvement in several of the scores for 2005 is a blip in a continuing cycle of neglect and apathy, or the start of a serious trend toward real progress in the human condition. Will historians look back one day and say that 2005 was the real beginning of the 21st century—the century when humanity achieved meaningful stability and prosperity throughout the world?

Civil society groups mobilized on an unprecedented scale to force governments to get more serious about their commitments to the world's poor.

Goals and scores:

Peace and security score: 3/10

The key challenges to global peace and security—to end civil and international wars, to eliminate weapons of mass destruction and to prevent terrorism—affect people everywhere. The year's headlines were mostly depressing. Major violence continued in Iraq, Darfur, Nepal, Chechnya, Northern Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and a host of other conflicts, while terrorist assaults wrought death and destruction from London to Amman. And there was no real progress in resolving the nuclear crises in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. Despite this depressing record, the world did marginally better in addressing peace and security issues than in 2004. No new wars broke out either within or between countries, and peace



agreements gave hopes for an end to long-running conflicts in Sudan and Indonesia. The September UN World Summit, although largely a lost opportunity, produced two major breakthroughs—the creation of a Peace-building Commission at the UN and the adoption of the "responsibility to protect" principle. In 2006 multiple challenges will continue to confront us. Foremost among them are: Iraq; resolving the "big three" African conflicts in Darfur, Northern Uganda and Congo; and resolving the nuclear standoffs in Iran and Korea DPR and regenerating momentum on disarmament and nonproliferation issues.

Those engaged in meeting these challenges can at least have the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts make a real difference. The evidence set out in Human Security Report 2005 demonstrates how the international community has helped achieve significant declines in political violence around the world over the past decade.

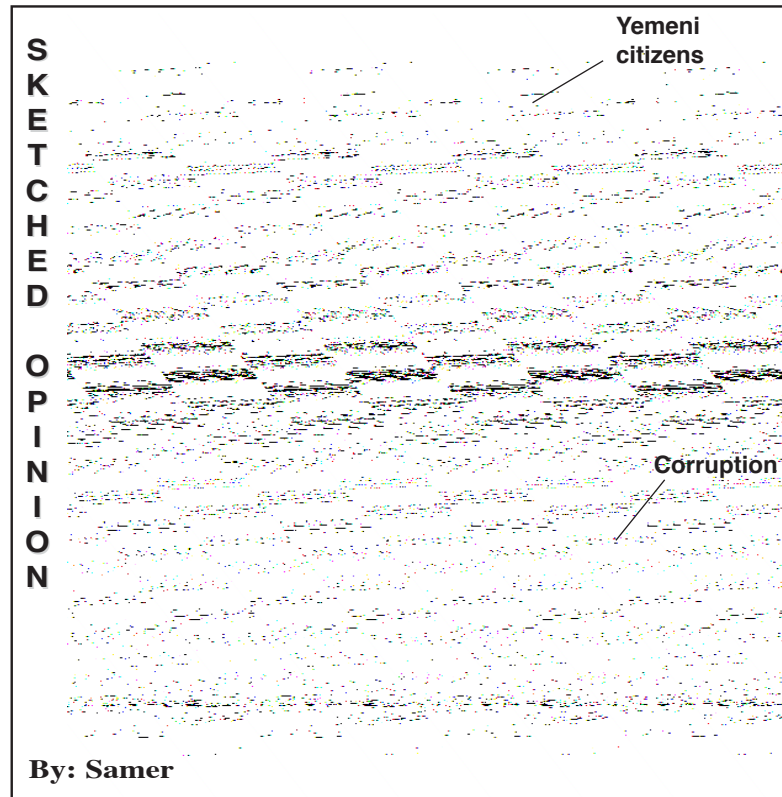
Poverty and hunger scores

Poverty: 5/10

Hunger: 4/10

The scores for poverty and hunger alleviation inched up for 2005. Rich-country governments and world leaders promised to increase aid and debt relief. Populous countries such as Brazil, China and India invested in significant pro-poor actions. And

massive civil society campaigns kept local and global pressure on governments to cut poverty and hunger in half. But the



By: Samer

Global Governance Initiative

This is the third in a series of annual assessments by the World Economic Forum's Global Governance Initiative (GGI). The GGI evaluates the world's efforts to achieve its goals, as laid out in the UN Millennium Declaration and other widely accepted international agreements. Over the course of each year, groups of the world's leading experts assess the efforts of governments and non-governmental actors alike, grading the world on a zero to ten scale across the full range of security, development, environmental and human rights issues so fundamental to global stability and prosperity. Ten represents the level of effort needed for the world to be on track to achieve its goals, and every number below represents a step down from what is needed. One indicates that the world accomplished little or nothing, and zero means that policies and initiatives over the year moved us in the wrong direction. The GGI is overseen by an eminent steering committee, in whose name this report is released.

global picture remains mixed. Rapid economic growth has not translated into poverty reduction globally. Only East Asia has met the

poverty goal, and only Latin America is on track to meet the hunger goal. Lack of preparedness for natural disasters hit the poor hard. The UN Summit largely reiterated commitments already made in other recent summits. The World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial meeting in December made only slight progress towards making a dent in poverty and hunger.

Looking ahead, for the scores to improve, civil society will have to keep the pressure on donor governments to honor their new commitments. Small and medium-size developing country governments will need to improve their governance and will need help to develop their capacity to implement pro-poor policies. And innovative pro-poor partnerships between governments, businesses and civil societies will make a key

difference in realizing "quick wins". The momentum of 2005 must translate into real action on the ground in 2006.

What Hamas wants

By: Daoud Kuttab

As it struggles to form a government for the Palestinian territories, Hamas seems to be clutching to the Biblical verses in Ecclesiastes rather than the desires of the Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations) charged with trying to bridge the Israeli-Palestinian divide. "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven," fits Hamas's current agenda because its priorities and time frame are different from those of the international community, which is pressing it to make immediate political declarations, most importantly, to recognize Israel's right to exist.

Hamas understands the political obligations that it must meet in order to

be fully accepted in the world community, but its leaders prefer to wait until they are fully empowered before exploring these issues. Moreover, Hamas, like most Palestinians, is trying to evaluate the best way forward in the peace process. In their eyes, the current process produced years of inaction in negotiations, allowing for continued occupation and theft of Palestinian lands.

As an example, Hamas leaders point out that in the past year, with the moderate Mahmoud Abbas in power, the Israelis have not even negotiated with him. So, from their point of view, Israel is not going to rush to negotiate with any Palestinian authority, whether it recognizes Israel's right to exist or not.

Instead, the newly elected Hamas leaders are preoccupied with basic issues like preserving internal unity among Palestinians, ending lawlessness, ensuring greater respect for the rule of

law, fighting corruption, and reforming Palestinian governance. Most Palestinians are in complete agreement with these priorities.

Indeed, the latest public opinion poll among Palestinians shows that 73% feel as secure as or even more secure than they did before the election. Of the 709 randomly selected Palestinians who were surveyed, 30% said that they hope the new Hamas government tackles corruption. Twenty-two percent said that they hope Ismael Haniyeh, Hamas's designated prime minister, will end the chaos in Palestinian towns and provide internal security and the rule of law. Almost one in five hoped that unemployment would be addressed.

Ironically, while the majority of Palestinians voted a religious movement into power, only 1% of those polled said that Hamas's priority should be to implement Islamic law in Palestine.

While the poll showed that an overwhelming 73% of Palestinians still support a peace deal with Israel, they are not confident that any deal is around the corner. Eleven percent of the respondents said that the prisoner issue should be the most important priority for the new government – nearly twice the number who said that a peace settlement with Israel should be the top priority. More than 8,000 Palestinians are held in Israeli prisons, many without charge or trial. Nevertheless, 62% of Palestinians said that they believe Hamas should change its position regarding recognition of Israel.

It is difficult for an international superpower like the US or a regional one like Israel to realize that a group or a people dare to have priorities different from theirs. But Palestinians have shown over the years that they are a proud people who will not cave in just because

the other side is militarily or politically more powerful.

In any case, Hamas cannot be blamed for using America's push for democracy to attain popular goals. After all, anyone who wants to be re-elected must give priority to the needs of their own people and not necessarily to the demands of the international community. Only when elected representatives deal with the day-to-day issues that face their people can they begin to tackle external negotiations.

What is clear is that Hamas and the Palestinians want an end to the 38-year Israeli occupation, and that selling Palestinians the same plans that were sold to the PLO will not work. If Israel and the international community are genuinely serious about ending the occupation, Hamas will cooperate.

While Hamas must be flexible in dealing with legitimate requests by the international community, the

international community is obliged to provide an effective road map to peace. Once Palestinians are convinced that there is an opportunity for genuine peace and independence, they will press Hamas to act on it – or elect a party that will.

Clearly, the international community has lacked the political will to press Israel to change. For the time being, and until this will is found, the world should give Hamas time to deal with the daily needs of Palestinians. Once the possibility of serious negotiations appears, a Hamas that has improved the lives of ordinary Palestinians will be in a position to carry out the negotiations that will be needed for a historic compromise.

Daoud Kuttab is Director of the Institute of Modern Media at Al Quds University in Ramallah.

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The crisis of Thai democracy

By: Thitinan Pongsudhirak

One year after he was re-elected in a landslide, Thailand's Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been forced to dissolve the National Assembly and call a snap election. Although his Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party commands a 75% majority in the assembly, Thaksin is embattled. He remains immensely popular with rural voters and the urban poor, who comprise more than 60% of Thailand's electorate, but he has been battling a fervent Bangkok-based insurrection against his rule by the intelligentsia and middle classes.

They accuse Thaksin, Thailand's wealthiest businessman, of corruption and treason for the tax-free sale of his family-owned Shin Corporation to the Singapore government's Temasek Holdings for \$1.9 billion. Thaksin's rapid reversal of political fortune attests to the limits of the ballot box, as well as to democratic short-

comings that now beset a host of developing countries, including regional neighbors such as the Philippines.

Until recently, Thaksin appeared to be as unassailable at home as he was bold and credible abroad. Exploiting Thailand's deep urban-rural divide, Thaksin bulldozed his way to power in 2001 on a populist platform. He stirred up national pride and promised rural Thais that their country would rise to greatness following the devastating 1997 economic crisis.

A raft of populist policies underpinned his first four-year government, from rural debt suspension and cheap universal healthcare to handing out \$25,000 to each of 77,000 villages for entrepreneurial start-up funds. Reminiscent of development strategies prevalent in East Asia, Thaksin picked strategic niche industries to propel Thailand's economic expansion, focusing on automobiles, fashion, food, healthcare, and tourism.

In foreign affairs, Thaksin carved out his own space on the international stage

with ambitious regional cooperation schemes anchored around the 25-member Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation (ACMECS) and a clutch of bilateral free-trade agreements with the major powers, including the US, China, Japan, India, and Australia.

The ACD was designed to make Thailand the political center of gravity in Southeast Asia; ACMECS was to make it the region's linchpin of economic development; and the bilateral agreements would cement relations with the biggest players in the region. At his zenith, many saw Thaksin as a worthy successor to former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, buoyed by authoritarian rule at home and assertive leadership abroad.

Voters overwhelmingly returned Thaksin to office in February 2005. But his personal popularity then plummeted, owing to the spate of separatist violence in the Muslim-dominated south and the scourge of corruption. Sins overlooked during his first term – from harassment of

the media and coercion of civil society groups to extrajudicial killings in an anti-drug campaign and conflicts of interest that benefited his Shinawatra telecommunications empire – soon caught up with him.

The shady sale of Shin Corporation in February galvanized long-simmering discontents. The deal was viewed as the epitome of Thaksin's sophisticated corruption and a betrayal of his proclaimed nationalism, thus exhausting his moral authority and political legitimacy. The company's value quadrupled during Thaksin's reign, with assets such as satellites, a mobile phone service, and an airline having originated from state concessions that were conditioned on majority Thai ownership. For Thaksin's opponents, the sale of these assets to a foreign company owned by a foreign government amounted to putting Thailand's economic sovereignty on the block.

Thaksin's days appear numbered, for Thailand seems poised to eject a popularly elected prime minister. The number of

street protesters has since swelled from five digits to six. His predicament illustrates the common dictum in the politics of developing countries where rural electorates elect governments but urban elites get to throw them out.

Indeed, the anti-Thaksin coalition will settle for no less than his ouster from office, permanent banishment from Thai politics, and possibly exile. But the opposition has decided to boycott the snap election, which the TRT would likely win again by a large margin, because Thaksin has captured and manipulated the institutions established by the constitution to safeguard against graft and uphold separation of powers within the state.

Thai politics has thus reached an impasse. Only intervention by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who is widely revered, seems capable of saving the day. In a fiercely contested battle between Thaksin and his opponents, King Bhumibol is the fundamental difference between Thailand and the Philippines, where "people power" revolts regularly

undermine and sometimes overthrow presidents. The King's intervention would put an unconditional stop to the street confrontations.

But the Thai people cannot afford to look to their aging and ailing King every time they have a problem. Moreover, a royal intervention would risk returning Thailand to square one, seeking to rewrite its constitution to remedy the shortfalls of its democratic culture.

What Thai democracy needs in order to mature is not a political safety net, but a vigilant citizenry to ensure disciplined enforcement of the constitution's provisions and institutions, so that they can no longer be hijacked by the likes of a Thaksin.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak, a Professor of Political Science at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore.

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\$100 million in profits from Yemeni communication centers

By: Abdulaalim Al-Sharaabi

Communication center owners say they earn considerable income compared to the average income of middle class Yemenis.

Yemen's communication services sector has witnessed noticeable progress in recent years, with communication centers revenue for the Yemeni government estimated at tens of millions of dollars, said engineer Fadhil Al-Maamary, owner of the Communication Services Center project in Yemen. Begun in the late '80s, it was the first private sector investment project of its kind in this field. Such projects then spread to other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, which began a similar project in 1996.

Al-Maamary affirmed the project's economic importance in that Yemen's government gains \$100 million in revenues annually, adding that it is one of Yemen's projects contributing to fighting poverty. He noted that the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) considered it the best poverty fighting project in 2003, mentioning that it provides approximately 50,000 job opportunities for youth, as well as about 10,000 opportuni-



Yemenis are still using communication centers in their daily life.

PHOTO BY ABDULAALIM AL-SHARAABI

ties for small investors.

Nevertheless, Al-Maamary said despite positive steps Yemen has taken in

this area, it does not mean it has reached an advanced stage because, "We are still consumers of communication technology

manufactured abroad and then we import it."

He said Yemen is the only country in

the region allowing the private sector to invest in this sector, thereby achieving advanced levels in developing this field. There were only 130,000 fixed telephone lines in 1990, whereas now there are 1.5 million. Added to this are two million GSM and CDMA lines, also operated by the private sector. Engineer Al-Maamary said there are presently approximately 90,000 telephone booths receiving a million calls daily, an average of 100-150 calls per booth.

Communication center owner Emad Abdulwahid said his average monthly income is more than YR 150,000. The government's cable and wireless communication establishment takes approximately 30 percent of the income, 20 percent goes to rent and center employees, while the remaining 50 percent is Abdulwahid's monthly profit, saying it is high compared to the average middle class income.

Another communication center owner, Ali Mohammed Ali, said his center, which has five booths, averages 70 to 80 outgoing calls daily. In this regard, a citizen who owns a mobile phone said he prefers calling from communication centers rather than other telephones because it is cheaper.

Business In Brief

Yemeni Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Dr. Jalal Faqiera recently discussed with UAE Minister of Environment and Water Mohammed Saeed Al-Kindi activating joint agreements and memoranda of understanding concluded by the two sides and including them in an executive program.

The meeting reviewed the two countries' experiments in agricultural marketing through building specialized companies. The two parties also dealt with laws regulating the two countries' importation processes, agricultural insecticide and fertilizer use, saline water irrigation in secondary agriculture, as well as growing palm trees and benefiting from the Emirates' palm tree disease fighting experiment.

Yemeni Minister of Water and Environment Abdulrahman Fadhil Al-Iryani discussed with his Emirates counterpart Al-Kindi cooperation in water and environment fields and ways to boost it. The two men agreed on the two countries' cooperation in halting Socotra island coral rock exportation under a world agreement banning trade of animal and botanic fungus species threatened with extinction.

Aden's Port Authority has finalized studies and designs for building a new seaport in Al-Thabba area in Hadramout governorate instead of in Broum area. The new port is estimated at more than \$200 million.

Ahmed Muthana Al-Ammari, Aden port director of statistics and planning, said the project includes building a 1,080-meter long and 10-meter deep platform and a 2,100-meter long wave barrier, in addition to other facilities, pointing out that the project will contribute to easing current pressure on Khalaf port.

Al-Ammari added that studies included building a seaport in the Khalfout area in Mahara governorate with a 180-meter long and 10-meter deep platform and a 1,154-meter long wave barrier.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh inaugurated the Dutch-supported water projects program in the countryside for 2005-2006. The project cost amounted to YR 1.5 million. Approximately 235 people from Taiz, Hodeidah, Ibb, Abyan and Hajjah governorates will benefit from the project's services.

Vengeance impacts economic development

By: Mahyoub Al-Kamali

Revenge problems in Yemen still exist and negatively affect the country's economic development, as well as project implementation, especially in tribal and countryside regions requiring much attention.

The situation still is pending despite a March 17, 2004 presidential directive dictating the necessity of quickly deciding vengeance cases. Nevertheless, many revenge problems remain unsettled, though some individuals and local authorities have contributed to solving some of them. In this regard, the latest government mediation has led to reconciliation between two tribes in the wake of clashes and exchange of fire due to property disputes over tracts of land.

After a two-year lapse since the presidential directive was issued, a temporary truce was established between Hajjah governorate's Shars tribe and Amran governorate's Bani Mahdi tribe in preparation for finally solving their dispute. In the meantime, security authorities retained six members from

the two tribes as a backdrop in a dispute over land ownership, which local sources say are state-owned.

The presidential directive stipulated forming a national committee and other sub-committees to end the revenge phenomenon in Yemeni governorates. The committees selected many cases that were unsettled despite modest progress realized in this regard in comparison with the graveness of vengeance problems in which the president personally participated in solving one of the most dangerous cases.

In implementing the presidential directive, Yemen's Cabinet approved a draft presidential resolution concerning forming a Higher National Committee to deal with revenge issues. The Cabinet instructed taking all necessary measures and arrangements, including holding general reconciliation meetings between tribes to solve their cases. The reconciliation meeting should be called by The state should call such a meeting, which will be binding upon all parties to implement, in addition to pointing out all vengeance issues, settling all problems related to them and treating their causes and impact. The aim is to end the phenomenon for good,

thus establishing security and safety in society.

Numerous meetings, symposiums and workshops have been held regarding this phenomenon, with several follow-up committees being established. Some such committees began their tasks, with Dhamar governorate district committees seeming to be outstanding in their activities. Two months after the presidential directive, they clarified that the number of revenge cases in the governorate amounted to 106 resulting in 581 individuals killed. Hadha' district in Dhamar governorate occupied first place in this regard with 40 vengeance cases claiming 392 lives.

The local development process in regions haunted by revenge has been hampered by problems aggravated by vengeance issues. Additionally, the issue of weapons spread and trade has resulted in feeding revenge issues at a time when the government's draft law presented to Parliament concerning organizing weapons possession and carrying remains undecided in Parliament drawers until now.

In implementing state efforts to accomplish local development projects, authorities acted to end the vengeance

phenomenon, achieving some solutions to problems from which Abyan governorate has suffered. Efforts exerted by Governor Farid Majwer succeeded in defusing revenge problems between two tribes on the basis of respect, cooperation and a pledge to abandon any aspects of violence and instigation of conflict and enmity. Local authorities there also succeeded in signing a five-year reconciliation contract regarding revenge issues.

Such a contract also was Amran governorate district citizens' response to the president's call to end the revenge phenomenon. Efforts also succeeded in Al-Beidha governorate where tribes signed a five-year reconciliation agreement whereby vengeance matters will be tackled and solved.

Local authority officials say results of the past two years' efforts to solve Yemeni society's vengeance issues still are meager in the face of hundreds of pending cases. Officials urge the necessity of solving the issues' causes as a major condition to conquering them. Such efforts should be accompanied by religious awareness campaigns that stipulate prohibiting killing individuals except by law and concerned authori-

ties. Such campaigns also should enlighten citizens on the consequences of personal revenge at family, tribal and societal levels.

Most recent studies emphasize the importance of expanding social and media participation in enlightening the public about the danger of vengeance via intensive religious enlightenment programs devoted to showing Islam's stance on revenge. Studies also urge media to tackle revenge's consequences, as well as join efforts to overcome its negative results on national reform and development.

The revenge phenomenon's spread has resulted in urging many donor countries to abstain from maintaining their assistance and many investors have ceased investing in areas where tribal conflicts have spread, leading to tourism activity recession.

Studies found that local development is flourishing in stable regions where state and local authorities are able to carry out development plans and find solutions to society's problems, as well as providing job opportunities, building roads and involving inhabitants in implementing services and development projects in the countryside.

Saudi investor to build cement factory in Yemen

By: Yemen Times Staff

Saudi investor Hussein Al-Attas announced completion of registration procedures for constructing a \$533 million cement factory in Yemen with an annual production capacity of 3 million tons.

Al-Attas also said there soon will be an announcement of international tender to supply the factory, as well as conducting

a geological and technical study and an ecological impact evaluation of the area where the factory is to be built.

In a Yemeni press conference, the Saudi investor said the plant will be built in the city of Ahwar in Abyan governorate according to the world's latest technical and technological specifications. He added that the factory aims to meet Yemen's cement needs, with remaining quantities exported to Gulf States.



A Saudi investor will build a cement factory in Yemen as part of Yemeni policy to encourage Arab investors.

FAO raises \$1.9 billion to fight bird flu

By: Yemen Times Staff

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director-General Jacques Diouf affirmed that the organization has received a promise from an international group of rich countries offering \$1.9 billion to combat trans-border diseases like bird flu. At the FAO's 28th conference meetings in Sana'a March 16, Diouf said member states must cement their economic and investment role in agriculture in order to assist the organization in implementing agricultural development programs.

In a Sana'a press conference, Diouf added that the organization is exerting efforts to fight bird flu in African states, clarifying that it is working through a program to fight the virus in four FAO member states, including Egypt where the virus recently appeared.

For his part, Yemeni Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation Dr. Jalal Faqiera renewed confirmation that Yemen remains free of bird flu, denying press information that is skeptical concerning the disease's existence in Yemen. He explained that there are 70 disease observation and follow-up points, affirming that the ministry is fol-

lowing the disease closely. The minister called on Yemeni media not to report on the subject out of partisan stances and political vexations to spread panic among the public.

At the conclusion of their meeting, FAO conference participants approved a coordinating meeting in Amman, Jordan involving region states' senior officials. The meeting is to be held in cooperation with the World Health Organization and aimed at studying the region's bird flu situation, exchange information and coordinate efforts for early disease discovery.

Conference participants demanded FAO member states continue strengthening technical and institutional capabilities of ministry units charged with analyzing agricultural policies and issues related to trade. Such action will support the states' dialogue teams in World Trade Organization negotiations, encourage taking necessary measures to increase investments, secure funding for states' agricultural development programs and work with international and regional financing establishments to discuss possibilities for aiding states' and regional branch activities to build capacities in areas related to multi-party trade negotiations, which should be done in cooperation with the FAO.



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Vacancy Announcement

The FAO Representation in Yemen invites Yemeni Nationals to apply for the following position:

POSITION TITLE:	Assistant F AOR (Administration)	GRADE LEVEL:	NOA
ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT:	OCOD	DUTY STATION:	FAO Representation in Yemen
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Al-Easi appointed YFF President

By: Adel Al-Khawliani

SANA'A, March 22 — Hilal candidate Ahmad Saleh Al-Easi was appointed Yemeni Football Federation (YFF) president by General Committee member consensus, with 57 out of 58 members recommending him as the eligible individual for YFF presidency according to a bylaw approved by the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA).

Sha'ab Ibb candidate Dr. Najib Al-Awj was selected as Al-Easi's first deputy, also via General Committee member consensus and recommendation, while Hussein Al-Sharif, Marib second-ranked teams' candidate, became the YFF president's second deputy.

Another eight out of 17 contenders were granted seats on the YFF board after 12 candidates vacated within the legal withdrawal period. Former player Abu Bakr Al-Mas, Aden's second-ranked teams' candidate; Sha'ab Hadramout candidate Salem Saleh Abdulhaq; former international [player?] Jamal Khawrabi, Wihdat Sana'a candidate; Shabab Al-Beidha candidate Salem Mohamed Ezzan and Abdulmun'em Nasser Sharhan, Dhamar's second-ranked teams' nominee, were among YFF board appointees.

At its first meeting under Al-Easi, the YFF appointed Dr. Hamid Shaibani as YFF Executive Secretary General and Khalid Al-Nadhiri as financial officer, according to operating bylaws. The new YFF appointments took place in the presence of FIFA representative Paul Moony Samuel who supervised the process.

Following a successful election process, Yemeni football has acquired better prestige in international football classification and renewed its FIFA membership, Samuel said. "Yemenis proved their ability to overcome all the difficulties posed to them, as well as unify their viewpoints and goals to improve the level of football in the country."

He pointed out that the recent election was the best one witnessed in Yemen, with many testifying to its good organi-



Ahmad Saleh Al-Easi

zation and sharp competition between candidates, coupled with adopting proper procedures. Samuel confirmed FIFA's continued support for Yemeni football in several areas, including establishing new stadiums with hotels for visiting teams.

Previous YFF elections were conducted last June, wherein Al-Easi initially won the YFF's highest post according to former bylaws set by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. But FIFA rejected

election results as the YFF approved by the Ministry of Youth and Sports did not comply with FIFA bylaws. This led to FIFA freezing Yemeni football's membership and preventing it from international participation until conducting elections again under FIFA supervision and in compliance with its bylaws.

Later interventions by President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Asian Football Federation President Mohamed Bin Hammam during his visit to Yemen helped settle the issue. Saleh and Bin Hammam met with many Yemeni sports officials, discussing obstacles and challenges to Yemeni football.

Such meetings resulted in renewing Yemen's FIFA membership and tossing out sanctions imposed upon Yemeni football, as well as forming a temporary committee to arrange new elections according to FIFA bylaws.

Following the election, new YFF president Al-Easi affirmed that this stage was very important in Yemeni football's history, as it ended all difficulties and challenges the game suffered over the previ-

ous time period.

He pointed out that the new YFF is due to work in an organized manner under FIFA supervision and in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports to cope with international advancements in the game. Al-Easi emphasized that his federation will exert extensive efforts to reclaim Yemeni football's reputation in international and regional competition.

Al-Easi stressed that the YFF will seek help from international football experts to improve its game level and footballers' performance, thereby allowing Yemeni football to occupy a prestigious rank in international classification.

The Yemeni football team's former coach, Rabeh Sadan, currently in Algeria, stated to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat that he is ready to coach the team again if the game's stability conditions are available. Sadan left Yemen for his Algerian homeland in February, leaving behind a letter to the YFF temporary committee informing it of his departure and claiming his financial entitlements.

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Youth Forum

The Youth Forum section is an uncensored space for youth-related issues written by Yemen Times readers.

Till last drop

By: Acram Mothana Haider.
Ibb Province

What has been published and republished by Danish newspapers and their counterparts and their insults on our Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) has recently involved mass protests worldwide viz a viz the Islamic community.

Our Prophet is certainly considered the purest heart upon this earth and the kindest creature the universe has ever known.

Those who undertook, however, to depict those blasphemous cartoons have indeed aroused Islamic rage. Furrows were created within various religions, forcing a multitude of public marches in mass protests condemning those incendiary caricatures.

To the extent Islamic states have reached varying degrees of deterioration and the poisonous campaigns against Islam, it is a known fact we are

still Muslims possessing all of the concepts of morality and the Eternal values towards humanity that respect all religions and their prophets and messengers. We continue to do our utmost to be in accordance with others safely and peacefully. However, those who are ignorant and blind in their hearts and vision should turn and review the pages of Islamic history. In reviewing the wide spread career of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), they will find the absolute record of the best of mankind. A man whose birth brought light to illuminate and prevail worldwide till Doomsday.

Our Prophet mainly taught us not to differentiate among the prophets, nor among the sacred holy books and angels. This is due to the belief that to believe in only one prophet would constitute disbelief in the whole of the Prophethood.

Globally renown intellectuals have identified 100 figures who have enriched and served humanity over the ages. Muhammed (PBUH) topped this

list due to his noble deeds and the deeds he made incumbent upon us. Were you to dive seeking for the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), you would find unique Pearls of Wisdom spreading and surrounding his life and the maxims found in his dealings with others.

Our appeals are directed to the authorities represented by the Arab League and the United Nations, whose concern it is to tackle the issue of imposing heavy sanctions on those involved, submitting a decree banning the defamation of the prophets and their religions to ensure mutual respect among all nations in a safe and peaceful manner.

Nations around the world, and western societies in particular, should understand that every Muslim worldwide is willing to be destroyed into fragments but NOT the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). Oh Prophet our spirits, our souls, our parents, our children and whatever we possess are in sacrifice of you Muhammed (PBUH) until the last drop of our blood!

A Saga of Myths

By: Sharique Naeem
shariq_n@hotmail.com

US peace activist Cindy Shehan, who's son died in Iraq, is forcefully handcuffed and jailed for wearing a t-shirt captioned "2245 Dead, How Many More?" In Austria British historian David Irving is imprisoned for denying the Holocaust. Eleven countries that include Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Israel, Lithuania, Poland Romania, Slovakia and Switzerland forbid by law any rejection of the Holocaust. In Poland's secular governmental system, research teams are barred from investigating the actual scale of the Holocaust.

And in countries like Denmark where caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) are published, offending 1.2 billion Muslims around the world. It doesn't take much to realize that Freedom of Speech is a myth propagated by secular ideology.

Unfortunately, this is not the only myth

One knows Democracy is yet another

myth tooted by capitalist ideologies when the superpowers of the world boast and express their desire to see democracy prevail by shamefully indulging in colonial rampage as they force democracy at the point of gun barrels in Iraq and Afghanistan. All this while they proudly reserve the right to "veto" the world's opinion within the United Nations.

The hodgepodge trend doesn't end there

It should be noted that those who initiated the savage War on Terror for the sake of the world's security are themselves the leading world dealers and exporters of arms. These superpowers are the UK, France, the US, Russia and China.

The only five members of the UN Security Council. Quickly you realize the fallacy found in the "peace talks" and the "peace process" initiated in the United Nations by these same superpowers.

Let us not forget the iron grip of international monetary institutions like the IMF and the WB who hold hostage the Third World by their luring ruling factions to take loans that are then lavishly spent, thereby

placing entire countries within whirlpools of debts and exorbitant loan interests. All to be paid through the noses of the poor.

This sad saga continues...

The so called civilized modern world seems to be satanically oblivious of starvation and hunger as it strikes repeatedly across various regions in Africa, while they dump surplus food into the ocean to maintain "fair" market share prices in their favor. Add to this the "reserved rights" to patent technology and life saving drugs that make healthcare sound affordable for the elite, yet poses as a mere distant hope for the poor who are forced to cling to the "generous donations" of these hoarders of knowledge.

This sorry state of worldly affairs only affirms the perpetual flaws inherent in the present dominant ideological systems.

Therefore the need not only arises but becomes of vital necessity for our people to revive a pure Islamic Caliphate. A system tried and tested through the sands of time, compatible with the tunes of all ages, and rooted in the infinite Wisdom of the Divine.

One day in Mukalla

By: Awadh
abiawadh@yahoo.com

I wake up in the morning. Very early morning. Wake up my two sons. They have to get ready for school. Their mom gets their breakfast ready. We all brush our teeth; take showers. And then we all have breakfast together. At such moments, I miss my older three daughters very much. I haven't seen them in so long. Too long! Divorce! And the pain it creates! People should never divorce! At least I have my two sons to comfort me. They quickly finish their breakfast and are off to school, after playing for a while with the two cats we have.

Another morning in Mukalla. Another day in Mukalla. It is cool now; especially in the mornings. Very soon it will be humid and hot. And then: very humid and very hot. Even then, I still like and love Mukalla. Very much!

I have some shopping to do. First: some fish. I leave home, walking. Outside it is still quiet. Some children going to school. Some people here and there. I walk towards the main road to board one of the mini buses. On the way: some cats. Garbage. The

collection of garbage isn't working. Piles of garbage are everywhere. They have to do some thing about all this garbage. I reach the main road and wait. Not for long. I board a bus. An old one with torn up seats. It shouldn't be on the road. A few men are seated inside. Some smoking. When will they ban smoking in public places?

On to the fish market. Traffic is heavy. Early morning traffic. Humanity on the move. My mind wanders: every where on this tiny rock we call Earth; every morning: humanity moves. In some places it is faster. Much faster. On we move. Slowly. Traffic rules and regulations have to be brought up to world standards here if Mukalla is to be modern. On the way: more garbage. Some plastic bags and bottles cover a side of a mountain. Blown by the wind. They dot the mountain side. Colored plastic bags. Blue. Pink. White. Black. From a distance, they look like flowers. Mukalla needs cleaning. Proper cleaning. Continuously. Maintained. Relief: the sea! Pure blue! Comforting! Can Mukalla be as clean as the sea?

The fish market. Crowded. Very noisy. Lots of fish. I just love fish.

Clean and pure as the sea. No mad cow disease. No bird flu. Fish. I go for the snappers. Very tasty. I love tuna too. The whole family does. And shark meat. Dried and salted. People of Mukalla love shark meat. All Hadhramis do. It is the most popular fish. Dried and salted. I get the fish. And some vegetables and fruits. I love bananas. My wife loves mangoes and oranges. My sons love apples and pears. But we all love cantaloupes. I head back home. Board another mini bus. A clean one this time. No smokers. A different route too. Closer to the sea and Mukalla's artificial water-way: Khor Al- Mukalla. Along the Khor it is much cleaner. Why not make all Mukalla as clean?

Traffic has reduced. I reach home. Take a shower. Tea. Some pastry. Some women come to visit. I watch the news. Same news. Over and over. Over blown. It keeps people watching. The business of news. Wars. Deaths. Chaos. The news feeds on that. The news on TV. That box! Like an idol. The TV. Every household has a TV. People spend more time glued to that box than to any thing else. So it seems to me. The women go. I spend some quiet time with my wife. We talk. She

doesn't bother much with the news. My sons return. The cats too. They know it is lunch time. Lunch: rice, fish and vegetables. Then fruits. After: a short nap. After: a shower and tea. I love tea! And taking showers. After brushing my teeth. It is almost evening. More women come to visit. I listen to some music. Read. Watch the news. Sunset.

We all go out after sunset. The

whole family. It is getting darker. Some weekends we go to the beach. But today: we go to the Khor. Spending some time walking along the water-way. There are many like us. Families with children. We have fish and chips in one of the many restaurants along the Khor. It is cool and already dark. The two boys play. This is one of their most favorite spots. And ours too. Hours later: we go

home. The cats are waiting. They are hungry. They love fish too. They have fish and rice. I have some juice. Brush my teeth. And take a bath. And go to bed.

My day has been a normal one. I am on leave. A normal leave day. Calm, pleasing and peaceful. I never miss my prayers. The mosques are close by. I love it: the Family. The cats. Home. Mukalla is home.

Europe's double standards

By: Imran Khan
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On February 20th, 2006 an Austrian court sentenced British historian David Irving to three years in prison for denying the Holocaust. He made that denial during 1989 in two speeches in Austria. Though he changed his views, the court was not convinced. The judge said in quote, "The court did not consider the defendant to have genuinely changed his mind." Mr. Irving, 67 years old, was arrested in November of 2005 when he arrived in Austria... This decision clearly shows that in Europe there are limitations to expressing anything and freedom to express does not mean to say anything anyone wants.

But why are there double standards in Europe? All of Europe was quick to jump to the conclusion against blasphemous cartoons of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) -that it was not wrong. Millions of Muslims around the world considered it an insult to their religion and are still protesting it. Mr. Anders Fogh

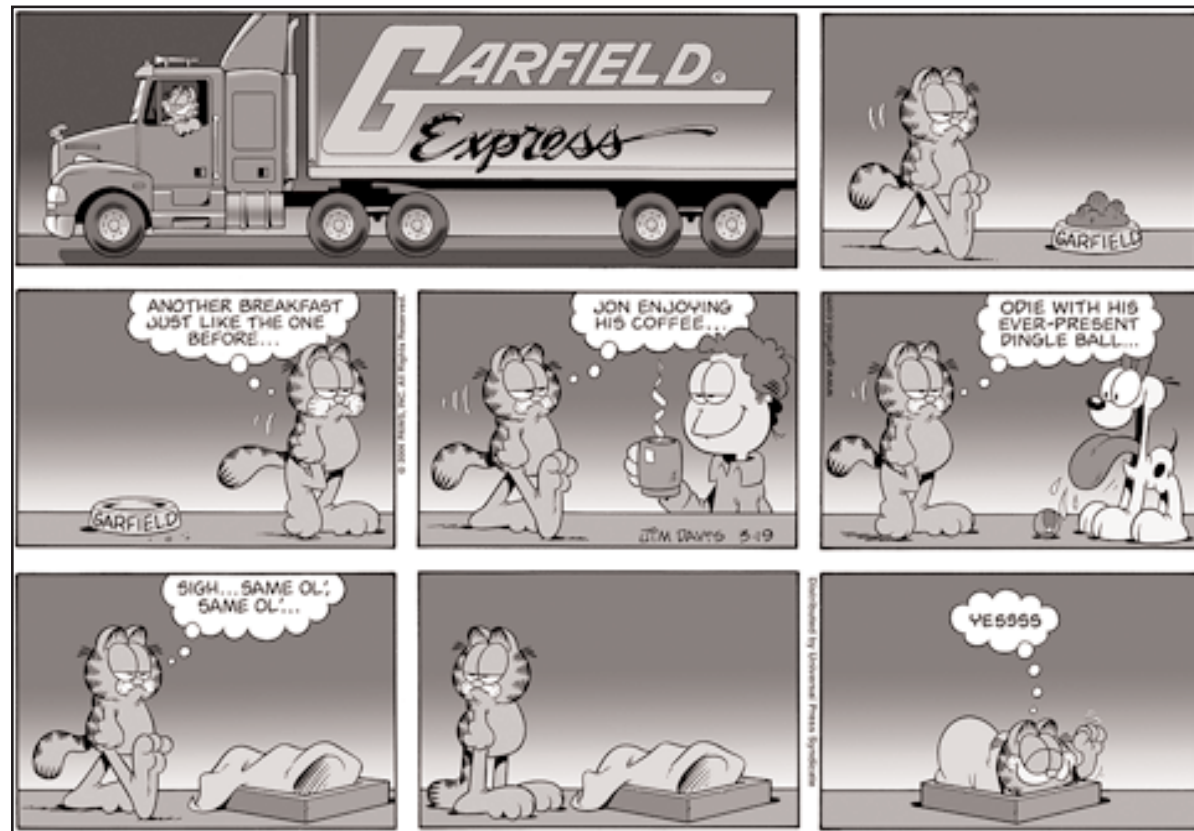
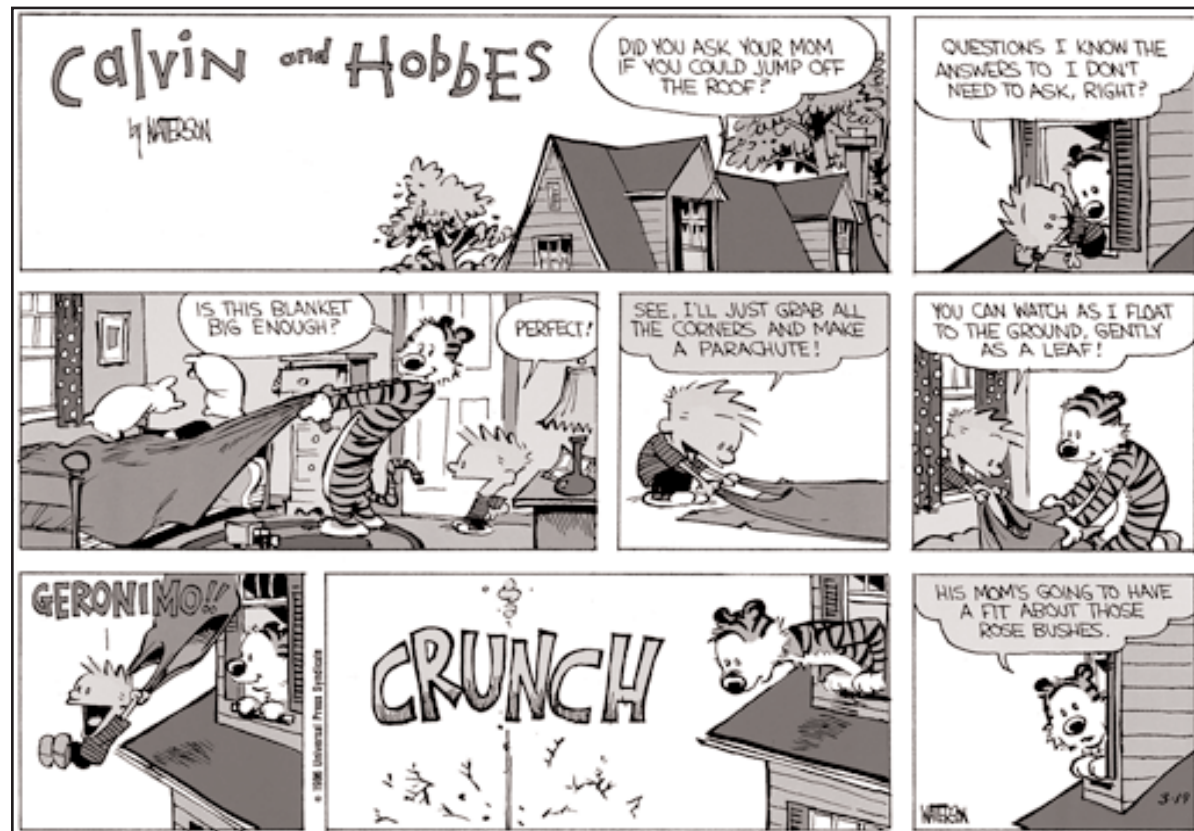
Rasmussen, the Danish prime minister has refused again and again to apologize for the publication of the cartoons of Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), insisting that the government has no control over the media and freedom of expression is fundamental in Denmark. To show solidarity in the name of freedom of expression, many European newspapers including Austrian papers also published those caricatures. Will the Danish Prime Minister and those newspapers show the same courage by criticizing the Austrian court verdict? After all it is also a case of freedom of speech. Mr. David Irving may be wrong to deny the Holocaust, but according to Europe's standards of fundamental free press, why has he been pleading guilty for saying something? On the other hand, does it mean one must be aware in Europe about not saying anything against the Holocaust because you can punished, but on the other hand you can say anything against any religion in the name of free press?

Some people say this issue has nothing do with freedom of speech, and everything to do with history. If someone is trying to change history,

then it is a crime and must be punished as Mr. Irving is now experiencing. Well then let us analyze this issue and compare it with the cartoon row against Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him). He is a historical figure and Prophet of Islam. He was not a cruel person and he never ordered the killing of innocent people. If someone tries to link wrong things with him, is it not an action to change history or realities?

Islam was not born in recent days; it is a religion which is more than 1,400 years old. So if the Holocaust was a historical event, then every prophet is also a part of history and made history. If denial of history is a crime, it must be associated with all historical events.

To avoid confrontation with other religions, Europe must have the standards to judge freedom of expression and where the limit ends. If in Europe, freedom of expression has boundaries, then it must not only be used in the case of the Holocaust. The widening gap between Islam and Europe could be filled with equality and justice. I am sure things are not so bad that we can say that we are on the verge of a clash of civilizations.



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A photograph of a traditional stone building in a desert setting. The building is constructed from light-colored, rough-hewn stone blocks. It features several arched windows and a large, prominent arched entrance. The architecture is simple and functional, typical of traditional desert dwellings. The surrounding environment is arid, with some sparse vegetation visible in the foreground.

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The two sides intensified efforts particularly in the cultural field to activate an October 24, 2002 executive program they signed concerning preserving and renovating towns by exchanging information, studies and documents regarding both countries' cultural legacy and historical sites. Training courses also were held for Yemeni experts, wherein town integration was encouraged.

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