

# DAMANAT

## GUARANTEES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN YEMEN CULTURAL POLICIES, 2017- 2018

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Guarantees of Freedom of Expression in Yemen  
Cultural Policies  
2017- 2018.

INTRODUCTION	1
WORKING PAPERS	17
WOMEN PRESS FREEDOM BETWEEN THE CUSTOMS, POLITICS AND RELIGION.	18
THE PICTURE IS THE HERO	43
PRESS AND THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN YEMEN	47
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION BY MUSIC	54
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AS A WAY FOR DEVELOPMENT	61
CINEMA INDUSTRY AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	71
PLASTIC ART AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION	84
DIGITAL ARTS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION COMPANIES	93
SINGING AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN YEMEN	109
ABOUT IMAGINATION AND FOLLOWERS	122
A STUDY ON THE WORKING PAPERS OF THE GUARANTEES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION POLICIES IN YEMEN	131

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## Introduction

The aim of the “Freedom Forum” project is to identify the prospects for raising the expectations of freedom of expression in Yemen, by working with practitioners of the creative, intellectual and cognitive process, draft a policy that serves the freedom of expression and submit it to the relevant government institutions like the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Human Rights to approve it and use it in the intellectual, creative, and cognitive productions as well as the adoption of this policy as a way to deal with the general public of the visitors and beneficiaries of the services in the government institutions related to the flow of knowledge and information and the ones based on the street’s prohibitions or the opening of the creativity and activity or at the level of the Internet.

The project worked on activating a monthly forum of 5 forums, it discusses the conditions of freedom of expression, its policies and the possibilities of developing, supporting them, and monitoring the extent of respect and violations that are accompanied by the current government through a monthly meeting technical meeting, where each month it a group of practitioners meets to discuss issues like: INGOs, the intellectual initiatives, Freedom of expression, music and sinning, Plastic Art, photography, and freedom of speech policies in Yemen. And companies working in art, women's press, cultural journalism and freedom of expression.

It was expected that special action would be conducted with the government, but with the changes of governments now in Yemen between the legitimate authority and the de facto authority in Sana'a this event has been canceled. Another event regarding the journalists, they nominated representatives for them, currently living outside Yemen was also canceled.

The project, until its current form, has had many difficulties due to the current situation in Yemen.

However, in the end, the establishment of freedom of expression, the resumption of remembrance and making orientation on this aspect is still very important until Yemen reaches the real and growing political road, which allows the public, intellectuals, governmental and non-governmental institutions to positively affect the freedom of expression and practice it vastly in the Yemeni street.

The World Press Freedom Day is celebrated on the 3rd of May each year.

However, press, arts, freedom of thought, expression and creativity in Yemen are in their worst circumstances due to the ongoing conflict. These have had a highly negative effect on freedom of expression despite Yemen had signed on international agreements that support and promote freedom of expression as they are important in development, creative productions, cultural and cognitive development.

Journalists, plastic artists, writers and media professionals have had bitter experiences including imprisonment, fleeing from Yemen and self-retroversion; thus leading to a slowdown in the development process and increasing bitterness of life on writers, knowledge producers and cultural actors in Yemen.

The creators cannot work in peace or war periods without policies and laws that support their attitudes, creativity, intellectual and creative freedom.

Accordingly the idea came to write this book which tries through working papersto cover the experiences, ideas and suggestions made

by non - governmental organizations(NGOs)

youth initiatives, journalists, writers, plastic artists, photographers and companies working

in the field of cognitive, cultural and artistic production that all support freedom of expression.

Yemen is a country that does not accept new trends in art due to the lack of cultural agents' knowledge and their non-desire to make use of the Internet, technology and grants and projects given to them. Most of the arts that emerged strongly in the ten previous years were variations of ancient arts with some focus on digital arts by virtue of the development of computer and the Internet such as digital design and documentary movies. These are new for the Yemeni society, and they are often done by civil society in Yemen as a part of grants provided to projects that

discuss community issues, yet they are not allocated independently for cultural work except in rare cases.

With the rise of civil society organizations and in particular those related to issues and problems of society, cartoon has emerged as one of the new topics that became popular in Yemen. So, there were good productions such as "Salma", a cartoon about girl education produced by Yemen Women's Union, as well as "Ahmed Return" produced by Shodhab Foundation for Childhood and Development. Similarly, there are some productions in this field carried out by young people such as graduation projects or some early experiments such as the experiment of "Morjan and Colors' Feather" by Ebhar Foundation for Childhood and Creativity as well as documentaries and recording films produced by civil society organizations in collaboration with the talented youth which discussed rights, development and environmental issues.

With the spread of political comedian programs which were quickly covered by local channels owned by political parties, it appeared "Akis Khat" program presented and acted by Mohammed Al-Ruba as one of the most famous programs in addition to other attempts in this aspect which have their audience and supporters.

Although Puppet Theater has existed for a long time, it has recently been popular as well as Shadow Play. There are new Foundations and Initiatives that have introduced and established this art and supported it in their work.

Political and partisan pluralism after Yemeni unification has helped in the emergence of many newspapers, including cultural newspapers. However, due to the Revolution of 2011 and Coup of



2014 have decreased freedom. Certainly, many newspapers, magazines, non-governmental organizations, local channels and radio stations have been closed.

The existence of new types of art in a traditional society like Yemen is a risk, but once these types were accepted by the society, it will be easier for their popularity. However, there are not many who like risk in the private sector and the government. Thus, civil society organizations (CSOs) become one of the important resources for change and development. This is due to the fact that most of these experiences are funded which makes the organization's level of material risk little. If it is successful, there is a guarantee of replication with other donors. If it fails, there are always other donors for new works and new ideas.

The political events also played a role in changing the arts and freedom of expression in Yemen, there has been, for example, an intensive emergence for national or religious anthems, which are very similar to famous religious songs which are shown in the religious channels in addition to the use of some machines in chanting as a kind of arts update commensurate with the development of the musical arts. Thus, new update and reproduction have been made to famous emotional, religious and patriotic songs which have been available for ages by transforming their melodies into patriotic songs that their poems were hastily created to serve the 2011 Revolution and also to serve some of the purposes of the 2014 Coup.

Events of 2014 have also contributed to a strong and new appearance of "Zamil". It is an old art form which was not paid

much attention by the public except in some villages but it re-emerged strongly in September Coup of 2014 by Houthis. So, it has become famous strongly across the nation where many works of such type have become popular to serve Houthis' objectives, policies or news. Of course, there are many exciting Zawamil broadcast via radios every day.

Apart from politics, youth initiatives have created groups of works that they present in YouTube because the Yemeni channels are mostly reluctant to broadcast them only if are paid for their ads. Most of which are poor renewal of well-known and great Yemeni and Arab songs and not expensive in their production. They are related to certain events such as national and religious festivals and social events.

Despite the importance of artistic production corporations in supporting freedom of expression in Yemen through artistic, intellectual, and cultural production as well as the desire to produce to make a profit, the society's traditional view scares investors. As a result, most productions in the last ten years were programs funded by civil society organizations or inexpensive experiments by young people. Certainly, there are commercial recording studios that record and publish but mostly produced by the singer himself. Some of these studios are not enough independent but as a part of a certain commercial or political entity by which it communicates its culture in public. Some of medium – sized and big civil society organizations established their own studios as a project that ensures its continuity, but they are also oriented programs which do not support independent creativity or freedom of expression.

For TV channels, there have been a lot of television channels that have been established due to political attraction such as Al-Masirah TV owned by Houthis, Yemen Today owned by the former President Saleh and the People's Congress, Suhail and Yemen Youth channels owned by Islah party and channels of the private sector such as Al-Saeeda. There are also programs that broadcast the arts within their program map, but each one of these channels hosts singers, intellectuals and artists who support them.

With regard to radio stations, we also see the same problem where each entity has its own radio station or stations which often broadcast works of art for its singers and artists as well as some independent artistic production for non - governmental organizations, youth initiatives or independent creators yet they do not always broadcast where priority is given for those who are similar to the radio and owners' policies or its supporters. Moreover, the National Radio Station, which recently became under the control of Al-Houthis, often adopts artistic or cultural perspective in production and broadcast of artistic and cultural works.

There were many local radio stations for each Yemeni province, each concerned with the local arts in its surroundings with some attention paid to Arab arts to meet broadcasting hours.

There were many local radio stations for each Yemeni governorate, each concerned with the local arts in its surroundings with some attention paid to Arab arts to meet broadcasting hours.

Some radio stations belong to some local and international CSOs such as the Talent Children Radio Station, which is supported

by Save the Children, Yemen Times Radio as well as Access Radio, which is supported by international organizations.

The private sector has its own radio stations as well, like Tirmana Radio which broadcasts 24/7 Yemeni, Arab and Western songs as well as Sam FM Radio, IRAM Radio and Grand FM Radio.

For newspapers and magazines, there were a lot of them before the Revolution of 2011. They increased in number due to the political polarization yet after the revolution they decreased largely especially after the Coup in 2014, as well as the war and launching the Decisive Storm so dozens of newspapers and magazines have been suspended after having, in each newspaper, a page devoted for arts and culture as one of the traditional pages in any newspaper. They used to publish poems, short stories, written passages from plays and novels in addition to the news of the Yemeni and Arab singers, and the activities of civil society institutions with artistic and cultural nature. There was an attachment for culture and art in Yemen's official newspaper "Al-Thawrah" this attachment is usually issued every Monday.

CSOs have contributed through magazines and newspapers in which two to three issues were published based on the availability of funds, but then disappeared until the organizations themselves disappeared due to the closure of a number of them after the coup in 2014.

There are organizations that have worked on publishing some films for young filmmakers and youth initiatives such as Sawt Cinema and Shift Foundation for Cinema which presented a lot of local production being supported by Arab and international grants.

In the Internet there are websites for some writers, they created them themselves, in addition to some of the cultural blogs created by the writers when blogs were popular as a new way of publishing and expression before the emergence of Facebook in which many writers began to post most of their work on their personal pages on Facebook as one of the important and popular publishing platforms.

There are cultural websites such as Fun Time, which is interested in publishing Yemeni artistic and cultural news, and the Basement Cultural website, as well as the Yemeni non-governmental organizations' websites, which publish some of their artistic, literary and cultural productions, if any, on their websites and in their social networking websites.

At the level of the cultural policies in Yemen, there have been developments in the field of cultural policies during the past ten years. Civil society organizations contributed to this by calling for the development of some cultural laws in the Ministry of Culture and ministries related to freedom of expression and cultural policies in general. The final document of the National Dialogue Conference presented a very wide range of cultural policies and articles that resulted from the Conference, including laws on cultural rights, human rights culture, articles on book, intellectual rights and cinema, culture and media development, cultural journalism as well as children and women culture.

The Yemeni constitution, which was developed after the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), the new part is devoting a Chapter on Human Rights. This was not the case in the past constitutions, there were only some articles on culture as a human right in the amended

Yemeni constitution and freedom of expression as one of the most important human rights. However, this was suspended due to the coup which was made under the pretext of rejecting federalism, which was stipulated by the NDC and the Constitution. In addition to the departure of President Hadi to Saudi Arabia and the start of the Decisive Storm. So, the NDC document and the new Yemeni Constitution were not in force yet.

Historically, some organizations under the support of Cultural Resource Organization called and advocated for the existence of cultural policies in Yemen like Al-Sharq Foundation and Basement Cultural Foundation.

There are laws that increase the support for arts such as the policies by which Heritage Fund, Young People Support Fund and Building Skills Fund were established as foundations that have to support youth and community creativity in different fields such as culture, arts, literature, innovations but the mistake always occurs upon practice. In Yemen which sees high levels of corruption, there is only little support for arts. Therefore, most revenues of these funds and other funds or programs are used in corruption or in financing the advocates and those who are similar in their views to the cultural and artistic decision makers.

There are also policies developed by some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Supporting the First Publication, and supporting the School Theatre however, they are still on projects in paper not inactivated yet, especially due to the current conflict in Yemen, there is no support for arts except some arts that keep pace with the Huothis' authority and broadcast via the channels. In

general, there are cultural structures to support culture, arts and literature like the Skills Development Fund, the Heritage Fund, the Youth Fund and programs that support arts in the Ministry of Culture, governmental and quasi-governmental organizations and non-governmental foundations, but as usual there is corruption in the practice.

There are international organizations (INGOs and the United Nations (UN) agencies that support the arts but not independently. The support of these agencies to arts is a way to communicate their ideas on the protection of the child, democracy, Anti-corruption, relief and human rights.

The private sector supports festivals that supports the promotion of its products like sponsoring the graduation ceremonies and some of the arts presented on the university's graduation stage.

Abroad, there are better opportunities for cultural support, but there the problem is the scarcity of organizations work in this field, there are only two organizations namely, The Arab Fund for Culture and the Arts and Cultural Resource Fund that really work. Yemen's share of these two organizations appears to be low. Many organizations support these funds while Yemen is the bottom of their list.

Unfortunately, specialized cultural agencies such as UNESCO did not have the same impact as the other UN agencies and funds in Yemen. Thus, culture, arts and literature received little support with rare appearance and at a risk for independent creators.

The same situation is in the practice of freedom of expression on the ground although freedom of creativity is legally protected as well as artistic expression, but at the level of practice, there are a lot of problems, these include:

1. Cultural and artistic organizations are closed by Houthis.
2. Artists are prevented to open plastic exhibitions.
3. Training courses and artistic, cultural or literary workshops are not allowed.
4. A large number of journalists were subjected to arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance without trial
5. Radio stations are suspended.
6. TV channels are suspended.
7. Confiscation of newspapers.
8. The escape of some cultural leaders outside Yemen because of the situation.
9. Religious declares (Fatawi) to kill some artists.

Thus, having protection laws is not much or important since when practiced these laws seem not important as a whole by the Yemeni public because of the fact that the coupers did not recognize the law just through their laws. Yemenis in general do not enforce laws in peace or war situations. Therefore, creativity and artistic expression are often protected by the size of the creator, the power, society or organization to which he or she belongs, but some cases have been



monitored that can be added as a new form of creative protection and artistic support.

Public protection for creativity. A great follow - up campaign is made by citizens, human and cultural rights activists for social networking, as happened with the case of Ayman Othman.

Sympathy and appeal by activists for human rights and cultural rights to cases of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance for intellectuals and media professionals as well as periodic campaigns in this field on social media.

Humane asylum cases were offered to some cultural leaders.

The artist's relationship with a tribe or political entity that guarantees his protection.

The impact of the conflict in Yemen as well as the war on Yemen have played a negative role in the cultural, artistic, literary and heritage development, cultural heritage protection and many other cultural issues as they deteriorated by attraction, extinction, escape or poor funding by national, regional and international donors for culture, arts and literature and support for freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression is not only about support and fund, but also about the lines/channels through which creativity passes to consumers such as channels, radios, newspapers, publishing houses and cultural platforms, most of which have

unfortunately been attracted and limited to independent creativity.

Freedom of expression is also associated with the consumer of the creative product, but the political screening also had an impact on the state of freedom of expression. As a result, there was artistic screening among the Yemeni public, too. In addition, there are a lot of people who listen to political Zawamil only, which are produced by the Houthis. There is also an audience who are interested in listening to Shilat produced by Al-Sharaiah artists who are affected by Saudi Arabia Shilats, the old national songs that re-produced or new artistic products with very few percentages of those who interact with youth initiatives and youth production of songs, films, documentaries. This is clear from the low level of watching to these products on YouTube. At the same time, there is a lack of response to many of artistic, literary and cultural activities among Yemeni audience as the people are searching for livelihood due to war, the siege, the increase of poverty, the outbreak of epidemic diseases, increased number of unemployment and non-payment of staff salaries for a long period which extended until now.

With the focus on consumer and cultural consumption, there is also a significant decline in this area. With the embargo on Yemen, it is totally banned to enter cultural products into Yemen, including respectable cultural magazines which have had interest among the public such as Al Arabi Magazine,

Dubai Cultural Magazine, Doha Magazine, Nizwa, albums of Arab and foreign singers, and movies. The Yemeni public often watches these products online or through the purchase of pirated copies, which are present frequently in Film Selling Centers. Moreover, there is almost relative closure to the Yemeni theater, except for some plays that promote the vision of the current authority and this has its own audience.

On the level of cultural events, there is an elite tendency towards the presence of plastic exhibitions, morning and evening poetics, if any; where most of the audience are themselves for long periods.

There are no more cinema houses and therefore the cinema disappeared from the public although a number of organizations are active in this matter. However, the audience of these non-governmental organizations is few and they are the same audience for all plays then was suspended because the funds was suspended.

It is ironic that the size of aids to Yemen amounts to about 2 billion USD, of which not even one percent is allocated for cultural work, even if it is related to the relief work. It is ironic that world cultural centers departed from Yemen that could have provided artistic and cultural support for Yemenis at this stage such as German House, French Cultural Center and the Egyptian, Syrian and Russian Cultural Centers.

It is a defining and dark phase for the cultural and artistic work as well as the freedom of expression and creativity in Yemen. It was attended by all the neighboring Gulf countries, Sharaiah government or the coup government, or national, regional and international organizations. Yemen will need a lot of work after the end of crisis to reach an acceptable freedom of expression and a good creative product.

## **Working papers**

**Women Press Freedom between the customs,  
politics and religion.**

**Dr. Mona Al-Mahakeri**

**A Publisher and Chief Editor Aroos Al-Yemen Magazine**

## **Introduction:**

Talking about the press in Yemen is risky and perilous talk, and I might not be exaggerating to say that it is a delirium-like talk, especially in a state of social isolation, political unrest and economic fragility, along with absence of the state of institutions and the rule of law in a tribe-governed and single-party-controlled scene. It might be surprising to give back the leadership of women press in Yemen to Mrs. Mahia Nageeb, the editor of the first women newspaper in the south of Arabian Peninsula, and this journalistic leadership extends to include *fatat-ul-Jazeera newspaper* (peninsula girl), which was established in 1965 by *Mr. Ahmed Luqman*. *Fatat-ul-Jazeera*: the first issue of this newspaper was published on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1940, and then, as a weekly newspaper, it was released every Sunday. Shortly thereafter, the *Adani Society* (the first political party in Aden) was founded in 1949, with main (single) claim of self-governance for Aden, and utilized this newspaper as a podium for spreading its programs and policies. The question here is: Can we consider this newspaper as one of the pro-colonial press? for being, all the time, with its policies and propositions.

## **The pre-fifties stage (1853 -1950)**

This period was characterized as the real beginning of the press in Yemen, for this period of time has witnessed the establishment of the Mutawakili Kingdom in the North Yemen, and the British invasion of the South Yemen. Those events led to the emergence of opposition movements against these two regimes, in addition to formation of several, regional affiliated, parties, groupings and

organizations. All this diversity was reflected in this era's press, and this paper is going to separately address the press history of both the North and South Yemen.

## **South Yemen**

The first experience of printing in Yemen was in 1853, when the British occupation authorities brought the first press to Yemen to overcome the difficulty of official work. They have also sent a number of convicts to India, in order to be trained on typesetting and operate the press, which was printing in both English and Arabic. The journals hereunder are classified based on their political affiliation:

### **The Official Press**

The British occupation authority was keen to issue their own newspapers, and increased their number in the early 1940s, to broadcast their news and promote their policies and victories in the Second World War, in order to increase the harmony of their political and propaganda plan, which will, accordingly, tighten the grip on British protectorates in the South Yemen. The following hereunder are of the official newspapers:

- **Aden Protectorate**, a bilingual Arabic-English newspaper, was firstly issued in the in the beginning of 1939. It was the first official newspaper to be published in Arabic. It was covering the appointments, promotions, news of the official occupation authority, protectorates, agricultural issues, short studies, news about the repression of opposition by the colonial authorities in protectorates, medical issues and some advertisement.



- **The voice of the island (Aden)**, an Arabic newspaper, was firstly issued in 1939. It was covering the news and victories of the Allies in the Second World War.
- **The British Falcon**, an English bulletin, was firstly issued in 1941. It was covering the news of British Air Force, and glorifying its victories and possession of various aircraft.
- **Adani News**, an Arabic newspaper, it was covering the official news, laws, appointments and current events in Aden, protectorates and the Arab world, in addition to the political commentaries, and extracts from newspapers' comments.

### **Regional and reformatory organizations press**

Some intellectuals, with affiliation to several organizations formed in the early 1930s, were interested in regional reform have issued newspapers and magazines that have politically expressed the orientation of these gatherings, though they have not openly declare their affiliation to these organizations. These journals are as below:

- **Fatat-ul-Jazeera**, an Arabic newspaper, the first issue of this newspaper was published on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1940, and then, as a weekly newspaper, it was released every Sunday. Shortly thereafter, the *Adani Society* (the first political party in Aden) was founded in 1949, with main (single) claim of self-governance for Aden, and utilized this newspaper as a podium for spreading its programs and policies. This newspaper has addressed a variety of issues in both the North. Its news and comments have also included several news the “*Awadel State*” that was on a self-government term under the British Crown in *Hadhramout*. Moreover, it was reviewing the Arabic and

international, and invented a new section that was called “*By Post or Telephone*”, which discuss the citizen’s different concerns. This newspaper has ceased publication in 1967.

- ***Sawt Al-Yaman*** (*Yemen Voice*), a weekly newspaper, the first issue of this newspaper was published on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1946. It has a peculiarity of being the first northern newspaper, opposing the Imamate rule in North Yemen, and being released in Aden. It was founded by the martyr Judge *Muhammad Mahmud al-Zubairi*, a great national leader and eloquent poet with many literary and poetic works. It was the mouthpiece of the *Great Yemeni Association*, and the *Movement of Liberated Yemenis*, as they called themselves. *Sawt Al-Yaman* was the first Yemeni newspaper to practice the concept of modern press.

The women press in the city of Aden went through three basic stages; these stages have supported its emergence and stability. It has started with the launching of *Fata-ul-Jazeera* newspaper, which has supported women issues in Aden, and claimed their rights to education, early marriage objection, work, political participation and veil removal. In contrast with this, there were newspapers that have rejected this opinion and claimed that the women must remain at home and get themselves educated on household management, such as *Al-Dhikra Newspaper*, which was owned and edited by *Al-Shaikh Ali Mohamed Bahameesh* and launched in 1948. The debate between the newspapers supporting the women issues, represented by the progressive current, and the women liberation opposing newspapers, represented by the hardliners current. All claims of women’s rights were called upon through men, who took a pledge

on themselves to defend the women rights. This was considered as the first stage, which paved the way for the emergence of the women's press in Aden.

The second stage has started when women started the self-expression, though they were writing under pseudonyms, such as: the country's daughter, the veiled, the ant, the South girl, the girls' mother, and some male names, to avoid problems with the clerics and men of conservative in Aden. Writing under these pseudonyms was considered to be the best way, for women themselves, to express their views and defend their own claims. They wrote many articles, stories and poems, and they even participated in the short stories competitions that were launched by one of the newspaper. Women, at this stage, have taken the responsibility of preparing and supervising the women's page in a number of newspapers, such as: *Mahia Mohamed Gargarah*, known as *Mahia Najeeb*, who was preparing and supervising the women page (women's corner) in (*Al-Yaqadha*) newspaper, owned by her brother *Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohamed Gargarah* and was published in January 1956. She was writing under a pseudonym, the country's daughter, to hide her real identity. Same year, in August, Hanim Gargarah, her niece to her elder brother Mohamed Gargarah, has succeeded her in editing the women page. She was also writing under a pseudonym (H. Gargarah). Moreover, *the girls' mother* was a pseudonym for a woman editing the women page on *the Adeni Pen* newspaper. This has continued till the publishing of *Shamsan Girl*, the newspaper that was addressing the women and family affairs in Aden, the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Maghreb.

The third stage and the formal appearance of women press in Aden have started with the publishing of *Shamsan Girl*, in 1<sup>st</sup> January 1960. The newspaper was owned and chief-edited by Mrs. Mahia Nageeb, in defiance of all obstacles, opposing opinions and arbitrary customs and traditions against women. The newspaper has been obliged to address the different women issues, starting from their right to education, early marriage objection, veil removal, work and political participation to their right to select their spouse, and gender equity in the Adeni society. It has cited the proofs and examples on the importance of education, the women role in society and the importance of this role for men themselves. It has also, confidently, defended the girls' education, and the development of girls' education, to be equalized with boys' education, and the equal chances of abroad-study scholarships to girls as well, in order to get good job chances and have different choices of work. It was also narrating the stories of girls' progression, on both educational and work levels, to inspire other girls to follow their steps. It claimed the women right to veil removal as a result of development, considering it as an obstacle that hampers the women development.

The newspaper has also reported all the sixties political events in the streets of Aden against British colonialism. On the front page of the fourth issue, in January 1964, the newspaper published some photos for women protesters at Al-Askalani mosque in Crater, after holding a live press conference following their entering to the mosque. Mrs. Mahia has attended the conference and kept covering the event until the arrival of British Labor Party delegation, which arrived in Aden on 29 December 1963. The next day, the delegation, with some Adeni figures, was meeting the women protesters, and

was informed about their situation and the sit-in claims, with an expression of admiration for their position.

The newspaper called for the women right political participation and to vote, and directly claimed these rights upon the official visit for the British Parliament in London, in the summer of 1962. The same claims were discussed in Cairo, at the Conference of Women of Asia and Africa held on 29 November 1963, and confirmed by the conference recommendations. Then this request was addressed to the Federation Prime Minister: Mr. Hassan Ali Bayomi, and after his death the request was renewed to his successor. Then *Shamsan Girl* newspaper ceased publication in 1966.

On 30 November 1967, Aden and the South Yemen achieved the national independence, and came into a completely new different stage, compared to the previous one. This new stage has witnessed a significant decline in the number and quality of newspapers published. This was due to the new media policy and the state-driven media, in succession of the free independent media.

In this stage, the *Yemeni Women Union* was established on 6 February 1968, to become the mouthpiece of the *Central Council of the Yemeni Women Union*. The *Yemeni Women Union* launched a magazine concerning women and family, to carry his own name "*Yemeni Women*". The first issue of this magazine was published in March 1975. It was a special issue, covering their participation in the Third World Conference on Women, held in Mexico. This issue has focused on the adoption of legal achievements in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, especially the family law, issued in January 1974, and the other laws that guarantee equality for women in work and socio-economic and political life. The magazine has also

discussed many issues of concern to women as modern methods of education and dealing with children.

The magazine was intermittent, due to the impacts of political situation in the country, and continued publishing until the date of Yemeni unification. Then the magazine ceased publishing after the announcement of the Yemeni women movement, for having no budget or management. Moreover, a lot of events that have gone together with the development of women press in South Yemen (Aden), and have been the cornerstone of the specialized press earlier emergence, compared to other neighboring countries.

The pre-independence stage has witnessed the primary features of women press when women started to express themselves and claim their rights through press, using pseudonyms and male names to avoid being attacked by conservative currents under the pretext of religion, customs and traditions. Women have also recognized the important role of press to influence the society, so they have utilized it to claim and defend their rights. Then came the moment in which women have recognized the importance of revealing their real identities. Mrs. Mahia Nageeb, by then, has applied for establishing and managing a women magazine, to address the women and family different issues. So, the first women and family specialized magazine was issued in Friday 1<sup>st</sup> January 1960, to address concerns of women in Yemen, Arabian Peninsula and the Arab Magreb. This monthly magazine has abided by defending women different issues, such as education, work, veil removal and social and political participation.

Throughout the period of its publication, the magazine continued to raise women issues until it the cease of publishing in 1966, i.e. one year before the independence of South Yemen. The post-independence period, after 30<sup>th</sup> November 1967, was quite different compared to the pre-dependence period, as all newspapers' licenses were revoked. The press, then, was shifted from a somewhat open media to state-driven media, based on the policy adopted by the government, represented by the "*Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen*", who has taken the scientific socialist approach.

This period has witnessed the issuance of "*Yemen Women*" magazine, which was issued by the "*Yemen Women Union*", it was concerning the women and family affairs. The first issue of this magazine was published in March 1975. It was a special issue, covering the participation in the Third World Conference on Women, held in Mexico, for which the "*Yemen Women Union*" has delegated three female members to attend. The magazine has mainly aimed at reflecting the general policy of the union and achieving its targets, through the published topics and articles, with special attention to the women, working women and childhood issues. The magazine publishing was intermittent, and was stopped from time to time due to the country political conditions. Firstly, it was poorly edited, for having no editing board, but in 1982 after forming the editorial board, the first issue came totally different in terms of art direction and topics. This magazine has ceased publishing with the unification of women movement in both the North and South.

In this stage, the "*14<sup>th</sup> of October*" and "*Sout el Omal*" newspapers, were chosen to represent this stage, in which all newspapers and

magazines, in Aden, were having one ideo-political center; through the ruling political organization, with its different names (the *Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen*, or *National Liberation Front*, or eventually *Yemeni Socialist Party*). These two newspapers have included pages for women issues, through which the topics and issues of women were raised by women writers. Women were also having a good presence in these newspapers through their specialized journalistic work, especially after the graduation of a number of specialized female journalists. They joined the newspapers as news writers, investigators, reporters and women pages directors. Women concerns at this stage have taken a new form to address their participation in nation building and in raising the social awareness.

- ✓ In 1872 the Ottomans introduced the first printing press to what was called the North Yemen.
- ✓ “*Yemen*” bulletin was launched in Sana’a, for the publication of Ottoman decrees and instructions, and continued publishing for 7 years.
- ✓ In 1879, “*Sana’a*” newspaper was launched, as the first newspaper in the Arabian Peninsula that is Arabic and Turkish bilingual. It has continued publishing until the Ottomans withdrawal in 1918. While, what was called as, South Yemen has witnessed, in 1929, the launching of the first public newspaper that was called “*Aden*”. Then publication continued to launch in Aden to reach the number of (34 issues), among of which were the (daily and weekly) magazines, public newspapers and party or union-related newspapers.



## North Yemen

After the revolution of September 1962, the publications in North Yemen have reached a number of:

- ✓ From 1962 to 1978, is the stage called the “*stage of modern press establishment*”, with almost 46 issues of (daily, weekly and monthly) magazines and newspapers.
- ✓ From 1979 to 1989, is the stage called the “stage of circulation”, with almost 47 magazines and newspapers.

Despite of this number of publications, both regimes of the North and South Yemen, however, exercised control over these media outlets, considering them as a part of their systems, and directing them to serve their purposes.

### **Ownership of media institutions:**

Law No. (25) was issued in 1990, on the press and publications was issued, and the Article 33 of this law guarantees that: **The right to issue and own a newspapers or a magazines is guaranteed to citizens, authorized political parties, individuals, public and legal entities, creative public organizations, ministries and governmental institutions as provided in this Act.**

This law is still in force to date, despite the faults presumed by the profession and observers. However, amendments of this law are currently being discussed, and the main point of these amendments is the president call to abolish the prison sentence against journalists. Others fear that this will be replaced by a more painful punishment, such as naming heavy fines which are beyond the ability of newspapers, especially the national and independent ones. Of the shortcomings presumed in these amendments are also the many prohibitions and necessity of getting a license to practice the

career. The critics claim the substitution of the license by a notice.

Radio media was introduced in 1940, after the launching of “*Sout al-Jazeera*” radio station, by the British authority in Aden. This radio station has ceased radiobroadcasting after the end of 1945 war. In 1946, a US delegation came to Sana'a to discuss with the Imam about the oil exploration in Yemen. They brought a radio broadcasting device, as a gift for the Imam, who used it for radio broadcasting, for only 75 minutes two days a week (Thursday and Friday).

The beginnings of television media was in Aden. But in Sana'a, it was started in 1975, with limited coverage area of Sana'a, the city and suburbs. Until now, the radio and television media have been exclusive to the State, and no private channels are permitted. The law amendments are expected to allow the launching of private radio stations and TV channels.

### **Second: the structure of media institutions**

The right to issue or own a magazine or newspaper was allowed, but for the ownership of audio and visible media institutions this right was prohibited. The printing press reached a state of prosperity, through the large quantity of publications. However, because of many difficulties it lost the institutional work. Some of these press outlets was collapsed and ceased business, some of them disappeared from the scene and some of them became the press of events, where they appear in seasons, such as national holidays and elections, to benefit from the support they get and then, immediately, they go back to a deep sleep. The difficulties and obstacles that have faced these media institutions, in Yemen, are:

- ✓ **Organizational problems:**
- ✓ Ambiguity of objectives
- ✓ Lack of strategic planning
- ✓ Lack of technology
- ✓ Weak information systems
- ✓ Lower organizational communication
- ✓ **Human resources related problems:**
- ✓ Traditional authoritarian leaders
- ✓ Lack of organizational creativity
- ✓ Lack of pilot programs
- ✓ Lack of objectivity in appointments
- ✓ Incompatibility of wages and incentives with work
- ✓ **Environmental Problems:**
- ✓ Intervention of higher authorities
- ✓ Weakness of legislative control
- ✓ Weakness of local competition
- ✓ Weakness of journalists syndicate

The partisan and civil publications were not better than the official or party-supported ones, despite of the possibilities owned by latter. However, all of them remained under the mentioned limitations, and were not able to establish a full-fledged experience. Many political, legal and socio-economic factors have participated to the weakness of political and independent publications, the most important of which are:

- ✓ None of political or independent press was abiding by the institutional work based on planning

- ✓ Low wages and financial and other incentives
- ✓ Lack of sources of information
- ✓ Not strict apply for the terms of press

**Perhaps, the referring to a recent study published by (*Al-Taghyeer* website - *Arif Al-Attam*) confirms that the paper-printed press suffers from several problems:**

The study has included (40) official, political and private newspapers, it was held in the governorates of Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Ibb, Mukalla and Hodeidah, for the period of three months, and was implemented by the public relations department at the Faculty of Information - Sana'a University. It has focused on low quality and weakness of distribution outlets, the low-volume of printed issues, and the availability in the market. *Al-Reyadha* Newspaper came in the first rank, in terms of the volume of actual distribution and the market availability, with (13,804) issues. *Al-Ayyam* national newspaper came at the second rank with (12,428) issues. The third rank was for *Al-Thawri* newspaper, an organ of the Yemeni Socialist Party, with (10,020) issues. The fourth rank was for *Al-Thawra* official newspaper, with (9,823) issues, followed by *Al-Nas* national newspaper with (9,280) issues. The sixth rank was for *Bazar*, advertisement newspaper, with (8,772) issues, then came, at the seventh rank, *Al-Sahwa* newspaper, an organ of the *Yemeni Congregation Reform* Party with (7,564) issues. Eighth rank was for *Al-Wasat*, national newspaper, with (7,199) issues, then 26<sup>th</sup> of September newspaper, issued by the Moral Guidance of the Armed Forces, with (6,890) issues. This field study, about the volume of

distribution for Yemen newspapers at the sales outlets, aimed at knowing the actual distribution volume, points of frequent/scarce sales, and the audience size of each newspaper. The study has not included the volume of free or subscription-based sales. The announced numbers of issues printed, given by some newspapers, were not considered, thus the announced numbers has not affected the study. The study has explained the problem that the majority of the newspapers are concentrated in the capital's secretariat, at a significant percentage, while being significantly less in other provinces, at low percentage. This explains the weakness of the dissemination of these newspapers and the decreasing audience in the provinces, which can be attributed to the weakness of distribution outlets and the marketing process. This is going be reflected on the size and level of the missions declared for these newspapers, and their availability in other provinces as well. This availability is not worth mentioning, except for *Al-Reyadha* newspaper, as revealed by the study, which has swept other newspapers in three provinces and ranked second in other three, to lead the all considering the overall distribution.

The weak and modest distribution are also applied on official newspapers, where it is well noticed that they have low distribution out of the issuing province, except for the *14th of October*, which is distributed in Sana'a more than in Aden, where it is issued. It is also noticed the recession of official newspapers to compete with other publications, except for *Al-Tahwra* newspaper which came first in the capital's secretariat, while *Al-Jomhorria* newspaper came ninth in Taiz the issuing province, and the *14<sup>th</sup> of October* newspaper came seventh in Aden.

As for the national newspapers, they were led by *Al-Ayaam* newspaper, then came *Al-Nass* and *Al-Wasat* newspapers, and finally came Sana'a newspaper, the lowest in term of distribution. Official women newspapers, notably, have not recorded a rational distributive rank, being among the last newspapers of low distribution. The same is applied on political parties' newspapers, which are suffering the weakness of distribution and dissemination, far beyond the others. *Al-Thawri* newspaper is one of political newspapers, with the highest ratio of distribution, most of which is concentrated in the capital's secretariat and less of which is in Al-Mukalla. Followed by *Al-Sahwa* newspaper, which is also having a distribution with most of it in the capital's secretariat and less of which is in Al-Mukalla. Then comes *Al-Wahdawi* newspaper, an organ of ASHM; then *Al-Balagh*, opposition newspaper; then *22<sup>nd</sup> of May* newspaper, an organ of the ruling party; then *Al-Mithaq* newspaper, an organ of the ruling party; and finally comes *Al-Assima* newspaper, an organ of the *Yemeni Congregation Reform Party*, at the end of the political newspaper, with the lowest distribution among the six provinces.

### **Women press ... shy presence.**

During the recession of women-oriented press in a very few number of magazines and newspapers, which could be summarized as follows:

#### **Al-Ossra Supplement**

It is a weekly supplement issued every Saturday by *Al-Thawra newspaper*, the first official newspaper in Yemen. It is a traditional supplement of 16 pages, Edited by Mrs. *Samira Al-Khaiari*, with

traditional black and white printing, except the colored cover pages. It is concerned with traditional issues.

### **Women's Newspaper**

It is a monthly newspaper, classified as an organ of the *General People's Congress Party*, and printed in black and white except for the colored cover pages. It was founded and chief-edited by Mrs. *Sayedah Al-Hailama*, a graduate of the information department. The newspaper has relied on the powerful public relations of Mrs. Hailama, who was able to make a large number of commercial advertisements.

### **8th of March Newspaper**

It is an annual newspaper, published on the eighth of March each year. It was founded and chief-edited by Mrs. *Mahasen Al-Hwati*, a journalist and story writer. It was founded based on the republican decree on 1995, and was edited then by Mrs. *Kawkab Al-Wadaee*. The newspaper has bided by tracing the news of the *National Women Committee*, and their branches in other provinces and female representatives in different ministries and universities. It has ceased publishing, for political reasons, after the outbreak of 2011 revolution.

### **Al-Yamania newspaper**

It was issued by the *National Women Committee*, related to the Council of Ministers.

### **Women and Development Magazine**

It was funded and issued by the *Yemeni Women Union*. It was a quarterly, concerned with publishing the news and activities of the union.

## **Lamees Magazine**

It was published by the *14th of October* House for Press, in Aden. It was chief-edited by the journalist Mrs. *Nadira Abdul Quddus*. It has benefited from women journalistic accumulation in South Yemen and the relative freedom enjoyed by women, under the government of Yemeni Socialist Party. It has continued publishing after the Yemeni Unification, and stopped publishing thereafter for unknown reasons.

## **Aroos Al-Yemen Magazine ... Success and Failures**

Aroos Al-Yemen was classified as the first women magazine in the beginning of the new millennium. The opening ceremony of *Aroos Al-Yemen* magazine was held in the *Shiraton* on 14<sup>th</sup> of January, and was attended by the Minister of Information, *Mr. Hassan Al-Lawzi*, with a large gathering of journalists and writers. A seminar was also held, in this connection, by the Director Editor of Al-Thawra newspaper, *Mr. Abdul Rahman Bagash* and was attended by the Dean of Information college in Sana'a university, *Dr. Ahmed Al-Eggel* and *Dr. Ahmed Aqbat*, *Samira Al-Nahari* and others. In which speakers have addressed the ways to develop women press in Yemen, and to improve the journalistic mission provided by newspapers and magazines, in addition to the best ways that could develop the Yemeni women press experiment to produce a distinguished model of specialized press in Yemen.

The Editor-in-Chief of *Aroos Al-Yemen* magazine, *Dr. Mona Al-Mahaqeri*, has pointed out the magazine aims to achieve tangible success in the field of specialized journalistic work and to provide a qualitative addition to many newspapers concerning with women issues on the local scene. She has also stressed that the celebrating



of the first issue of this magazine comes to translate the objection of Yemeni women to the policy of marginalization and exclusion, which proves the achievements of Yemeni women under the country political leadership. She has also stated that the magazine is a qualitative addition to the Yemeni press in general, and to the women press in particular, and to the follow-up, performance evaluation, and the discussion of all obstacles that prevent women of achieving their goals.

The childbirth of this new baby, *Aroos Al-Yemen*, was not easy, as the journey of getting the license has started in 2007, and after a long chain of complex routine procedures, along with security and political recommendations. In March 2009, the license granting approval came, to launch thereafter the trial opening issue. The magazine has raised many sensitive women issues, the most important of which were the admitting women in military police, and the discussion of society acceptance and reaction to this experience. The first challenge for this magazine was the independence, as the magazine avoided to be a podium for any political party. At this time, there were two controlling political parties dividing the newspapers and magazines; the *General People's Congress Party*, the ruling party led by the former president *Ali Abdulla Saleh* and *The Yemeni Congregation Reform Party*. In this context, *Aroos Al-Yemen* was classified as one of the *General People's Congress party* magazines, for its socially-open policy and for not-abiding by religious or party-driven ideology. The magazine has always sought to affirm its independent approach, national bias and commitment to advocate women issues and promote their

political participation, in addition to the economic and cultural enablement of women.

The magazine, in a short period of time, proved the successful and was able to obtain sufficient support to print a 1,000 issue of luxury printed copy, of the same level, in terms of art direction, contents and printing quality, of Gulf magazines, issued at that time and followed by Yemeni women. The magazine was sold for an affordable price, and distributed in all provinces, through *Al-Thawra Institution for Press and Publishing*. The magazine was not making much profit, and was solely relying on its own efforts and on the efforts of *Dr. Mona Al-Mahaqeri*, the founder and chief editor.

### **The religion in face of women press**

The religion has always been used to limit the participation of women in public life, and was used to oppose the women presence in media, on the level of newspapers, magazines and audio or visual media. It was through the prohibition of photography in general, and the prohibition of the women images in particular. This was reflected in the absence of women images from the cover pages of newspapers and magazines, and, at best, it is replaced by a picture for small girl, of less than ten years and often wearing the popular modest Yemeni clothing:

### **Al-Shaqa'eq Magazine**

*Al-Shaqa'eq magazine* was a model of the religious media, and was issued by the *Iman University*, directed by *Sheikh Abdul Mageed Al-Zendani* and chief-edited by *Sheikha Aysha Al-Zindani*. This magazine was characterized by the regularity of issuance and the consistency of sections and topics. The magazine has also maintained some permanent commercial advertisements, with

companies, institutions and banks, known for their loyalty to the *Yemeni Congregation Reform Party*, they were the same institutions that refused to advertise in *Aroos Al-Yemen Newspaper*. It turned out that the magazine has focused on Islamic women figures, belonging to Sunni Salafi current, dedicating the image of the obedient and submissive wife. The wife who was commanded to, sensually, please her husband, even if she was occupied with the oven, and was commanded to prostrate to her husband after God.

### **Al-Zahra'a Magazine**

*Al-Zahra'a magazine*, shyly, came out to express the *Zaidi* current in Yemen, Supported by *Al-Haq Shiite Party*. It was edited by female journalists, of *Al-Haq party*, such as *Ishraq Al-Makhedhi* and *Raja'a Al-Wazeer*, same personalities will turn with *Houthies* and join the *women commission of Ansar Allah*. The magazine abided by the same policy of *Al-Shaqa'eq magazine*, and stipulated the Islamic Sunni figures with Islamic Shiite figures, and limited the role of woman to raising children, serving the husband, raising the value of sacrificing their sons for the sake of Allah, and raising the value of martyrdom, martyrs' mothers, morals, and the national loyalty.

### **Society in the face of women press**

Opposition for women press was only limited to the religion and clerics, but the community, through social traditions and tribal customs, has also been an obstacle in the way of women press development. We were surprised that some women, of female elite leaders of different sectors such as officials, physicians, teachers, and university students, who were unveiled, are totally refusing to be photographed or to publish their photos in magazines. It is an ongoing difficulty that we face with any issue, as we need a cover

girl. Most of the time, we find ourselves forced to use photos for Arabic or foreign girls, or maybe Yemeni singers, making sure that they wear the Yemeni folk costume, which guarantees full coverage for their hair and reflects their modesty. It is worth mentioning that we often find the sellers of newspapers and magazines deliberately covering the magazine cover or hiding it between other magazines and newspapers to preserve the customs and traditions.

### **Lack of government support and unfair competition**

The magazine was not receiving any significant support from the government, except for the annually amount of YR 27,000, equivalent to only \$ 100, paid by the Ministry of Information for regular newspapers, while the annual renewal of license was costing about 50 USD. Government support was in the form of announcements and some congratulations at national events, presented by some ministries, the Telecommunications company and Yemen Post Authority, to the political leadership of the country. *Aroos Al-Yemen magazine* was not saved of unfair competition waged by the *women and development magazine*, which was, by then, paused for years and resumed publishing incited by *Lamasat for Design*. I got introduced to *Lamasat Office* and *Mr. Zaher Al-Aghbari*, the one whom I chose to design the header of the magazine, and to do the design and art direction of the magazine. But shortly thereafter, *Lamasat Office* started to delay art direction and to procrastinate the issuance of the magazine. They were preparing for convincing the late *Mrs. Ramziah Al-Erryani*, the chairman of *Yemeni Women Union*, to re-publish the magazine of *Women and Development*, in a new and competitive appearance. In this offer, a broker office will be producing, marketing and owning

the advertisement contracts against a monthly amount of money for the Union. Then, *Women and Development magazine* was re-published in a new competitive and luxurious print. The magazine has benefited from the power of the Union and of *Mrs. Ramziah Al-Erryani*, the chairman of the Union and the leading personality in the *General People's Congress*, the ruling party.

The editorial department was handed over to a journalistic staff of *Yemeni Journalists Syndicate*, affiliated with the *Yemeni Congregation Reform Party*. The magazine has not withstood the financial problems, after disputations between the broker office and the Union about the profits and revenues of advertisement. Then the Arabic Spring revolution came in February 2011 and the magazine completely stopped, till the time of writing this paper. As for the magazine of *Aroos Al-Yemen*, it has continued publishing even after the revolution of 2011, it has only ceased publishing after the invasion of Sana'a by *Houthies* on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2014, after releasing the third issue on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the democratic climate in Yemen will be an appropriate environment for the creation of journalistic freedoms, but the experience has not yet been rooted. For the all in Yemen, government or opposition, are still abiding by the past, and the policy of containment, marginalization and attenuation of the other is still followed. Many, so-called, national newspapers have not abided by impartiality or clear and sound approaches, as they lack the proper planning, and they might tend to the right, once, and to the left, again. In general, we can say that the weakness in the structure of media institutions in Yemen, along with the underdevelopment of

their administrations and the weakness of the economic infrastructure and funding sources, though different here and there, with the low professionalism and inappropriate wages and incentives; not to mention the interference of the authorities, the weak legislative environment, the not-abiding by the media mission, the politicization of content and the weakness of the regulatory frameworks such as the Journalists' Syndicate, are all common factors in Yemeni newspapers, despite of their various nature and political affiliation.

**The Picture is the Hero**  
**Abdulrahman Al-Gabri**

**Photograph**

## **Introduction**

History and historians depend on photography and nothing could match photography in terms of proving facts because the photo is the evidence to show reality or in terms of proving the personality. Every dot in a photo refers to clarity and stimuli to the meaning of the moment of the event. Modern technology has demonstrated that the picture is the everlasting and will not disappear like other communications media means and other visual arts. Therefore, technology scientists worked to improve and develop tools and equipment of fixed and mobile photographing as it represents the future and a major factor to present the beauty of the universe (the human and earth) and reveal the facts and the most important evidences before judges, legal persons and practitioners.

## **The Artistic Experience**

My artist experience extends back to 49 years, in those years I have written everything related to the Yemeni society, both urban and rural, including all elements of the Yemeni identity, the nature, and the Yemeni environment that our country is distinguished with. I am still active and diligent in this field with my sons who became talented and distinguished in this field, too.



## **Overview: Photographing**

Despite the attempts to restrict this type of arts due to fear of it, but it found an important place and flourished much compared to nearby countries, i.e., it has the seniority over other arts in the Arab peninsula. In Yemen, pioneers could prove their competence in this field; the first of these pioneers is Ahmed Omer Al-Absi.

There were also public and private organizations established which adopted photographing as an important entity. Despite the official exclusion, Yemen is still with endeavor of those artists –an important home for photographing. The picture became important reference to the researchers and concerned organizations of this field. Thus, the photographic picture found international organizations to preserve it from damage as these organizations concern about old photographic picture in which I am one of its members. I attended four workshops abroad. These organizations provide the old photograph with huge possibilities besides electronic archiving.

## **Freedom of Expression and Photography**

No rules have been issued that restrict freedom of expression regarding photographers. Because who is able to prepare and issue such laws is unqualified for that, and the expressions of the picture are above comprehension due to its importance and all fear from it whether by the authorities or security is an ignorant fear since the picture unveils the prevailing deep ignorance, and the era of technology science, satellites and internet defeated such fear.

Those who fear the picture do not keep up with the updates and developments of the era and do not read about scientific inventions

occurring from moment to another. The problem that obstructs photographers is a silly wish. The camera still terrors the tyrannized authorities. Indeed, it is an unjustified fear due to the ignorance of the importance of the picture and the visual culture.

Currently and in the war situation, photographers are restricted and prevented from moving. Therefore, Yemen has lost one of its media platforms that unveil the impacts of the destructions resulted by war parties. In addition, Yemen became lost and internationally forgotten because of this blockade imposed on private institutions and individuals and even public institutions which produce the picture. Again, I confirm that ignorance is behind such blockade. The picture will remain and most prominent now and in the future. All whether the authorities or the society should understand that, whether accepted or not, the future will be for the picture, as such time will end while photography will remain.

### **Recommendations**

- All segments of the society should read about paragrapping and educate themselves since the picture is the judge between the times of ignorance and fast development of life. The electronic world will abolish all paper files so those do not understand the significant impact of the picture will lose their counterfeit allegations against photography at the end. The picture is the hero and that's it.

**Press and the freedom of expression in Yemen**  
**Ahmed Al-arami**

**A journalist, and cultural policies writer and researcher**

## **About Press and the freedom of expression**

For more than a century, press has been one of the most important aspects of cultural, political and intellectual life in Yemen. Press beginnings in Yemen, and other regional Arab countries, date back to the 2nd half of 19th century during the British occupation of the southern part of the country and the 2nd presence of Ottoman Empire in Yemen (1872– 1918). The different beginnings, some of which were local like that of Hadhramout at the beginning of the 20th century, were all efforts that have paved the way for the emergence of a local press. Many reasons were behind the different forms and beginnings of press in Yemen like; access to printing and its techniques, the massive political and cultural transitions, in addition to the constant change of press forms, worldwide, due to the developments in telecommunication and printing technologies. Thus, the different forms of press beginnings in Yemen were an echo of the political, intellectual and cultural interactions and a reflection of the disturbance in the socio-political life. But, the steady state of the country, after the independence of the southern part against the British occupation in 1967 and the revolution in northern part against Imamate in 1962, has led to the legal organization and overall prosperity of press in Yemen. The press work in the southern part of Yemen was governed by the issuance of Law no (27) dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1939 which was known as the law of press and publications, and the law of 1953 concerning the press in what was called the “Qaeiti-Hadrami State”. Those two laws remain effective until the date of independence on 30 November 1967, after which the press work, in the southern part of Yemen, had no governing law until the issuance

of “Press and publishing Law” no. (7) in March 1990, the law that remained effective until the date of Yemeni unification. In the northern part of Yemen, the press work was governed by the “Republican Era Publishing Law”, No. (24) issued on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1968 that has ruled the press work, and the law (No. 42) issued in 1982 concerning the journalistic planning, which remained effective until the date of unification in 1990. After the announcement of the “Republic of Yemen” in 1990, the law (No. 25 of 1990) was issued to abolish all previous press-related laws. This law has organized the press work and gave the opportunity, of issuing journals and publications, for everyone (individuals, institutions or parties), which has contributed to the press prosperity and led to the diversity and renovation of more factual press work. A republican decree (No. 49) was also issued, on 25 April 1993, concerning the regulation of “Press and Publication Law” in press field. Since the early beginnings, press in Yemen has led an important role in applying the freedom of expression, for many journalistic publications have represented the voice of people and revolutions, formed the principles of political changes and incorporated a lot ideas and experiences; it was an arena for disputations and a record of events, with a part of it for the authority and the occupation like any other media platform with a rostrum for both the authority and opponents. The press in Yemen has caused emergence of many ideas, authors, writers, books and different currents of thought, meanwhile some journals and media platforms were representing the authority, and reflecting an aspect of its domination. However, despite of everything said about it, the press in Yemen, during the republican era or after has recorded an advance stage and, with no doubts,

was qualified for openness and for leading an educational, intellectual and informational role, with further cultural and political developments, due to the prosperity of the information sector in a steadily progressing world. Then, came the events that affected the Arab world, including Yemen, to obstruct this development process and to become the most prominent obstacle in the way of improving the media and the freedom of opinion and expression in Yemen. Many journals and journalists have anchored a lot of freedom principles, embodied the values of freedom of expression, confronted the political and religious authorities that have repressed this kind of freedom, and led a never-ending struggle. No doubt, that the security and stability of a country is the most suitable climate for journalists to strive for the freedom of expression, and that explains the inability of press and journalists, in Yemen, to stand for the oppression during the current state of disturbance, war and fragmentation of the country, in addition to the weak role of a free and independent opinion, and the weakness of both independent journalists and intellectuals against major plans and superpowers with their media frontlines. The press in Yemen, due to the political unrest and the state of disturbance, fragmentation and war, is living the darkest period of their history. The period of 2011- now, was not only a period of disturbance for the prospected development, owed to the emergence of many independent journals and diverse cultural press and to the prosperity of the information sector, but also a period of more violence and hostility against the press and journals, with a torrent of violations committed against the reporters, photographers and dozens of journals, websites, broadcasting headquarters and properties of journalists. These violations have

varied in forms of abductions, detentions, blocking websites and social media platforms, threats, incitement campaigns, killing attempts, confiscating and looting the properties of journalist and media institutions. In addition to the violations of prosecution, detention, enforced disappearance, and torture in detention, work suspension, suspension of salaries, visit prohibition, media outlets closure and cases of killings and issuance of oppressive rules and regulations, all are violation committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen, in different ratios, to result in making Yemen one of the most dangerous countries for the press work. The press diversity, being one of the Yemeni press features, since the seventies of last century, with its accumulations, was likely to lead major transitions in the Yemeni press and its role of activating the freedom of expression as well, especially with the increasing span of freedom and potentials of the modern telecommunication technologies, related to this field. But despite of this all, the recent transitions in Yemen, having started in 2011, will take back the Yemeni press to square one. Aside from the repression of the freedom of expression and the unlimited violations against the press and journalists, the disturbance in country has firstly eradicated the diversity of press, and subsequently the chances of prosperity in cultural press, as an example, which resulted in clear homogeneity. Being known, the functions of press known as (news, opinion, education, amusement and entertainment), then it is clear that the cultural press, after 2011, has been severely hit by the disappearance of many cultural supplements (the cultural supplements of Al-Thawra, Afkar, Afnan and Al-Thaqafia Newspapers), and some cultural pages were even abandoned. Generally, we can say that news function has madly

overwhelmed the Yemeni press, with a considerable space for articles that discuss the accelerating events and recent developments in the political field, along with the Arab Spring movement. The afterward state disorder, in addition to the war and regional conflict that have affected the country, have all contributed to the exacerbating situation of this field, through the emergence of long and illogical list of TV channels, journals and websites, which has reflected the socio-political rupture and the ideological regional conflict. No doubt that this situation would abolish the independent political press, or those who were, to some extent, obliged to an independent discourse, and expose journals and journalists to torture and unlimited violations. The political parties and institutions were able to resume or re-initiate their journals, or the media platform that was closed, confiscated or stopped, but the independent press entities, being established by young independent journalists, were not able to resist the disaster or re-initiate their platforms, among of which were Al-Neda, Hadith Al-Madina, Al-Sharae (the street), Alola, Al-Nas and Al-Masdar Newspapers. All these newspapers were of distinctive importance in the Yemeni press, and ended up closed or looted, while the journalists and founders have been obliged fled their own country.

### **Concluding Recommendations:**

- ✓ To join efforts of activists, institutions, trade unions and concerned organizations, and work collectively and apply pressure on political stakeholders and parties to the conflict in order to stop committing violations against press and journalists.



- ✓ To urge political stakeholders and countries sponsoring the national dialogue and political settlement, for including the principle of “freedom of press and expression” as a basic point of any dialogue for future settlement. And to ensure more room for freedom on issuing or discussing any law in future.
- ✓ To support the projects and workshops concerning with the freedom of expression in Yemen or the press and journalists or the media outlets, to raise the awareness about the press reality in Yemen for obtaining new ideas, studies and visions that might help in the restoration of press leading role and provide alternate climate for the freedom of expression provided by press.
- ✓ To support the projects and ideas concerning with the cultural, social and independent press in Yemen, including the websites and the safe and alternate media outlets, or even the outlets that could provide or contain this kind of press, such as social media platforms and the internet.

**Footnotes:**

- ✓ Al-Gabr, Ameen (2011), *The press and authority in contemporary Yemen: Intellectual and political trends*, History Dept., College of Arts, Dhamar University.
- ✓ Al-Arami, Ahmed (2012), *The Official Press: Vision for the Solution*, Al-Masdar Online, <http://almasdaronline.com/article/print/30285> (Thu. 29 March 2012).
- ✓ Wikipedia.

# **Freedom of Expression by Music**

**Rafeeq Al-A'akori**

**General Manger of Yemeni music heritage**

## **Introduction**

Music is one of the most important elements to determine identity and civilization being connected to human, the earth and customs and traditions. It is with human in all the developments of his life and civilization. Plato considers music to be one of the main drivers of human beings. According to Ibn Khaldun, the first manifestation of the lack of civilization is the lack or decline of music. It is said that music is what precedes speech and transcends it when the latter cannot express.

Music is not a luxury or entertainment or a joy as the public thinks, however, it is a means of expression by tones and rhythms.

In the beginning, music was restricted to worship rituals, performed in places of worship, religious ceremonies and festivals. It was a means of man relationship with God. Music was then used in wars to motivate fighters, bring people together, and instill fear among the enemies. It gradually evolved so that the music accompanied social rituals such as birth delivery, circumcision, wedding and death as well as it accompanied daily works such as songs of agriculture, construction and grazing.

With the development of civilizations, music has become a profession practiced by professional musicians to make their living. Music has its own approaches and methods. Perhaps the reason that has made music to be related to entertainment, it is the presence of musical art professionals who performed their art in the court of royalty and state officials in exchange of material revenue.

With the intellectual and cultural revolution at the end of the nineteenth century AD, the musical concept developed and became a cultural art that contributes to cultural life and touches people's concerns and became one of the most important means of expressing social and political problems.

The importance of music in expression is because it reaches the public easily unlike the other arts that address some group or gender in the society such as theater or plastic arts, which despite its importance in the expression of society, it does not have the effect of music that is heard and echoed by the public at any time in any place.

Therefore, music often faces obstacles by the authorities or expedients under any pretext such as religious prohibition or moral disintegration

### **The State of Lyrical Music Art in Yemen**

Lyrical art in Yemen can be divided into two parts

Traditional lyric (City Lyric)

Folk lyric (Countryside Lyric)

The prevalent thought among Yemeni society is that folk lyric is a lyric accompany the work with the purpose to make the worker enthusiastic and active like the agricultural songs or the construction songs.

On the other hand, the traditional lyric or city's lyric is linked to entertainment and joy where it has no social function; just to be listened in the afternoons in idleness with Qat chewing and listening to music and emotional lyrics.

Traditional songs were usually performed at weddings, in meetings and cultural office. In the 1950s in the south, and with the appearance of artistic symposia such as Aden Symposia, Lahj Symposia and other, the lyrical art came out from the sources to the audience directly in the theaters.

In the north, after glorious September Revolution, musical art came out from the cultural office to the public through television and theaters. Thus, subjects of songs were varied as they were already limited to emotional songs. Topics of revolutionary and political became themes of songs so the political song was matched to the emotional song in terms of the audience and fans.

With the expansion of radio and television broadcasting and their reach to every house, it was necessary that the song has to express the concerns and problems of society. A number of artists introduced the social song which received a great popularity in society, and became the best among the other songs. Some of those lyrics have contributed to change in the society, eliminated some of its disadvantages and encouraged its advantages.

### **Examples of Expression by Music**

Sing O Hadi the anthem of the country .... Sing the nice Dan song\*<sup>1</sup>

Do not mention the Sanani songs .... The songs of Branches of Akyan \*<sup>2</sup>

Welocme the Hashimi\*<sup>3</sup> who ease sorrows and the sadness

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<sup>1</sup> Dam is a Hadrami style of songs

<sup>2</sup> Gosn Akyan= branches of Akyan : This is a title of a Sanani Song

<sup>3</sup> Hashimi : is a title a Lahji Song

This is how Al-Qumindan expressed in the 1930s his refusal to the domination of Sana'ani song over the other lyrical arts and he demanded to revive the Lahji song. In spite of criticism, and accusation of segregation, Al-Qumindan delivered his idea to the poets and artists of his society and thus the revival of Lahji song was achieved and became one of the lyrical arts of Yemen.

There is a misconception that only love and passions are the songs that become popular and accepted by the audience unlike songs that express the concerns and problems of the society. Of course, there are expressive songs excelled over all love songs. The following are some examples of that kind:

- 1- Ayoub Tarish Song (Come Back Home) in which he appealed expatriates to come back to their homeland to take care of the farms and fields. This song cause many expatriates to come back Yemen.
- 2- Ali Al-Simah Song (Al-Balah) which criticizes emigration and shows how emigration can cause social damages to the individual and society.
- 3- Abdulbaset Absi Song (The Most Bitter Glasses) which got its popularity with the voice of Amal Ka'adol in which she criticizes the marriage of minor girls to elderly men due to their need of money.
- 4- Fadhl Mohammed Al-Lahji and Faisal Alawi Song (We Will Reap) in which they express their pride of Lahji cotton and this lyric became widely popular in Lahj and all around Yemen.

5- The epic (Love and Coffee) by Ali Al-Ansi in which he encourages coffee tree cultivation as this tree has both physical and moral values.

These are simple examples of the expansion of social songs which became popular everywhere and were chanted by all people. They contributed in changing some customs of the society. The popularity and excellence of this kind of songs over other romantic songs indicate that the society liked and accepted this kind of songs which express its concerns and problems.

In the 1990s, the Yemeni lyrical art decreased where there were no new artists in the art field. Concerts and theatres disappeared; even youth chorus which appeared in the middle of 1980s disappeared.

In the millennium, songs were just related to wedding parties as many youth artists appeared, but all were restricted to perform concerts and to produce songs that meet the atmosphere of weddings and the audience.

By the end of the first decade of the millennia, new art came into the surface which originally came from western countries and was popular among the youth, namely, arts of hip-hop and rap, where a group of young guys performed songs that express their concerns and the social circumstances with rhythm of hip-hop music.

Fahd Alqarni and Mohammed Aladhra'ai became famous as monologue artists performing social songs that express the situation of the ordinary citizen. This kind of songs became so popular among people as it touches their daily life, where these songs were listened to on busses, taxis and cafes and were sung by elderly people and children.

Expression through music and singing was not an easier task where some artists faced disturbances from the authorities, some were thrown to jails and were charged with fabricated accuses, and others were threatened. They were even annoyed in their business and attacked by government owned media.

Even there was official controlling system which had the right to allow or prevent expression by such kind of social or political songs. The prevention of such kind of songs was due to their topics which criticize the situations of the society or which criticize the authorities such as songs: (I am the People, O Leader) and (Nashwan). The other reason to prevent such songs is the political attitude of the artist himself as the artist (Abo Nassar).

### **Recommendations**

The freedom of expression has many obstacles and problems including:

- 1- Religious scholars still prevent music as it is religiously prohibited.
- 2- Underestimating songs and music and those who perform them.
- 3- There are official control bodies on songs that grant or prevent license
- 4- Recent political changes and events that presented artistic types other than music
- 5- There are no specialized institutes or schools for music
- 6- The Yemeni Artists have no artistic and cultural awareness



# **Freedom of Expression as A Way for Development**

**Nabil Ahmed Al-khadher**

## **Summary**

This paper will contain a number of experiences in the Arab world and the whole world in the field of freedom of expression and its impacts on development through the creative industries and will provide information on freedom of expression in the Arab world with focus Yemen. Then it will provide a vision of the future in the presence of a policy of freedom of expression in Yemen to be applied by decision-makers and to identify its positive impact on human and development. The paper concludes with recommendations that support the issuance of a policy on freedom of expression in Yemen.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Some consider that freedom of expression serves or is used only by those working in the media or literary field or in the field of expressing opinion as a whole. This is well known because of the nature of the expression is in the collective mind as a concept concerned with writing or verbal declaration. This is also known in light of the fact that many arrests in this are for journalists, activists and media professionals whose speeches are against the views of the ruling authorities. This is because journalists and media professionals are always on the front lines of hot political events. This is what happening in Yemen and the Arab world, too, especially in the period following the Arab Spring in 2011.

However, there are also many arrests and torture that have been deeply inflicted on artists, novelists, intellectuals and cultural activists.

The demonization of freedom of expression and a wide range of human rights came as a result of the rumors of the state and its elected or non-elected governments, which affected a lot the people in a way that affected on their vision negatively about human rights and freedoms. It also influenced the way the people's views and understanding of freedom of expression as a cause of conflict in Yemen.

However, this paper is not intended to discuss the concerns of freedom of expression and its human issues, this will be discussed among other papers in the policy draft of freedom of expression in Yemen, which is implemented by Damanat (Guarantees) Foundation for Rights and Freedoms with a support from Cultural Resource. On the contrary, this paper aims to discover the positive aspects related to freedom of expression and its role in increasing the growth of cultural and creative productions, then discovering the positive role of freedom of expression in development as well as disposing, even partially, from some pressing humanitarian issues such as poverty, illiteracy, extremism and other negative issues that have increased more and became part of the Yemeni community.

This paper seeks to convey the idea that respect for freedom of expression will push towards making large, medium and small projects and medium in hundreds of areas related to thinking, invention and talent. Because when a creator is free from the inner conscience, the execution blade, the extremist's bullet and the government prison, s/he will produce and create a lot of creative

and cultural products, which in turn will bring more funds thus contributing to the Yemeni people economic and social welfare.

The objective of this paper is to change the perception of policymakers and Yemeni people towards freedom of expression as a more profitable concept rather than a problematic concept. This is studied by showing how this freedom have contributed to the growth of global economies and the extent to which freedom of expression contributes to the overall production of countries.

The call in this paper for a policy on freedom of expression in particular is not to show a bitter experience or tragic humanitarian stories though their importance. This paper is not based on the emotional concept, however, it focuses on looking forward to good life and then making a comparison to another region was not compared before by papers whose writers exceled in self-flagellation and reality as well as soliciting sympathy.

### **Are Creative Productions Profitable?**

Creative productions are gaining increasing importance as a key drive to make job opportunities, knowledge, and economic prosperity. The World Bank Group estimates that creative industries account for up to 7% of global GDP and it is expected to grow about 10% annually.

The cultural industries include publishing, music, cinema, handicrafts and design, which are continuously growing. These industries need freedom of expression to be able to work so that it must result in contribution to the total national income.

At the level of the Arab world, economic sources believe that Saudi Arabia possesses several elements of excellence in the field of "creative industries" and that it has many human resources and natural resources that place it in a prominent position among the most advanced countries in this field. Experts pointed out that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can compete strongly in world markets.

Egypt is seeking to support creative cultural industries "as a promising and growing sector in the global economy" and the Egyptian government is planning a project to establish a holding company for these industries.

Egyptians believe that the support of creative cultural industries means supporting the "Soft Power of Egypt" as well as the economic gains already achieved by countries that have made great steps in this regard within a vision seeks to include various areas of art such as plastic art, designs, handicrafts, antiques, fashion, films, video, photography, interactive games, advertising, software and music, however it is radically and decisively interested in innovation.

In Morocco, there is also a trend in this field. Participants have emphasized, in different professional workshops during the second meeting of Cultural and Creative Industries' Professionals held in "Al-Andalus - in the north of Morocco", that cultural industries can play the role of economic development in Morocco and Spain.

Despite the lack of initiatives available to work in small and medium-sized enterprises, the creative industries field in Kuwait is not far behind its counterparts of high-income and high-growth countries, where about 35,000 employees work in the sector, and the revenues of value added products account for hundreds of

millions of Kuwaiti dinars, thus making it one of the largest non-oil sectors in Kuwait, accounting for 24% of the non-oil manufacturing sector and 72% of business services sector.

Creative industries contribute about 3% of the EU economy. The market value of these industries is about 500 billion Euros, with about 6 million people working in this field. This sector is crucial to innovation, especially in terms of tools and networks.

US sales accounts for 142 billion USD of these goods and services alone which are more than what it has exported of goods and services in the fields of agriculture, aviation and all relevant whichever. About 27 million people are working in the US economy directly or indirectly and approximately 750 thousand organizations in the US care of creativity and publishing of arts only with 3.1 million individuals working in them who represent 2.1 % of the task force there. California has the eighth-largest economy in the world, with a creative economy contributing more than \$ 3 billion to domestic income and taxes in 2012.

Thus, there are evidences that the creative industries contribute strongly to find job opportunities and countries to get funds, so where is the problem of it now. Why Arab countries' revenues of creative industries did not increase?

Since this paper is about Yemen, the question will be where the scarcity of the contribution of the creative industries in the Yemeni economy and the role of these industries in development in Yemen would be; though Yemen has a lot of opportunities in this field that bring funds and create many job opportunities.

The problem lies in freedom of expression. Simply,  
Let us know about freedom of expression.

### **Is Freedom of Expression Guaranteed?**

Ms. Pénès Tlacola, Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, says that "There should be a strong commitment to make freedom of expression and access to information a reality, not just words on paper."

Journalists in Tunisia still face considerable pressure. At the beginning of 2016, a number of Tunisian journalists were interrogated by counter-terrorism security teams.

The freedom of information in Algeria is also in severe downturn and officials' statements emphasized the hostility towards press freedom in 2016.

The National Intelligence and Security Service in Sudan, which was granted powers, harass and monitor journalists, control printed media through censorship and confiscation of its issues.

In Egypt, the state of freedom of thought and expression continued to deteriorate in 2016, and press freedom was not free from such downturn.

Freedom of opinion and expression in Jordan is too in a critical situation. Journalists in Jordan are under close surveillance by the intelligence services and must be affiliated with the Jordanian-controlled Press Syndicate.

Human Rights in Iraq was critical during 2016, as conflict continued and human rights violations were committed by all parties.

Human rights' defenders, including journalists and those who exercise the right to freedom of expression, were harassed, threaten, and killed in 2016.

In Saudi Arabia, activists are targeted on the Internet for expressing their freedom of opinion and expression.

On the other hand, freedom of opinion and expression is also a major issue in Oman being under high levels of censorship that have imposed strict laws and restrictions on human rights activities. The government agencies in Oman have limited the press and media corporations to government's propaganda and its achievements. They tend to ban any criticism that talks about the Executive Authority's errors and practices or that uncovers facts about corruption issues in the administrative body.

The year 2016 witnessed the adoption and application of a number of laws and decrees that include excessive restrictions on freedom of expression and the press. They are clearly aimed to muzzle and restrict freedoms (6).

Yemen exercises full monopoly over radio and television's means of broadcasting and prevents to be owned by persons. It also takes control of Yemeni News Agency, blocks online websites, withdraws licenses of profession and monitors the media and access to information. In addition, it uses threats, abuses, and attacks against journalists, which supports the idea that the right of expression is the most violated in Yemen.



The fear of freedom of expression is not only limited to the media and journalists, but applies to all aspects that, in essence, are related to freedom and human and his desire of expression. This applies to the novelist, visual artist, designer, website's owner, the inventor, the dancer and singer. Here, we must choose and decide between either freedom of expression with the money and wealth that will be brought by creative industries and the public creative production or violation of freedom with poverty and preventing any creativity from appearance because it may not be commensurate with the orientation of the government, the fundamentalist ideology or the general orientation of society.

### **Good Choice:**

There is no nation more diverse on the cultural side than Yemen. Each district/area in Yemen has its dialect, so when we travel from village to another, we find a different style of folk dance, chants and songs; even though one ruling authority or several ruling authorities had one style of dance or folklore as read and seen by tales, stories, legends, and cultural style as a whole.

Yemen has a unique diversity. Even in cities, established through emigration from rural places to urban cities, we see the style of food items and furniture different from one house to another, as is the most one has diversity in the neighboring countries.

That is why Yemen, in general, has more cultural diversity than any other country in the world. Yemen is a diverse country that has a great number of historical sites, antiquities and environmental places. It also has a diverse music heritage ranging from Sananian and Hadhrami music to the music heritage in Al-Hudaida, Taiz and

all other Yemeni cities. In addition, there was artistic diversity based on sectarian-religious diversity such as Jewish music, Baha'ai and Sufi creativities even the Huthi-embraced Zamil which are primarily derived from Zamil as a traditional folk heritage to say the least.

Moreover, Yemen has a tremendous group of handcrafts products which are totally different comparable to other neighboring nations such as the golden, silver, crockery-stony, home-made products and the clothing items for men, women, and children alike.

Yemeni literature is highly valued as good in the Arab region and it has a platform or market for the purpose of circulating and promoting its categories such as poetry, short story, novel or criticism.

The possibility of Yemen to claim a respected status in Arab and global market for creative industry, which lies in creating laws to guarantee freedom of expression and thus liberating creative industry and Yemeni creators from the official restrictions and funambulist violence, just requires flexibility and understanding to the nature of creative work and how to support it.

# **Cinema Industry and Freedom of Expression**

**Mohammed Al-Mahdi**

**Shift Cinema Foundation**

## **An Overview of Cinema and Its Companies:**

The first cinema in Yemen, the Private Cinema, was established in December, 1962 three months after Revolution. The idea came when the attitude of the Egyptian leadership in Yemen was to make a cultural campaign in Yemen. This contributed in establishing the cinema in Yemen despite there was a big ignorance after Revolution.

There was a belief among the authority and businessmen then that development will not happen without cinema. The number of investors was big, and now they are pioneers in other investment fields.

The idea of improving cinema came when there was a big demand of it as it was the only to provide entertainment before the appearance of television in Yemen and accordingly the investment was big. Yemen competed the developed countries, and the houses of cinema were developed in 1979 through better data shows and furniture which increased the audience attraction.

The number of cinema houses in Yemen was 43 houses including 4 houses in Sana'a, 11 houses with a Lion Share in Aden, 7 houses in Taizz, 4 houses in Al-Hodeidah, 5 houses in Hadramout, 2 houses in Ibb with the same number in Shabwah, 1house in Al-Mahrah, 4 houses in Abyan, 1house in Lahj and 2 houses in Dhamar.

By the way, there were mutual connections among cinema companies in Yemen and some artistic companies in Egypt, India

and some European countries. Totally, there were three cinema companies in Yemen with a big competition and they are:

- 1- Kaba'a Foundation for Trade and Cinema.
- 2- Sabiha Group for Trading & Cinema
- 3- Nasir Maso'od Group for Trading & Cinema

Unfortunately, all these houses were captured by leaders of corruptions. Then they were closed, so there are just few of those houses. Nowadays, football matches and rare movie shows are always presented. In Sana'a, there is only the private cinema and some cinema houses in the commercial centers, but they are too expensive that the ordinary citizen cannot afford. Now these cinemas are often of no fans not just because that the community regards it as prohibited, but also because the existence of the internet, computers, home-based watching and TV channels.

### **An Overview about The Producers of Cinema Movies**

Today, there is no cinema movies production. But there are individual and collective attempts and experiences working on making short movies, cinema movies, documentary and other various movies with simple limited possibilities. Movies are often made for the purpose of serving social issues when these movies are funded by international corporations to discuss the society issues, and thus the movies are often reporting, preaching and promoting health or education concepts and others. They are not necessarily containing the beauty of the cinema art and the cinema movie. These movies are often presented in special shows to the

attendants of workshops, training courses and conferences. If the film is of a good quality, the movie is often kept for participation in the festivals without the desire to show it at the local level.

### **Companies Working in the Field of Art**

Private companies working in the fields of culture and art face noticeable regression in the last years all over Yemen provinces except of some companies in Sana'a, Aden and Hadramout. However, there are rare and successful models that we only can count them by the fingers of the hand, and that is due to many reasons such as:

- 1- Continuous interior and exterior war since March 2015.
- 2- Sole voting system which uses the art and culture as a weapon to pass political and sectarian agendas in order to increase the conflict.
- 3- Low support to such companies and regarding them as unnecessary accessories in the time being.
- 4- The bad planning and implementation to the projects of these companies, which lead to rapid failure.

### **Freedom of Expression in the Perspective of The Company Working in The Field of Art**

Cinema is the most important media mean for influence, income and investment. It is considered an art itself containing all other arts "The Seventh Art". It transfers human and his stories to different worlds including past, present and future. Human is the fundamental base of cinema.

Freedom of expression represents a basic right of human rights as the Article 19 of International Declaration of Human Rights provided. In line with other associated freedoms like freedom of information and freedom of press, freedom of expression contributes to obtain all other rights. Shift Foundation confesses that human rights are applied to network and non-network means alike. UNESCO is committed to study issues of freedom of expression, personal privacy, information manipulation and moral aspects in the Internet. Freedom of expression and freedom of information are the basics of building a good democratic society and achieving social and economic growth, which allows the freedom of exchanging necessary thoughts for creativity and to enhance accountability and transparency. General Director of UNESCO, Iyryna Bocova, Said, "Press flourishes when media means are free and independent, and when journalists have safety while preparing their reports, and when escaping the punishment is exceptional but not the rule".

In terms of activities, Shift Foundation provides Yemeni and international movies from different cultures and countries with high quality to make a real interaction with its audience including children, youth and the Yemeni community, to let them know different issues touching their reality and imagination they come along with. As for the Foundation's vision, the Foundation seeks to change the Yemeni society point of view toward cinema, which is full of negativity and bias since the mid of 1980s. This is what contributed to the deterioration of cinema, its bad reputation, and the attempts of religious scholars which reached to its extremes by closing cinema after the war in 1994.

Despite the fact that Shift Foundation doesn't have the right to close a scene or reproduce it due to the reason that it respects the artistic work of the movie which should not be misused it, thus, Shift Foundation tries to search films from all cultures and countries movies that don't have invoking scenes to the Yemeni community that needs a long time to accept them as parts of the film's story and plot, especially when the movie is collectively presented.

Here, movies play a basic role in expressing the stories of the people and their hardship, passions, opinions, privacy and all what is related to them as a living entity interacts with its surroundings.

Cinema presents many values and plays a faithful and influencing role as it presents an equivalent world to the life and nature and gives enthusiasm and values to the family. It improves positive behaviors and practices. It is an intermediary means to the positive change and a generator of imagination. We should not forget that cinema changes and improves, add rules and legislations about the human issues. It is also a source of gaining knowledge and information and identifying other diverse cultures and civilizations.

### **The Experience of The Company Working in The Field of Art**

Since 2009, the idea of establishing Shift is in my mind, I tried with many friends writing a project proposal to be funded, but with other names other than Shift. Then I got the chance in 2015 to rewrite the project proposal and settled on the name –Shift and for many reasons including:

- 1- Enhancing the positive point of view about cinema, and creating good relations with corporations, centers and cultural



spaces, and presenting new, innovated and valuable cinema shows.

- 2- A platform to present cinema talents for local amateurs and producers of youth.
- 3- Contributing in raising the awareness of the society, especially the youth, of the importance and the effect of visual arts to solve and limit the influence of negative thoughts and the unhealthy phenomena among the society.
- 4- Providing a new convenient place for people, and improving the feeling of the impact of watching movies collectively.
- 5- Reviving the culture of going to cinema and alleviating the psychological pressures resulted by political and economic situations going in the country through creating new, good and encouraging public places.
- 6- Discovering the abilities of the youth and their skills in the cinema production which allow them to get chances to invest their talents.

Shift Foundation has presented 60 events of which 42 is the total of events of "CineShow" program, which presents local and international purposeful and selected movies of different categories using visual equipment with high accurate data show screens and with a cinema sound system to be presented at the independent and public cultural and educational centers with high and accurate standards once a week (short movie + long movie) for two hours according to the annual plan. The movies are presented with professional standards and special cinema rituals through choosing

the movies that are to be presented and linking between them in the idea or the type through corresponding with the party in which the program will be presented. Then designing an advertising poster is made about the place and time of show for the audience, and coordination for the show, and making sure that the equipment and the place of the show are ready. This is made through a power point talking about the initiative, partners and supporters. It also contains a short brief on cinema history or the category of the movies that are to be presented, or a biography of a creative person of movies, presenting a background of the movies to be presented along with cinema watching instructions. After that, it is followed by a short discussion and distribution of popcorns. This is ended with the Initiative's evaluation through a two color stick to be raised by the audience to express their content or refusal.

The same is done with kid programs under the title " Kids Show " by which we produced 18 shows, most of them associated with Ibhar Foundation for Childhood and Creativity in which we presented silent short and long cartoon movies dubbed into Arabic. Kids have reacted in a noticeable and amazing manner where they created dialogue for the silent movies and discussed the ideas of the presented movies as well as the cinema technology which surprised them and had an unforgettable impact on them.

Shift enthusiasm in cinema, made several aspects to the development of success in film performances, as well as the relations of the Foundation with youth volunteers and also the audience that are increasing because of the innovation in the performances, learning from the learnt lessons after each

presentation, trying to minimize errors, maximizing good practices in the Foundation's work and growing the relationships with the youth.

### **Firm's Experiment and the Obstacles Facing Freedom of Expression:**

Freedom of expression is considered the driving force which gives the Foundation the permission to work within the cinema domain. However, there are a variety of obstacles and challenges that the Foundation strives to deal with and then avoids them accordingly. These challenges have increased sharply under the current crisis and harsh conditions the country passes in all aspects. Among such obstacles are the severe deterioration in the cultural and artistic field as well as the sharp decrease in freedom of expression which are attributed to the drastic changes in the political scene which in turn impose restrictions on the inventive and creative cases prosperity according to its agendas, for example, there were activities carried out by the Foundation during the conflict period. It was announced on Social Media such as Facebook and What's app. So, it received great interaction where the amount of attendance was great including guests from Political Security Agency who came to evaluate and see what the activity elements are all about. So, both of the work team and audience were afraid of the existence of figures from the Political Security being something unusual as they are not used to such guests before in any activities and our work is not involved in the consequence of the ongoing war and it is not contrary to usual life in Yemen.

Though the movies we present are dealing with different topics and issues which try to be linked with Yemeni movies for being showed all together in one single activity in order to encourage the audience to make their appropriate discussion and criticism on the projected movies, there are issues in which we face a great difficulty as showing them may result in creating a state of controversy among society and official security forces which shift its loyalty according to the political changes, so the illegal or unjustified censorship scale, closure and prohibition become more intensified to the extent that discussing issues such as the subject of making peace which provokes the fears of the conflict parties profiting from the continuity of war as a sample.

The rules and bylaws entrenched in the current enforce constitution grant a huge room for freedom of expression yet has been gradually diminishing since March, 2015.

We have faced a big challenge during the execution of the Second International Festival for Yemeni Movies which held on December, 2016. At this festival eight short Yemeni-produced movies were projected which were made under film industry programs within civil community organizations and a documentary film for the US director Jemenz about Soqutra Island. We were deeply shocked when some scenes of two short films were cut about the humanitarian crisis and the deterioration of situation in Sana'a due to the effects of the random attacks launched by the Saudi-led coalition although these scenes were on graffiti drawings in Zubairi Street Wall located in the middle of Sana'a which were still present on the walls till our projection talking about the refusal of Militia rule

to obey the government. We have tried through negotiations to persuade the cinema administration to not cut those scenes but they did.

However, we resorted to keep showing them via PowerPoint. This was a big victory for us because our standards contradict cutting any scenes of any artistic work.

We are so lucky for the overlooking of official authorities whose censorship grow up as well as they suppress the activities and works performed by artistic and cultural organizations and firms inside Yemen. Really, we have noticed the stop of many works because they did not get a license for these works from the Political Security Agency and the National Security Agency or Ministry of International Planning and Cooperation (MOPIC) or Ministry of Culture even though unqualified persons came to control the activities and licensed works and to ask in an illegal and provoking way for their share from the funds and support of these projects

Due to these difficulties and restrictions, activities organizers prefer not implement them than to be subjected, extorted or controlled. One of the catastrophic difficulties which artistic and cultural companies and organizations face, including Shift Foundation, is financing and supporting the Foundation's projects. This is because donors don't believe in cinema as a means and channel required for any community through which it can transfer its ideas and issues as an entertainment to the community and as an investment industry.

Besides, the closure of cinema houses available in the provinces of Yemen made no effective benefit of such spaces as an option for

freedom of expression to introduce the issues and stories of the community and the youth's experiences and creativity.

### **Positive Future Vision about the Condition of Companies Working in the Field of Art**

What we have mentioned that there is a retraction in freedom of expressions and maximization in the role of State's controlling authorities and the nonexistence of an authorized party to issue licenses to implement artistic and cultural activities and works even though the organizations have work activity licenses issued from Ministry of Culture or Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSAL). On the contrary, we see an unjustified interfere from MOPIIC, the Political Security Agency and the National Security Agency that control and issue licenses to these works and activities.

This is considered a serious abuse and a confusing problem to the artistic organizations as they are being closed or forced to minimize their works. The Yemeni citizen never got used to such practices by the authorities except in the rare situations so of course they get shocked when they receive such prohibition, control or risk.

### **Final Recommendations**

The ongoing war, siege, and conflict since March 2015 is not an excuse to any party of the conflict to violate an eternal right of the human rights while Yemen is one of the first countries to sign on the international declaration of human rights and its relevant agreements, conventions and recommendations.

We recommend discussing these recommendations and making a draft which contains all what is related to the policies of freedom of expression in the framework of artistic and cultural work and concluding with solutions to be presented to Ministry of Culture that include the following:

1. Establishing cinema policies as the cinema to be a creative industry, and houses of cinema in the field of art, culture and media.
2. Supporting cinema through youthful programs and activities and giving the chance to film producers of youth to develop the industry of cinema.
3. Increasing the freedom of expressions in making movies so that it assures that cinema would be a convenient place and a media device to exchange opinions, stories and cultural exchange.
4. Renewing and rebuilding closed cinemas in different provinces through creating investment opportunities in the field of cinema and changing the Yemeni community view towards cinema.
5. Enabling movie producers and especially youth to develop their skills in producing films with high standards
6. Establishing educational and training academies in film industry as well as creative and cinematic industries.

# **Plastic Art and Freedom of Expression**

**Ghada Al-Hadad**



## **Introduction**

Plastic art is all what is taken from the nature. It is reproduced in new ways, which means that it is reproduced and constituted in a new and different from what it was in the nature. Therefore, it is called (Plastic Art) according to the view of such an artist who takes his thoughts and words that he wants to re-form in a new way from the environment and the surroundings that s/he lives in according to his/her special method.

Between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were the birth of plastic art renaissance during which the artists determined the signs of development in the Italic art. They were drawing the reality to embody certain moments instead of the camera. Artists in that period worked on establishing the Realistic school in the plastic art. It is the school that conveys all that in the nature and the reality into faithful and original artistic work. It was a form of documenting situations according to the reality in terms of political, economic, religious circumstances at that time.

Today, camera records a certain reality concerning the society, the passions and feelings of the artist intervened in documenting these works, so there was the Symbolic Realism and the Expressionism as a new addition, which the artists of the Renaissance era discovered to add a new sensation that is different from what the camera lens does. From this point, the discovery of other schools of plastic art started in order to provide us with new works and imaginative thoughts which camera lens cannot do. They also discovered many schools like Impressionism, Abstract, Romanticism, Brutalism, and Cubism...etc.

Plastic art is like the third lung to the artist through which he can express what it is inside him such as suppression, human or social issues and even political issues. The world of art is so wide and we cannot study it all. The more life develops, the more art develops.

### **The Artistic Experience**

In general, art in our society is a need of no value in the point of view of people or at the best they think it is a secondary thing practiced by people of no jobs or ambitions. When I joined the faculty of Fine Arts, I faced disturbance from my family before others do, and later I faced a lot of troubles in my society. This because the people here know nothing about the plastic art only that silly jokes they hear like: You are an artist complains to me and I am an artist complain to you (the word complain in Arabic has the same letters as plastic artist).

Above all, I got tired nodding my head to get rid of constant questions of some people like: What will you benefit, Where will you go after graduate. They were answering these questions by saying "You will stay at home like the rest that plastic art is not a high paid job or even accepted and You will regret your years wasted on such silly things. But, I tolerated all that troubles and tiredness and considered that a challenge. I struggled and believed in my abilities and my talent. I was so confident that someday certainly I will achieve what I want. I have this dream since I was a child to be a well-known plastic artist and that people would respect what I produce. I used to think that it is going to be easy, but I didn't know that obstacles and troubles are awaiting me like a hard wall prevents me from achieving my dream.

At the time of studying at collage, days were hardly passing. Everyday such a challenge gets bigger, for one moment I feel that I am about to fail and for another moment I feel that I am going to survive. At that time, I remembered that I got an invitation from the Libyan University to attend their anniversary festival being nominated by my university. However, I could not travel because, as a girl, in my country and religion I don't have the right to travel without male guardian (Mahram), so I lost the chance of participating in such anniversary. I had to quit, but with some friends we took the hardest decision, which is to confront the society and to defend our right to travel.

After graduating –as a group of five girls –we established a group that has the name of "Chromatic Auras(Halat Lawneeh)", and we did succeed and later we participated in more than 25 internal and abroad exhibitions. We didn't stop at this point, we came back to our beautiful city "Al-Hodeida", this kind and quiet city, met all its artists, and we established Plastic Art House in Al-Hodeida in 2006 to which more than 100 plastic artist of the province joined as this city is full of a lot of talents. Thus, the Art House constituted a convenient place to those artists, and worked hard to provide them with special requirements that helped the artist to continue his/her artistic life. Constant festivals also made a strong hope and confidence to those artists and I am one of them.

In 2088, I won the State Youth Award. This award made a strong motivation to me. Soon after that, I moved faster and tried to participate in new Arabic festivals, but this time with more confidence.

In 2011, the country moved into a big conflict. In those years I lost hope, but a ray of hope still shines inside of me. During the years of conflict and the changing of circumstances, I was confronting all those conditions with drawing and teaching kids.

I declare my refusal to what happened through my paintings. When things went to worst I made them up with drawing, when the status of the country exacerbates, I make myself patient through drawing.

What makes me happy is the big hope inside me still as it was, and this talent that I have is now bigger than ever.

### **The Plastic Artistic Movement in Yemen**

The form of the plastic art movement has developed in the last three decades in Yemen. We could mention the most important artistic generations, which made an advance and distinction by virtue of the presence of pioneers who contributed in the first formation of the movement, depending on themselves and their artistic issue. This issue was their daily concern to their artistic and stylistic development, and seeking to get a position which carries an objective- plastic privacy.

When I was at college, we studied that there are plastic art pioneers in Yemen such as Hashim Ali, Abduljabar Noa'aman, Fuad Al-Fotaih and Abduljaleel Al-Surori. Those pioneers were classified as the First Generation who made the start point of the artistic movement in Yemen. They had big and distinguished presence where each one presented the plastic art in his own way

Then the Second Generation appeared who was taught by the First Generation. They include Talal Al-Najar, Amnah Al-Nosiri, Motahar Nizar, Hakem Al-Aqil, Hani Al-Aghbari and others. However, they were not introduced enough just we heard about them in some media. Due to the lack of possibilities that we have -Youth Artists- we just we heard about this generation only through gatherings in the artistic exhibitions in Sana'a. The financial situations do not make the artist to travel from one province to another. During the period.

In Sana'a the Capital of Arab Culture, the Third Youth Generation appeared who were from different provinces. The conditions were possible to travel and move. When I participated in Tihama Caravan, I was astonished with the number of youth artists there from different provinces including Dhamar, Ibb, Al-Mahweet, Al-Hodeida and other provinces. Great artists praised the appearance of this Generation with such strength so numerous workshops and meetings were held at that time.

There was a great plastic art movement because the concerned parties as Ministry of Culture then had strong financial possibilities. As a result, new horizons were opened to the artists through establishing a House of Art in each province in order to keep the artistic movement going. Of course, it did continue for a reasonable time. Meetings and artistic workshops were held in the Houses of Art at the provinces until financial support granted by the Ministry of Culture was cut. Thus, they became mere ruins which make us recall the days of such prosperity and the days of big artistic exhibitions.

## **Freedom of Expression - Plastic Art in Yemen:**

The freedom of expressions in the plastic art depends on the cultural flair and also the dominating customs and traditions. There are restrictions that prevents this art, for instance: as a women I cannot express what I feel inside of me; and if I dare to do that, the majority will scold me proving that this is prohibited and as a women I do not have the right even to think or dream to reach this because as plastic artist we express what we can't achieve in the reality.

Speaking about creativity and its freedom drives us necessarily to think about the creative person as he is the basis of creativity. Allah has distinguished him from others with a different ability. With constant curiosity searching and polishing his experience, s/he needs a real freedom to liberate from the capture of reality, customs, traditions, solidity and the boring routine that came along with most of the artists and the freedom of expression.

A real artist is a person who endeavors and sail into an unknown direction and does not let the obstacles and challenges that he come across with to prevent or frustrate him from what he wants to express through his artistic works or to fear of receptor's reaction which would kill his creativity.

We need to break all customs, traditions and surface thinking to which the society or the environment that we belong to restrict us. This would not happen unless we insist to express freely. The constant stylization and subjection to follow the model of old generation and the prevailing style of life, all kill the spirit of creativity of the real creator and the creative work as well.

Creativity in our country as in the Arabic world is really in a crisis. All know the reality of Arabic creativity and all know about thousands of talents who left our country to achieve what they could not achieve here in our country. All we need is real culture and we need the concerned parties with culture to understand what culture does mean and what creativity does mean. Unfortunately, all who are in charge of culture are of no relation to culture, and this is what stopped our progress.

### **Recommendations**

1. Artistic galleries should be provided from the concerned parties in the various provinces because the galleries make a wide space between the plastic artist and the followers. These galleries would be a place of connection and contacting between the plastic artist and the artistic flair.
2. Marketing the plastic product through galleries, artistic experiences as media programs have the ability to promote the product of the plastic art.
3. All concerned parties should encourage talents and creative artists while the artist should have the responsibility to work diligently and persistently to improve his abilities by all available means.
4. Concentrating the classes of artistic culture especially among youth in order to have a society that tastes, values and respects art.
5. Media means should cast light on plastic arts effectively to reflex positively its state among the society.

6. Concentrating artistic cultural background to school students correctly in order to establish the bases of plastic art among talented students.
7. Conducting artistic workshops and artistic forums to educate people about the importance of plastic art for the society.
8. Promoting and marketing the artistic product properly and there must be a cultural behavior caring of art and beauty to attract the segments of the society of different ages and thought and that would be through the support of concerned parties.
9. Allocating support from the Ministry of Culture, the Fund of Heritage and Cultural Development and from the concerned parties to supporting the cultural movement through coordination and sponsoring their innovations each in his field. For example, the plastic artist should have an exhibition held every month as a support for him, that is, equivalent to 12 plastic exhibitions in a year as well as the literary fields should care for plastic artists through literary publications and theatrical scenes...etc.



# **Digital Arts and Freedom of Expression Companies**

**Muhannad Al-Shaikh**

**Massive Studios**

## **Status of Companies Working in the Field of Art**

As major producers of art, there are government, private sector, civil society organizations, youth initiatives and individuals.

As a government, it has been divided into two sides each has its own ministries and works namely, Al-Sharaiah government which lives since September 2014 in Riyadh, presenting its works, data and even its cultural, artistic and literary events in its stay in Saudi Arabia or in places under its authority in some Yemeni cities, the other is the de facto authority which was until some recent time shared between Al-Houthis and the General People's Congress and their artistic. This too has its own cultural, artistic and literary events, which are predominantly religious because of the religious orientation of Al-Houthis in Yemen and the celebration of many occasions that fit with their ideology. It also has businesses that work for their own interests or under their supervision and most of which are companies working in the field of exchange and transfers, food and oil derivatives, but it also has its own artistic companies which support its festival orientation and provide them with an artistic product that serves these orientations.

There are community-based organizations which are interested in cultural affairs and which are mostly either stopped, froze its activities, or simply are open but they do not work because of lack of support and lack of faith by the donors in culture, arts and literature with the positive participation in issues of peace, public health, education and psychosocial support for

children and communities through the art. In this regard, there are many effective organizations that simply no longer hear their voice.

In the same vein, youth initiatives follow this way even if they do not require large amounts of funding compared to community-based organizations, which appear to be lighter in terms of administrative aspect. However, they are also submerged in relief and health work with rare experiences in artistic, literary and cultural production.

Although an artistic creator is one of the creators who do not get much support due to the lack of supporting policies for talents, innovations and the lack of support provided for organizations that care for creators, there are good experiences for Yemen creators who make plastic arts' exhibitions, documentary or recorded films on their own expense; following the same way by which Yemeni writers who often print their books at their expense and distribute them free of charge in the various events because of the Yemeni society cannot afford to purchase. However, there were also special experiments in this period, such as the mural paintings which artists to present what is happening in the war in streets' board through graffiti.

Here, we come to the subject of this paper which addresses the case of companies working in the field of art. Then, in a later chapter within this paper, the situation of those companies in terms of freedom of expression will be clarified. There are many kinds of companies that commercially work in the field of art, like:

- 1- Companies working in a commercial way but associated with the government in works and promotion.
- 2- Full independent companies working in a commercial way.
- 3- Companies working under commercial companies or Yemen Business Houses.
- 4- Companies working under supervision of a party, a political group or a religious group.
- 5- Companies owned by a community-based organization or youthful initiatives.
- 6- Companies owned by individuals or individual experiences.

**Companies working in a Commercial Way but Associated with the Government in Works and Promotion.**

War divided Yemeni society to many sections. This is too applied to companies working in field of art. There are companies attempted to benefit from the division of conflict-fronts in Yemen; thus having companies that publish kids magazines in Sana'a which support and introduce Houthis' thought and ideology through magazines with photographic stories for children. Designing companies, too, work on designing and printing their martyrs' pictures and signboards of commemorations. In addition, there are artistic companies work on producing Houthis' Twashih and Zwamil that flooded Yemeni streets since 2014 till now.

Similarly, the other fundamentalist groups have their own religious and national chants and songs. Sharaia government in Riyadh, too, has radio stations, channels and companies working on artistic productions attempting to promote its policies,

purposes and orientations. However, often these companies ought to be one of those left Sana'a because of Houthis' inhuman and offensive treatments. Of course, they moved out of Yemen to start working in one of the Gulf countries, Egypt or Turkey.

### **Full Independent Companies Working in a Commercial Way**

They are often established by some talented youths in certain fields. They started to work on opening companies serving that purpose. One of these companies which is working in supporting digital arts and cartoons is the one that presents this working paper. There are companies belong to youths working on the field of stage, movies industry and so on. These companies might present some productions within funded projects by local or international community-based organizations. Some of them try to continue by documenting usual social occasions such as graduation ceremonies, weddings and some non-governmental organizations' conferences.

### **Companies Working under the Framework of Business Companies and Yemen Business Houses**

As its usual, Yemeni capital attempted to enter the world of arts and to benefit of it despite the fact that the Yemeni community is not a big consumer of many arts except of some kinds like national songs and old Yemeni songs or inspired from the Yemeni heritage. But these companies sought to improve the way of providing the artistic and cultural service to the audience.

After the 26 of September Revolution, there was a big investment in the field of cinema and building cinema houses as well as the completion of many big commercial companies which established cinema production companies so that the cinema reached a critical point between disappearance or remaining with constant loss because of the appearance of television in the 1970s where the field tended to artistic production of songs and dramas. Thus, there appeared recording studios. When Yemeni narration increased, companies of printing, publication and publishing were established like Nabil Obadi Corporation. By virtue of computer availability, many companies turned to work in digital designing and printing books and materials in the field of educating and awareness implemented by community-based organizations, especially when establishing the political pluralism after Yemen Unification as well as due to the increase of work in this field year after year until the Yemeni Revolution in 2011.

This came along with the appearance of radios and television channels. The big companies have had their own broadcasts, and some of them have TV channels. These channels present their own artistic products and still some of these channels broadcast till the moment like Al-Saeedah TV channel. This is too associated a number of companies of designing and printing business owned by such type of companies which we can call them the media and advertisement hand for these business houses.

### **Companies Working under Supervision of a Party or Political Organization.**

Any political organization needs a media or an advertising hand that presents its artistic or literary or cultural productions which serve the purpose of such a political organization. One of the most famous experiences is the experience of the Socialist Party which it had and still has its own newspapers that promote its vision. Then comes Islah Party which is the smartest one to use the private sector and the companies working in the field of art to its favor. The party, too, established, during the period of political pluralism in Yemen, companies that were working to host artistic, cultural activities and even training activities in the field of arts which serve its approach. This party had newspapers including magazines on kids like Osama Magazine, which represents one of the most important artistic experiences in the field of illustrated stories being the most widely spread and oldest one in Yemen. The General Public Conference Party had also its own contributions in this field and ended up with establishing its own television channel and radio broadcast as well as establishing some companies that fulfill the needs of these channels of cultural, literary and artistic products. The scene was completed with the appearance of Houthis who excelled all these political organizations, to impose the sole artistic scene as a violent exclusion policy by providing the Yemeni people with massive cultural, literary and artistic products which only serve the group, including Zawamil, illustrated story magazines, printing of advertisement posts and many other business works that use art in promoting.

### **Companies Owned by Community-Based Organization**

These companies owned by local civil society organizations are one of the reasons for gaining funds through a business activity. Non-governmental organizations have private schools, universities and institutes for teaching English language and computer skills. Arts are also one of the works considered as a source of funds for organizations' projects.

Some organizations have furnished a theater and rented it to the organizers of artistic and cultural events performed by cultural organizations initiatives. Other organizations have done pictorial magazines and children's books which have been sold commercially. In addition, some organizations made their own media section by an artistic and media production company owned by the company so they are using those companies to produce the organization or other organizations' awareness products.

### **Individuals-Owned Firms and Individual Endeavors**

They are often time-framed and or making plans for them may continue. However, they fail with time passing because of the individual creator's inability to keep on financing his/her own project. They are almost an atelier to a certain graphic artist or an artistic firm for songs production but couldn't make further progress so they remain where they started first where mini firms mostly succeed as they appeal to the artistic needs and expectations of society as well as discovering new ways for the artistic business or coming up with the latest things may not be necessary factors to achieve success. Among such firms are those owned by a certain artist who manages wedding parties



and graduation ceremonies, so they merely act as an institutional toll dedicated to coordinating his work's list. The same goes with chanters performing on funeral occasions and wedding parties in Yemen.

Because of the society's tendency to maintain its artistic heritage, the artist often together with his firm are being afraid of modernization, so he prefers to stick to the traditional artistic heritage even for long years with the intention to make money not for the purpose of art promotion or developing it at least at the business level; even if some of them are using the profits of these weekly businesses in financing the art, they perform by funding their recorded albums or even their accounts on social media.

There are other individuals-owned firms which have failed upon the departure of their owners to outside Yemen after seizing power by Al-Houthis in 2014. Most of such firms, almost all are digital design firms or simple software firms, faced closure, ban and closing for many reasons whether sectarian, political or partial ideologies.

### **Freedom of Expression from Point of View of Firms Working in Art in Yemen.**

Continuing with the same way that has been applied in dealing with artistic firms, so we will develop a strategy on freedom of expression working in artistic firms which have been mentioned above as follows:

### **Business Firms But Associated with Government in Woks and Promotion**

No government from the third world may sponsor an artistic product that's projecting any negative aspects of that government whether on its financial failure, mismanagement or violating human rights and thus for such government freedom of expression is neither admissible nor possible for companies working with the government whether they were under its property such as companies or governmental organizations or private companies where they work with the government in one of the awareness and educational fields or artistic products that promote in support of the government's vision as it tends to present it through these firms.

This has been nearly during the Yemeni contemporary history since the Yemeni Revolution of 1962 up to the Youth Uprising took place in 2011 which has resulted in big events, the first of which was splitting the country into two parts and seizing power by Al-Houthis in 2014 which also led to further division on all accounts such as political, sectarian and a number of armed groups. As a result, freedom of expression has severely deteriorated in Yemen as never witnessed before. This multiplied the lack of freedom of expression in Yemen more than ever where each party nearly has its own prohibitions which increased the violation of freedom of expression more, too. Each party has its opponents which increased the number of arrests adding crimes to the freedom of expression

### **Fully Independent Profit-Driven Firms.**

Prior to and after 2011, these firms were enjoying a limited sense of freedom. But these days they are going through the worst

working conditions ever because of work expenses, the lack of electrical and communications services, besides the high increase of petroleum materials' prices. What makes it worse is the absence of disciplinary laws as a reference when violations occur. Most of those in the authority are of armed religious groups who do not believe in rule of law, deal with severity against those who oppose including companies working in arts thus leading to emigration cases from Yemen abroad, cases of closure to companies. Those managed to remain was against freedom of expression and creative work performed by these organizations where independent firms in Yemen became full of armed groups. prevent violations against those firms make it rather difficult to work freely. This could be attributed to the sectarian officials who don't believe in freedom of expression and deal harshly with artistic firms.

### **Firms Working under Commercial Firms and Yemeni Businesses' Houses.**

Capital is coward. Accordingly, during Saleh's rule these organizations were taking part in making events which were performed by the ruling party at the time since the 70<sup>th</sup> of the past century to 2011 Uprising. The former government of Saleh was criticized due to its malpractices in management, corruption, tyranny and the sever negligence to freedom of expression yet without criticizing the president himself or his state higher officials.

Similarly, those firms have taken part in inflating Hadi's power when he preside and supporting the national dialogue and later

paying sum of money to financing Al-Houthis' war as well as supporting the president with congratulations in some Yemeni official newspapers and some artistic products that cherish this historical action.

These firms also provided support for Military Funding and it is the new theory introduced by Al-Houthis movement to collect funds from the individuals, organizations and businesses. Indeed, it has become clear that capital in Yemen doesn't allocate proper fund to raise freedom of expression but rather being a constant support to any government either elected or came through undemocratic means (coup).

### **Firms that are Sponsored by Political Parties:**

The former governments, despite many violations, may appear to be more democratic comparable to the current sectarian and political ones which don't take seriously into consideration any reactions from the world community towards their violations and hostility for the world and relevant consequences. This is clear through assassinations in Aden, attacking cultural and artistic activities in Taiz and the arbitrary detention for a big number of artists, journalists, and independent creators Al-Houthis'-held areas in Sana'a which would expect a more hard times on freedom of expression and creators who work for firms which work together with other political parties. Often such firms are closed or subject to ban from the opposed political or sectarian party as has happened with "Osama Kids Magazine" which was sponsored by the Islah Party and was substituted by another one owned by Al-Houthis to be used in favor of their sectarian and

political agendas by inculcating new thoughts and concepts advocating Al-Houthis' ideologies. Similarly, it was dealt with all artistic, cultural or literary firms through closure to be substituted by similar ones but under the supervision of the ruling power. As for creators in those old organizations they became whether a part of the new regime, put in jails, or escaped to other countries.

### **Firms that Belong to Community-Based Organization**

It has never happened in the history that community based organizations to be in such fear, closure and freezing of its activities. Many non-governmental organizations were closed and their furniture become confiscated, or freezing whether the individual or organizations' bank accounts. Yet, such organizations which are still working due to the reason they are in agreement and harmony with the authority of Al-Houthis in Sana'a or the government of Hadi in Aden and the other places under their control. During war, organizations working in the field of relief have increased because of the abundance of fund. However, cultural, artistic and literary organizations are not paid such attention. This had to force many cultural organizations and youth initiatives to stop working because of the lack of funding. To some extent, this is considered to be a form of restricting freedom of expression. The artistic, literary and cultural work enhances and encourages freedoms more than the humanitarian action which takes care of human health and his nutrition, but it doesn't dramatically focus on his basic human rights such as freedom of expression, the right of access to information, the right

of privacy and other important rights. Altogether, there is some freedom in the field of relief and humanitarian work, yet there is no freedom of expression in the field of art, culture and creativity.

### **Private Firms and Individual Experiments**

Like independent organizations, there were many inventive experiments in areas of story, novel, plastic arts, songs and theatre. Yet, they weren't financed, seem poor and also unprotected against violations practiced by power. The same is for individual experiments which often resort to perform secret activities for the purpose of documenting the experiment but not promoting for it.

### **The Artistic Experiment " Massive Studios"**

Since the year 2010, the firm started to take part in a number of artistic fields including plastic art, printed designing in plastic arts and awareness drawings for civil community organizations and free works. Then it has worked on animation since 2014 and later which has taken a new name in 2016. It has focused its work in the field of animation, digital artistic works.

The Foundation has faced some challenges concerning freedom of expression, but not in that degree as it is a new field to the Yemeni community.

### **A Future Vision**

I will do my best to make my future vision a quite positive in this regard. Upon the end of the war and forming a new government that is represented by all political parties, action will be taken to issue new rules and regulations relating to guarantee freedom of

expression. Of course, if political reconciliation is made, there will be a wide range of work in advocating and a force to issue policies and working within the range of political reconciliation to implement cultural, artistic and literary projects which are in support of all human rights and public freedoms. I believe that even with ongoing war and after what happened in December of 2017 in Sana'a, Al-Houthis' power will begin to tolerate free activities of creators in the field of freedom of expression. However, the tolerance period will start within two to three years as it is the nature of dictatorships in their beginning or middle rule. This shift may be more difficult in to happen in areas held by the legitimate governments or some armed sectarian groups. By the way, this shift will materialize even a partial respect for freedom of expression which will require a reasonable period yet it is not impossible to be achieved.

### **Concluding Recommendations**

- 1- Civil community organizations are advised to mount pressure constantly on the Yemeni current government to take measures that ensure freedom of expression, observing and respecting with the authorities that currently rule Yemen.
- 2- Networking should be done in this field to connect creators, individuals and firms of art to community based organizations for the purpose of raising the level of freedom of expression in Yemen.
- 3- Seeking the latest of thoughts and showing them in a smart manner so that no risk would face the creator.

4- Establishing organizations and funds to protect artists against violations on



# **Singing and freedom of expression in Yemen**

**Yahya Mahdi**

**Yemeni singer and singer**

## **Introduction**

Music is considered to be one of the most important arts in Yemen. Its inception dates back beyond Al-Jahily era in which Yemen was providing Hijaz and the other places of the Arab peninsula with singers and songstress. In this context, Abdullah Jada'an's Garadatas were not the first to perform the Arab singing. According to Al Qalqashandi, the root-era of this singing is descended into (Aa'd Era).

Yemen is famous for a variety of Yemeni singing such as (Hadhrami- Sana'anian, Lahji, Adeni, Al-Tehami singing and there is the nomadic singing...etc. It is famous for religious type of singing that is known as (Inshad), particularly the Soufi one which is prevalent in almost Yemeni governorates like Sana'a, Hadhrmout, Al Hudaida and in different places of Yemen. Yemeni music has drawn its basic support from three resources.

The first resource is the music rhythms and the folk songs which have special taste to deserts and countrysides, the sea songs, heritage melodies which all tend to be the cornerstone in forming songs and melodies in Yemen.

The second resource is the melodies of Gulf and Arab Peninsula which are close to Yemeni music in terms of stanzas and rhythms. These songs have been transferred into Gulf and Arab peninsula through hearing circulation, oral performance and also with the constant move of the performers themselves from and to it.

The third resource is the African-Indian rhythms by which it was heavily influenced; these rhythms came to Yemen through mutual trading among merchants from Yemen, Africa and India.

In attempt to get these rhythms adapted to their own music, Yemeni artists had modified them into their Yemeni local mood, for example "Al-Tanbura Dance" and "Bamila Dance" which are of African origins as well as "Al Zurbadi Dance" which has quick rhythms and Indian taste. Mohammed Jomma'a Khan was considered the first artist who mixed such rhythm with Yemeni music at the beginning of the twentieth century.

UNESCO has classified the Sananian singing as a cultural heritage immaterial to humanity which ought to be preserved and maintained. Sananian music is all about love, moderate flirting and almost ends up with praising and honoring the prophet Mohammed peace be upon him. It is clear that almost all its words belong to Al-Homaini poetry school which does not adhere to the rules and regulations of Arabic Standard and it is a mixture of local dialects and classical language (Fusha).

Unfortunately, the original authors of most songs remain unknown and so their poems were attributed to with no clear evidence to (Zaidi Imams) who in fact used to impose punishments on lyrics and singers. They tend to look at them with a strong sense of inferiority just like the other segments of the society at the time do. Sananian singing is clearly distinguished by (Ballad) which is equivalent to

Dandanah in Hadramout and Aden. The loss of the poets' names is attributed to old social and religious reasons. It is one of the main reasons that resulted in the steal of Yemeni heritage and attribute them to poets and singers from Gulf, to the extent that some songs and poems were plagiarized even though their original authors are known to Yemenis. There were efforts made recently by UNESCO in coordination with the Yemeni Ministry of Culture to document the Yemeni art.

Hadrami songs are one of the important art styles in the Yemeni singing styles. Poets Hussein Al-Mahdhar and Abo-Bakr Salemare among the most prominent artists in this style. This type of art was more prevalent in the Arab peninsula compared to Sananian art. It reached east south of Asia. Mohammed Juma'a Khan who is of Indian origin had introduced into Al-Hadram music melodies and rhythms and to Aden art as well. The famous singers of this art are Mohammed Murshed Naji, Mohammed Saeed Abdullah and Faisal Alawi.

There are a lot of singing in Heritage Library of Yemen which keeps its ancient taste and it has never changed despite some attempts by singers like Ahmed Fathi and Fuad Al-Kibsi. Among the well-known singers in Yemen are Ayob Taresh who sang many national songs and Al-Tholathi Al-Kokabani.

There is a widespread tone in Yemen known as "Zamil": it is a type of "Chanting" much often sung in times of war and battles. It is an old Yemeni art related to wars. The purpose

of this type is to terrify enemies, and it dates back to old eras, and it was of one type only which is the Zamil of war. Later, the zamil improved across ages. So, Zawamil appeared like Zamil of welcoming, lamentation, weddings, satire and Tarbe'e which means calling for alliance with another tribe. The form of this type exists only in the northern regions of the country. As for Hadramout governorate there is another type of songs called (Shailat). The contribution of Jews to the Yemeni song was significant and affluent, and the most well-known poet of Yemen Jews was Shalom Al-Shabizi who was the most famous rabbi among Yemeni Jews, who lived and passed away in Taiz governorate in the 17th century. Most of those songs were of a religious nature which Yemeni Jews preserved, even Jews of other origins were amazed by Yemeni Jews' pride of their heritage compared to other Jewish societies. The Israeli government uses them to add a kind of authenticity to the State of Israel and especially in the recent years after decades of discrimination against them and other Mizrahi Jews. A number of Yemeni Jews sang the Dawdahi (a type of songs) which narrates a story that happened in the thirties of the 20th century, in addition to the poems of Shalom Al-Shabizi. The most famous of those singers are Afra'a Haza'a, Haroun Amram and Shoshanah Dhamari.

The Yemeni heritage is rich and the Yemeni singers took a lot of it. In addition, they revived it. Ahazeej is one of the prominent Yemeni type of songs that accompany Islamic

holidays, festivals, weddings and the like. Then the lyric came which have many types and the most popular are:

- 1- Al-Jamali Songs: They are performed for traveling and this type originally came from the art of Al-Hada (a district in Tamar governorate) whose language is close to the classic Arabic than to the colloquial language.
- 2- Al-Kasir Songs: They are performed by sailors either for trading or fishing.
- 3- Bani Maghrah Songs: They are performed in southern Yemen with dancing, this type of songs is especially for farmers and peasants.
- 4- Al-Zarbadi Songs: They are performed with dancing, and are distinguished for using the percussion and the flute which is known as (Mardouf). Its artistic mould consists of tonic, lyrical mazhab and role playing, the rhythm. The role playing differs from the tonic rhythm and the lyrical mazhab.
- 5- Al-Awadi Songs: They are heritage songs with monotonous rhythms. Its form consists of poetry and performed with flute. This kind is especially for Hadramout governorate, however, Hadramout singing decreased and was overshadowed by Hindi music because of the huge Indian community in Hadramout and in most coastal cities especially in Aden and Mukalla, in which the Hadramout song became an echo for Hindi rhythms or for primitive Arabic songs. It restored its glory by the poet Abo Bakir Al-Mihdar in 1965 who made a great couple with the singer

Abo Bakir Salim Balfaqih, who sang many of his great poems like (O Grape Farmers), (Your Desert is Harmful To Me) and (Say hello Even with Your Hand Wave), which surpassed Yemen to reach all Arab countries, and were sung by famous singers.

- 6- Al-Hadri Songs: They mean the middle and bottom of Hadramout Valley, in which lines are chanted depending on extension, and this type of songs is grieving and touching.
- 7- Aldan: It is a type of singing similar to Mawal, and it is of two types: Aldan Almoga'a whose performance depends on the colloquial language and rhythm, and Aldan Almorsal whose singing depends on poetry along with one musical rhythmic instrument, and it is similar in performance to Alzuhairi Mawal in the south of Iraq.
- 8- Al-Mowashahat: All Yemeni artists agree that Mowashahat were first originated in Yemen before Andalusia. The first one to introduce Al-Mashah was Maqdam Bin Ma'afer Al-Yemeni, Ma'afer was the ruler of (Almua'afir) which is currently known as (Alhujariah). The Yemeni Mowashahat is a type of religious and heritage works of slow rhythm, and it is of many types like: Lahji Mowashahat relative to Lahj governorate and it is performed in Morsal, Moqa'a or Al-Yafi'i. It is similar to religious singing popular in Saudi Arabia as well as Sana'ani which requires high skills of performance.
- 9- Sound: An artistic term was known among Arab in the Alabbasid era. It is nowadays one of the most important

types of Yemeni songs. It was mentioned by Alasfahani in his book (Songs) classified his tones, rhythms and its ways of singing. He also mentioned some of its texts. Sound was also mentioned by Saif Aldin Al-Armawi in his book (Roles). He introduced its tones and rhythms using the musical terms of that time. The Sound Singing disappeared from the artistic life after the fall of Baghdad in the 17<sup>th</sup> century of Islamic calendar under the control of Mongols and only appeared in the 12<sup>th</sup> of the Islamic calendar. There is no scientific evidence that the Sound currently used is the one that Alasbahani mentioned, though researchers said that there are linkages between their singing origins. The Arabic Maqamat book mentions that the art of Sound was established in Hadramout, and was transferred to Bahrain and the Gulf countries by the artist Abdulraheem Al-Asiri, from whom the artist Muhammed Faris Albahraini took, and the latter taught Dhahi Bin Alwaleed and the Qatari Khairi Bin Idrees. The Sound is of two types: (Arabic and Shami (Syria-Palastine-Jordan-Lebenon)).

- a. Sana'ani Song: The heritage of Sana'ani song, which is popular across Yemen, dated back to hundreds of years. It is distinguished over other Yemeni songs with its texts that are full of wisdom and expressive meanings on social, patriotic and flirty values that are the conscience of the people. This is what made artists to care about, maintain and renew it by composing according to this type. This heritage whether the new or the old is still performed with outdated, old and classic musical instruments, like



Alqanbous, flute with four chords made of Raq, Rababa, flute, Mirwas, copper drum. It is a rhythm instrument made of goat skin and copper frameworks, Alhajir (a big drum) and Alsasambah.

### **The Situation of Singing in Yemen**

There is no doubt that singing in Yemen in the current days was deteriorated and reduced significantly due to many reasons other than the ongoing conflict. The following are some reasons:

- The lack of interest by the Ministry of Culture for art and artists in terms of supporting and capacity-building or protecting their intellectual rights as well as protecting them from any individual or any authority that may target them because of their artistic works.
- The lack of interest to produce all sorts of songs but limited to national songs and occasionally religious songs. This is because of the focus of government-owned or private media TV channels to broadcast national and religious works persistently, which is in my perspective a form of suppressing the freedom of expression, and supporting only a certain attitude which mostly aims to bury it and bury all voices demanding that type.
- The lack of production companies to meet the needs of integrated artistic production, whether in terms of searching of poems and buying melodies, producing and making it popular or protecting the artists' rights whether those related to intellectual rights or the freedom of expression.

- The lack of schools and academies that care of teaching music in an academic way.
- Some youth artists cannot afford to produce their works due to the economic situation and the high cost of producing such works.
- The lack of new artistic experiences and the currently practitioners of singing are only the children of Yemen great singers of 1970s and 1980s and there is nothing new concerning produced songs as those children only reproducing the same songs of their fathers with some new unpopular experiences.
- Seeking safety in the theme of songs and the accumulation of religious and national songs. When the civil society organizations began to work in Yemen and their tendency towards songs as they are a form of awareness, the song lost its artistic value and became full of advising and guiding on the issues of health like cholera or violence issues like war or woman issues like breast cancer.
- The conservative nature of Yemeni people in terms of signing where the new songs are often unpopular and non-desired unlike old songs. This is a form of suppressing the freedom of expression relative to the youth artists who face one of two choices, whether to fall into the trap of the past and to perform the songs of great Yemeni singers of the past, or to be limited with the poor views/watching of their new singing experiences.

## **Freedom of Expression Relative to Singers**

Yemeni artist suffered disturbances in the last decades and restrictions related to their freedom of expression, especially in the northern regions of the country. The art of singing was only performed by lowly blood families as this job is regarded as humiliating and disgracing, because it talks about love unlike the Islamic chanter who was in the front and was called " Faqeeh". Of course, this is a form of restricting the freedom of expression. The conservative nature of Yemeni people in the field of singing and the restriction to the heritage became an obstacle for the youth from different classes of society to work in singing or to perform new form of singing as they must restrict themselves to heritage. Yemeni artist still suffers restriction in freedom of expression for many reasons:

- **Political Reasons:** Many artists were thrown to jails or trials or pursuing or even killing due to their opposing political opinions.
- **Social Reasons:** The culture of the community, which still exists now, underestimates the artist and does not respect him. It is one of the reasons that restrict the artist, and it is a predominant overview not to support or help the artist.

**Reasons Related to the Conflict:** Many artists became representatives and fans to their groups within the limitations that the group allows in terms of freedom and support by which the artist can keep going his/her singing. But as an independent art, there are many restrictions to

the singer not just for the freedom of expression but also to the support, capacity-building as well as introducing the talents to the audience.

### **Proposed Future Vision**

- Issuing a policy regarding freedom of expression in Yemen to the talented artists which shall provide at least the ground work. Then comes the role of production and supporting them, regardless of their creative practices such as singing, plastic art, photographers or whoever deals with the word like poets, narrators, writers, story writers and others.
- Providing artists with financial and moral support as well as establishing specialized funds for supporting the youth and the creative work in Yemen, which ensures renewing the cultural and artistic scene.
- Building the capacities of youth that are working in the field of photographic media in how to develop the singing work by photographing and video clip photographing, and to photograph the different artistic products whether they are new or heritage.
- Activating laws related to intellectual property which preserves the rights of the artist, and to facilitate the procedures of preserving the rights of intellectual property to make it easy to preserve rights at the Ministry of Culture.
- Activating rules regarding singers who face life risks due to their political opinions.

- Supporting the artistic production in Yemen through contracting with private companies, donating organizations and businessmen.
- Issuing and activating special laws that regulate the work of technical companies and motivate them to work in the Yemeni environment.

# **About Imagination and Followers**

**Saeed Hassan**

**Imagination Friends for Puppet Stage and Shadow Play**

## **An Overview: Imagination Friends for Puppet Stage and Shadow Play Initiative:**

Imagination Friends for Puppet Stage and Shadow Play Initiative is one of the initiatives recently established, but it has a distinctive impression in its specialization as it believes and seeks to have a community that shares in development, believes in peace, respects humanity, and protect main freedoms. The initiative aims at reinforcing the involvement of theatre, particularly, puppets stage and shadow play in discussing public issues especially those concerning youth and children. It also seeks to increase and encourage their participation in public issues and how to address the ones related to them through the stage. It also did its best to increase the knowledge of modern theatrical experiences and schools, especially those related to the field of puppet stage and shadow play. Furthermore, it performed many volunteering scenes for the purpose of raising the awareness of peace and tolerance including activities performed in cooperation with Yemeni NGOs. The last project, in partnership with German Fredrich Ebert, was about a puppets stage's shows for peace and the role of youth in development and peace building to the young of both sexes.

### **Youth Initiatives in Yemen**

A number of youth initiatives have appeared in Yemen which in turn meet parts of the community's needs.

Especially in winter, a lot of these initiatives provided clothes and blankets.

The initiatives also worked in the field of humanitarian assistance and relief based on the number of their members of youth since getting a membership in a youth initiative is easier than in foundations and non-governmental organizations.

In the cultural field, initiatives have performed cultural activities, some of which are superior in quality to the cultural work made by non-governmental organizations depending on volunteering of youth groups and thus increasing their ability to launch effective, good and unique cultural activities in cinema, theater, puppet theater, Shadow Play, Public Theatre, festivals of International Children, Women and The International Environment Days, as well as the National holidays.

As part of their desire to networking, the initiatives have worked within activities and events performed by Yemeni non-governmental organizations or some international organizations wishing to invest the energies of youth of these initiatives to carry out their various activities.

Historically, government institutions have taken control of cultural and social work. By virtue of with the establishment of political pluralism, non-governmental organizations have begun working in Yemen community. However, due to the inability of organizations to absorb more young people, cultural initiatives have begun to emerge as free initiatives



that do not require licensing and have flexibility in work being not restricted by organizational rules and regulations. The international and local community as well as the press has recognized this influence made by youth initiatives in the Yemeni community and how these initiatives fit the state gap. According to an article by Hamdan Al-Ali on Al-Arab Al-Jadeed website, he talked about the youth initiatives and the state gap: **"In light of the suffering resulting from this gap, some community organizations try to assist in order to alleviate the community suffering with simple potentials and traditional measures."** This influence has emerged when rubbish was accumulated in Yemen because cleaning workers made a strike. Therefore, the role of youth in this aspect has become clear and evident through the disposal of waste and the distribution of cleaning materials. As a result, this has somewhat alleviated the risk of fever in Taiz, for example, as well as the activity of these initiatives in large numbers in the promotion of hygiene, taking into consideration how to control the outbreak of cholera, dengue fever and malaria. Indeed, this promotion was often made with a cultural character.

### **Culture and Youth Initiatives**

There are a large number of youth initiatives that are active now in Yemen and their role is clear. However, when focusing on youth initiatives within culture, arts and literature it is something different. Youth initiatives have

often been directed towards local NGOs and international organizations with the view that humanitarian relief related to food, health appliances, medicines, tents in addition other topics and tools are considered to be part of the human concept while forgetting the important role of culture, arts and literature in the humanitarian process. Even though the role of culture, arts and literature in health, psychological and social support as well as psychotherapy through these tools, very few initiatives that have specialized in the cultural aspect and its role in the humanitarian process.

This is often due to the fact that humanitarian work does not require licenses for cultural, artistic and literary activities, or the request to submit cinematic, theater, folkloric or lyrical texts to be read to be approved or not. Consequently, there has been an evasion of youth initiatives of these activities otherwise working in areas that do not need permits, readings and modifications. By the way, giving a wheat bag will not change the community thinking as it seems drama will do. Thus, the plays must be monitored and modified to be acceptable to the authorities, society and to the initiative's self-censorship or the creator himself within or outside the initiative.

This does not mean that the initiatives have not been engaged in the cultural, artistic and literary fields. However, in general, as it is the case of local and international organizations, there has been a relative disregard and lack

of attention to its importance and the entry of these three areas within a sensitive area based on the individual, the initiative, the local organization, the international organization and the government.

The availability of a policy to freedom of expression will bring to the community many youth initiatives that will work in pure cultural field or cultural aspect to be considered as an input to the humanitarian process. There will be no fear of interruption or risk due to the sensitivity of the community, society and the state.

### **The Experiment of Imagination Friends for Puppets Stage and Shadow Play**

Based on its cultural tendency, the Initiative had a variety of pure culture experiments without a title framing the work whether it was humanitarian, cultural or concerning rights. Among these works are the following:

- Partnership works with Ibhar Foundation for Childhood and Creativity and with Bader Foundation for Development promoting issues relating to the values of peace and tolerance through puppets stage and shadow plays.
- The Initiative's subordinate partnership with international organizations such as Care and Fredrich Elbert to show puppets stage and shadow play in a number of host organizations and those which sponsor and take care of children to promote peace values and to assure the right of education to children.

- Inter-schools activities as a type of promotion for schools or to reinforce a cultural or ethical value within activities of those public or private schools.

**Overview: Experiment of Imagination Friends with Freedom of Expression:**

Each event of Puppet Theater and Shadow Play requires a theatrical text as the starting point for the work. Under a policy that serves the freedom of expression, these texts do not need to pass to many parties to be modified and approved. Implicitly, the writer must be sensitive to social, political and religious issues of society and the state. His sensitivity (i.e. writer) is increased during a conflict or war.

However, even with the presence of this sensitivity, there have been great modifications to the texts. Among other things there are a number of modifications that do not occur due to the poor text of the theater, but because of the ideas presented. Because of the general atmosphere in Yemen, these modifications are subject to:

- The writer's modifications being a part of self-censorship that s/he got used to.
- Initiative's adjustments as appropriate to its idea or specialization or work or the work title it does and the case it serves, as well as deleting or modifying some of the texts fear of the political and social situation.

- The donating organization's modification which does not wish to raise the society or the government against it because of its desire to continue to work in Yemeni society.
- The official modification which often made by specialized authorities such as Ministry of Culture in case the cultural, artistic or literary activities were performed in a school under its care.

It is a long series of procedures which provoke fear to engage in cultural, artistic or literary and engage only in the purest humanitarian work or training.

These subsequent measures may result in decreasing the Initiative's works or other Initiatives' works in the cultural aspect.

### **Establishing a Policy of Freedom of Expression and the Future**

Whether in the time of war or the desired peace period, the existence of a policy on freedom of expression is so important that not only youth initiatives but also individual activists, non-governmental or international organizations can work in a more active way and have a more positive influence in the society.

The existence of a policy on freedom of expression with this number of youth initiatives and making the cultural work reachable and applicable - will encourage the existence of a big number of cultural, artistic, and literary events. This will lead to a better participation and involvement of youth in the public concerns and make

positive change towards the issues of peace, tolerance, human rights and public freedoms.

Bureaucracy used towards culture will only lead to the fear of cultural work and ignorance then tends to focus on other issues which necessitate the repetition of the work without future effects. The sack of wheat may save the human life, but at the end the play is what makes the human.

### **Summary**

Cultural work is as important as humanitarian work. It must be given more freedom when dealing with and not fear or put obstacles against cultural, literary and artistic production. Modern studies proved the role culture, arts and literature in the humanitarian work and accordingly, so there is no necessity to deal with the culture by such kind of modifying or charging. Each text calls for peace and tolerance is a good text. We also see the necessity to have a policy to freedom expression in Yemen.

**A study on the working papers of the  
guarantees of freedom of expression  
policies in Yemen**

**Ahmed Alarami**

The working papers in this book, have place the issue of freedom of expression in Yemen, on the discussion table, from the experiences of these writers, each in his/her field. These papers provided an almost inclusive view of the state of freedom of expression in this country, whose society is passing through a historic turning point and exceptional circumstances, a society that had suffered a lot of trouble and difficulties, however, it was always ambitious for the state industry. It needs it, before anything. Therefore, all aspects of life, including culture, and its policies are governed by the history of this country, the experience of the society and the circumstances it is now undergoing. This has been demonstrated by the nature of the arts in Yemen, the experience of the press, and the means of expression, as reflected in these papers, where it can be said that they have their own history and character as part of the general history of society and the state, as they are part of the structure, thinking and privacy of society. Perhaps the state of transformations that did not stop during the last 100 years of the history of Yemen, makes the instability the dominant feature in the life of its society, the experience of the state, making it difficult to come up with clear visions of the future of freedom of expression, and the state of its cultural policies. However, in the book, which contains worksheets, a series of symposia organized by Dhamant foundation in various fields of arts and culture holds much to be read, through a comprehensive approach to what the researchers have



done in their respective fields and through their experience and knowledge.

Perhaps this is why the working papers have been preoccupied with the rooting of cultural and artistic trends, both theoretically and historically, while it was difficult to capture many of the functions, trends and issues related to freedom of expression and cultural policies, however, in such a case, more in-depth, more specialized studies are needed and details has been explored, , But more generally, we will note the absence of the role of the cultural institution, and their variations in accordance with the country's circumstances and the political variables, where the variables usually affect the culture and policies.

### **Artists Experiences**

Looking at the experiences of the artists and researchers themselves, as models of the artistic and creative milieu and the role of cultural policies in this, it will become clear to us that they represent individual cases, there is no great role for the official cultural institution in their industry, that is, they grew up and worked in the absence of cultural policies aimed at creating and building creators, they are just creative individuals who have engaged in cultural work and have even tried to institutionalize their cultural work by launching initiatives or working in civil society institutions (CSOs) and benefiting from external support for cultural work, away from the official cultural institution and close to youth initiatives organized outside formal frameworks.

### **Between social awareness and prohibition**

However, as far as the arts are concerned, social awareness is still an important impediment to the contempt of the arts, in addition to the religious view that denies art, which is an important factor contributing to the emergence of the religious songs and its emergence at various stages with its political functions and prompt speech. Many of the artists involved in the paper works have complained of the repression and underdevelopment, both in art, photography and singing. This reflects the level of the cultural policies in the country, in one sense, albeit implicitly, are governed by traditions, customs and heavy religious-social heritage.

### **Digital Development:**

Worksheets reflected to what extent such digital evolution and modern communication techniques reflected an important gate or window that breaks the dominance of censorship. Although it has not led to the development of new art or artistic forms, or at least this has been limited, it is a window that has gone beyond censorship. It allowed many actions and voices in various fields to reach the public, without being subject to the authority of the observation. We note, however, that the recommendations have been so preoccupied with the urge to do education, and rightly so, that many arts in Yemen are still in their infancy. The main obstacle in the arrival of the message remains the large gap between the artist and the recipient,

which makes the technical messages, especially in the fields of literature and art difficult to reach, or difficult to understand, due to the recipient's weak culture of the visual and reading. This remains an obstacle in terms of modern means of communication, despite the widespread use of technology and social media, most Yemenis who suffered from literacy illiteracy, continued to suffer from digital illiteracy, the financial status, the power outage and the problems of the Internet make digital networks and social networks ineffective in Yemen unlike other Arab countries at least.

### **The Impacts of War**

War has played a role in crystallization of the future of freedom of expression in various arts and fields in which all of singing, theatre, journalism, photography, and plastic art have been affected by the war. Like what happened to singers with detention, put into prison, and suppression for their voices, plastic art, photography, and newspapers were also suppressed, ill-treated, closed, and suspended; sometimes their members were killed.

Notwithstanding the fact that the working papers pointed out the richness of the popular culture and genuine arts with many features and cultural functions which reflect freedom of expression; however, the cultural situation, due to the conflict and the political disputes, tends to impose single forms that put diversity and heritage at risk plus their cultural and social content and purport that threatens the

community solidarity and that glorify violence and propagate and manifest hatred.

### **Deterioration into the Worst**

Instead of development that Yemen may make in different fields of arts, we see that things show a quite reverse trend. For example, journalism, which had achieved big steps in its field, has undergone a retreat in the last decades where most newspapers were closed; and freedom of expression and reporting work are moving backwards. The retreat of pluralistic and cultural journalism occurred in coincidence with the suppression to the press and journalists. While what appeared in Yemen such as new medias, channels and news websites, it is just attributed as a reflection of the war situation as well as the retreat in freedom of expression through embodying a political information which inspires its subject, adjust its speech and works due to the war within the scope of attractions and oriented speech, which in return reflects the existing situation of conflicts in the country. Apart from this framework, there may not be a sufficient space for the growth of arts through which an embodiment of freedom of expression may occur.

Apparently, such setback has occurred to the arts, as well. So, we find that singing which had a remarkable development during the previous periods has stopped in a specific point, that is, reproduction of the product. Similarly, the popular heritage forms which had paved the way for the

emergence of various forms of singing such as Sananian, Lahji and Hadrami had saw a different development or underwent an artistic retreat. However, at the level of speech it has started to cover the political speeches that glorify violence and foment hatred like what is called " Al-Zamil" and "Al-Shilah", as a form of enthusiastic songs to be performed during the activities of the militant and religious groups.

This retreat has occurred in the cinema, too. Yemen had been popular with cinema houses in various cities which had reached up to 43 houses in number across many cities. However, there is only one of them left located in the Libyan Center in Sana'a. The cinematic activity was limited to civil initiatives and this is very horrific when the cinematic work becomes in the form of youth initiatives and civil organizations that cover only one or two events.

### **The Laws**

Researchers have focused much in their papers and recommendations on the first problems in arts and freedom of expression, that is, the social and religious vision and the political issues. This means that the situation of arts in Yemen has retreated excessively prior to discussion and enforcement of laws where most of the problems which had been raised would have been discussed or would have proposed solutions within lawful frameworks.

But the weakness of the state as it appears and the ongoing war make the discussion of enactment of laws to be unrealistic where even the officials and legal policies and laws had become semi functioning due to the war. Therefore, understood these calls by activating the laws related to the cultural policies, freedom of expression and intellectual property rights. However, all of these are still subject to the future of the government since the laws cannot be discussed in the light of the ongoing war, the State absence and the fragmentation across the nation. And the possibility of return back to what has been discussed in the National Dialogue Conference (NDC) as it was before the war.

### **Investment in Art**

Many working papers have complained, in one way or another, about the absence of investment in arts. The absence of cinema houses is due to the absence of support for which the artists demand, and the absence of the cultural production are attributed to the absence of artistic economy so that movement of funds is working through it. However, the investment is sometimes subject to the political conflict such as radio stations, websites and newspapers that convey the artistic product or is communicated through which makes the artistic producer him/herself and the investment to be subject to the political attractions, devoted and embodied in their speech. In this context, the movement of funds earned from the artistic

product can only cover the initiatives and the projects of the Yemeni community to be an alternative economical option or a margin for the operation of the arts and be connected with them. This support, however, lacks to the study of the needs of the arts as it is only temporary and rare; which only contribute very little to the growth of the artistic movement but with the exception of raising the awareness and the community work or creating an artistic and cultural movement and artistic-cultural economy.

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