

# en.v

issue 004 - 2009  
governance edition

**POCKETBOOK** *Eco-Innovation*  
**COMMERCE** *Project Reuse Me*  
**PEOPLE & SOCIETY** *Yemen's Refugees*  
**THE VERVE** *Exploited Jewels*  
**CREATIVE CONSCIOUS** *Love & The Cause*  
**IMPRESSIONS** *Rebuilding Iraq*  
**THINK FORWARD** *Sudan in Crisis*

## MAKE YOUR MOVE

*trusting others to decide for you...*

issn 1998-1023

*a publication dedicated to social responsibility in the Arab world*



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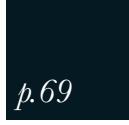
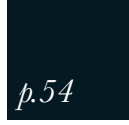
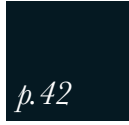
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# TREE OF HOPE

*The Tree of Hope is dedicated to organizations and individuals who support en.v as we embark on a thought-provoking journey. Log on to [envearth.com](http://envearth.com) and download our mediakit to learn more about how you can support en.v's initiatives.*



# en.v



## 1 en.v

- 4 *Tree of Hope*
- 6 *Contributors*
- 7 *Editor's Letter*
- 8 *Opinion: White, or Off White?*

## 10 POCKETBOOK

- 11 *Lingo*
- 12 *Statistics*
- 13 *Calendar*
- 14 *Trends*

## 17 COMMERCE

- 18 *Initiatives: Project Reuse Me*
- 20 *Economics: The Credit Crunch Arrives...*
- 22 *Business: Telecommunications: Leading Privatization*
- 23 *Online: Page Not Found*

## 25 PEOPLE & SOCIETY

- 26 *Culture: Egypt: Seeking an Impossible Balance*
- 28 *Community: Going Global with Governance: Yemen's Refugee Paradox*
- 30 *Personality: Our Leading Ladies*
- 32 *Corporate Social Responsibility: Changing the Philanthropic Face of Corporate Social Responsibility in MENA*
- 34 *Informed: Good Governance for Development: A Necessity or Merely a Pipe Dream?*
- 36 *Leader: Fighting Fire with Fire: The Leadership Vacuum*
- 38 *Innovation: Out with the New and in with the Old?*

## 41 THE VERVE

- 42 *Fashion: Exploited Jewel*
- 43 *Food: Foreign Solutions to Local Problems*
- 44 *Shopping: Shopping for a Stamp*
- 46 *Sports: One Fine Sunday*
- 47 *Travel: The Diplomacy Olympics*

## 49 CREATIVE CONSCIOUS

- 50 *Film: Fouad Nahas*
- 52 *Books: Hamida Na'na': Syrian Writer in Exile*
- 53 *Music: The Metaphor*
- 54 *Art: Love & The Cause*
- 56 *Design: Conserving History*

## 59 IMPRESSIONS

Iraq... Building a Nation?



## 68 THINK FORWARD

- 69 *Agriculture: From Sorghum to Guns*
- 72 *Industry: On the Road to Economic Liberalization?*
- 73 *Science: Going Green in the GCC: Government-led Waste Management Initiatives*
- 75 *Technology: eGovernance*
- 76 *References*
- 77 *Directory*



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**MEHIYAR KATHEM AL SA'ADI**

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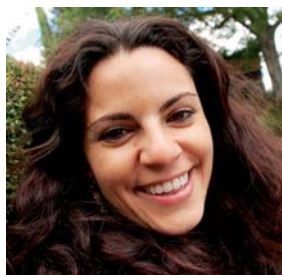
In 2003, after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), Mehiyar Kathem travelled to Baghdad to help set up a grass-roots charitable organization, Culture for All, with the objective of contributing to the country's rehabilitation from years of war, sanctions, dictatorship and isolation. Building the necessary trust with targeted communities through the provision of cultural, social and educational services, meant that a successful model had been established early on in 2003 and 2004 – effectively protecting Culture for All from what would bring the country to the brink of civil war and fragmentation in 2006. Since 2003, Culture for All has worked at the grass-root level through community owned projects to bring hope and confidence to various echelons of society in the backdrop of ensuing conflict. In 2007, Mehiyar graduated from the London School of Economics with an MSc in Development Management. He now resides in Baghdad.



**LAILA AL-GHARABALLY**

*Cover Artwork*

After attending the University of Boulder in Colorado and Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 23-year-old Laila Al-Gharabally graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Advertising and a minor in Studio Art in December 2006. Ever since she was a young child, Laila has always immersed herself in anything creative – specifically the arts. Apart from classes she took at school and university, as well as a handful of private lessons in her younger years, Laila has attempted to make time to develop her skills and find a niche of comfort for her artistic abilities. A former copywriter at JWT-Kuwait, Laila is continually looking for opportunities in which she can merge her creative skills with real-life ventures.



**DWAN KAOUKJI**

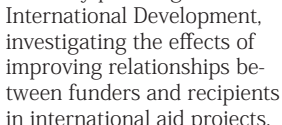
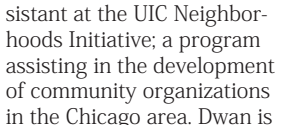
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Dwan Kaoukji is a researcher at the Darlington Social Research Unit; a non-profit organization that conducts scientific research about child development in the context of children's services in the United Kingdom. Prior to her work at the Unit, Dwan received a Master's degree in Urban Planning and Public Policy from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) in 2005. There, she worked as a research assistant at the UIC Neighborhoods Initiative; a program assisting in the development of community organizations in the Chicago area. Dwan is currently pursuing a PhD in International Development, investigating the effects of improving relationships between funders and recipients in international aid projects.

**NESMA FARAHAT**

*Contributor*

Nesma Farahat is a Program Specialist at the Near East Foundation/Center for Development Services (CDS) in Cairo. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Sociology from the American University in Cairo (AUC), and an MSc in Violence, Conflict and Development from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) - University of London. At SOAS, Nesma focused her research on the reformation of child soldier rehabilitation programs in Sub-Saharan Africa. Nesma's passions include children, women's issues, education and poverty reduction.



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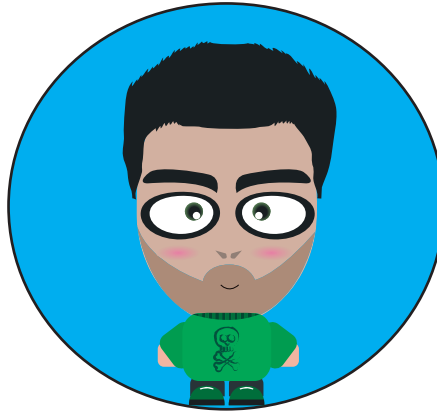
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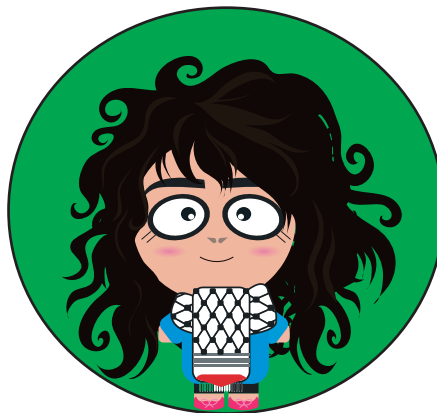
**en.v 2008**



**MANAGING EDITOR**

*Zahed Sultan*

*“Given the state of the global financial crisis, skilled individuals, proactive youth groups and smaller agile organizations will be the biggest drivers for social change in the coming year.”*



**EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

*Siham Nuseibeh*

***Dear Reader,***

Survival and adaptability are the greatest gifts we possess as humans; the ability to persevere when all seems lost, and the desire to improve upon that which has failed. These are the very underpinnings of our society, and the skills that we must continue to hone and cultivate.

In this issue, Issue 004: The Governance Edition, we examine the systems and processes through and under which our societies are run. As the world seems to be falling around us, the cracks and faults in our governance systems are beginning to reveal themselves. Rather than this being a signal for panic, it is in fact a beacon of opportunity for change and reform.

In our fourth issue, en.v's staff and contributors have worked hard to bring you the failures and successes of our governance systems. From the inner workings of a community, to the organization of a corporation and policies of a government; governance is the very basis and fuel behind these processes.

There seems to be no better time for us to dissect, examine and analyze these processes to continue on a path towards progress – for there is no greater opportunity to rebuild when all that was built before has started to crumble.

The need is great and the time is vital, what we make of it shall remain our greatest legacy as a society.

***Siham Nuseibeh***

## White, or Off White?

*Siham Nuseibeh*



### *It all began with a shoe...*

As the bombs and bullets rained over Gaza during the 22-day Israeli invasion between December 27, 2008 and January 18, 2009, politicians, people, organizations and whole nations roared to attention in seeming support and solidarity with the besieged population. Legislators, journalists, and parliamentarians all over the region displayed particular fits of rage, disgust and outrage at this latest Israeli show of unrelenting destruction and savagery. I remember watching one particularly well-known Kuwaiti Member of Parliament (MP) give a speech in which he raised his shoe in a daring and dramatic overture against a certain Palestinian personage whom he deemed to be no better than the upraised item. I found myself, sitting at home in my living room, cheering him on, as he seemed to be mirroring the very feelings of the Arab street.

When the moment passed, however, I found myself experiencing a great moment of pause over my reaction

of excited support. This MP is one on whose policies, on any other given day, I would think about two, three, four times before backing – let alone cheer on with as much enthusiasm as I just had!

I had previous knowledge about the political and social leanings of the MP in question, yet I still found myself falling prey to his demonstrative gesture – because his sympathies and sentiments, at that demonstrative moment, lay parallel to mine...

This made me question: How could an educated person sift, decipher and sort through all the political rhetoric of one political party or entity versus another with a critical eye and fine-tuned ear, without having to simply settle for the better of two unappealing extremes? Does my choice of a political party or affiliation have to be, by default, between the one that is the least corrupt, or the most vocal – even if their agenda is not one to which I relate to, nor ascribe?

Why do my choices have to be so limited?

The famous Indian economist and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, characterizes development as the widening of choices and the expanding of our capabilities in order to attain and access these choices. This is a revolutionary way of viewing development, as a means rather than as a static end, as processes through which we struggle for freedoms and emancipations. In this view, development becomes an active and participatory process in which we the people become the agents in a shared quest.

Prince Claus, the German-born aristocrat and founder of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development said: “People are not developed, they develop themselves.”

Maybe we should get started. [en.v](#)





a good education  
will take years of  
commitment from  
them... and us.

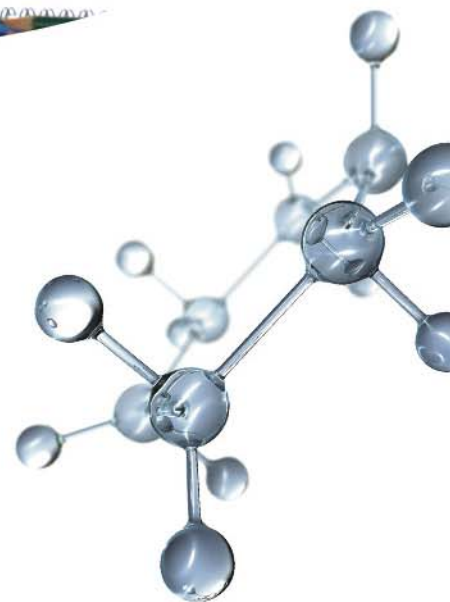
**Education is the key to Kuwait's future development.**

So it's no surprise ExxonMobil is committed to supporting the advancement of Kuwaiti education, health and culture.

Our support of Kuwait's educational establishments, our partnership in the Kuwait Science Fair and our contributions to Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah and the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital are all part of our long term commitment to being a valuable, responsible member of the community.

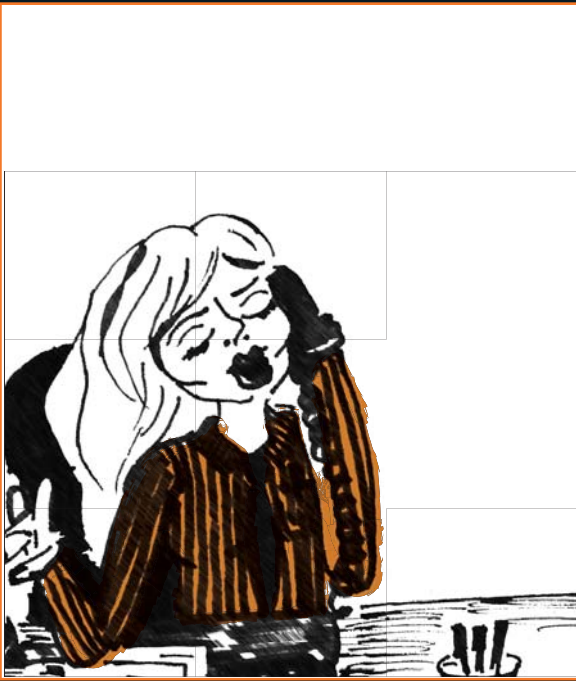
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THE FEMALE LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE STANDS AT 29% IN THE MIDDLE EAST - CURRENTLY THE LOWEST OF ALL REGIONS.



**POCKETBOOK**

**LINGO  
STATISTICS  
CALENDAR  
TRENDS**

		<p><b>GOVERNANCE</b></p>	<p>The process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented).</p>
		<p><b>GOOD GOVERNANCE</b></p>	<p>Eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective &amp; efficient, equitable &amp; inclusive and follows the rule of law.</p>
		<p><b>URBAN GOVERNANCE</b></p>	<p>Inclusive process in achieving a quality of life sought by the residents of cities; especially the disadvantaged, marginalized and poor.</p>
		<p><b>DECENTRALIZATION</b></p>	<p>The process of dispersing decision-making governance closer to the people or citizen.</p>
		<p><b>SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION</b></p>	<p>Means of overcoming fundamental problems of environmental degradation and poverty.</p>
		<p><b>CIVIL SOCIETY</b></p>	<p>The aggregate of non-governmental organizations and institutions that manifest the interests and will of citizens; individuals and organizations in a society which are independent of the government.</p>
		<p><b>E-GOVERNANCE</b></p>	<p>Is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.</p>
		<p><b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b></p>	<p>Assistance which is provided to entities, usually developing country societies, which have a need to develop a certain skill or competence, or for general upgrading of performance ability.</p>
		<p><b>PATRIARCHY</b></p>	<p>The structuring of society on the basis of family units, where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of, hence authority over, their families. The concept of patriarchy is often used, by extension (in anthropology and feminism, for example), to refer to the expectation that men take primary responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole, acting as representatives via public office.</p>
		<p><b>PRIVATIZATION</b></p>	<p>The conversion of a public enterprise into a private one.</p>
		<p><b>DEMOCRATIZATION</b></p>	<p>The action of making something democratic.</p>

1



THE POPULATION OF THE MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA (MENA) IS EXPECTED TO REACH 833 MILLION BY 2050.

2



3



ITS URBAN POPULATION ALONE HAS INCREASED ALMOST TENFOLD FROM 23 MILLION IN 1950 TO 210 MILLION.

AROUND 25% OF THE POPULATION WILL SOON LIVE IN CITIES OF 1 MILLION OR MORE.

4



THIS HAS RESULTED IN HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT ESTIMATED AT 15% ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUTH.

5



IN EGYPT, LIBYA AND MOROCCO 1/3 OF THE URBAN POPULATION LIVE IN SLUMS.

6



7



AGRICULTURAL WATER USE ACCOUNTS FOR 85-90% OF TOTAL WATER WITHDRAWN FROM AVAILABLE SOURCES IN THE REGION.

MENA HAS 5% OF TOTAL WORLD POPULATION WITH ONLY A MERE 1% OF FRESHWATER RESOURCES.

8



9



THE FACT THAT THE MIDDLE EAST IS A REGION WHERE THE POPULATION WILL NEARLY DOUBLE BETWEEN NOW AND 2030 WILL MAKE MATTERS WORSE.

BY 2025, THE MIDDLE EAST WILL NO LONGER BE THE WORLD'S PRIMARY ENERGY-PRODUCING REGION.

10



IN SPITE OF AN ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE MENA REGION'S BROAD MONEY SUPPLY IS EXPECTED TO SHOW HEALTHY GROWTH REACHING 21.6% IN 2009.

**Massoumeh Eblekar, PhD**  
 Tehran, January 2009  
 Professor of Tarbiat Modares University  
 Tehran City Councilor  
 Former Vice President of Iran  
 UNEP Champion of the Earth



shortage of freshwater resources and increasing trends of desertification. Our region is particularly afflicted by the environmental consequences of war and armed conflict. In addition to the human tragedy, war in this region has dire environmental consequences for present and future generations to come. Governance systems in the region have not yet properly undertaken environmental concerns in the mainstream of their development policies, and for this reason, the environment still lacks priority in national planning in many countries.

**In the Name of Allah**, the Compassionate, the Merciful,

**We are connected to and aware of the future today more than ever before.** Advances in information technology and science have provided us with the opportunity to foresee and influence the future in many respects. Science and technology also inform us of the dire consequences that we must meet if environmental degradation and global warming continue at the current pace. Economists predict very harsh economic circumstances for many if the current economic decline in western markets is not properly addressed.

**The Middle East and West Asia is no exception.** Poverty and injustices are taking millions in underdeveloped nations to the limits of despair; and violent reactions are anticipated as natural consequences. War and the incompetence of international mechanisms to address crimes against humanity and abrogation of all international norms like what happened in Gaza leave no hope for peace and reconciliation. Environmental degradation will also aggravate the situation if not properly addressed. Each region faces its particular challenges and the Middle East faces above all, a serious

**The mismanagement of world affairs is the root cause of these imbalances,** which are taking our region into dangerous waters. In such circumstances, one can urge only for a change of course and attitude among world leaders. The future requires leaders who would stand up against genocide and oppression, against double and triple standards, against the destruction of the world's ecosystem, and against the excesses and selfishness of capitalism and consumerism. The future of the world rests in the hands of the young generation who search for selfless souls; leaders who have gained control over their egoistic desires and will lead societies on the basis of truthfulness. They await the devoted individual who can lead the world out of this quagmire of wars, wars against nature and wars against humanity. The future can shine for 2009 and beyond only if world leaders wake up to the dark realities of current times and change course.



*Venue of Gulf CleanTech 2010*



**CARBONWORLD DOHA 2009**

April 26 - 28, 2009  
 Doha, Qatar  
[www.cmtevents.com](http://www.cmtevents.com)

**GREEN REFINING & PETROCHEMICALS 2009**

April 28 - 29, 2009  
 Doha, Qatar  
[www.cmtevents.com](http://www.cmtevents.com)

**MIDDLE EAST WASTE SUMMIT**

Waste Management & Recycling Solutions  
 May 26 - 28, 2009  
 Dubai Airport Expo Centre  
 Dubai, UAE  
[www.wastesummit.com](http://www.wastesummit.com)

**PROJECT REBUILD IRAQ 2009**

May 2009  
 Amman International Fair  
 Amman, Jordan

**RECYCLING & WASTE MANAGEMENT 2009**

May 24 - 27, 2009  
 Riyadh Exhibition Centre  
 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
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 F +966 1 454 4846

**15TH GCC eGOVERNMENT AND eSERVICES FORUM**

May 23 - 27, 2009  
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 Dubai, UAE  
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F +9714 3328223  
[www.datamatixgroup.com](http://www.datamatixgroup.com)

**GULF MARITIME 2009**

December 14 - 16, 2009  
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 Sharjah, UAE  
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 F +971-6-5770111

**ASTEX 2010 (ARABIAN SECURITY, CIVIL DEFENSE AND LIFE SAFETY TECHNOLOGY EXHIBITION)**

January 2010  
 Riyadh Exhibition Centre  
 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia  
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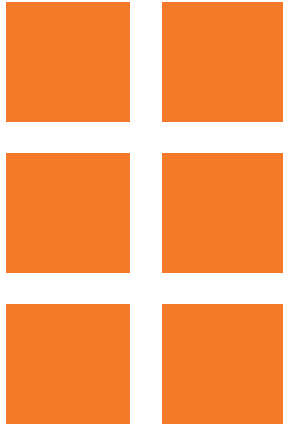
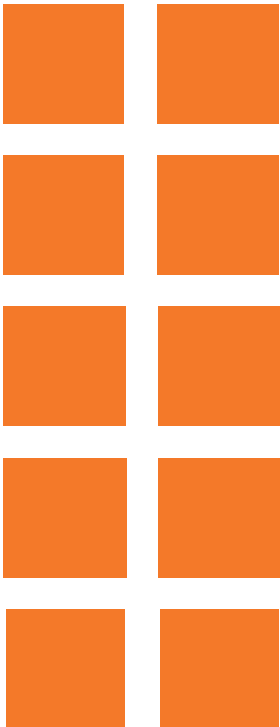
**GULF CLEANTECH 2010**

January 2010  
 Dubai World Trade Centre  
 Sheik Zayed Road  
 Convention Gate  
 Dubai, UAE  
 T +971 4 3321000  
 F +971 4 3312173



*GM Hybrid Taxis in Dubai*

In June 2008, General Motors (GM) introduced the first hybrid vehicles in the Middle East to the Government of Dubai and the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority. The cars are to be the first hybrid taxis in the area and will catapult Dubai as a pioneer in using environmentally friendly public transportation. Through this endeavor, GM and Dubai hope to reduce vehicle pollution and ensure cleaner air in Dubai first, and then in the rest of the region. The cars that will be used as taxis are the Chevrolet Tahoe hybrid and the Chevrolet Malibu hybrid. A 12-month trial began June 1st, 2008.



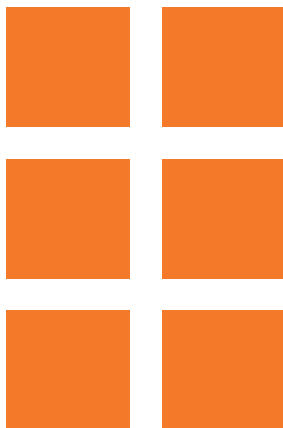
*Solar Cookers in the Gaza Strip*

In the Middle East, solar ovens have been in use in the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing Israeli blockade, which has left residents without basic needs – most importantly fuel. Yousef Abu Tawahina has created a solar cooking oven in his backyard in Deir Elbalah using basic materials. He converted a normal oven that runs on scarce gas to one that can be run by the abundant Middle Eastern sun. The materials needed to build a solar oven are: 15 cement bricks, mud mixed with straw, and two sheets of glass. Abu Tawahina explains that “one sheet is incorporated into the top part of the oven and the other into the front side, and finally a metal sheet is placed at the base of the oven on the inside.” The sheets of glass absorb the sun’s rays and can heat the oven up to 100° C, while the transistor attached to the metal sheet inside the oven heats the oven an additional 80° C.



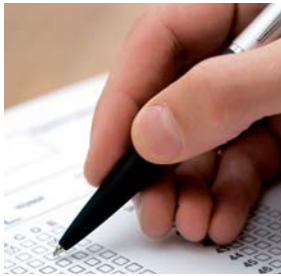
*Oil Rich Nations Invest in the “Green Deal”*

The oil rich Gulf States are set to invest in the United Kingdom’s Renewable Energy Bill, or “Green Deal.” The plan came about when British Prime Minister Gordon Brown visited Saudi Arabia to ask for help in bailing out the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Prime Minister Brown asked GCC states to lower the price of oil in order to alleviate the burdens of those nations hit hard by the global financial crisis. He has also requested that the Saudis, and other Gulf nations, invest in other renewable energy to reduce the harmful affects of climate change. The UK’s Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband, emphasized: “[...] with the impending threat of climate change, we need to find [...] greener ways of running our economies [...]”.



*Biodegradable Plastics in the UAE*

Eco-Polymers, a new company in Dubai and Sharjah, announced that they are creating new biodegradable plastic bags. Eco-Polymers signed on with British company Symphony Environmental Ltd., as exclusive distributors for Symphony’s range of d2w oxo-biodegradable plastic additives. The substance used in d2w makes ordinary plastic oxo-biodegradable so that it degrades and disappears in a short time, leaving no pollutants, and no harmful residues. It is affordable and can be made by using existing machinery and factories in the UAE today.



*Qatar Schools Link with National Database*

Private schools in Qatar will soon link their databases with the national database. The Supreme Education Council (SEC) is working on a project to link all the independent schools in Qatar to its Qatar National Educational Data System (QNEDS). QNEDS was launched in 2007 to support Qatar's Education Reform Initiative, and seeks to provide access to comprehensive and meaningful information about Qatar's educational system from a variety of sources. The sources include surveys, tests and system analysis. This initiative will allow school administrators to assess the level of performance of schools the government operates, compared with other schools. QNEDS is designed to support Qatar's future progress.



*Here Comes the Sun*

As the worldwide search for alternative energy continues, Dubai is planning to build the largest solar panel plant. Announced at the Green Dubai World Forum 2008, the 93,000 square meter plant by Solar Technologies FZE will begin construction at the end of 2008, and production at the beginning of 2010. The plant will be able to produce solar panels up to 5.7 square meters in size.



*Oman Part of Planting 100 Million Trees*

January 8, 2009 marked the first Oman Environment Day. The day was filled with activities run by the Ministry of Environment Affairs, Muscat Municipality, Ministry of Agriculture, and the Art of Living Foundation. Activities that took place on Oman Environment Day included: tree planting, exhibitions, seminars, cleaning of coral reefs, planting of mangroves and educational visits. The main activity was tree planting, which is part of a worldwide initiative called "Mission Green Earth, Standup and Take Action" (MGESUTA), and is part of the UNDP Millennium Program. The MGESUTA and UNDP's plan is to plant 100 million trees worldwide between July 2008 and July 2009.



*ID Cards as a Method of Payment*

An agreement was recently signed between the Information Technology Authority, Bank Muscat and Ganelot; which will allow residents of Oman to make electronic payments using national I.D. cards or Resident Cards. The project is part of ePurse, which allows residents to store, and load money on their ID cards to make electronic payments. This will enable people without debit cards or credit cards to make payments to the government with their ID cards, and will, likewise, facilitate a more efficient way for government bodies to collect payments. The project will run as a pilot for the next seven months in coordination with Bank Muscat to assess its effectiveness as a viable payment solution.



## You see scrap, we see life.

No matter what scrap you seek, Metal & Recycling Company "MRC" works hard to develop its products to meet your specific needs. Our job is to cater to the production line requirements by:

- Segregating the waste from the product.
- Resize to fit your streamline needs.
- Perform Quality Assurance Check "QAC", to make sure you obtain the best results.
- Help provide money saving solutions.

MRC is an environmentally committed company and that's why it's no surprise we received the ISO 14001 certificate for the management of environmental systems by Germany's "TUV" company. MRC seeks development in the Recycling and Waste Management sector in the GCC and MENA regions.

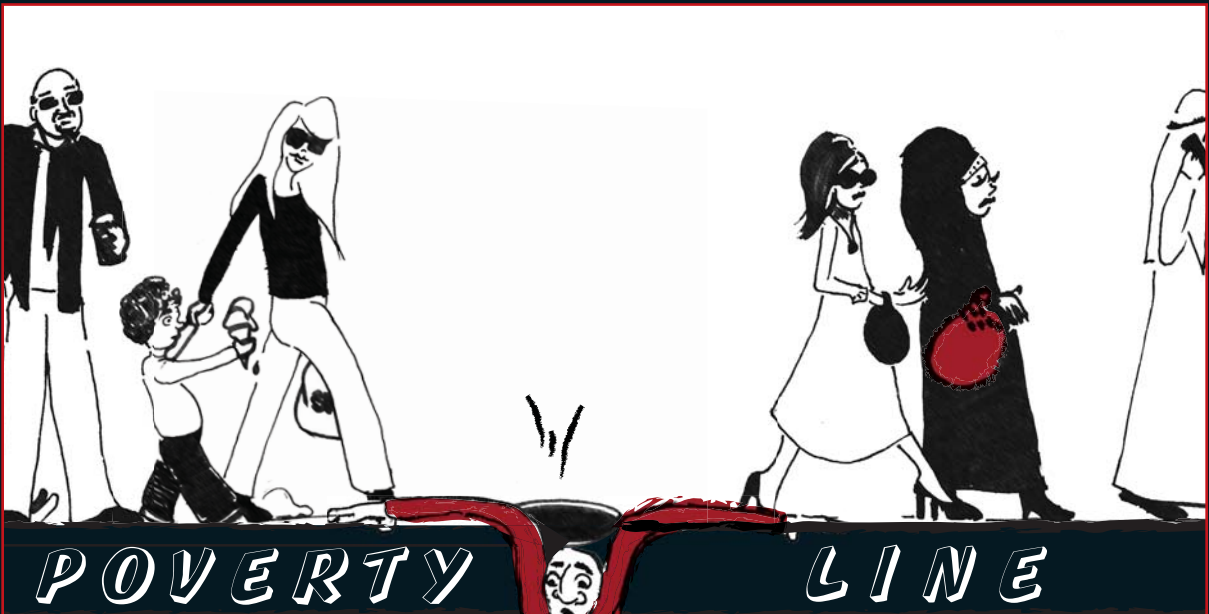
 MRC

*Environmentally Committed*



[www.mrckw.com](http://www.mrckw.com)





THE MIDDLE EAST HAS 15 COUNTRIES IDENTIFIED AS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE PER PERSON PER YEAR.



**COMMERCE**  
**INITIATIVES**  
**ECONOMICS**  
**BUSINESS**  
**ONLINE**

# Project Reuse Me

en.v

a.



c.



Art from scrap, junkyard photography, jewelry from aluminum... All of this and more were the main attractions at the en.v initiative's REUSE 2.0 exhibition, under the patronage of MRC and Zain.

In May 2007, in an effort to expand its initiatives and introduce a new brand identity, en.v's parent company ([www.elboutique.com](http://www.elboutique.com)) designed a creative brand launch event for The Metal and Recycling Company (MRC), a leading commercial waste management company in Kuwait, to raise awareness for the environment, promote recycling, and highlight the importance of waste management. The event was entitled REUSE.

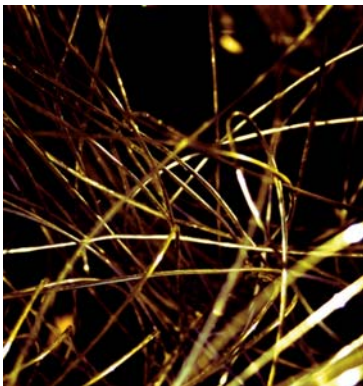
Hosted at The Sultan Gallery for three days, en.v invited a versatile group of local designers to showcase their talents in the realm of innovative product design, furniture and house-ware products, produced entirely from waste, scrap and recycled materials collected from MRC's Amghara facility.

As a first attempt at conceptualizing and organizing an event for the general public, REUSE proved to be a genuine success, from the end products on display to the attendance and overall positive feedback.

b.



e.



More importantly, through interaction with attendees and the media, and the overall experience of REUSE, the impetus behind the idea to launch the en.v initiative was born with all its associated platforms for promoting social responsibility.

Building on the success of the event, a second (more comprehensive) installment of REUSE (2.0) was held at Bayt Lothan (a traditional Kuwaiti home turned cultural center for the community) on the 30th of November 2008 for three days under the patronage of MRC and Zain (the leading regional mobile telecommunications provider). REUSE 2.0 was inaugurated by the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Fadel Safar.

a-d. Furniture and photography from REUSE 1.0.

e-f. Creative photographs by college students from MRC's Amghara facility for REUSE 2.0.

g. An open discussion being held with attendees at REUSE 2.0 in Bayt Lothan.

h. Talking to children during scheduled morning tours for schools at REUSE 2.0.

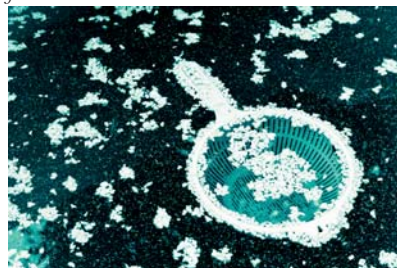
i. The central courtyard at Bayt Lothan where REUSE 2.0 was held.

j. Creative photography from a REUSE 2.0 participant.

d.



f.



REUSE 2.0 granted an opportunity for various members of the community to come together and flex their creative muscle. For this event, all artistic mediums were fair game. Talents ranged from a featured internationally-renowned artist (Hassan Hajjaj), guest speakers, local professional artists, as well as aspiring creative talents from various high schools and universities.

Bayt Lothan was selected as the venue because it embodied a traditional spacious courtyard (with permission granted to en.v to install a garden for the event) and a selection of dedicated rooms that were utilized as focused exhibition spaces for a variety of artistic mediums ranging from audio, video, photography, fashion, and more.

g.



**Hassan Hajjaj**  
Featured International Artist  
REUSE 2.0



h.



**When commissioned for REUSE 2.0 what were your initial expectations?**

First of all, I was really pleased and flattered to be picked up to participate in this appealing and ambitious project as the international Artist. Talking about my initial expectations will be a little bit tricky as I have, as a general guideline, not to have expectations. (No expectation = no disappointment = no regret = no frustration!)

What I do is to keep myself really open to receive the maximum of a situation, and respond to it giving the best of myself to deliver the work in that particular environment – and enjoy it, which I did!

**What is your opinion on the effort to raise environmental awareness via artistic inclinations?**

Art is probably one of the most positive and talkative ways to raise those issues. And we need to raise them. It is positive and talkative because it involves people's reactions, it generates a dialogue.

Art is inspirational, people seeing an art piece in which rubbish is used will give them a new eye on rubbish.

It is more positive than making people feel guilty with terrible statements

about the environment. We shouldn't ignore it, but we have to act and go beyond!

**Given your unique style of art and design, what kind of reactions/feedback did you get from the attendees at the event?**

I was overwhelmed. I think people were surprised and amused; they got back to me in a really positive and kind way. The minister even told me he used to play around with match boxes, turning them into miniature tables when he was a child!

**What role do you feel your work plays in promoting the notion of reusing items?**

I presume through reusing rubbish, showing it as an aesthetic that strikes people's minds and makes them aware of the materiality of it.

**What was your most memorable experience(s) during your visit here for REUSE 2.0?**

So many! But some of the best are:

Collecting rubbish from the street and being looked at weirdly!

Being so well looked after by Zahed and the El Boutique team.

Discovering and meeting young and amazing up-and-coming artists!

i.



In order to keep with the environmental ethos of the event, *REUSE 2.0* was devised as Kuwait's first carbon neutral event and *en.v* commissioned a local environmental auditing firm, Equilibrium, to calculate all carbon emissions incurred during all phases of setup and final execution to arrive at the total carbon footprint amount. (This amount will be offset by *en.v* through investments in carbon mitigation projects around the region.)

The exhibition was open to the public, while allocated morning timings were reserved for primary school students who were taken on guided tours of the exhibition to educate them on the envi-

ronment and the possibilities of looking at scrap from a different perspective.

All the works on display were for sale via a silent auction. An astonishing 80% of the exhibition was sold out by closing day, further demonstrating that approaching sustainability creatively can reap financial returns.

*Curious to see what en.v has in store for REUSE 3.0 (which goes live in December 2009)?*

*Track en.v's movements online via [www.projectreuseme.com](http://www.projectreuseme.com). (A comprehensive body of work for REUSE 1.0 & 2.0 is also available via the site.)*

j.



[projectreuseme.com](http://projectreuseme.com)

## The Credit Crunch

Arrives...

Adel Nuseibeh

**20** million Americans have lost their jobs since January. Most of them have found new jobs, but their new jobs generally weren't as good as the ones they lost. And, almost certainly, more than 600 thousand of them were unable to find new jobs...

As the rest of the world plunged into a downward financial spiral due to the global credit crunch, the MENA region was not spared for long. As one local bank neared the brink of extinction and others clamored to survive, a look into the governance systems of our financial institutions sheds light on the region's most pressing issues...

*"In an environment where banks can continually mismanage money without any oversight or incentives to focus on long-term value creation, good corporate governance is an effective means of injecting transparency and preventing a financial collapse."* -John Sullivan

As with western world markets, Middle Eastern markets have been lethargic in the past 18 months – experiencing appalling and chilling losses. Governments, international banks and major businesses have all fallen victim to the current financial crisis. The global fiscal catastrophe was instigated and prompted by the collapse of credit bureaus and the sub-prime mortgage crisis in the United States – the effects of which have been slowly spreading across the globe. This crisis has forcefully encroached upon economic powerhouses in Europe, and has gradually leaked into the growing economies of the Middle East and Asia.

The Middle East remains a budding economy in the late stages of infancy, with a lingering concern about its ability to withstand the financial crisis and sustain its economic growth. As a result of the recent events that have begun to cripple the region, top executives, managers and investors have been working around the clock to find a solution. Frustrated and distraught, the general population is beginning to question the inner workings of companies, and how effectively these businesses are being administered.

So the question remains: What are the governing bodies of countries and organizations doing about this current catastrophe, and what steps are being taken to mitigate the risks and effects of the global financial crisis?

Countries in the region were under the assumption that their economies were

immune to the financial crisis, but in light of recent events, investors and governments have been given a rude awakening. More specifically, Kuwait witnessed the first collapse of a major bank in the region when Gulf Bank, the second-largest lender in the country, experienced losses of US\$ 1.4 billion due to poor investments on currency derivatives. The news quickly spread throughout the country, and Gulf Bank customers were in a severe state of panic. Clients feared the losses would directly affect their cash deposits and, as a result, scurried to Gulf Bank branches and ATMs all across the country with the intention of withdrawing all their cash. In response to investor fears, the Central Bank of Kuwait took precautionary measures and guaranteed all deposits from Gulf Bank. Investor and stockholder confidence has diminished. Stock exchanges in the region have experienced a financial melt-



Once Upon A Time...  
Financial Crisis Timeline

**What Went Wrong**

The financial crisis has its root in the United State's housing market subprime loan crisis. A subprime loan is a loan made to someone who, under normal circumstances, would not qualify for a loan due to several factors such as his or her income and ability to make payments. Why then would a bank make a loan to someone it believes is unable to make the payments?

**Between 2004 and 2006**

US interest rates rose from 1% to 5.35%, initiating a deceleration in the US housing market. Homeowners, who were barely managing their mortgage payments when rates were low, began to default on their mortgages. Default rates on sub-prime loans - high risk loans to clients with poor or no credit histories - rose to record levels. The impact of these defaults were felt across the financial system as many of the mortgages were sold to banks and investors.

**August 2007**

Investment bank BNP Paribas tells investors they will not be able to take money out of two of its funds because it cannot value the assets in them, owing to a "complete evaporation of liquidity" in the market. It was the most blatant signal that banks were rejecting business from each other. The European Central Bank pumps 95 billion Euros (£63 billion) into the banking market to try to improve liquidity. It adds further 108.7 billion Euros over the next few days. The US Federal Reserve (Fed), the Bank of Canada and the Bank of Japan also begin to intervene. The Fed cuts the rate at which it lends to banks by half of a percentage point to 5.75%, warning the credit crunch could be a risk to economic growth.

**January 2008**

The World Bank predicts that global economic growth will slow in 2008, as the credit crunch hits the richest nations. Global stock markets, including London's FTSE 100 index, suffer their biggest falls since the attacks on September 11, 2001. The US Fed cuts rates by three quarters of a percentage point to 3.5% - its biggest cut in 25 years - to try and prevent the economy from nose-diving into a recession. It is the first emergency cut in rates since 2001.

**September 2008**

The subprime mortgage crisis reached a critical stage the first week of this month, characterized by severely constricted liquidity in the global credit market and bankruptcy threats to investment banks and other institutions.

**December 2008**

The US recession is officially declared by the National Bureau of Economic Research, a leading panel including economists from Stanford, Harvard and MIT. The committee concludes that the US economy started to contract in December 2007. The US Federal Reserve slashes its key interest rate from 1% to a range of zero to 0.25% - the lowest since records began.

**January 2009 Onwards...**

The Financial Crisis becomes a global economic crisis...

**40 - 45 per-**  
**cent of the world's**  
**wealth has been de-**  
**stroyed in the past**  
**year and a half.**

down in recent weeks with no market reporting less than 25% Year-To-Date losses. The markets of Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Cairo have incurred the most severe losses at over 60% Year-To-Date losses. Demands for greater government intervention are echoing throughout – be it through cash injections into the markets, or complete termination of trading in regional stock exchanges. Stock traders in Kuwait marched from the Kuwait Stock Exchange to the Seif Palace, where the cabinet resides, pressuring Kuwait's government to counter steep drops in stock prices. The government quickly reacted by closing the Kuwait Stock Exchange for two days pending a court hearing aimed at finding an adequate solution to the issue.

As a result, a sense of stability and steadiness has started to trickle down and spread among consumers. The most immediate dilemma has been solved,

and governing bodies are now left with an array of solutions and decisions that need to be strategically implemented in order to protect the future of the country and, more importantly, the region. How they move forward remains to be seen, but one thing is for sure – change is coming. *en.v*

a.



b.



a-b. The Kuwait Stock Exchange.

## Telecommunications Leading Privatization

Laila Hayat

Privatization schemes have been on the table for years as a way for the region to move away from its dependency on oil. One industry in particular has been taking the lead in this quest towards diversification...



*Buoyant oil prices* have generally always kept GCC countries' economies afloat. Petrodollars fueled government spending and disposable incomes, but also created dependency on the precious commodity. This dependency has created a lack of initiative toward diversifying GCC economies.

Over 80% of the Kuwaiti labor force works in the public sector, leaving a meager percentage of nationals in the private sector. Private sector development is key to diversifying GCC countries' economies away from oil dependency.

The telecommunications sector has bloomed since undergoing deregulation by various GCC governments. As a result of the sector's deregulation, competition has grown fierce and the technological landscape has vastly improved.

Regarding the industry's privatization, Ali Alostath, CEO of Hayat Communications, said: "With regards to the community, there are more advanced services [and] the latest technology is in the market with lower costs and greater efficiency.

"Companies have started competing on regional and international levels and gaining experience. They are working against the giants in the region and becoming more profitable," he continued.

"The industry has created local expertise for local manpower. In addition, it has provided better packages than the government."

Several private telecommunications companies have sprouted in the region over the past decade. The first of these is the Kuwait-based National Mobile Telecommunications Company (Wataniya) in 1999, which was introduced to compete against the region's first mobile operator – Kuwait-based Zain (formerly Mobile Telecommunications Company, established in 1983). Since 2003, Zain has quickly expanded to offer services in 22 countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. It has become the fourth largest telecommunications company in the world.

As of July 2008, Zain's customer base totals 50.74 million. Wataniya has also grown significantly via acquisitions in Asia and the MENA region. In March 2007, Qatar Telecommunications Company (Qtel) acquired a 51% stake in Wataniya. Though the country was a forerunner in deregulating the industry, the absence of a telecommunications regulating body still persists.

Saudi Telecommunications Company (STC) enjoyed market monopolization from 1998 until 2003, when Etihad Etisalat Company (Mobily) won a bid to begin operations in the kingdom. In

2007, Zain and Bahrain Telecommunications Company (Batelco) were both granted rights to begin telecom operations there. After five short years, the Saudi telecom market was completely liberalized and has now reached 100% market penetration.

Qatar's telecom market was largely monopolized until 2007, and expects to see liberalization results as soon as this year.

As the telecom industry sets an example for privatization in the region, citizens should wonder what other industries could be deregulated to allow greater competition, less price control and more employment opportunities for a burgeoning population.

"The private sector is able to relieve governments from resources, as the young workforce is more interested in the private sector. The private sector needs time for development but has already improved a lot," said Alostath.

As Gulf governments readjust their balance sheets for fluctuating oil prices, authorities should think to the future. Private sector development will sustain economies in the long run and provide jobs for the blossoming population. The telecommunications industry has exemplified what the private sector can do when a government loosens the reins of control. *en.v*

## Page Not Found

Mindy Schulte



Part of the appeal of the WWW is the speed and access to information.

**The MENA region** represents only about 1% of the world's Internet users right now. But the region is quickly racing to catch up in the global race to go online. While personal at-home services were still slowly developing 10 years ago, Internet cafés began booming with local users eager to become globally connected. Everyone from college students to the unemployed raced to grab a seat at a local café to spend hours exploring the World Wide Web. Currently, broadband and high speed internet services are advancing more quickly in this area than in any other region in the world. More and more households are gaining access to high speed Internet service as well.

Consequently, governments are responding with strict regulatory measures to keep tabs on the information that users can access in the hopes of limiting unwanted influences from trickling into communities. Censored sites include everything from popular social networking sites like Facebook and YouTube to political webpages and journalism forums. Anyone who has accessed the Internet recently may be familiar with "page not found" messages or the even more direct "BLOCKED" message spelled out across the browser when trying to access these popular sites. It is not just social networking feeling the heat from Internet censorship. Blogs are especially high on the web censorship hitlist. In 2006, Egyptian blogger Kareem Amer was sentenced to three years in prison for online postings that included insulting Islam and the Egyptian president, and challenging educational policies including the separation of men and women at universities.

**Internet users have been multiplying exponentially around the globe as people have been racing to get online. MENA users have also been logging on and trying to keep up, despite governmental restrictions and blocking of certain sites. How have MENA web users coped? And, in what ways have they sidestepped online censorship to get their daily fix of the World Wide Web?**

Now, individuals are mobilizing to stand up for online freedom. In November, the online advocacy group, Reporters Without Borders, encouraged the Egyptian government to release Amer midway through his sentence. Reporters Without Borders also releases an annual Press Freedom index, which quantifies countries' media policies. While countries like Iceland, Luxembourg and Norway scored well, MENA nations including Iraq, Syria, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Eritrea, made the bottom of the list for repressive efforts against online freedom of expression and freedom of information. Another evaluation by OpenNet found that in the MENA region, Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the UAE and Yemen widely filter online information, while Algeria, Egypt, Iraq and Israel consistently censored the least amount of online content in the region.

Yet, in all of these regions, web developers and blog posters are finding ways to thrive in the midst of these obstacles. Online survival tactics include creating email distribution lists instead of webpages and continuously changing URL's (web addresses) to stay ahead of the filters. But these tactics are imperfect and temporary solutions to a daunting political and cultural issue. For now, the battle between censorship and individual expression is far from over. With broadband Internet access reaching more and more Arab homes and businesses every day, people are finding more ways to stay ahead of the censors and gain access to more information than ever before. For now, this seems to be a step in the right direction. *en.v*

**2 Anonymous Bloggers**  
Blogging and Censorship  
Kuwait



**How has the spread of internet users around the region affected how the region gets their news and information?**

I imagine it has had a positive effect. Globally, more people get their news online than from any other source (Edelman Trust Barometer 2009), and that's the first time this has happened. I assume the region is as affected as the rest of the world, I know many people who get their news today online rather than print or TV. It's more accessible and it's faster. Having said that, and to answer the question; the more people use the internet the more internet becomes a preferred choice for information.

**Has stricter government regulation of the internet been a hindrance for regional users?**

No. The internet is still important. People use the internet to find out new ways to get around those regulations.

**How have blogs changed the way in which regional users receive news? Have these changes been negative or positive?**

[Blogs] have made people more engaged with the news. [They] have also allowed people to discover details that mainstream media doesn't think is worthy as "information" and provide "alternative media" which didn't exist before. Having said all that, the changes have absolutely been positive as they have given people more information.

**Do you feel that censorship of blogs in Kuwait is less widely applied than in other regions of the Middle East? Definitely, yes.**

**How do you, as a blogger, deal with censorship on the net; and, do you feel it's easier than other forms of media?**

Most blog readers are internet savvy and know how to get around censorship and I don't believe it's that great of an obstacle from a technical standpoint. And I think censoring blogs hurts governments more than censoring traditional media as the blogs have been regarded as "the voice of the people."

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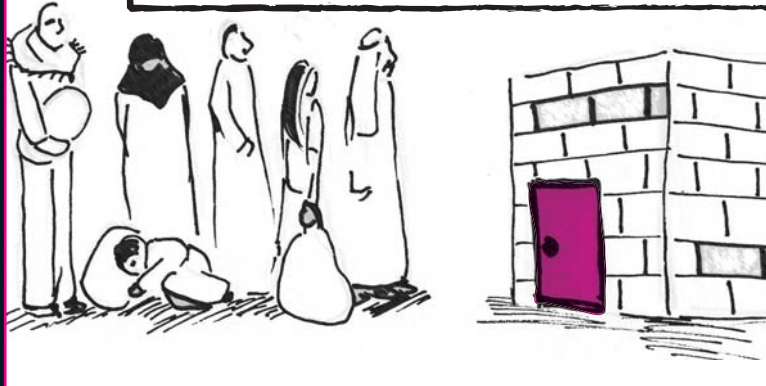
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## PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

CULTURE  
COMMUNITY  
PERSONALITY  
CSR  
INFORMED  
LEADER  
INNOVATION

## Egypt: Seeking an Impossible Balance

Yasmin El Rifae

The fight for women's rights has moved a step further in Egypt as new legislation was passed that raised the age at which girls can legally marry to 18. How has this move affected the traditionally conservative society? And, what sort of spillover effects will this have on the rest of the region?



In June 2008, the Egyptian Parliament passed a series of legal amendments in the name of child protection. The new legislation criminalizes Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), allows the registration of children whose father's identity is unknown to be registered in their mother's name, and raises the marriageable age of girls from 16 to 18. These amendments raised fierce debates about the interplay between human rights, Islamic law, and patriarchal traditions when it comes to governance in the region's most populous country.

Egypt, which faces much criticism for its violations of human rights and its failure to protect marginalized members of society, has been under a state of emergency law for nearly three decades. With the constitution suspended and the security apparatus operating above the law, legislation like the recent child protection amendments is viewed as a welcome and surprisingly progressive move. With that said, it is often held by commentators and scholars that progressive change is likely to take place in courtrooms and in legislature long before it occurs in society.

### The Framework

Like several other Middle Eastern countries, Egypt's legal system has a mixture of secular and religious influences

– in this case, a combination of Sharia law and the Napoleonic Code. The latter was introduced to Egypt following Napoleon Bonaparte's brief but influential occupation of the country, which led to Egyptian jurists studying and training in France. The Egyptian legal system is thus considered a civil law system, resting on well-established and codified sets of laws. A 1980 amendment to the Egyptian constitution, technically the highest form of law in the country, designates Islam as the religion of the state. This has been interpreted to mean simply that the state shall not pass legislation that contradicts a prevailing principle of Sharia.

However, laws pertaining to personal status, which cover issues as crucial as marriage and inheritance, are drawn directly from Sharia. Sharia courts were integrated into the National Court system in 1956; today, all family law cases are heard in National Courts presided over by judges trained in Sharia.

This legislative framework can prove troublesome for a parliament comprised of two main opposing forces: that of the ruling party, the nominally secular National Democratic Party (NDP), versus that of the increasingly popular Muslim Brotherhood. The Brotherhood, while not officially recognized as a political

party, is granted an ever-shifting space by the state within which to participate in the political and social systems. In the most recent parliamentary elections, the Brotherhood won a large number of seats in the People's Assembly (the lower house and holder of the last word in legislative questions). They form the largest opposition bloc to the NDP, which still holds a sweeping majority.

The new child protection laws were advocated and pushed by members of the NDP and members of the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood (NCMC), which is led by First Lady Suzanne Mubarak. Brotherhood MPs and their allies voiced outrage regarding these laws, claiming that they contradict Sharia and therefore the religion of the state. Mohamed El-Omda, an independent MP with Islamist leanings, commented: "The problem is that the NCMC obtained millions of dollars in donations from Western institutions to push their non-Islamic agenda on Egypt. Its members want to see this agenda enacted as soon as possible so they can claim more cash donations." El-Omda also led a demonstration in favor of FGM, accompanied by his mother and his two daughters, in front of the People's Assembly.

a. Girls pose for a photo.

b. Foreign tourists pose with locals.

c. Egypt's Suzanne Mubarak and other Arab first ladies meet in Manama, Bahrain for the First Arab Woman Organization Conference in 2006.

b.



### Marriage and morality

In rural Egypt, it is not uncommon for girls to be married by their families, sometimes against their will, at 13 and 14 years of age. This trend has gained attention in recent years with the rise of cases in which families marry their young daughters to older, wealthy men in exchange for large sums of money. Child marriages are deemed as a threat to young girls by human rights groups for several reasons, including: the health risks involved in teenage pregnancies, the fact that child brides are deprived of education, and the many cases in which young girls do not give – nor or are they asked for – their consent to a marriage.

Brotherhood members and other opponents of raising marriageable age laws argue that, since Sharia does not specify a minimum age requirement for marriage, it is appropriate to place it at the point of sexual maturity, which they deem to be 15 or 16. The silence of Islamic law regarding marriageable ages has also been cited in the legal systems of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other countries in the region which do not specify minimum age requirements for marriage. Conservative societies

c.



often encourage marriage at a young age as it is seen as a way to prevent pre-marital sex, support the traditional family structure and maintain moral order.

The push and the backlash that took place in parliament with regards to these amendments mirrors the schisms in society at large. Egypt's society, even in its most urban form settings, tends to be on the traditional side of the spectrum. Morality and religiosity come hand in hand, and change is often received with skepticism if not suspicion.

One student of Islamic studies said: "It is a Western conception of right and wrong, one that does not take into account the circumstances or the culture. Who is to say that a 16-year-old girl, uneducated, and given few rights by her family, is not better off in a happy marriage? It should be left to private individuals to decide. That is why Islam does not require a certain age to be passed; the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) consummated his marriage with Aisha when she was only 9 years old. The world is different now, but puberty implies sexual maturity and to prevent sexually mature individuals from getting married will encourage immoral and sinful relations."

It is too early to tell what the impact of raising the marriageable age will be in a society that is staunchly patriarchal – a characteristic which is all the more prominent in rural areas where child marriages most frequently occur. What is evident is that Egypt's efforts to address pressing social problems will continue to bring to the surface the starkly differing views on governance that are held by its most vocal groups. *en.v*

### Groundbreaking Legislation Timeline



#### January 2000

The Egyptian Parliament passes a law allowing women to divorce their husbands for incompatibility. Previously, women had to provide proof of mistreatment by their husbands in order to be granted a divorce, whereas a man could divorce a woman by stating "I divorce you" three times.

#### November 2001

Saudi Arabia issues ID cards for women. Previously, women's names, but not pictures, were provided on their father's or husband's ID cards. In 2006, it became mandatory that all Saudi women carry ID cards of their own.

#### May 2005

After years of advocacy by Kuwaiti women and women's rights groups, women in Kuwait obtain equal political rights. They voted for the first time in a municipal by-election in April 2006.

#### July 2007

Egypt completely bans the practice of Female Genital Mutilation within its borders, closing a legal loophole which had allowed FGM to be carried out in private and government hospitals. This move was accompanied by the launch of a national campaign to raise awareness of the harmful effects of FGM, including the creation of an FGM hotline.

#### October 2008

An Egyptian court sentences a man to three years in prison for verbally and physically harassing a woman on the street. While sexual harassment is widely prevalent in public places, this was the first time a perpetrator was successfully prosecuted for his offence.

## Going Global with Governance Yemen's Refugee Paradox

Saleem Haddad

a.



As the number of refugees continues to rise due to war and conflict in the region, there is one place where this problem has so far gone unnoticed. As the impoverished country of Yemen fights to remain afloat, its refugee crisis threatens to boil over and sweep the entire region into a political impasse.

b.



The poorest country in the Middle East is facing an ongoing war in the North, a secessionist movement in the South, piracy attacks on its coast, and increasing al-Qaeda attacks throughout the country. It is therefore not surprising that the influx of thousands of refugees into its borders, fleeing the worst humanitarian crises in the world, garners little to no attention. Nonetheless, night after night, Yemen's lawless, remote southern beaches provide the backdrop for a slow-burning humanitarian crisis that has jeopardized the economy and stability of the country, and has the potential to destabilise the region as a whole. Without effective local and global governance structures to tackle the problem, both on the ground and at its roots, it is a question of when, not if, a spiral into chaos will occur.

### *"No Choice": African Refugees Flee to Yemen's Southern Beaches*

Every year, thousands of Somalis and Ethiopians risk their lives to cross the Gulf of Aden into Yemen, to escape violence, drought and poverty. Yemen lies along a historical migratory route and has been experiencing an unremitting flow of new arrivals for over 17 years; but recently, as conditions have worsened in the Horn of Africa, the numbers fleeing have drastically increased. In 2007, almost 30,000 took the dangerous voyage. This year, Yemen has witnessed almost triple that amount.

Refugees have fled the Horn of Africa for a variety of reasons: Somalia has suffered from a collapsed state and an ongoing civil war for almost 20 years, and the past two years has seen some of the worst fighting in the country's bloody history. In Ethiopia and much of the Horn of Africa, climate change and poverty are driving forces for people to make the perilous journey to Yemen.

Lacking safe and legal ways to leave their countries, Somalis and Ethiopians pay smugglers to take them to Yemen. Upon arrival, refugees are given a stark choice: either be taken to the Kharaz refugee camp in the middle of the desert, or make it on their own in one of Yemen's impoverished cities. Most opt for the latter option, living in urban slums, with roughly 7,500 choosing to stay at the Kharaz camp in southern Yemen. The influx of refugees seeking a better life in Yemen exacerbates the country's existing economic and political problems: It is the poorest of the 22 Arab nations, struggling with 40% unemployment, 27% inflation and 46% malnutrition rates.

### *Local Response and the Failure of Governance*

Since 1991, Yemen has offered automatic refugee status to Somalis. At this rate, however, Yemen cannot sustain the current refugee situation. The UN

estimates that there are 84,000 Somali refugees in Yemen, whereas the Yemeni government claims the number is closer to 300,000. At the moment, neither the Yemeni government nor the international organizations responsible for refugee protection and resettlement have the capacity or governance structures in place to deal with these flows.

As part of a US\$19 million operation, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) operates shelters and reception centers for the refugees in Yemen and has increased its efforts to discourage people from making the illegal crossing into Yemen. It has also sponsored training programs for local coast guard personnel and other officials, and has been trying to design policies, interventions and governance frameworks where assistance and protection are provided to refugees in Yemen's urban settings. However, the needs remain largely unaddressed with major gaps in water, sanitation, health, education and infrastructure.

Despite this, the UN is nowhere to be seen on the ground, as it hastily runs its operations through a local implementing partner, with little to no regulation

a-b. Al Kharaz Somali refugee camp, Yemen.

c. New arrivals Section at the Al Kharaz camp.

c.



**Group of Six Ethiopians 03.10.07**

"We left Bossaso on a boat with a lot of people, about 130. The Ethiopians were separated from the Somali. The Somali were treated better and were on the upper deck. We Ethiopians were at the bottom. People urinated and vomited on us. The smugglers beat us with sticks and belts. When we arrived close to the shore they ordered us to jump out. Some could not swim and 4 people died."

**Refugee Testimonials**  
Short Stories



**Somali Woman, 37, 19.01.08**

"We thought we would arrive in Yemen quickly [as they had come on a smaller, faster boat] but then our boat had a problem and we thought we would die in the middle of the sea. Six children died because we ran out of food and water. Then they threw them from the boat. The boat took 5 days for the crossing. There was also a woman who turned crazy and started to bite us, saying 'I'm hungry'."

**An older woman from Mogadishu, who was travelling with her son, recalling the death of her 7-year-old grandson. 10.12.07**

"When the boat was still near Bossaso it hit a rock. The smugglers were afraid that the boat would sink and started throwing people overboard. They took my grandson and threw him in the water and also some others. I wanted to grab him to get him back into the boat, but the smugglers prevented them from getting into the boat and pushed them down into the water. At least three people died that way."

**Somali Woman, 40, 11.04.08**

"As the boat was coming towards the shore, my husband was getting the children ready. He wanted to give them biscuits, but the smugglers threw the biscuits in the sea. Then suddenly the smugglers threw him into the sea by grabbing his legs. He resisted, holding on to the boat, but they hit him with knives. Then the smugglers threw my two daughters into the sea. I held onto my youngest son. The children were crying. But thank God there was a young man who could swim very well who helped my children to reach the shore. We slept on the shore. In the morning, I saw the dead body of my husband."

**Ethiopian Man, 20, 10.03.08**

"This is the third time I came. The first time, I tried to go to Saudi Arabia, but they arrested me and I was deported to Ethiopia. The second time, when I arrived in Yemen, the coast guards arrested me and sent me to Sana'a where I was in the jail for 20 days, after that I was deported to Ethiopia."

or accountability mechanisms. The UN says that the reason it does not have staff on the ground is that southern Yemen is a lawless tribal region, too dangerous for UN staff to operate openly.

At the same time, the lack of governance structures to tackle the refugee problem in Yemen contributes to haphazard attempts by various international, local and government agencies working to dampen the potential unrest created by this population flow. Migration to Yemen has been ongoing for over 17 years, and the slow and inadequate international response is difficult to understand.

The UNHCR has not been able to register all the refugees residing in Yemen. During the agency's registration exercise, which ended in January 2007, only 48,000 Somalis came forward, most of whom had been in Yemen since at least 2004. Other refugee populations are equally difficult to identify and reach. Ethiopians are considered 'economic migrants' by the Yemeni authorities, leaving them at risk for detention and deportation. As a result, most evade the authorities once they reach Yemen.

On the government's side, Yemen does not yet have a national body responsible for managing refugee affairs. Instead, various national and international bodies apply various pieces of legislation to refugees in an inconsistent and ad hoc manner, leaving them, and their host country, at serious risk. The lack of a single governance body represents a hindrance to addressing protection and resettlement.

**Re-Thinking the Refugee Paradox: A Global Perspective**

The issue is not simply one to be tackled at the national level, and in fact, the lack of a global approach to tackling ongoing refugee flows has contributed to a worsening of the situation in various contexts, including Yemen.

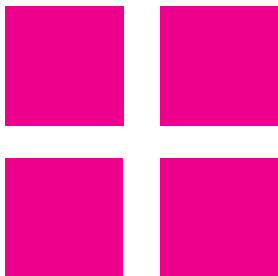
Refugee protection should be seen as a global public good, and the problem is one of regional – even global – security. The plight of refugees in Yemen has been overshadowed by the dozens of pirate attacks off Somalia's coast that have grabbed international headlines in recent months. Piracy has implications for corporate and big business interests, but heavy and ongoing refugee flows into a fragile state will have spill over effects into the region as a whole: An unstable Yemen will lead to an unstable Arabian Gulf, which may have disastrous effects on the region's security and oil supplies.

At the international level, governance structures that wish to deal with refugee issues would need to effectively look at the refugee problem through various lenses. Refugee problems must be understood to be structurally interconnected to other global issues, including migration, security, development, peace-building and human rights, and regulated by effective and well-enforced global governance systems. Unfortunately, what are currently in place are a number of ad hoc procedures that are dealt with on an issue-by-issue basis.

The idea of a system of global gover-

nance should not be understood as a global government, but rather as a framework of principles, rules and laws to tackle global problems, upheld by a diverse set of institutions. This would allow problems such as the influx of African refugees into Yemen to be tackled from a broader perspective than simply humanitarian and development work at the point of arrival. Such a system would need regional and international support to tackle the issue from its various sources in the Horn of Africa, supplemented by local governance mechanisms at the point of arrival in Yemen.

Until the political will is mustered by the international community, the anarchic waters of the Gulf of Aden will continue to be host to a potentially destabilising crisis with global implications. *en.v*



## Leading Ladies

*Leen Al-Zaben*

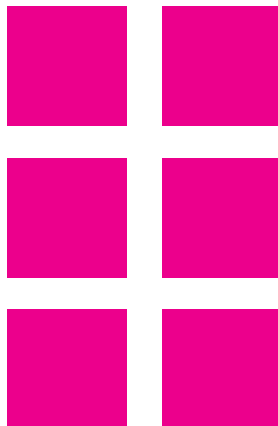
The leading ladies of the Middle East have made it their business to be responsible citizens and have created a standard as regional role models. They have managed to combine their initiatives towards responsible business practice, education, health and welfare into a model that has translated into improved quality of life for the less privileged; as well as a society that is more aware of its activities and impacts on its members.

The immense efforts of each of these three women have contributed to enhancing the overall welfare of the region, as well as in each of their respective countries. They have not only set up various initiatives and institutions to bolster their efforts, but have also succeeded in creating a culture of giving through the spread of a humanitarian message. This has left a significant imprint on local societies, and will hopefully encourage others to follow suit.



## Queen Rania Al Abdullah

Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan recently launched the Arab Sustainability Leadership Group (ASLG) that is driven by its mission to commit to sustainability and reporting. She announced: "In the Arab world, we desperately need to focus our energies on creating equal opportunity for all, particularly our young people, our potential [and] our future." The ASLG aims to encourage businesses to balance the profits they reap with environmental protection and equal opportunity in order to keep the concept of sustainability at the forefront. Queen Rania said that the ASLG "will be the region's voice on the global stage, ensuring the Arab world not only catches up, but keeps pace with the front runners in [the] field [of sustainability]." Queen Rania of Jordan has also pioneered various projects in Jordan that address education, women's issues, equality and general welfare.



## Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein

Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, the wife of the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, and the daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan, has also left her mark in the region. Princess Haya has geared her efforts towards supporting the health and medical needs of the Dubai community with a focus on specialized healthcare services, child health and rehabilitation for children with special needs. Princess Haya has also been working toward implementing creative educational programs in order to achieve the educational goals of Dubai. The princess has additionally contributed to bettering the welfare of the Jordanian people by setting up various charitable initiatives such as Tikyet Um Ali – an organization that provides food and services to underprivileged Jordanians.

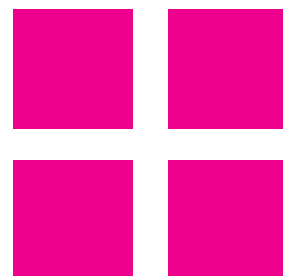
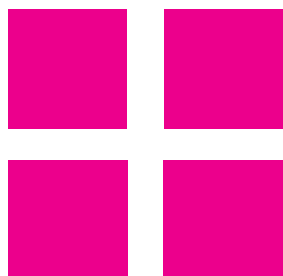
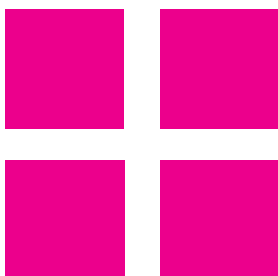
## Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser

Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned of Qatar has also pledged her efforts towards bettering the state of her nation and spreading awareness about core issues such as healthcare and education. Sheikha Mozah has guided the Qatar Foundation on a number of educational projects in order to put Qatar on the world map as the hub for higher education in the Middle East. Additionally, Sheikha Mozah's efforts have been focused on creating an environment where research, technology and business can fuse together in order to bring together students, professionals and educators. She has also been addressing the need for environmental education in order to raise awareness about the environment and arm the youth of tomorrow with the knowledge of environmental and conservation issues.



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# *Who do you think will be the driver of social change in the Arab world for 2009?*

*"Who will be is not apparent, what should be? Educational institutions." – D.S.*

*"Syria. But unfortunately, I don't believe they will succeed in changing the Arab government's views on their own responsibilities, as each government is too ignorant and self-involved." – K.E.*

*"Non-governmental organizations have recently adopted the concept of social responsibility, and will be major agents of change in getting companies to recognize the potential they have to be socially responsible." – N.F.*

*"Our collective conscience..." – Z.J.*

*"Education, Education, and finally Education!!! That is what is needed to create awareness, social responsibility, and good citizenship." – A.K.*

*"All our leaders! If they should continue on their paths; they may one day drive our populations to take on the greatest social responsibility of all – toppling those who are corrupt for the good of all." – T.K.*

*"The Arab citizens who are responsible for their own fate, and must take it into their own hands. The people should have the power; it's time to take it back." – D.A.*

*"Who says that there will be moves towards greater social responsibility in 2009?" – S.K.*

*envearth.com*

## Changing the Philanthropic Face of CSR in the Arab World

*Passinte Mokhtar*

Social responsibility and community development projects have been gaining ground in the region. The private sector has been slowly catching up as the drivers in this social undertaking, and gaining speed as pioneers in a field traditionally dominated by the government. As companies push to revamp their initiatives from simple philanthropy into established Corporate Social Responsibility programs, in what areas have regional corporations come out on top?

*Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) has been gaining momentum in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, shaping itself as a new paradigm in the way companies conduct business. With the economic reform agenda in the region, corporations are increasingly being asked to participate in addressing social problems. There has been a consensus on the urgent need for companies to conduct business in a way that adds value to societies in which they operate. No longer are environmental and social problems seen as the executive responsibility of the government alone. So what are the drivers for this change? To what extent is the private sector willing to fulfill this demand?

Ten years ago, the term CSR was only used among multinational enterprises and civil society organizations. Individuals and organizations across sectors viewed their social responsibility as either aiding progress, or, at the very least, impeding the stagnant or accelerated degradation of the region. Recently, a remarkable change has occurred – governments in the MENA region have become pro-active in institutionalizing, promoting and supporting the social role of the corporate sector. This change is a continuation of reform programs embarked upon by MENA countries to create environments more conducive to private sector development and participation, while raising the socio-economic status of countries in the region.

After decades of the state dominating economic activity, governments in the MENA region began to increasingly rely on the private sector to foster growth. Corporations in Morocco and Tunisia spearheaded this process, but progress



a. One of REUSE 2.0's participating photographers gives the Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Dr. Fadel Safar, a tour of his photography installation as Zain's Corporate Communications & Relations Manager, Khuloud A. Al-Feeli looks on.

b. Zain co-sponsored en.v's REUSE 2.0 exhibition as part of their ongoing commitment to corporate social responsibility.

has been slow. Egypt has been able to sell almost one-third of all state-owned enterprises in the last few years, and privatization is picking up in Algeria, Yemen, Jordan and Lebanon. Yet, economic growth in most countries has consistently remained below potential. Though economic performance improved in the 2000s, with GDP growth up from 3.7% in the 1990s to 4.6% between 2000 and 2003, MENA region reform has lagged behind the rest of the world.

One of the greatest development challenges facing the MENA region is high demographic transition – with a heavy supply of young workers to the labor force – and growing unemployment rates that have pressured social and economic infrastructures. According to a prediction by the Arab Labor Organization, more than 32 million people will be looking for jobs in Arab states by 2010. The UN and World Bank have forecast the jobs needed for the growing numbers of school drop outs, alongside the unemployed in the MENA region, as 80 million over 20 years. Even so, MENA's population growth can be turned into an unprecedented opportunity for sustained economic growth, provided that new entrants become productively

employed.

Improving the investment climate, facing unemployment challenges and modernizing governance structures and operations have taken position at the core of MENA's reform. Governments have begun to realize that CSR can significantly and positively contribute to enhancing countries' socio-economic development. Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian National Authority, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen have all endorsed the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development, highlighting the role of CSR and corporate governance in creating a healthy investment climate. Additionally, governments are working to harmonize their national laws and support awareness-raising on CSR-related issues. For example, Morocco has enforced a new labor law that raises the minimum employment age, reduces work-week hours, calls for a periodic review of the Moroccan minimum wage, improves worker health and safety regulations, addresses gender equity in the workplace, and promotes employment of the disabled.

To support the efforts of governments in the Arab region, many corporations have highlighted job creation and



**Socially Conscious Corporations**



**Aramex**

In the past 25 years, Aramex has been committed to acting responsibly towards its shareholders, customers, people, the community and the environment. Aramex has become a strong advocate of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and has succeeded in institutionalizing a strategic approach to its responsibility towards society. A prime example of Aramex's

achievements in CSR is the founding of "Ruwwad," an initiative with the purpose of acting as a catalyst for members of marginalized communities to work together to meet their needs. Other activities that Aramex engages in encompass areas of disaster relief, youth development, education and employment, entrepreneurship and athletics support.

**BP**

BP operates in a way that contributes to the company's long-term sustainability and that of the society and environment around it. BP supports a range of projects at all levels of education - from early childhood learning to advanced research at leading universities around the world. To contribute to solving the problem of unemployment, BP has expanded its educational programs to fund the Technical Skills Employability Program, which aims at providing industries with a qualified and highly skilled workforce. BP is also involved

in the area of health by funding water quality improvement projects and investing in programs to reduce the incidence of disease and improve public health.

**Procter & Gamble**

P&G's motto, 'Touching lives, improving life,' is about ensuring a better quality of life through the company's commitment to quality brands that meet consumer needs and contribute to the prosperity of employees, shareholders and communities. Through P&G's corporate cause 'Live, Learn and Thrive,' the company supports projects targeting the development of children (aged 0-13) in need. These projects are in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals, and seek to keep children healthy and disease-free. P&G also works in local communities where it operates to create places that enhance children's ability to learn, as well as provide access to programs that help develop self-esteem and skills for life.

**Vodafone**

At Vodafone, the business strategy and Corporate Social Responsibility strategy are inseparable and vital to the company's ongoing commercial success. The company does not consider CSR as merely a philanthropic gesture. Vodafone invests significant resources to respond to the needs of the communities in which it operates. It has a remarkable footprint in supporting disaster relief projects and programs targeting the most disadvantaged youth and their communities with a focus on the areas of health, education and welfare. Their aim is to make a difference in people's lives through alleviating poverty, enhancing wellbeing and promoting the development of sustainable economic activity.

**Lafarge**

Lafarge is convinced that sustained economic growth cannot occur without improving the quality of lives of the communities where it operates. Everywhere it has a presence, the company works with local populations and associations to implement action programs for economic and social development, environmental protection and public health. Lafarge's strategy is to exchange viewpoints and know-how and implement practical solutions that respond to local needs. It collaborates with the expertise needed - including NGOs, public and semi-public organizations and medical staff - to implement sustainable development projects that support natural disaster relief, youth skills development, child education, prevention and treatment of diseases, building houses for the needy, and heritage protection.

opportunities for young people as their corporate cause. In Egypt, Yemen, Morocco and Jordan, Microsoft is partnering with governments, non-governmental organizations and academics to deliver solutions in three key, interrelated areas: transforming education, fostering local innovation, and enabling jobs and opportunities. In addition, Barclays Bank in Egypt is supporting a number of initiatives to equip youths with leadership and labor market skills. According to Rania Hasanen, Barclays Bank Egypt's Community Relations Manager:

"Around half of Barclays' CSR budget is directed to youth training and skills development." Also, Abdul Latif Jameel Company in Saudi Arabia has recently initiated the Grameen-Jameel Pan Arab program, targeting the creation of one million jobs through a microcredit program by 2011.

To encourage these and further efforts, many governments have facilitated the creation of a policy environment conducive and rewarding to the adoption of CSR. This year, for example, the Cairo and Alexandria Stock Exchange has launched its Corporate Social Responsibility Award in accordance to the CASE 30 Index. CEMEX, Assiut Cement Company, received the CASE "Best Social Responsible" Award in recognition of the company's various efforts to build the infrastructure of surrounding communities, improve the well-being of CEMEX plant neighbors and employees, and conserve natural resources.

MENA governments have also promoted and engaged public-private partnerships (PPP) to affect positive social and environmental change, and to realize targeted developmental goals. Over the past few years, numbers of PPP projects have taken place across various industries in countries such as Egypt, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman and Jordan. Furthermore, some Arab countries have started to pass legislation on transparency and accountability in reporting and assurance - an indication to companies that CSR is being taken seriously.

Currently, CSR has substance in almost all Arab countries, yet its perspectives differ from country to country, according to governance performance and the economic reform strategies being applied. In some countries, the focus is on the search for a business case, while in others, CSR is arising from or responding to pressures and demands from society. Still, in others, the debate is driven by and rooted in moral reasoning. Certainly the gradual change in the role of governance has highlighted the need to transcend CSR from an ad hoc, voluntary, charity, and philanthropic action to a deliberate and regular developmental action that will leave sustainable impacts and support countries' socio-economic development plans. Therefore, education, youth empowerment and employment projects supported by private corporations have been increasing in the MENA region - shifting the simple acts of charity and donation to the implementation of sustainable development projects. *en.v*

b.



## Good Governance for Development A Necessity or Merely a Pipe Dream?

*Nesma Farahat*

Good Governance has become the new benchmark by which various processes of a government are measured and graded. How and from where did this new system develop? What does MENA's report card look like?



*UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon.*

While the concept of 'good governance' likely sounds familiar, developing a solid definition of the term may prove cumbersome. Governance – the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented, or not implemented, in terms of the management of resources for social and economic development - has been a factor in human society since the beginning of time. Good governance, however, has only come to gain recognition and substance over the past 20 years. International organizations and developed nations have looked to good governance as a necessary condition for sustainable development and poverty reduction. With such heavy weight being placed on the shoulders of good governance, it is imperative to fully understand what is meant by the concept, on what basis it is applied and adapted to changing contexts, and how measuring its success, or lack thereof, can contribute to development.

In 2000, the United Nations, in seeking to create an agenda for reducing poverty and improving lives, set specific targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In endeavoring to achieve these goals, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) looked to good governance to create an environment where poverty could, and would, be eliminated. By employing the elements of good governance, and exercising political,

economic, and administrative authority, human development can be achieved, conflicts managed and resolved, and needs met.

By association with the MDGs, good governance has become a buzzword that cannot be contained. However, little consensus as to its meaning, or how it can be applied, has been reached. Good governance is not merely regulated to the operation of governmental bodies, but rather extends to the partnership between government, parliament, civil society and the private sector. For good governance to be effective, it is assumed that there exists a mutually supportive and cooperative relationship between these societal bodies. Ideally, through this relationship, executive, judicial, administrative, economic and corporate institutions make certain that corruption is minimized, minorities' views are ensured, and the most vulnerable members of society have their voices heard.

With the increased attention good governance has garnered, and the apparent benefits it has for development, major donors and international financial institutions have increasingly begun to tie their aid and loans to the condition that reforms to apply good governance are set into motion. This, however, has begged the question of whether there is a one-size-fits-all standard for good governance. The creation of the concept took place

in a Western context, with Western-derived standards of conduct. Whether these standards should be applied at face value in the developing South is of great concern to development practitioners.

In recent years, key players in the Arab world have looked to good governance as the basis of reform in the region. In February 2005, the Good Governance for Development in the Arab Countries initiative was launched by the Jordanian government and UNDP through its Program on Governance in the Arab Region (POGAR). Through this initiative, 16 Arab states, regional and international syndicates and organizations seek to make positive and sustainable reforms in the areas of civil service, governance of public finances, public sector reform, public service delivery, public-private partnership and regulatory reform. (See box to the right).

Another Arab initiative was the Conference on Arab Reform organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandria, Egypt, in 2004. Participants at the conference stressed the need for transparency in public life, the elimination of corruption, the safeguarding of rights of women, children and minorities, and protecting the basic rights of defendants before the courts – all issues rampant in Egyptian society. To tackle these issues and sustain human development, large-scale actions must take place.



**Ali Mokhtar**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Center for Development Services  
Near East Foundation



## The Eight Elements of Good Governance

### Participation

Both men and women, either directly or through legitimate, intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation allows for freedom of association and expression.

### Rule of Law

Fair, legal frameworks that are enforced impartially and ensure full protection of human rights. Impartial enforcement requires an incorruptible police force.

### Transparency

Decisions taken and enforced in a manner that follows rules and regulations. Information is available freely and is directly accessible.

### Responsiveness

All stakeholders are served within a reasonable timeframe. This is the responsibility of institutions and processes.

### Consensus Oriented

Mediation of the different interests in society to establish how the best interest of entire communities can be achieved. This requires a broad and long-term perspective to allow time for sustainable human development.

### Equity and Inclusiveness

The inclusion of all members of society. The most vulnerable members of society are of particular importance here, as they require the opportunities to maintain or improve their well being.

### Effectiveness and Efficiency

Making best use of resources to meet the needs of society. Of particular importance is the sustainable use of natural resources and the environmental protection.

### Accountability

Including governmental institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector. These bodies are accountable to those affected by their decisions or actions.

### How do you ensure equity and inclusiveness in CDS-led projects in the region?

Rather than making programs inclusive for all, we do the reverse. We design projects for marginalized groups so that they are not appealing to all groups. This ensures that we are able to focus on the vulnerable and marginalized. In terms of equity, we try to provide target groups with services [with which] they can equate to their peers. However, to achieve total equity, mega governmental schemes are needed.

### To what extent do you see safeguarding the rights of women, children and minorities in the region as essential to sustainable development and poverty reduction?

This is critical. Women first, and children second, constitute four-fifths of the population. If you want to reach a whole family, women and children are the entry point. Safeguarding, however, is a different issue. For example, our Young Women's Leadership Program had to include men in the original project idea – especially when working in rural areas. Without this, we ran the risk of getting negative social vibes that would prevent our project from proceeding.

### How can capacity building to promote social empowerment be a means for equity and inclusiveness?

At the national policy level, there is a lot of rhetoric about social empowerment. Laws are easily issued by policy makers, but execution is minimal. Real execution comes from lower institutional levels where capacity building is greatly required. Individuals at this level receive awareness training, but there is no real skill, behavioral or attitudinal change. There needs to be a shift in concentration on knowledge to skills and attitude.

### How important is it to have mutually supportive and cooperative relationships between government, civil society and the private sector in order to achieve levels of equity and inclusiveness?

There needs to be a level of dialogue between the three interrelated circles. The power plays in each sector are neither static nor equal, and coordination and communication across the sectors are imperative. For example, for issues of welfare, civil society and the private sector, expand and take a dominant role.

### How can one measure equity and inclusiveness and assess whether projects have successfully achieved such levels?

Each project has built-in measures to ensure inclusiveness. Monitoring this, however, is the function of an aware management.

One such action is the building of capacity. Capacity building consists of promoting democratic governance, improving structures and institutions responsible for policy making, invigorating civil society and creating a context of social empowerment. Through these channels, populations in the Arab world will have the power to positively influence the decisions that affect their life chances and the development process as a whole.

The multidimensionality of good governance is positive in the fact that it allows for much room to maneuver and adjust according to regional contexts. However, while it is possible for the Arab world to begin to incorporate and apply characteristics of good governance in ways that lead to sustainable human development, this multidimensionality is problematic when issues of measurability are raised. The ever-evolving concept of good governance makes pinning down an agreed-upon definition relatively impossible, let alone set standards for measurement.

Good governance can generally be measured in one of five ways: by observing civil and political liberties or political freedoms for the rule of law and governance; frequency of political violence; expert assessments and opinions; objective measures; and mixed measures that combine aggregate data, scales and expert opinions. However, these modes of measurement are so varied and open to interpretation that no real clarity exists. Without substantiated base indicators, good governance is subjective, and in the hands of the ad hoc practices of various institutions and bodies. Optimistically, however, H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the United Nations General Assembly, states:

“There are many hopeful signs of progress in the Middle East. The rule of law, good governance, and respect for democratic values, are principles that guide many of today's governments in the Arab world. And, the increasing role and influence of civil society and NGOs is a welcome trend in moving towards more open societies and greater gender

equality.”

Several states in the Arab region have yet to adopt good governance practices, but have exhibited strong economic growth. Who is to say that this growth does not have a positive impact on human development? And, who is to say that good governance was needed to achieve this level of growth? Countries in the region that are achieving levels of sustainable development and reduced poverty without adhering to loose good governance standards are raising questions of how strictly development aid should be tied to good governance, and to what extent the practice need be applied in the local context. These questions will only be answered when consensus, ironically a characteristic of good governance, is reached on definitions and tools for measurement. Until then, however, the United Nations should continue to press forward with their agenda of promoting good governance in the hopes that development follows in its path. *en.v*



As terror attacks in the region seem to be on the rise, and nowhere appears to be safe anymore... This begs the question: Where did we go wrong? Or, more importantly: Who went wrong?

On any given day, the cafes and hotels of Sharm el-Sheikh are buzzing with people and tourists from all over the world catching some sun and enjoying the pleasures of the Red Sea. However, on the night of the 23rd of July 2005, this was not the case. At approximately 1:00 a.m. that morning, a small car made its way through the gates of The Ghazala Gardens' Hotel, a five star hotel on the coast of Naama Bay, and stopped in front of the main reception. Within minutes, an explosion was set off that took with it the lives of 88 people – a terrorist attack directed at foreigners with the objective of harming the country's tourist industry.

The Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak vowed to respond forcefully to these attacks; promising to bring justice to the families of the victims, and protection from future terrorist attacks in the country. Investigations were carried out and a number of arrests made. However, less than a year later, another terrorist attack took place in the seaside resort town of Dahab, killing 23 people, and leaving the country feeling even more insecure.

The attacks are a result of a growing number of militant groups in the country who resort to terror to make their voices heard. Many of these groups are ever spreading across the region, and gaining in popularity among those feel-

ing unempowered and betrayed by their governments and leaders. How have these groups developed and why are they becoming so popular?

In the Middle East, terrorist attacks of this nature have occurred frequently over the last few years, mostly by Islamist fundamentalist groups seeking to gain public attention, while also destabilizing their local governments. Most of these groups developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s primarily as a result of people's frustrations with their governments' authoritarian regimes, and with leaders' inability to stand up to political pressure from the West. People believed that the Arab nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s failed in bringing countries together to fight foreign forces, and prevent their control over the Middle East. As a result, movements associated with Islam became a promising form of resistance.

It was not until the late 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, that these movements resorted to using violence for the purpose of making bold

## Fighting Fire with Fire The Leadership Vacuum

Dwan Kaoukji

a. Quneitra Orthodox Christian Church in the Golan Heights, Syria.

b. Golan Hospital - Rubble and surfaces pockmarked with bullet and shrapnel holes.

c. Non-violence training in the West Bank, Palestine.



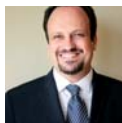
political statements, attracting both local and international attention. The terrorist attacks on the twin towers on September 11, 2001, are an example of how far extremist groups of this kind were willing to go to make their statements clear. Unlike hostage-taking or hijacking a plane, suicide attacks specifically target civilians to make a public statement, and offer no opportunity for negotiation.

As governments continued to maintain their status quos across the Middle East, their connection to their people began to weaken. Consequently, the distance between their objectives and those of the people they were meant to serve widened. Islamic fundamentalist groups began to see this distance as an opportunity to take the role governments used to occupy. However, this role has not always been so popular among people, and their use of violence an extremity.

As a result, governments across the Middle East have been forced to adopt tighter security measures within their boundaries to prevent further attacks from occurring. This has become particularly challenging considering many

**Bernard Haykel**

Professor of Near Eastern Studies  
Director, Institute of the Transregional Study of  
the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia  
Princeton University



**How can good governance play a pivotal role in deterring the alarming rise and increased following of terrorist / radical Islamic regimes in the region?**

Al-Qaeda, and other radical Islamic groups, often justify their ideology and terrorist acts as a reaction to the pervasive corruption and the brutal

nature of the regimes in the Arab and Islamic worlds. In other words, one can see Al-Qaeda's agenda as being aimed at establishing good governance, albeit through violent and terrorist strategies and tactics. Bin Ladin and Ayman al-Zawahiri constantly argue that greater transparency and accountability are not only much needed in the Middle East, but that they are indeed fundamentally Islamic values, and that they would institute these should they ever come to rule. In particular, the ideologues of radical Islam focus on the massive oil wealth of the Arabian Gulf and claim that these resources belong to the entire Muslim world, but are tragically being wasted by corrupt regimes.

And because of this, Al-Qaeda has argued that if these resources cannot be utilized properly then they should be destroyed because there exploita-

tion helps perpetuate corrupt power and injustice. The failed Al-Qaeda attempt to destroy the Abqaiq oil facility in Saudi Arabia in 2006 was in pursuit of this goal. There is no doubt that corruption and flagrant forms of injustice play into the hands of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and have a radicalizing effect on a generation of young men and women who cannot reconcile the contradiction between the justice of Islam with the reality of daily brutalization and the obscene wastefulness of public resources. Because of this, the most effective ideological and propaganda weapon any society has against the nihilistic violence of Al-Qaeda is good and accountable governance.

c.



of these groups are homegrown and usually spread out, making them difficult to isolate. In Lebanon, for example, an attack by a militant group called Fatah Al-Islam demanded much strategic action and military force from the government. The insurgents initiated an uprising in the Nahr al Bared Palestinian refugee camp in the summer of 2007, which left approximately 400 people dead, most of whom were civilians. The Lebanese government responded with heavy military action, by air and land with bulldozers and tanks that moved into the camps and attempted to capture the insurgents.

The cost of fighting terrorism is expensive, and the rehabilitation of people after the attacks even more costly – particularly when civilians are attacked in the process. The attack on Fatah Al-Islam cost an estimated US\$42 million in humanitarian assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) to meet the needs of some 30,000 Palestinians displaced by the attacks. The government could not afford the rehabilitation costs and is currently receiving assistance in aid from contributing donor countries willing to help.

However, the response taken by the Lebanese government is not unlike that adopted by a number of other Middle Eastern countries, using force to demonstrate strength and security in the coun-

try, coupled with political and financial support from the West. As would be expected, these actions increase the distance between governments and the Islamic fundamentalist groups.

The problem is that despite all the policies adopted by Arab governments, there appears to be no decrease in the number of terrorist attacks in the region. Quite the contrary; some would speculate that they seem to occur more frequently. Additionally, Islamic fundamentalist groups have developed strong followings and in some cases have established political power within government. In the West Bank, for example, the political group Hamas was elected into parliament in January 2006, despite being considered a militant group by the international community. Their reputation for using violence as a means for resistance was not an issue for voters, who believed that Hamas's opposition to Fatah legitimate, and therefore a priority.

Arab leaders struggling to maintain stability in their country face a serious challenge: How are they meant to respond to these actions? Do they continue to respond forcefully through violence? Or do they attempt to engage in a dialogue with the opposing groups?

The answer is not straight forward, and there is no evidence to show that one option is more effective than the other.

Although responses have varied slightly in the region, governments are beginning to learn from each other. An Arab anti-terrorism conference held in Tunis in June 2008, called for Arab states to develop greater regional co-operation between national governments to combat terrorism. This called for both political and financial support within the region. Additionally, some preventative measures were introduced that called for Arab states to devote their energy to the region's youth; providing them job opportunities and protecting them from being recruited by terrorist groups.

The attacks caused by Islamic fundamentalist groups are not acts unrelated to the political dynamics of Middle Eastern society. They are very much a reflection of the struggles of a powerless people seeking to undermine the power of government through violent acts. Many of these acts would lead people to believe that Islam encourages violence and terrorism, and anti-western sentiment. The reality is that Islam as practiced by these groups is alien to most Muslims in the region, and recognized for its hostility. However, the frustrations felt by them are not unfamiliar to many communities in the area. As a result, Middle Eastern governments are faced with the risk of terrorist attacks becoming more severe and progressively more radical should these frustrations not be addressed. *en.v*

## Out with the New and in with the Old?

Dwan Kaoukji

The region is host to a plethora of historical sites and cities, which have begun to show some wear and tear due to rapid urbanization, pollution and lack of planning. Now, however, several international organizations have teamed up with local partners to restore and preserve the historical and cultural integrity of several cities in the region. This next story begins in the heart of the Old City of Damascus...

*Rays of light* peep through tiny holes in the metal roofs that cover the wide passages of Souq el Hamidiyah, in the heart of the Old City in Damascus. Shoppers make their way into the market through the dark arched alleyways, to stalls selling traditional hand embroidered dresses, t-shirts, spices and much more. Everything is available here, from clothes to car parts – and at affordable prices too. Originating in the Roman period, and later restored by the Ottomans in the 19th century, the Souq is known in the Arab world for its traditional architecture and modern merchandise.

Like many old and inhabited cities in the Middle East, Damascus hosts hundreds of ancient sites that suffer from neglect and are slowly at risk of dilapidation. One of the reasons is because there are no formal infrastructures in place to protect these sites, or to prevent them from being destroyed. As a result, city residents are not aware of the risks affecting the cities in which they live.

The poor conditions of these sites have attracted the attention of a number of international organizations that have put pressure on local governments to preserve the heritage of its cities. A significant number of these sites are located in the Middle East. In 2008, the World Monument Fund included the Old City in Damascus in its list of the 100 Most Endangered Sites in the World. The purpose of the list is to raise public and international awareness

a.



c.



b.



d.



of any threats that endanger old cities across the globe and that prevent them from being liveable cities.

At a time when rapid urbanization is of major concern to city governments in the Middle East, it becomes difficult to make heritage preservation a priority for city councils. This is particularly challenging as cities continue to modernize, hoping to catch up with competing neighboring counterparts. Should the restoration of heritage sites be of concern to city governors, or does it lack the urgency of, for example, the improvement of roads?

Some would argue that restoring the heritage of cities simultaneously improves the well-being of its residents. This idea is particularly popular among organizations like the United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which advocate for preserving the humanity and cultural identity of cities. They believe that this should be a global responsibility that should be taken on by local governors as well as the international community.

However, these ideas are difficult to sustain, considering it is ultimately easier and more profitable to build new

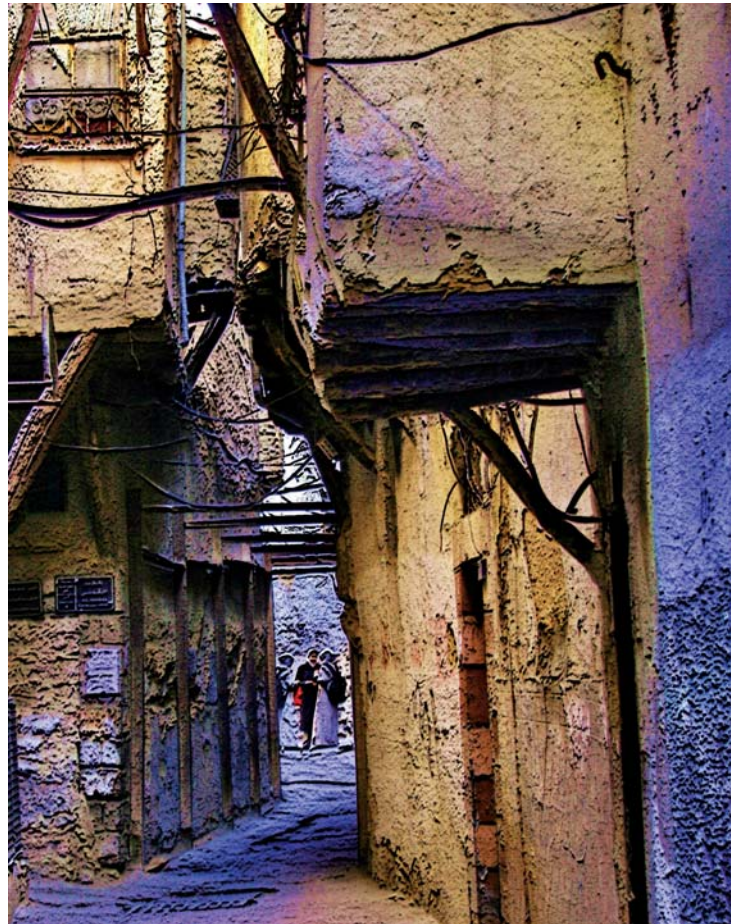
and modern sites instead. The option to redevelop can be more attractive to city governors whose objectives are to bring economic opportunities to their cities. In 2007 for example, Damascus' city government decided to demolish a number of abandoned buildings to make space available for new commercial developments. While there are a few laws to protect heritage sites in Syria, there is not enough money to restore them. So, for the most part, the new developments win, and traditional buildings are torn down instead.

In a city like Damascus, this phenomenon is widespread. Despite being one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, the city also has a thriving modern urban culture. Founded in the third millennium BCE, the city came under the control of various civilizations from Greco-Roman, Islamic, to today's Arab Nationalist Syrian party. Today, Damascus is a bustling metropolis with an estimated population of four million. Although its old quarters are currently occupied by people whose generations precede them by centuries, its new districts are flooded with modern shops, coffee shops and nightclubs. A number of Middle Eastern cities, in particular those with an abundance of heritage sites, suffer from the same

- a. The Citadel in the Old City is still intact and well preserved.
- b. Snow dusts the domes of mosques in Damascus.
- c. View of some houses in the Old City.
- d. Skyline of the Old City
- e. Souq Al Hamidiyah, Damascus.
- f. The Old City.



f.



dilemma and look to institutions in the West for expertise and financial help to restore their ancient sites. However, to do so, cities are expected to adopt the regulations and conditions that come with this type of assistance, and they include improving the participation of local residents in the decision-making process.

But what happens if residents prefer new and modern buildings to the old ones? According to Dr. Shadia Touqan, director of the Old City of Jerusalem Revitalization Plan, speaking at a charitable event, she suggested that the best way to approach residents is to “[...] make them aware and proud of their heritage. Some feel they are stuck in a slum, and thus it is important to raise their awareness of the value of the building they live in, and encourage their participation and bring in services for them, and the community. That’s the challenge – to make it a place where people are proud to live and participate.”

According to many international aid agencies like the World Bank, engaging residents in the planning process is a key element to receiving funding and guarantees a successful project. As a result, pressure is put on city councilors to encourage stakeholders to voice their concerns in the development of their areas. Additionally, governors are also expected to take into consideration the needs of people in their plans for restoration.

However, participatory methods of this nature are not popular among policymakers in the Middle East. They represent a western way of working with communities that is both formal and unfamiliar. Policymakers in the Middle East are believed to represent the concerns of the people they serve, and have their own traditions for communicating with these people. As a result,

participatory processes are superficially taken up to accommodate to the needs of donors, but may or may not have an actual effect on the people they are meant to help.

There is a need for local initiatives to educate people about the importance of the heritage sites they live amongst, and the risks to which these buildings are exposed. Adopting ideas and methods from the West does not necessarily solve this problem. Unless a process is developed to encourage residents and city governors to make these cities ‘liveable cities,’ the restoration of heritage sites will continue to be the responsibility of international aid organizations. *en.v*

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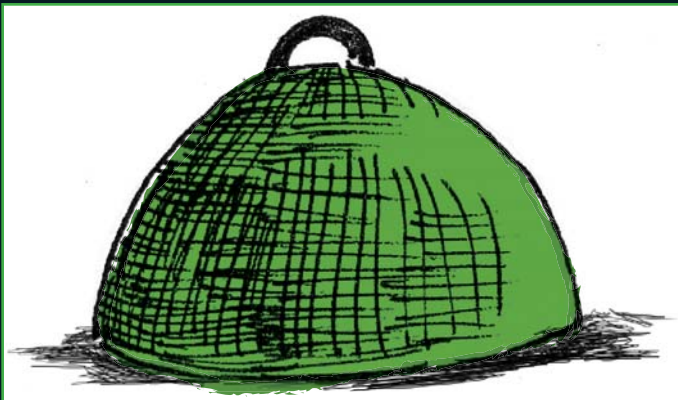
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## THE VERVE

FASHION  
FOOD  
SHOPPING  
SPORTS  
TRAVEL



a. Bourj Hammoud, Beirut.

b-d. Jewelry artisans remain behind factory doors virtually unknown all over the world.

Ever wonder where the jewelry you are wearing originates from? Who is the jewelry-maker behind each piece? This is the story of one...

*“Meet me in Bourj Hammoud, 7:30 a.m. tomorrow; I take you to really work.”* Golabi’s broken English was perfect, his sentences were unembellished and always to the point.

Golabi is the chief craftsman at an established jewelry house in Beirut where I interned for a week in 2004. His proposition to meet him the next day in Bourj Hammoud, the Armenian district of Beirut, was out of insistence that my learning should not end and potentially, therefore, go to waste. Thanks to the strong language barrier, Golabi invested a lot of time and energy into training me during my internship – thinking that I was an apprentice, he was understandably furious to find out at the end of the week that I was leaving.

I arrived promptly at 7:30 a.m. the next day. I had never been to Bourj Hammoud and was amazed to see signs written in Armenian, lines of soujuk (sausages) hanging in the windows of every butcher and jewelry shop at each corner. This unique world that I was being introduced into would be my refuge for the entire year.

Golabi took me to a short road entirely occupied by small studios with frosted glass sliding doors. He explained that each studio included a small self-sufficient factory where a number of jewelers, usually ranging from five to eight men, produced pieces that were then sold to dealers. These dealers buy the pieces anonymously, which means

## Exploited Jewel

Nur Kaoukji



that the jewelers of Bourj Hammoud never know which major jewelry house has purchased the piece. The pieces are then stamped and sold by these major jewelry houses, generally retailing at 10 times the price. He also explained that on occasion, dealers will arrive with designs from jewelry houses that they then commission these factories to make.

Golabi was the star of the jewelry district in Bourj Hammoud; he had made it out of the industrial world and was finally appreciated as an artist at an established atelier. Unfortunately, he is one of few – Armenian jewelers of Bourj Hammoud work with love and passion in a trade that exploits their talent and art every day.

The factory that I worked for was a small one, consisting of four jewelers who had been personally trained by Golabi: “He trained us, now we train you.” For the entire year that I spent working there – at odd hours of the day in order to attend my university classes – I was put to work under the main craftsman, Hagob.

Hagob was my mentor, he taught me the entire process of jewelry-making: from melting the gold, making wire, soldering, to polishing. He invested much of his extra time and energy into making sure that I perfected the skills, which he had acquired from the age of 14. Although he was only 24, Hagob had managed to support himself, study, work and participate in political rallies, while also maintaining a social life.

Hagob, who loves the craft, once spent two weeks perfecting a single pair of cascading diamond earrings with which he then painstakingly parted. One night, after a month’s period of mourning this separation, I received a text message when I was on my way to the factory.

“Look up at the bridge at the entrance of the Bourj.”

I did, and there it was in all its glory – Hagob’s pride and joy was lit up on a poster the length of the bridge.

Under it sat the name of another jeweler. *en.v*

## Foreign Solutions to Local Problems

*Mindy Schulte*

When arable land is at a minimum, or when agricultural expertise is lacking; where is a nation to go to produce food? Why not buy out plots of land in other parts of the world where fertile soil is in abundance? That is exactly what some countries in the region are doing...

*Hunger is not a new problem* in the MENA region. Millions of people have been struggling with malnutrition and access to food for years, and international efforts are ramping up to address the worsening global economic and food crisis.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that over 800 million people around the world are undernourished. And even for many who are able to maintain nutritional health, it can be quite a struggle to put food on the table. Where is the food crisis of the new millennium stemming from? According to the UN's Millennium Development Goals 2008 Report, under-investment in agricultural programs and farmland in developing nations is the largest cause of the crisis. Lack of investment means out-of-date agricultural technology and poor harvest yields, which leaves many countries resorting to importing vast quantities of food including staples like wheat. Many countries in the MENA region currently import over 50% of their food products. Even in areas of the world with better resources for funding agriculture, arid land, severe droughts and sweltering dry heat can result in poor conditions for farming and livestock.

So what are we doing to combat the food crisis?

Lebanon and Syria are turning to international organizations to help underwrite food subsidies. Others, like

Morocco, are cutting down tariffs on imported foods to make foreign food sources more affordable while limiting exports to keep food in the country. With groups such as the Red Cross and last summer's G8 Summit bringing more attention to the crisis, strategies for investing in longer term solutions are beginning to emerge. Countries like Djibouti and Yemen are seeking technical support from the World Bank to design more effective food policy responses. Governments are also exploring ways to increase salaries, especially among government employees, to help families combat rising food prices until costs stabilize. However, the most sustainable long-term solutions call for countries to produce their own food and reduce dependence on international imports. But how does a country without the natural resources for productive farming produce domestic crops?

Saudi Arabia is looking into agricul-

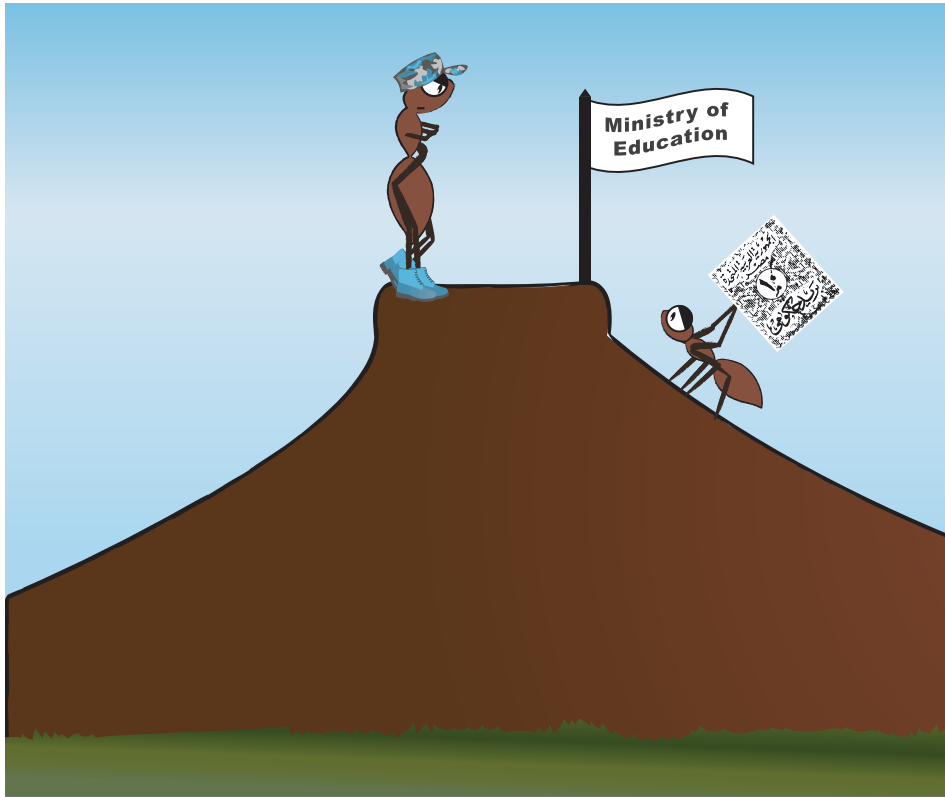
tural lands in areas from Pakistan to the Ukraine and Thailand for potential large-scale farming projects. The United Arab Emirates is also exploring sites in Kazakhstan and the Sudan, while Libya is considering farmland in South Korea and Mongolia. These "overseas" domestic investments may mean that solutions to the food crisis in the MENA region are on the way in the years to come. Meanwhile, WorldHunger.org notes in its 2008 report that Kuwait, Syria, Egypt, Iran and Turkey have been making great progress to reduce hunger levels over the past 15 years. The key is to continue current efforts by combining international relief and food subsidies with stronger investments in local agriculture. So far, MENA is off to the right start, but as Josette Sheeran, Executive Director for the United Nations World Food Programme, reminded the world recently: "We are still in a food crisis. We are not out of the woods yet." *en.v*



## Shopping for a Stamp

*Nur Kaoukji*

The following is the story of one girl's journey through the bureaucratic labyrinth that is our public sector system...



*All I needed was one stamp;* one stamp from the Lebanese Ministry of Education to validate my years of secondary schooling, enabling me to eventually enter university or work if I chose to do so.

In search of this magical stamp, I landed at the steps of a decrepit, once white and now murky, building located in Mousharrafiyeh – a southern suburb of Beirut. It was hot and humid – rays of heat could be seen radiating from the ministry building, cars were tooting their horns relentlessly, and the area was bustling with busy-looking people running in and out of the building. Apprehensive and confused, I turned to my taxi driver, Abu Ahmed, who pointed at the three broken steps that led to the entrance of the building. He then drove off and left me alone to face a journey that I will never forget.

One of the first, of many senseless things, I encountered was a young man in civilian clothing leaning on an M-16, which was probably produced during the Cold War. I soon became aware that it was a waste of time as he flipped aimlessly through my papers only to brush

me off wishing me God's assistance. Luckily, a sweet old man sitting at the foot of the steps realized I was facing some difficulty, and told me that I could find 'The Stamp' on the third floor.

With no floor signs to guide me and armed only with my broken Arabic, I somehow found myself on the landing of the third floor. In the corridor were around seven blank doors to choose from, two of which were surrounded by swarms of people screaming and waving yellow slips of paper in the hope of being singled-out and allowed into the room.

I chose the first room to my right. The memory of that room remains clear in my mind – I literally stepped into a cloud of smoke in which there were three dreary men in army uniform sitting behind large desks that occupied the entire room, and on which there was nothing but large square ashtrays piled with squished cigarette buds. I examined each individual carefully, and opted for the friendliest looking of the three. Without a word he took my papers, and asked me to sit down. Having noticed that the wheelie chair was

missing a wheel, I chose to stand and politely smiled hoping that he would understand I was in a hurry. After looking through my papers, he handed me a form and told me to fill it out and take it to the third room down the corridor and get the required 'yellow slip.'

The second part of my journey consisted of pushing my way through angry mobs with my 'yellow slip' in the hope of reaching the end of my ordeal.

The entire working day passed and I never made it anywhere near the intended office.

The following day was no better. I managed to build up the courage to scream and shout like the other petitioners in front of closed doors, and found that although it gave me some momentum it made the whole ordeal all the more tiring. I shuffled around based on obscure directions (often contradictory) given by dubious-looking individuals and finally made it to the last room where a row of lifeless souls completely drained of energy stood patiently in front of a closed door. I didn't know what to expect, I had just about





As the Palestinian Territories continue to live under an ongoing occupation and closure regime, it seems at times like the 'normality' of everyday life does not exist. This is not so as something remarkable and quite 'normal' happened One Fine Sunday...

*Sports, for its audience,* is much more than displays of physical prowess and the execution of strategy on the field. Ask anyone in the Arab world and they will tell you that it is all about pride and national honor. It is an outlet for expression, a precious and rare opportunity in itself, and an opportunity to glimpse unity in an often fractured socio-political landscape. The 'game,' at its finest hour, aspires to deliver this.

One fine Sunday last October, the Palestinian soccer team was able to deliver just that to an audience of 8,000 that packed the 6,500 spectator stadium in East Jerusalem. The friendly game pitted the Jordanian national team, ranked 112th, versus the Palestinian national team, ranked 180th – not exactly the match of the season, but a landmark game in its own right marking the first time the Palestinian team plays in the West Bank, its home ground. For the players and their zealous fans, this was a welcome respite from the stress of day-to-day life imposed by four decades of occupation.

The score, a draw of 1-1, was no surprise and was secondary to the fact that the game actually took place, and to the



## One Fine Sunday

Hussam El-Tayeb



location within which it took place. The game was played in a new stadium in the West Bank, which was refurbished with the help of the FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and other donors - a mere 200 meters away from the massive concrete barrier erected by Israel. The Palestinian coach Izzat Hamza, the former coach of the Jordanian national team, was quick to comment: "This is our idea of resistance [...]: We have a flag, we have a nation, and we have a cause."

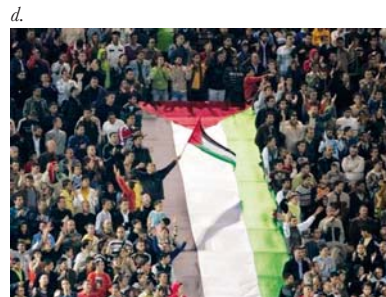
Ahmed Kashkash, the 22-year-old Gazan who scored the first goal 15 minutes into the match, obviously felt touched when he commented: "It was one of the most emotional moments of my life, scoring a goal for Palestine in front of Palestinians [...]. It was great to come here, but I wish that all of Gaza would be able to come." A beautiful sentiment soured only by the fact that after months of negotiation five members of the squad were only given permission

a. The refurbished 6,500 spectator stadium held an audience of 8,000.

b. The destroyed stadium.

c. Palestinian team celebrates after first goal.

d. Palestinians rejoice in national pride.



to join their teammates two days before the match.

For others still, this was also a homecoming such as for Roberto Bishara who is from the long-established Palestinian community in Chile where he plays for a Chilean team named Palistino. Bishara, who does not speak much Arabic, remarked on his first visit to his homeland: "It's a huge honor to play in Palestine, where my parents and grandparents were born [...]. The people here deserve a bit of happiness."

It has been a long road the Palestinian team has trekked since 1998 when "FIFA, the World Cup's governing body, granted the Palestinian team accreditation for the first time since 1940." For a brief moment on a sunny Sunday morning, they brought hope to the Palestinian dream or in the words of goal-keeper Fahed Fakhoury: "Palestine is in our heart. We're not going to wait for a state to represent Palestine." *en.v*

## The Diplomacy Olympics

Leen Qablawi

Summits, conferences, treaties, talks... The region is no stranger to any of these kind of high-level political meet-and-greets, so who is at the fore of these regional diplomatic races?

a.



From the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict to the seemingly never-ending saga surrounding Iran's nuclear energy program, the Middle East remains a hot spot for ceaseless diplomatic activity prompting different actors in the region to engage in high-level diplomacy of varying degrees. While in the past only a handful of actors dominated the diplomatic power-game, today the region is seeing the rise of new players not afraid of working with, at times, diametrically-opposed sides in an effort to bolster prestige and bargaining leverage.

Iran continues to be actively engaged in its diplomatic endeavors as it works to persuade the world about its peaceful intentions regarding its nuclear ambitions. Whether he is attending United Nations General Assembly meetings or being the first Iranian president to visit neighboring Iraq, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad never fails to grab international headlines as his foreign policy apparatus works to push forward Iranian objectives around the globe. Egypt is another big actor which has not shied away from the diplomatic scene in the last year. It has tried, albeit with limited success, to bring different

b.



a-c. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Palestinian sides to the negotiating table and has drawn upon its historic position within the Arab world to put pressure on actors that can be effective within the Arab-Israeli conflict. Such moves correspond with continued Egyptian moves to bolster bilateral ties with countries ranging from Venezuela to Russia – the latter of which hosted an Egyptian delegation on October 11 of last year.

Yet, the award for the most actively engaged regional country should go to the region's rising diplomatic star, Qatar. In the past year alone, Qatar has upped the ante in its diplomatic engagements throughout the Middle East and beyond. From brokering a significant cross-party peace agreement between Lebanese political factions, to engaging with warring tribes in the Horn of Africa, this small Arabian Gulf state has shown a penchant desire for playing a more active role in mediating conflicts and engaging

c.



in international affairs. Qatar's broad-spectrum diplomacy is facilitated by a considerable influx of hard cash. While it is well known that the Qatari Emir gave US\$100 million to help Hurricane Katrina victims, the country is also building a \$1.5 billion oil refinery in Zimbabwe, a huge residential complex in Sudan, and a \$350 million tourist project in Syria. Qatar has also bolstered its crisis management and brokering prowess as evidenced by the launch of its recent Darfur peace initiative to end conflict in the troubled province, and through its support of the African Union Mission in its peacekeeping initiative in Somalia. This new diplomatic drive is also being steered by Qatar's Foreign and Prime Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al Thani, who recently attended the UN-sponsored Interfaith Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations. In his speech, Sheikh Hamad revisited Qatar's early efforts to annually host the Doha Conference on Inter-religious Dialogue, as a concrete expression of Qatar's commitment.

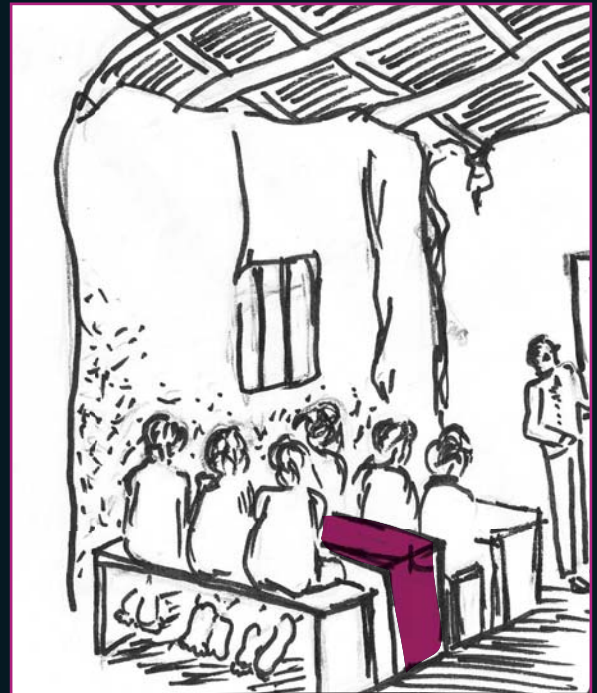
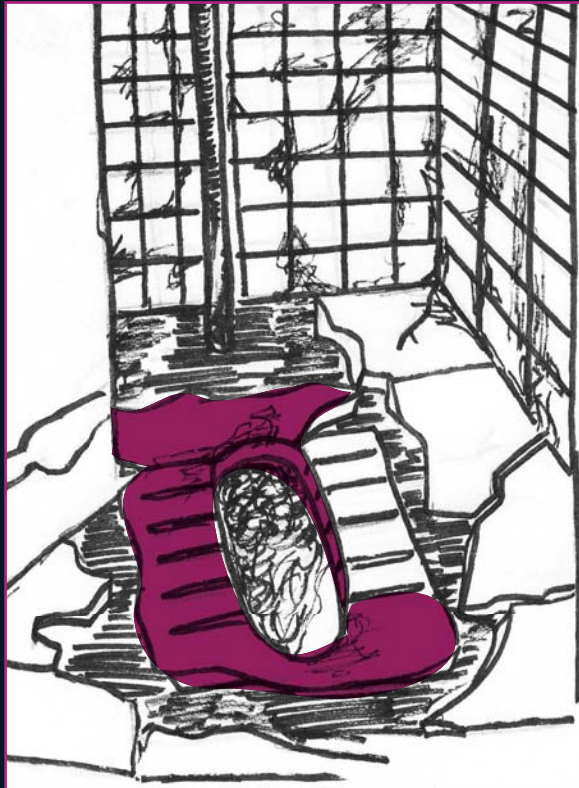
Be it a support-service for a fast-growing economy, a strive to attain new levels of recognition around the world, an ever-shrinking global village, or perhaps a combination of the above; the tangible result is an increasingly engaged Qatar in the voyage of diplomatic travel. *en.v*



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THE AVERAGE RATE OF URBAN SLUMS STANDS AT AROUND 31% REGION-WIDE.

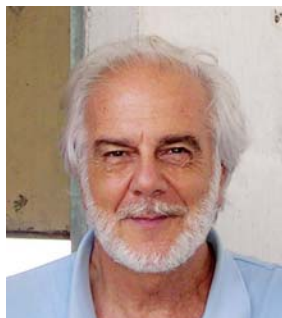


## CREATIVE CONSCIOUS

FILM  
BOOKS  
MUSIC  
ART  
DESIGN

## Fouad Nahas

*Dwan Kaoukji*



*Fouad Nahas*

Although Fouad Nahas belongs to an old and well-established family of film producers that pioneered Egyptian cinema between 1938 and 1963 with the Studio Nahas and Nahas Films, his work as a writer and producer has made a unique contribution to Iranian cinema today. In 2001, Nahas produced and co-wrote the script to the film *Baran* with Iranian director Majid Majidi. The film was nominated Best Foreign Film in the European Film Awards, and became an instant success among international filmmakers around the world. Following that, Fouad went on to produce documentaries and features about the lives of various ethnic minorities living in Iran and Iraq. He presently spends his time between Canada, the United Arab Emirates and Iran.



**Lemon Tree**, Israel/ Germany/ France, Eran Riklis

Stories about olive groves being uprooted by Israeli bulldozers, and farmers losing their land to settlers are covered regularly in the media. They are often accompanied with images of farmers throwing themselves in front of Israeli bulldozers to save their 100 year old trees. These scenes send a powerful message, but tell us little about who these farmers are, and what type of life they lead.

### *Film Recommendations*

Lemon Tree goes beyond the media, and goes into the psyche of the people whose lives are affected by the conflict. It depicts the life of a Palestinian widow living alone, tending to her family's lemon tree grove. When the Israeli Defense Minister moves in next door, his security officials suggest to chop them down as they may pose a threat to the safety of the minister and his family, by inviting terrorists to hide among them. The widow challenges the security order and takes the minister to court.

Winner of the Panorama Audience Award at the 2008 Berlin Film Festival Awards, Lemon Tree is both a political and comic film about the realities affecting Palestinians today. Starring Hiam Abbas and Ali Suliman (both from Paradise Now), the film is filled with exceptional performances that are definitely worth seeing.

*Is there such a thing as 'Arab' cinema, or is it mostly unique to a specific country?* I don't think there is an "Arab" cinema as such. There is an Arabic film industry, dominated by Egypt that produces 40 to 60 films a year, while the other Arab countries produce a total of not more than 10 films a year. The non-Egyptian few films are characterized by the intervention of the government or foreign companies like France for funding. They often have a simple storyline and appear more like documentaries. The result is often of high technical quality with hot subjects like emigration, women's rights, minorities, etc. Yet, maybe because of the subject, the style, or simply the lack of proper distribution channels, these films sadly remain limited to festivals and repertory cinemas in western countries. Because they do not recover their costs, investors are not encouraged further and this kind of production remains limited. On the contrary, the Egyptian cinema is a well established industry, much like Hollywood. It is a self-funded cinema

and based almost exclusively on the "Star" system. Arabic audiences come to see their favorite actors or actresses. Yet, contrary to Hollywood, except for very few cases, film directors or screenwriters are ignored and few know their names. Egyptian film storylines are rarely original; they are usually direct lifts from American movies with an extra splash of trademark Egyptian melodrama or slapstick comedy. Occasionally, a film emerges with some artistic quality, often because it is a funded by a foreign company, but in general, while actors or actresses are remembered, few modern Arabic films become classics.

*Who are the biggest audiences for Arab films today? Are they mostly western?*

Arabic films' audiences are mostly Arabs in their own countries or emigrants watching satellite TV networks. While they are shown in western festivals, very few Arab films are distributed in western countries and if they are, the audiences are limited to festival-goers and repertory cinemas.

For a mainstream Arabic film to reach a larger audience, the problems are multiple. Young Arab audiences are increasingly exposed to the technical quality, style and elliptic rhythm of western cinema they watch on digital networks or DVD. Most mainstream Arabic films suffer from low technical standards in terms of cinematography. They also use an outdated cinematic language. They suffer from exaggerations, lack of structure, endless scenes with repetition, old fashioned editing, and complacency in cheap aesthetics and in general a lack of rigor. In addition, because of inadequate distribution structures and the absence of governments to regulate the influx of foreign films, Arabic films have a hard time competing with western films with the new generation of Arabic cinema-goers.

*With Satellite television as available as it is, what role do Arab films hold in society today?*

Satellite TV is a double edged sword.



**Salt of this Sea**, Palestine, Dir Annemarie Jacir

An official selection at the 2008 Cannes Awards, *Salt of this Sea* is possibly one of the most popular Arab films of 2008. Written and directed by Annemarie Jacir, *Salt of this Sea* tells the story of Soraya, a third generation Palestinian-American who travels to the West Bank in the hopes of retrieving her grandfather's savings from a frozen bank account in Jaffa from when he was exiled

in 1948. The opening scene shows Soraya at Ben Gurion's airport, being selected for a security check-up for being Palestinian – despite holding an American passport. For the rest of the film, Soraya is faced with discrimination and challenges that make her task very difficult.

The film stars the Palestinian American poet and writer, Suheir Hammond, who plays Soraya, the strong and defiant woman not ready to be ill-treated by the Israelis; and

whose unfamiliarity with a country about which she is passionate seems at times contradictory. Along her journey, she meets Emad (played by Saleh Bakri), who is trying to leave Palestine to live a life outside of the everyday troubles; and with whom she develops a relationship that could bring her dream to fruition.



**Under the Bombs** (Sous Les Bombs), Lebanon, Dir Philippe Aractingi (2006)

In July 2006, Israel attacked Lebanon in a ruthless war that lasted 34 days, which killed over 1000 people, and displaced even more. Aractingi's film looks at the story of one woman in search of her son, displaced by the events of the war. Zeina's journey to the South of Lebanon takes her through damaged villages and refugee relief centers, meeting people whose lives

have been severely affected along the way. She hires a Lebanese taxi driver who drives her across the South from Beirut, and with whom she develops a tense, but supportive relationship.

Shot only 10 days after the beginning of the war, Aractingi uses actual film footage from the war, while also engaging non-actors whose lives were directly affected by the atrocities. With rare access to footage on the ground, the film teeters between a documen-

tary and a fictional film, giving it an authentic and realistic feel.

While the film showcases the violence and outcome of the war effectively, the drama around the relationship between Zeina and the taxi driver slowly becomes the main focus of the story, and diverts away from the issues of the situation. Nevertheless, the film was a nominee at the Venice Film Festival Awards 2007 and is well worth viewing.

It does provide a financially rewarding outlet to Arabic films (mostly Egyptian) but ultimately, quality is sacrificed to quantity. We see a proliferation of mediocre Arabic films filling up antenna time that promote a superficial view of Arab societies with the sole purpose of entertaining. This is especially dangerous for young audiences watching Arabic films who become used to mediocrity and unable to create anything better. What is sadly missing in Arabic TV are programs that inform Arab young audience about Arabic films such as interviews with actors, actresses, directors, producers. Promotion of Arabic cinema for Arabs is almost nonexistent and Arab viewers know more about Nicole Kidman than they know about Hiam Abbas. More TV programs are needed to let Arabs know about each other's cinemas and talents to encourage exchange and dialogues.

*In your opinion, do tough censorship laws shape the way films are made today?*  
Except for politically charged subjects

or graphic sexuality depictions that are in any case against the traditions of Arab societies, I don't see censorship having any influence these days. Films that dare to talk about taboo subjects, such as sexual exploitation of women (*Meat is Cheap*) or homosexuality (*Omarat Yacoubian*) seem to pass censorship without much trouble. It is not valid to blame censorship for the low quality of films.

*More Arab films are making international film festivals today than ever, what direction do you see Arab cinema moving towards?*

There seem to be a growing awareness among the Arabic intelligentsia that Arabic cinema, while having some qualities, is not reaching the artistic and technical levels that it could considering the availability of talents and resources. It could also be the emergence of the awareness that cinema is not only an industry but also an expressive art and that it plays a role in educating and building bridges with other Arab

countries and with the rest of the world. It is possible that young Arabs are becoming saturated by Hollywood cinema and its stereotypes; and may want to see more of their own society through cinema. It is interesting that countries like Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, which have modern theater networks, admit there is a recognized new interest in Arabic cinema. Egyptian film *Captain Hima* and *Omarat Yacoubian* and the Lebanese film *Caramel* were unexpected box office hits.

The United Arab Emirates are taking the lead in creating channels for Arab talents and resources to improve the production quality of the films. The Dubai Media city is supposed to offer up-to-date studios with most modern film and sound laboratories. Abu Dhabi and Dubai are using their Annual Film Festival to grant funds to young Arab screenwriters and reward Arabic films. They already have laws to prevent piracy, which is a huge problem for an emerging new Arabic cinema. *en.v*

*Hamida Na'na'*  
 Syrian Writer in Exile  
 Whitney Rios



Hamida Na'na'

Syrian-born Hamida Na'na', an activist in her youth, is a journalist, a novelist and a writer of political and literary memoirs.

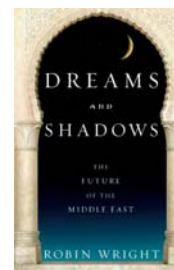
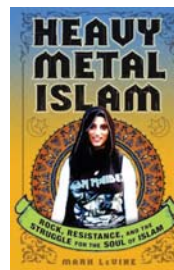
*Na'na' left Syria* with her first husband following the military coup that gave the late Syrian president, Hafez al-Assad, rule. Na'na' and her husband fled to Algeria as political refugees; but, once there, her husband allegedly made her feel like a prisoner. Soon after the move, she left for Paris for special medical treatment and decided to stay. Finally a refugee on her own, she lived in freedom.

This information comes from Na'na's illuminating autobiographical essay, *Writing Away the Prison*, published in English in Fadia Faqir's *In the House of Silence* (Garnet Publishing, Ltd., 1998). In this work, Hamida Na'na' also reveals the wars she fought with her brothers in order to pursue an education, the fatwas of the Sheikhs in Idlib (a city in northwestern Syria) deeming educating girls as haram [a sin], and her family

who imposed the hijab [head covering] upon her and forced her to submit to her brothers, the community and society.

When she finally made it to school, it opened her eyes to the freedom of literature – both reading and writing. But the journey there was not easy. She bartered away many of her freedoms to stay in school and allegedly became a virtual servant to her brothers. After tough negotiations with her family, Hamida finally followed her beloved freedom, and a scholarship, to a Syrian university – still under the watchful eyes of her brothers. There, she earned a degree in literature from the Arabic Language Department. Shortly after graduation, she met her first husband the then Minister of Education.

Hamida inadvertently began her career in writing when she published *Songs of a*



*Book Recommendations*

**B as in Beirut**  
 by Iman Humaydan  
 Younes translated by  
 Max Weiss  
 Publisher Interlink  
 Books, 229 Pages

*B as in Beirut* tracks the lives of four Lebanese women during the civil war, each with her own life and story, and the struggles and sacrifices each has to make in order to survive. "As the war continues each day, unending, divisions between past and present begin to break down."

**Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam**  
 By Mark Levine (July 2008)  
 Three Rivers Press, 304 Pages

*Heavy Metal Islam* provides a musical tour of the Middle East and North Africa area and the effects of Western music on the region through interviews with musicians and fans. As young Muslims try to reconcile their traditions with their love of modern music, could music be the driving force behind democratizing the Middle East?

**Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East**  
 By Robin Wright (February 2008)  
 Penguin, 480 Pages

*Dreams and Shadows* provides an in-depth analysis and look into the ideas and movements that are shaping the region; and links the various personalities and events behind these forces coming from Turkey to Egypt, Iraq, Syria, the Palestinian territories and the GCC.

*Woman Who Does Not Know Joy* (Anashid Imra'a la Ta'rif al-Farah), a collection of poems, around the time she graduated. She later became a novelist and a writer of memoirs and analytical discourses. She also became a journalist early on, which continues to be her focus. In *Writing Away the Prison*, Na'na' expresses the joy she felt while traveling to different Arab nations as a journalist. She had been, and still is, confronted with a cognitive dissonance between her seeming independence in the West and her culture in the East, but journalism has maintained her connections with both. Hamida has written for *as-Safir*, *Le Nouvel Afrique-Asie*, as well as various Arabic newspapers.

Nearly no Na'na' works are available in English. Although Hamida Na'na' writes from France, she writes for the Arabs. *en.v*

## The Metaphor

Hussam El Tayeb



Mahmoud Darwish

After the death of one of the Arab world's most beloved poets, his memory lives on through the lyrics of some of the region's best known singers...

*Palestine* is more than a mere plot of land to the Arab psyche and imagination; but rather a metaphor – for the loss of Eden, for the sorrows of dispossession and exile, for the declining power of the Arab world in its dealings with the West. This was the notion coined by the late Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish who passed away at the age of 69 on August 9, 2008.

Darwish, who has authored more than 30 volumes of poetry and eight books of prose that have sold millions of copies, “started out as a poet of resistance and then he became a poet of conscience,” remarked Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi. “He embodied the best in Palestinians [...]. Even though he became iconic he never lost his sense of humanity.”

Darwish who wrote in Arabic, but also

spoke impeccable English, French and Hebrew, was widely perceived as a Palestinian symbol and spokesperson for Arab opposition to Israel. His works continue to illuminate our understanding of the Palestinian cause and Arab identity – which are ever entwined. In the words of Egyptian poet, Ahmad Fouad Negm: “He translated the pain of the Palestinians in a magical way.” In 1974, Darwish penned the eloquent words spoken by the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who declared at the United Nations:

“Today, I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter’s gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.”

Yet, what will forever touch our hearts is his poetry, set to music by composers such as Marcel Khalife, Majida El Roumi and Ahmad Qa’abour. These poems

### Under Siege

Here on the slopes of hills, facing the dusk and the cannon of time  
Close to the gardens of broken shadows,  
We do what prisoners do,  
And what the jobless do:  
We cultivate hope.

### Record! I am an Arab

Record! I am an Arab  
And my identity card is number fifty thousand  
I have eight children,  
And the ninth is coming after a summer  
Will you be angry?  
Record! I am an Arab  
I have a name without a title  
Patient in a country,  
Where people are enraged . . .  
I do not hate people  
Nor do I encroach  
But if I become hungry,  
The usurper’s flesh will be my food  
Beware.. Beware..  
Of my hunger,  
And my anger!

### I Am There

I come from there and remember,  
I was born like everyone is born, I  
have a mother  
and a house with many windows,  
I have brothers, friends and a prison.  
I have a wave that sea-gulls snatched away.  
I have a view of my own and an extra  
blade of grass.

I have a moon past the peak of words.  
I have the godsent food of birds and an olive tree beyond the kent of time.  
I have traversed the land before swords turned bodies into banquets.  
I come from there, I return the sky to its mother when for its mother the sky cries, and I weep for a returning cloud to know me.  
I have learned the words of blood-stained courts in order to break the rules.  
I have learned and dismantled all the words to construct a single one: Home.

### Rita And The Rifle

Between Rita and my eyes  
There is a rifle  
And whoever knows Rita  
Kneels and plays  
To the divinity in those honey-colored eyes  
And I kissed Rita  
When she was young  
And I remember how she approached  
And how my arm covered the loveliest of braids  
And I remember Rita  
The way a sparrow remembers its stream  
Ah, Rita  
Between us there are a million sparrows and images  
And many a rendezvous  
Fired at by a rifle.

– *Rita, Birds of Galilee* and *I Yearn for my Mother’s Bread* – have become anthems in their own right for generations of Arabs. Marcel Khalife was even put to trial in Lebanon in 1999 for singing and performing *I am Yusuf, oh my father*, penned by Darwish – so provocative that the Lebanese government felt it could be threatening to the religious stability of Lebanon.

In an eulogy Marcel wrote: “I felt as though Darwish’s poetry, with its divine assertiveness and prophetic cadences, had been revealed to me and for me. I could nearly savor his mother’s bread that has become iconic to his readers. I could feel the eyes of his Rita as deeply as I could feel the pain that his Joseph suffered at the hands of his treacherous siblings.” In closing, one may only echo Marcel’s final closing words and hope that poets do not die, but only pretend to... *en.v*

# LOVE & THE CAUSE *Kamal Hakim*

THE SUMMER I WAS 19, I THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS A REBEL WITH A CAUSE - THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE THAT IS. THE REALITY, HOWEVER, WAS THAT I WAS NO REBEL AND THE ACTUAL EXTENT OF MY INTERACTION WITH 'THE CAUSE' WAS LIMITED TO GRANDIOSE SPEECHES USED TO IMPRESS GIRLS. AT THE TIME, I HAD A PALESTINIAN FRIEND WHO WAS A BIT MORE ACTIVE - AND ADVISED ME TO VOLUNTEER AT THE CAMP OF SABRA AS A DRAWING TEACHER. THE THOUGHT WAS THRILLING: I WOULD RIDE INTO THE CAMP, TEACH THE KIDS HOW TO DRAW, AND COME OUT A HERO OF 'THE CAUSE'. AFTER TALKING TO NAJAT, THE SUPERVISOR OF THE CAMP, OVER THE PHONE, I ARRIVED AT THE CAMP TO FIND ANOTHER VOLUNTEER... A GIRL NAMED NADIA.



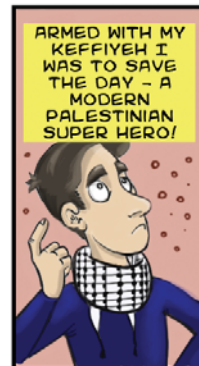
I ASKED NAJAT IF WE WERE THE ONLY VOLUNTEERS AT THE CAMP.



YES, NOBODY EVER LASTS.



IT WAS A SIGN... DUTY WAS CALLING ME TO THIS TASK.



ARMED WITH MY KEFFIYEH I WAS TO SAVE THE DAY - A MODERN PALESTINIAN SUPER HERO!



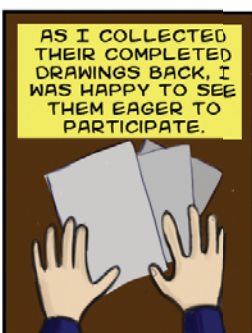
ON OUR FIRST DAY WE WERE INTRODUCED TO THE KIDS, THE ATMOSPHERE WAS WARM AND INVITING.



I WAS RELIEVED TO FIND THE KIDS SHOWED A LITTLE INTEREST.



I WOULD HAVE THEM DRAW SOMETHING THAT MEANT THE MOST TO THEM...



AS I COLLECTED THEIR COMPLETED DRAWINGS BACK, I WAS HAPPY TO SEE THEM EAGER TO PARTICIPATE.

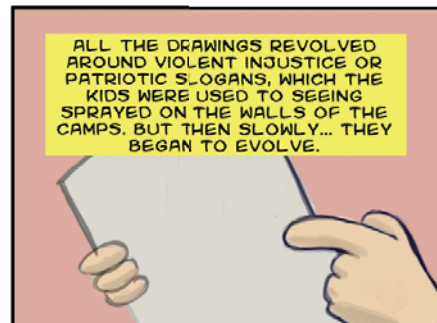


I FELT GREAT! SOON, NADIA WOULD SEE ME AS A HERO!

BUT IT WAS NADIA THAT CAPTURED THEIR ATTENTION. SHE WAS LOVELY AND SPONTANEOUS; SHE PREPARED ACTIVITIES AND INITIATED A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE KIDS - WHILE I WAS TOO BUSY TRYING TO INITIATE ONE WITH HER. TO GRAB SOME ATTENTION I STARTED DRAWING AND THE KIDS BEGAN TO TAKE MY LEAD. PROGRESS WAS MADE - FINALLY!



I WAS SHOCKED BY THE DRAWINGS; THESE WEREN'T SWEET SKETCHES FROM LITTLE CHILDREN.



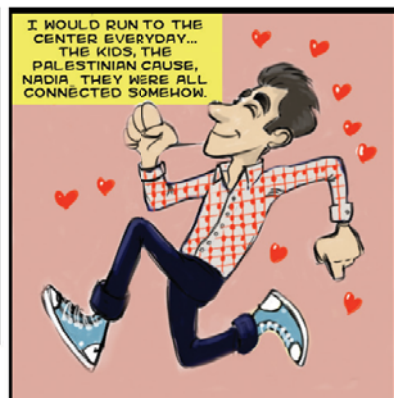
ALL THE DRAWINGS REVOLVED AROUND VIOLENT INJUSTICE OR PATRIOTIC SLOGANS, WHICH THE KIDS WERE USED TO SEEING SPRAYED ON THE WALLS OF THE CAMPS. BUT THEN SLOWLY... THEY BEGAN TO EVOLVE.



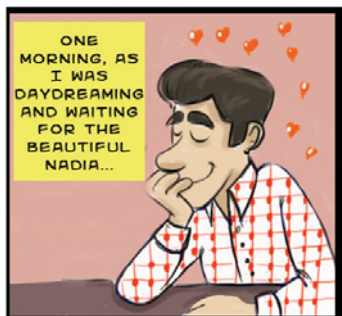
EVERYTHING WAS GOING SMOOTHLY AND NADIA WAS LOVELY... THE KIDS WERE IN LOVE... I WAS IN LOVE!



THE DAYS PASSED, AND WE WERE SLOWLY BONDING WITH THE KIDS... IT WAS PERFECT!



I WOULD RUN TO THE CENTER EVERYDAY... THE KIDS, THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, NADIA - THEY WERE ALL CONNECTED SOMEHOW.



ONE MORNING, AS I WAS DAYDREAMING AND WAITING FOR THE BEAUTIFUL NADIA...



I FELT HER SWEET HAND, AND AS I BEGAN TO TURN, I HEARD AN UN-FAMILIAR VOICE...



ANOTHER MAN!!!



SHE WAS ALREADY DATING AN AMERICAN WHO WAS TAKING AWAY ALL THE ATTENTION I HAD WORKED FOR...



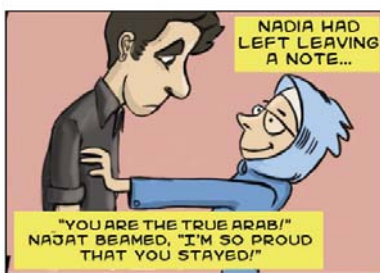
HE HAD TO GO! I SAW THE ENEMY IN HIM, KIDNAPPING OUR LOCAL LADIES, I MEAN CAUSE, AWAY FROM US...



I WAS SHATTERED.

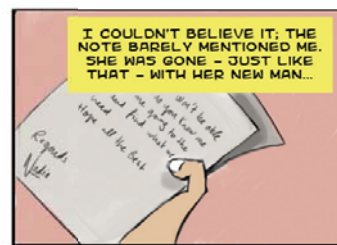


THE NEXT MORNING, NADIA DIDN'T SHOW UP. I WAITED THERE ALONE WITH THE KIDS WHEN NAJAT APPEARED...



NADIA HAD LEFT LEAVING A NOTE...

"YOU ARE THE TRUE ARAB!" NAJAT BEAMED, "I'M SO PROUD THAT YOU STAYED!"



I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT; THE NOTE BARELY MENTIONED ME. SHE WAS GONE - JUST LIKE THAT - WITH HER NEW MAN...



AND THEN IT HIT ME...



THE REVOLUTION WOULD HAVE TO WAIT! I RAN AWAY FROM THE CAMP, LEAVING THE KIDS AND 'THE CAUSE' BEHIND ME WITHOUT A GOODBYE OR BACKWARD GLANCE... AND I'M STILL RUNNING.

*The End*

## Conserving History

*en.v*

a.



a-c. *Qalat Al Bahrain, Bahrain.*

MENA, the cradle of civilization, is home to over 60 heritage and cultural sites. Several, in fact, have been included on UNESCO's World Heritage Center's conservation list.

Since November 1972, The UNESCO World Heritage Center has been protecting and preserving cultural and national heritage all around the world. The organization's stated goals are: encourage countries to protect their natural and cultural heritage; encourage state parties to nominate sites for protection; establish management plans and technical assistance; provide emergency assistance and public awareness; encourage local populations in the preservation of their cultural heritage; and, encourage international cooperation when needed. The World Heritage Center has inducted 679 cultural sites, 174 natural sites and 25 mixed property sites within 145 states that are party to its treaty.

MENA is host to a plethora of these architectural ruins and buildings. In the Arab states alone there are 65 heritage sites and 60 of them are considered to be under cultural identification by the organization.

The following sites have recently been included in the World Heritage Center's conservation list.

### *Qalat Al Bahrain (Bahrain)*

Qalat al Bahrain, the Ancient Harbor and Capital of Dilmun, was inscribed into the world Heritage center in 2005. Dilmun, one of the region's most important ancient civilizations, was a trade partner to several Mesopotamian civilizations, and a link to the Indus Valley Civilizations from the Middle East. Qalat al Bahrain is an artificial mound created by consecutive human occupation and shows evidence of continuous human presence starting from 2300 BCE up to the 16th century CE. On top of the mound lies the qal'a or fort. Only 25% of this site has been excavated and has already revealed important structures of the past. The site currently has residential, public, commercial, religious and military architecture.

### *Samarra Archaeological City (Iraq)*

In 2007, the Samarra Archeological City was inscribed into the World Heritage Center. The city of Samarra is important because it is the site of the powerful Abbasid Empire that ruled over a vast territory spanning from Tunisia to Central Asia. The city demonstrates the architectural and artistic innovation that had developed in Iraq and which then spread across the Islamic world. The site is home to the ninth century Great Mosque and its spiral minaret. Samarra is the only surviving Islamic capital that holds the original plans of the city, and represents the only physical trace of the Islamic Caliphate at its height. Two of the largest mosques, Al-Malwiya and Abu Dulaf, represent new artistic concepts in the form of unique planning and construction of Islamic mosques. Since the war began in 2003, however, the site has been under grave threat as



**Samir Rebeiz**

Dr. in Architectural Conservation  
Director of Lebanese Center for Conservation  
and Restoration Studies

b.



c.



**What are the main concerns you have when restoring an historical building or site?**

Our main concerns are to stop deterioration and to preserve as much as possible the original material. We also have to preserve the architectural integrity of the building.

**What official problems do you face when trying to restore a building? Is there any red tape that stands in your way?**

The major problem in the Middle East is the complete absence of any conservation establishments, laws, or official awareness. Restoration work is always carried out in very uncontrolled conditions.

**How does the selection process for a building or site take place? What kinds of buildings take priority?**

Priority should be given to buildings in critical structural condition. However, general selection should be a function of the urban development of a city.

**Who usually funds restoration: governments, NGOs, or private parties? And who is the biggest funder amongst the three?**

Governments and educational institutions should be the main bodies to fund restoration. In the Middle East, it is the private sector that usually funds most restoration projects.

**What kind of restoration is the hardest to work on?**

The restoration of monuments in unbaked brick and in perishable organic materials is definitely the hardest.

it has been used by various international and local forces as a base for military operations.

### *Crac des Chevaliers and Qalat Saleh El Din (Syria)*

These two palaces in Syria represent the cultural exchange and evolution of fortified architecture in the Near East during the Crusades. The Crac des Chevaliers is a castle first built by the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem between 1142 and 1271 – further constructions were added by the Mamluks in the late 13th century. It is one of the best exemplars of Crusader castles. The Qalat Saleh el Din, along with the Cracs des Chevaliers, represents a superb illustration of this type of fortified architecture in the Near East during the time of the Crusades (11th – 13th centuries). The Qal'a is a history lesson in itself because of the different features it has amassed spanning from its Byzantine beginnings, its Frankish

transformations, and the subsequent forts added by the Ayyubid Dynasty. The buildings were both inscribed to UNESCO's list in 2006.

### *Irrigation Systems of Oman (Oman)*

The five aflaj irrigation systems of Oman are representative of some 3000 other systems still in use in Oman. Aflaj dates back to 500 CE, but new archeological evidence suggests that irrigation systems existed in this arid area as early as 2500 BCE. The way such irrigation systems are designed is through the utilization of gravity, wherein water is channeled from underground sources or springs to help irrigate agriculture. Important and innovative watchtowers that were built to defend the water systems reflect the high significance and dependence the aflaj communities placed on this system. This ancient engineering technology, which shows long and sustainable use of water resources for farming in the desert, could

very well teach modern societies about issues pertaining to water conservation. The aflaj irrigation systems were inscribed to UNESCO's list in 2006.

### *Portuguese City of Mazagan, El Jadida (Morocco)*

Built as a fortification city by the Portuguese in the 16th century and later reclaimed by the Moroccans in 1769, Mazagan, or el Jadida, on the Atlantic coast is a great example of Renaissance military design. The city includes the surviving Portuguese buildings of the cistern and the Church of the Assumption, which were built in the Manueline style of late Gothic architecture. The city, an early port city for explorers going to India from Portugal, illustrates the wide interchange of influences between European and Moroccan cultures from architecture and technology, to town planning. The site was added to the World Heritage Center preservation list in 2004. *en.v*

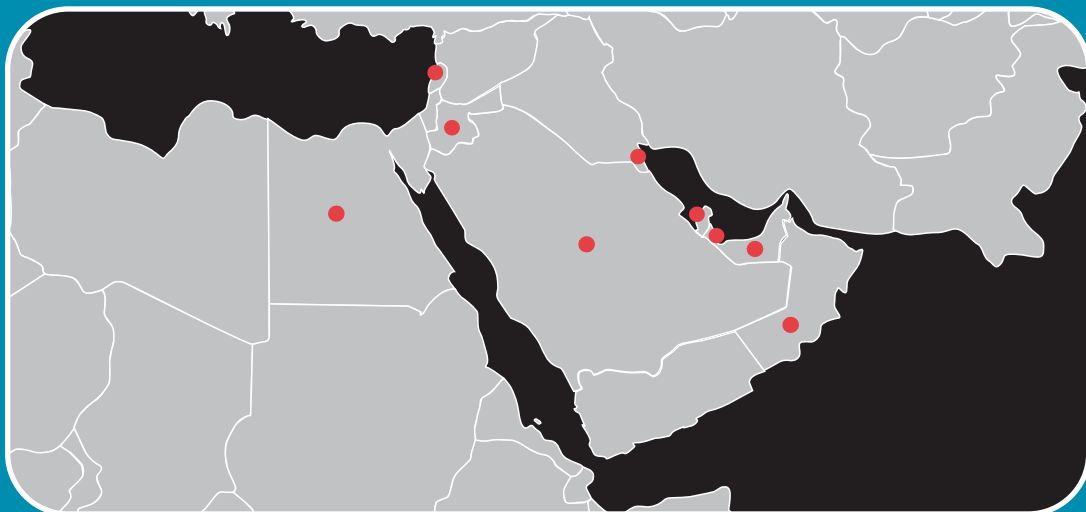
*"...It is really one of the most promising magazines in the region."*

*"It is so important that this kind of awareness comes from within the region... and you guys are doing a great job at making sure that happens!."*

*"... I very sincerely want to congratulate you on a great publication. Its topical, relevant and easy to read- so many mags are a letdown because other than an article or two there's no substance. Not the case here."*

*envearth.com*

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## Iraq... Building a Nation?



*Building* reciprocal interdependence between Iraq's stakeholders, numerous ethnic groups and diverse polities is one of the country's greatest challenges. Against common predictions in 2005 and 2006 that the country would split apart, Iraq has shown that these assertions were based on the face value and opportunism of political parties rather than the under-reported complex reality of a historically communal and cohesive civic-based society. Testimony to the formidable Iraqi ethic of getting back to work, even in times of distress, the following photos represent a snapshot of the life and times of modern

Iraq.

Civic action is key to strengthening Iraq's nascent civil society. The photos presented here show that the country's population is far from actively engaging in active democracy – or what can be understood as citizenship beyond mere elections. Supporting Iraq's expanding community-based organizations is vital to help build the social capital required to strengthen its networks of trust. After decades of neglect, the provision of quality education, potable water access, efficient and modern sewerage networks, and reliable electricity is a challenge

for any government. Along with creating a conducive framework for the growth of a vibrant civil society, the government's role in providing services is pivotal to overcoming a looming socio-political crisis that threatens to derail the continued improvements in security since 2007.

*Mehiyar Kathem Al-Sa'adi is the Co-founder and Director of The Culture for All (CfA). The organization was established in Baghdad in October 2003 with the objective to empower Iraqis with the necessary educational tools and skills to actively participate in the rebuilding of Iraq.*

*Since then, CfA has developed into a service provider of key vocational and educational programs focusing on the*

*most impoverished members of Iraqi society, working closely with numerous stakeholders and partners in areas as diverse as Sadr City, al Yousifiya, Basra and Kirkuk.*

*CfA is composed of an Iraqi team of professionals, teachers, academics and concerned members of the general public from various ethnic backgrounds. It continues to expand its work in Shi'a, Sunni and ethnically and religiously mixed areas of Iraq. Testimony to this success, the Ministry of Education in Baghdad nominated CfA for UNESCO's International Prize for Literacy 2008, the only charity in Iraq to win this accolade. [en.v](#)*

*All proceeds from the commission for this section were donated by [en.v](#) on behalf of CfA to The Kuwaitis for Jerusalem Committee.*





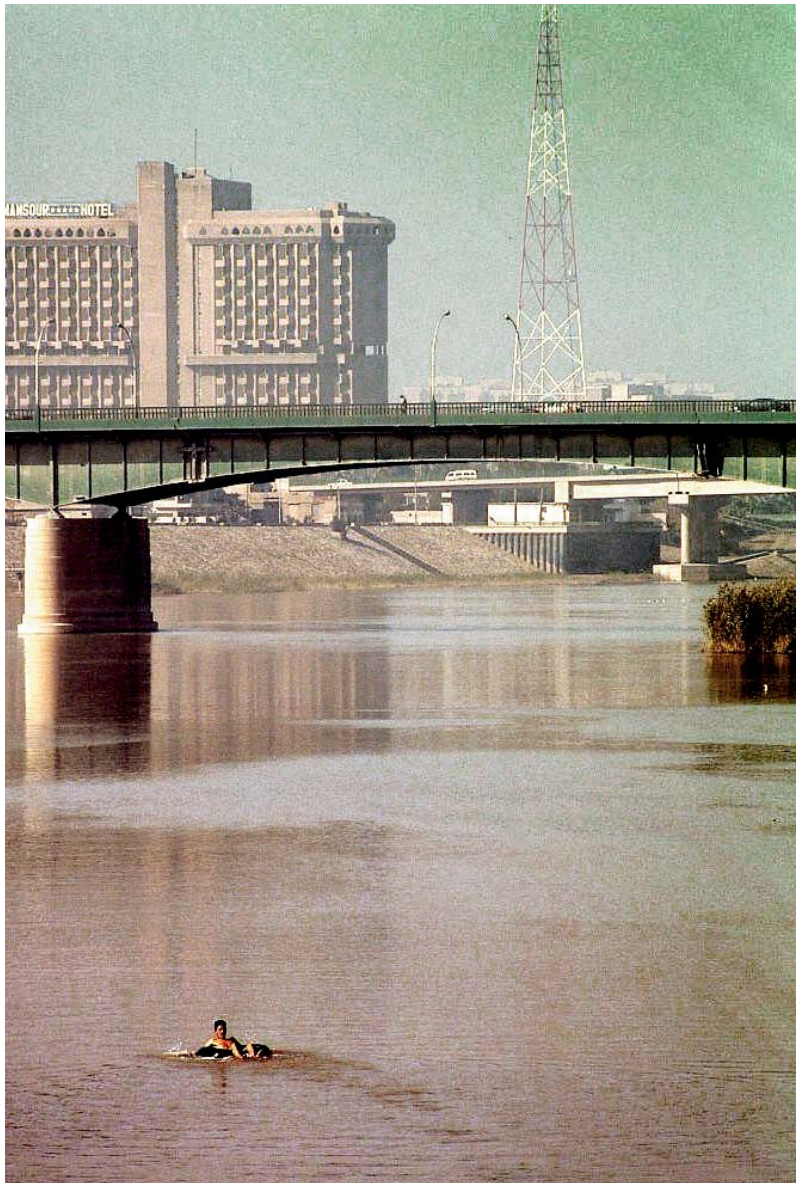












*Pg. 59: Iraqis celebrating the liberation of Iraq from Saddam Hussein (both photos).*

*Pg. 60: The Energy Crisis (2004-2008); (top photo) Iraqis waiting for subsidized propane gas distributed under the Public Distribution System (PDS); (other photos) Selling petrol on the black market.*

*Pg. 61 (left to right): The Elderly, the lack of services means the elderly are one of the worst affected groups in Iraq since 2003; Traffic jams, congested Baghdad streets due to the surge in cheap, imported cars between 2003 and 2007; Securing fuel due to the shortages in 2006; The plight of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Baghdad as they wait for non-food items, 2007.*

*Pg. 62: (top right) Women and children waiting for non-food items to be distributed at a primary school in Baghdad, 2007; (bottom right) Woman remembering the hundreds that drowned during a stampede on a Baghdad bridge in 2006 because of rumours of a suicide bomb.*

*Pg. 63: The Plight of Children, children must resort to the informal labour market to supplement family income.*

*Pg. 64: Iraqi tourists in the north of Iraq, enjoying Kurdistan's many waterfalls.*

*Pg. 65: IDPs, non-food items being distributed by American and Iraqi troops in 2005 and 2006 at the height of the insurgency.*

*Pg. 66: Child playing on the Tigris next to the International Zone, at the top left is Al Mansour Hotel and Al Jumhuriya Bridge; (bottom left) child scouring from the aftermath of a car bomb, 2007; (below) An explosion over Baghdad.*



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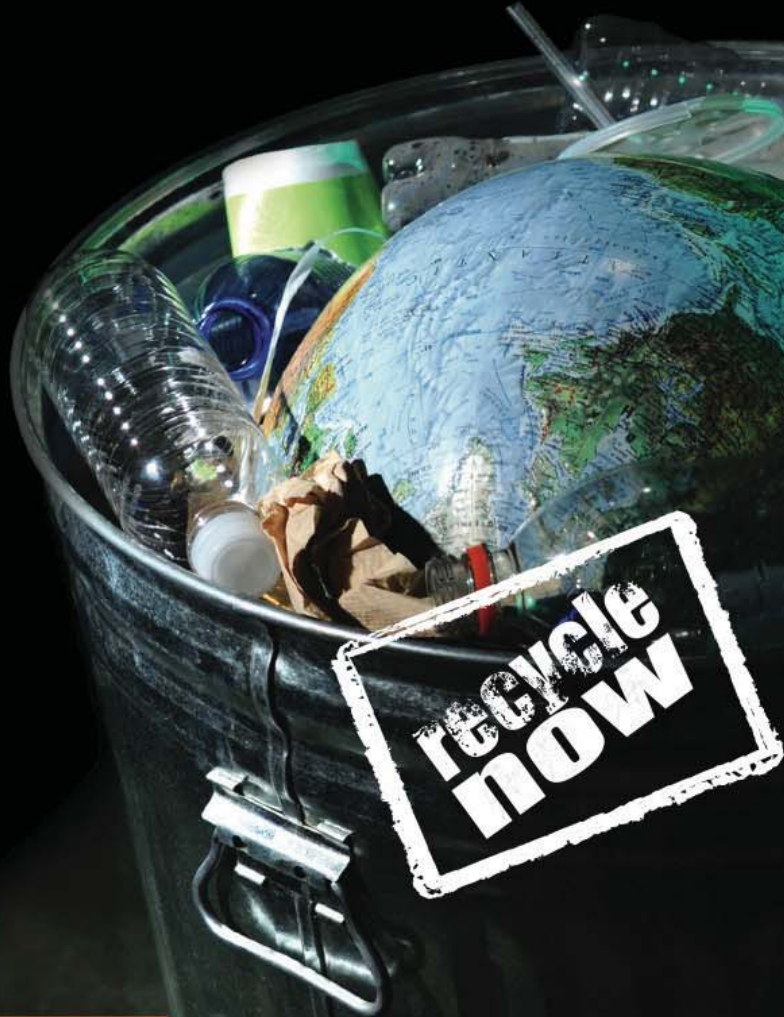
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## From Sorghum to Guns

*Sarah Schmidhofer*

a.



a. Sudanese farmer.

b. Nuba Nomads in Southwest Kordofan.

As the Darfur crisis continues and an international arrest warrant hangs in the balance, another part of Sudan lies on the verge of catastrophe...

b.



*Human action* always results in some unanticipated effects. This “law of unintended consequences” has been cited and evaluated by economists and social scientists for ages. It has been fundamentally ignored by governments and politicians for equally as long. The law explains why a new freeway designed to relieve traffic can ultimately cause more traffic by attracting development and industry. It also explains why a butterfly’s wings in Thailand can create atmospheric changes that cause a tornado in Africa.

We have just such an example in South Kordofan, Sudan.

*Bigger is Always Better... Or is it?*

### *The Roots of Trouble*

Sudan’s “tornado” involves violent disputes over land and grazing rights.

“South Kordofan is a Sudan in miniature, with heavily armed African and Arab tribes living side by side,” said Fouad Hikmat of the International Crisis Group (ICG) to the BBC.

The issue is quite old. A conflict developed between mechanized and smaller farms in the 1960s, when the Sudanese government and the World Bank planned to revitalize agriculture in Sudan’s Nuba Mountains. Through two acts passed between 1968 and 1970, unregistered land became government property and was parceled into chunks designated for large-scale mechanized farms, with no regard for what existed previously on the land. Then-president Jaafar an Nimeiri proclaimed that “land should be given to those who will make use of it,” to excuse the broad-scale evictions occurring. This was the first wave of displacements for small-scale

farmers.

The second wave of displacements was unintentional on the part of the government, resulting instead from oversight and/ or inability to enforce their original plan.

To keep the land viable, according to the 2007 UNEP Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment Report, half the plots were to lie fallow. Accordingly, the plots were to be switched every four years to let the cultivated soil recover. Because large farms rarely adhered to this policy, or policies requiring crop rotations and fertilizer for that matter, their land was quickly degraded and unusable. In fact, from 1980-2002, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported a full 70% decrease in sorghum crop yields and 64% for sesame.

a.



a. Sudanese farmer.

b. Displaced farmers.

c. Sudanese goat herder.

d. Displaced Sudanese family.

c.



b.



This land degradation reduced the quantity of usable land. Instead of fixing land-use problems at the source, larger farms with ever-growing capital simply moved on, abandoning the infertile land. They headed for greener pastures, literally, by seizing farms of smaller neighbors. The government could not enforce the original policy, and by 1997, 66% of land in Sudan's Gedaref was held illegally, with a corresponding number of displaced farmers. That single government plan to revitalize agriculture resulted in two separate waves of displacement and unrest. Even nomadic herders were affected, as routes for moving livestock were disrupted by these large, immobile farms.

This alteration of the land-use patterns continues to lead to much violence.

The displaced and disillusioned people do not remain silent for long. Instead, they take up arms and join organizations that might represent their interests. The 1990s saw the resulting formation of the rebel Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), made predominantly of displaced Nuba farmers attempting to resist further marginalization. Concurrently, an Arab

faction developed in opposition to protect themselves from their African neighbors.

### *The End of the Quarter Century Civil War*

#### *Further Winding the Spring*

Tensions increased between the groups as they were mobilized by opposite sides during the 25-year North-South civil war, ending in 2005 with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This created the state of South Kordofan with a new government; one in which power was to be integrated and shared between the northern, mostly Arab National Congress Party (NCP) and the southern, non-Arab SPLM. Located at the geographical border between North and South and the ethnic border between Arabs (Misseriya and Hawazma) and indigenous Africans (Nuba), South Kordofan is a hotbed for conflict, with the majority of both armies still concentrated here.

The CPA was a Sudanese effort to tame tensions, though its intended benefits have still not been developed in this region. Projects have been stalled, including those to return internally displaced

persons (IDPs), develop schools and create an integrated government. People continue to die over land disputes and grazing rights with no complete or sustainable governmental response. Thousands of returnees from this war exacerbate the disputes over land, grazing and seasonal livestock routes.

Both sides feel abandoned and taken advantage of, as those for whom they fought are not following through with promised benefits. They are also armed and organized, presenting a dangerous combination.

The displaced Nuba are particularly frustrated. They returned from war to find their lands occupied by others, and were absent from the population and housing census conducted in 2008. They are concerned they will not receive adequate political representation. Furthermore, many Nuba enterprises were shut down during the war, including Nuba Mountains Cotton Production Corporation, and Rural Development Project. After the war, instead of reinstating these projects to re-develop the mountains, the government focused that money on oil investments in Abyei.

d.



**Tragedy and the Commons**

Garrett Hardin's "tragedy of the commons" analysis suggests that in order to maximize long term gain in relation to a commonly shared resource (like grazing land); there must be some sort of regulation. He uses the example of herders sharing a piece of pasture (the commons). When each herder does what is best for himself in the short run, eventually the commons is destroyed by overgrazing and every herder loses. He argues that essentially, an overseeing organization is needed to do the long-term thinking for everyone.

South Kordofan is an example of exactly his point. Big farms, acting in their own interest, deplete and destroy their land to get the most immediate gains from it. Even worse, they then move on to the next most lucrative course of action, which is in this case, taking over the land of a neighbor and repeating the tragedy. The government did provide rules when they made their original agricultural revitalization plan, but

they failed to support those rules with enforcement. This pattern further increases tensions between large and small farmers.

Some point out that climate change and environmental conditions such as drought make reconciliation between the groups difficult, as resources such as water and usable land are becoming increasingly scarce. They say that those in South Kordofan could stand to take some lessons from their neighbors to the North. Here, the two opposing groups forced by location to share a dwindling resource found a peaceful coexistence in... **watermelons.**

According to Ad-Dukhri Al-Sayed, a community leader in the state of North Kordofan: "Our farmers discovered that whenever the Kawahla tribe [mostly pastoral] brought their livestock into the fields, the animal droppings helped improve production, so the members of the Gawamha [mostly farmers] started planting watermelons to attract the livestock

to the field." Instead of squabbling over exclusive rights to the land and resources, people here learned to find individual niches and live not only a peaceful co-existence, but a cooperative one as well.

Though the symbiotic relationships of those in the North could provide a helpful model for their southern counterparts, we must note that the co-existing parties in North Kordofan share the same (Arabic) roots, and life there is not marred by decades of political discord, as it is in the South. The South can look to the North for creative ways to share a dwindling resource, but a force greater than watermelons will be needed to overcome the issues those in South Kordofan have with each other as people.

- CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreement
- ICG International Crisis Group
- IDP Internally Displaced Persons
- NCP National Congress Party
- SPLA Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army
- SPLM Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement

*What has Been Done and Why Hasn't it Worked?*

There have been some efforts to support dwindling small-scale agriculture and reduce violent conflicts in the South. Though the government set up two land commissions involving all community sectors (to their credit), it has been hard to access lands in previous SPLM territories, as unexploded mines and other dangers related to the local conflict present obstacles. Most government effort has thus far been on a case-by-case basis, offering no sustainable solution – i.e. patching the crack in the ceiling caused by ignoring the crumbling foundation.

Looking at the larger picture, UNEP recently called for a moratorium on expansion of mechanized farms in parts of Sudan. Similarly, many NGOs are pushing for the government to pressure large-scale, richer farmers to reinvest in communities affected by their unplanned growth, and to utilize more efficient and eco-friendly farming techniques. The government of Sudan had not embraced either idea as of 2006, instead calling for further expansion of mechanized agriculture (through its 'Green Programme').

In an effort to curb violence, SPLM and

NCP jointly agreed to implement security in the region, moving SPLA (the army of the SPLM) forces to the South and deploying joint, integrated police forces. This militia has not had the intended effect, however. It has been ineffective in curbing violence, and in fact, has been credited with scaring other tribes into arming themselves for protection – many of them joining the SPLA.

Andrew Morton of UNEP's Post Conflict and Disaster Management Branch feels that "on the governance side, a key need is improvements to the land tenure [both the legal framework and its application] to allow for all three groups [mechanized farmers, pastoralists and small-scale farmers] to co-exist and cooperate under the rule of law."

*The Importance of Agriculture in Politics*

Part of the problem in this region is that the very land rights fueling the fire of conflict are intimately tied into politics of state. According to the ICG, the politicization of land claims "explains the failure of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent the degradation of inter-tribal relations."

With such deep-seated hurt and aggression towards each other, increasingly

fueled by each recent move on the political landscape, it is no wonder that there is such a hostile division in South Kordofan. What may be less obvious is the role that agriculture politics played in the issue, and how much of a difference sorting out land-use rights will make in the ability of these peoples to co-exist. Agriculture is the basis of people's lives here. Tribes cannot be expected to get along if they feel their livelihoods are constantly being threatened by each other – if the thriving of one family means the destruction of another.

The government needs now to focus on this issue to improve livelihoods of the people instead of engaging in pre-electoral politics. Currently, the NCP and the SPLM are both attempting to woo the Arab and African tribes (respectively) with opposing political agendas for the upcoming 2009 elections, resulting in further fragmentation and tensions.

"If this area slides into another war then it could derail the whole CPA," Hikmat said. "If the parties fail to implement the protocol of the CPA, it will be a challenge to the CPA itself as a framework. Then, if it fails here, can it solve Darfur, yet a bigger problem?"

A very interesting question, indeed. *en.v*

## On the Road to Economic Liberalization?

Laila Hayat

The current financial and economic global climate has many countries asking: Are our current economic models working?



*The Middle East* and North Africa (MENA) region is one storied with struggles, reforms and setbacks. Consequently, the governments in power have either helped or hindered economic developments in their respective countries. With control of economic regulators varying to wide degrees in MENA, government regulations can greatly dictate a country's success story.

In political and economic forecasts for 2009-2010, it is expected that the United Arab Emirates will continue with its liberalized economic policy. While the country has benefited from its leader's forward-thinking mentality, growth is slowing noticeably as the cranes that once littered the city's skyline are grinding to a halt.

The Egyptian government is also attempting to continue with its economic reform policies, which include job creation and increasing standards of living. Egypt may encounter lower levels of tourism due to decreased purchasing power.

Jordan is also expected to grapple with rising standards of living, but will pursue changes on a more conservative level. Social unrest, however, may hinder a more liberal economic plan.

In Qatar, the government will be further diversifying the economy although oil-and-gas investments will dominate over other sectors. Qatar has placed a special interest on Islamic art and history by opening the Museum of Islamic Art, which houses a large collection of Islamic art.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia will also try to diversify into other sectors giving job creation its top priority. The King Abdullah Economic City will employ up to one million local youths. As the country recently joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), it must adhere to new economic policies.

### *The Banking Sector*

An area in the region with high private sector growth is banking. With a fast-growing, better educated population, the banking sector is increasing its financial products and services.

In the Gulf states, the banking sector is relatively well developed and more mature than in other MENA countries, where the sector is dominated for the most part by public authorities.

In light of the ongoing financial crisis, which recently touched down in the Middle East, governmental bodies have

tried to step in and sidestep important regulations.

Ameen Behbehani, Chairman and Managing Director of Mohammad Ameen Behbehani General Trading and Construction Co., WLL in Kuwait, explained: "The Central Bank has [set] regulations [for] lending to companies, but many are not enforced, and are very arbitrary. If a smaller-size company wants to grow, the Central Bank will look at assets that hamper growth. Instead, they should be looking at cash flow statements."

"Many businesses don't use their own funds, they use the banks", he continued. "If companies don't perform, that's not good news for the banks."

Regional governments should set up independent regulators to monitor stock market, legal and investment activities. While competition should be encouraged, transparency should be required and emphasized for greater economic freedom. However, implementation of these suggestions must be strictly enforced with a follow-up mechanism to ensure accountability and a smoother transition to a freer marketplace. These steps will hopefully lead to greater sustained economic growth and a more prosperous private sector. *en.v*



## Going Green in the GCC Government-Led Waste Management Initiatives

Reem Sweid

Waste management has been characterized as one of the single most important issues we face as a human race... How do we manage the growing amounts of waste in a sustainable manner?



Masdar Headquarters

As the region tackles the current financial crisis, the global economic crisis and the regional military crisis, it is no surprise that the environmental crisis is easily overshadowed. A recent global study reported the GCC as one of the world's largest waste producers (on a per capita basis). The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was listed as the country with the largest carbon footprint, largely blamed on the construction boom, but also assisted by a population that enjoys the world's highest consumer spending per capita. With over 120 million tons of waste being produced by the region each year, the governments of the GCC have placed the issue of waste management on the top of the agenda. Historically, the low cost of landfills and the abundant availability of land (especially in the case of Saudi Arabia, one of the largest waste producers in the region), have made recycling seem an unjustifiable venture. Now, municipalities around the region are making a concerted effort, backed by billions of dollars of investment, into developing an efficient and environmentally-friendly waste management industry.

The partnership between the governments and the private sector has been a persistent characteristic of this industry. Technical expertise from all around the world has been introduced to help develop state-of-the-art infrastructures. Ahead of the game is the UAE's capital city, Abu Dhabi, which has already pledged US\$ 136 million for the operation and management of a municipal solid waste treatment and disposal plant. In addition, the government has awarded a \$345 million contract to develop a 'home solid waste-recycling project'. Abu Dhabi is also building the world's third plastic recycling center that can produce high quality plastics safe for home and food storage use. It also claims a zero-carbon and zero-waste city, Masdar City, which aims at a zero carbon footprint, and complete waste-to-energy solutions. (Masdar City Phase I is expected to open in 2009.)

Also setting an example is the emirate of Dubai, which has recently allocated \$20 billion to encourage waste-to-energy projects. Seeking to improve technical industry know-how, the Dubai municipality is investing in the develop-

ment of efficient methods for waste sorting. A proposed new 1,500,000 square foot recycling park, the Dubai Recycling Park, will be the first of its kind in the Middle East. The private company, National Projects Holding Co., will manage the park and will work in conjunction with the planned \$17.5 million Emirates Recycling Park, which is designed to convert construction waste into usable road and construction material.

Other public/private initiatives include: the Dubai Municipality & Serkal Group launch of the \$2.7 million waste treatment facility; the Sharjah Municipality partnership with Sharjah Environmental Company to manage its world-class Al Saja'eh recycling plant; a paper recycling initiative by the Sharjah International Airport; a cell phone recycling initiative by the Dubai Municipality; and, a \$75 million contract between Al Ain Municipality and the Sharjah-based Austrian firm to operate a waste management facility.

In Saudi Arabia, the government has allocated a \$200 million waste manage-

**Lina Chaaban**  
 EnviroCare Manager  
 Tadweer Waste Treatment L.L.C



**Do you think the current financial crisis has stolen the limelight away from the environmental crisis that the world is facing today?**

Yes, definitely, because without financing, you can't really implement environmental projects – especially since the concern is now how to keep business running.

**How receptive have companies & individuals been to the concept of waste management?**

For the past two years, the idea has been highly welcomed by both

companies and individuals, and we are receiving more inquiries about having public recycling centers so that more people can sort their waste. But still, we need to reach to a bigger platform of people.

**What are the most common hurdles faced by a company like yours in pushing forward the concept of waste management?**

No legislations enforcing people to sort their waste, and no proper and comprehensive awareness campaigns and education to support us.

**Do you think ample initiatives are being undertaken to tackle the environmental crisis the region is facing today?**

There are good initiatives that have been taken by the municipalities or the private sector to tackle this sub-

ject, but still, there needs to be a lot more that should be done to enforce rules and legislations towards executing environmental standards.

**What steps are being taken to raise awareness among the general public about your services and its impact on the environment?**

We are trying our best to approach companies, schools and individuals to create a joint venture to work as one hand in spreading the concept of sorting at the source. We participate in events and campaigns towards that concept. We also conduct a lot of awareness presentations about waste management.

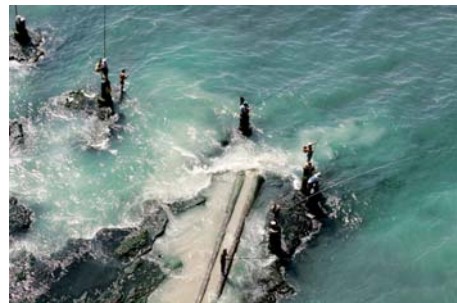
a.



a. Wastewater

b. Men fishing atop rocks while sewage is being discarded around them into the sea, Beirut.

b.



ment budget, as well as \$5 million towards a treatment and recycling plant for waste oil. Additionally, a Dammam-based tire recycling plant is poised for major expansion, and projects are being considered for industrial waste recovery and domestic wastewater treatment.

Qatar Municipalities have also recently awarded two contracts of \$1.7 billion and \$3.9 billion to Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) for the 20-year operations and maintenance of an integrated solid waste management facility.

The Middle East region is bracing itself for higher water prices and investing over \$100 billion to address solutions over the next decade. Water recycling and treatment will be a pressing issue for the future. In Bahrain, the leading waste recycling company, Zero Waste Technology W.L.L., has partnered with Bluewater Bio International to lead the way in advanced wastewater treatment solutions, which is one of the most serious issues facing the GCC.

To address all the abovementioned issues, the Dubai Municipality will host the region's first Middle East Waste

Summit in May 2009. The summit will bring together leading professionals in the industry to address challenges covering a range of themes including the effects of waste on global climate change, waste-to-energy initiatives, construction waste and domestic waste control. The Middle East Waste Summit will complement Kuwait's 2nd Waste Management Conference & Exhibition scheduled for April 2009 with the collaboration of Kuwait Municipality, which will focus on sharing strategies and solutions for the region's waste and recycling professionals. *en.v*

## eGovernance

Leen Qablawi

With the information and communications technology revolution in full force, a new socio-political environment has transpired in the region, which recognizes the need to shift to an era of electronic government or, eGovernment.



*The adoption of* a new and improved system of eGovernment has transformed the communication lines between government and its people.

Yet, not everyone in the Middle Eastern quarter can boast a similar success story, as some proved more ready and better equipped than others to embrace and implement such innovative technology. Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the forerunners in the regional race, were among the first to adopt the system of eGovernment.

Setting off with a pilot project to renew residency permits in July 2000, Qatar went on to establish a larger eGovernment enterprise, launched by virtue of Emiri Decree No (25), in 2002. Since then, Qatar has successfully implemented a number of e-services through its official eGovernment website. In 2004, Emiri Decree No (36) saw the set-up of the Supreme Council of Information & Communication Technology (ictQATAR), which, amid other initiatives, is preparing for the next level of "integrated eGovernment." Hukoomi, Qatar's online government portal since February 2008, now provides more than 60 transactions online in addition to more than 300 informative services for Qatari citizens, residents, businesses and visi-

tors. As regards the country's achievements, Qatar's ICT infrastructure is considered one of the regional leaders of its kind in the Arab world. Also, figures point to exponential growth in transactional turnover and a steady increase in the number of eGovernment customers.

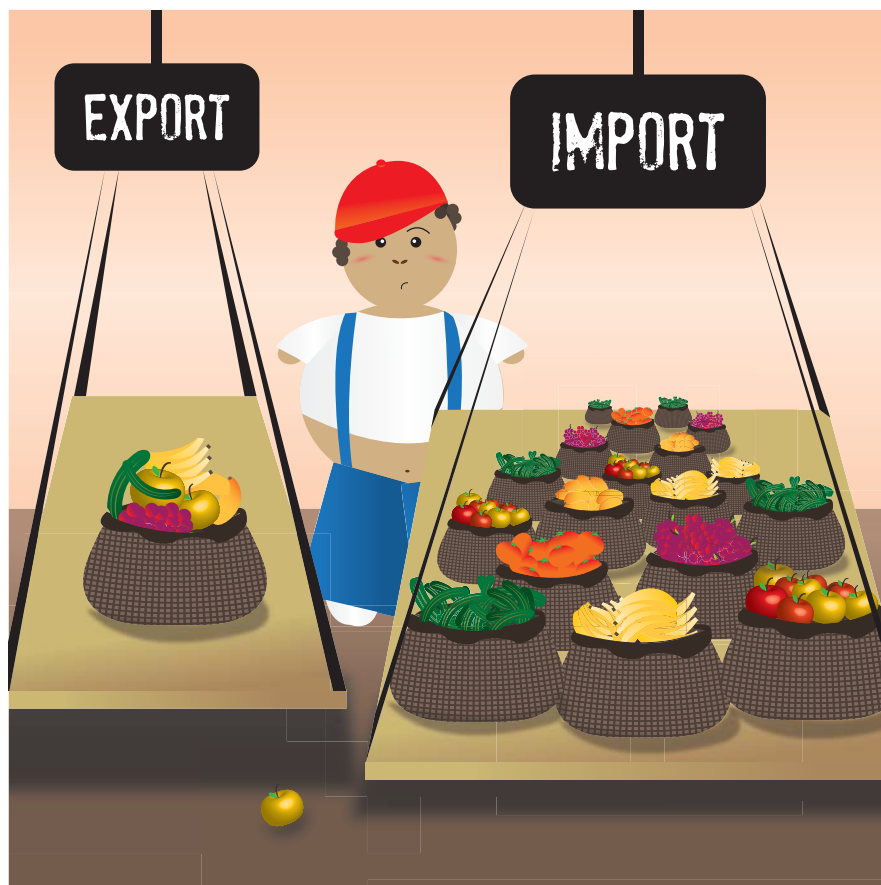
Mazen Thabet, a senior marketing and alliance specialist at Malomatia (a leading IT services provider in the region), explained: "Qatar's gradual and step-by-step approach to accomplishing eGovernment allowed for an informed and continuously evaluated implementation process." Another success factor quoted is government support. For example, Mazen highlighted the various Emiri decrees that appointed steering committees to overlook the various eGovernment initiatives, which high-ranking officials were called upon to coordinate and enforce in an environment of clear accountability and transparency.

In comparison, the UAE can retrace a different experience. At the time of the technology's inception, certain UAE government bodies were hitherto operating automated systems. As a cheaper and more efficient alternative to 'reinventing the wheel,' the UAE

portal functioned as a unifying link to various associated web pages. But the lack of a one-stop-shop facility, such as a single payment gateway, led the UAE to revamp its national site to integrate information and services. Organized by the end-user, with separate sections for residents, visitors, business and government, its offerings are more easily located.

Others in the region such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman rank comparatively lower in the eGovernment Readiness UN Index. The main reason for this discrepancy is arguably in the nature of execution. Saudi Arabia and Oman, for example, provide eGovernment portals that are more informative rather than transaction based.

Yet, in spite of regional discrepancies, results have shown significant progress across the GCC since 2005. This strong performance has been attributed to heavy investments in deploying broadband infrastructure and increased implementation of eGovernment applications for GCC citizens. With discussion of moving towards a common GCC eGovernment, one cannot help but feel optimistic that continued governmental and technological support may just pave the way toward regional success. *en.v*



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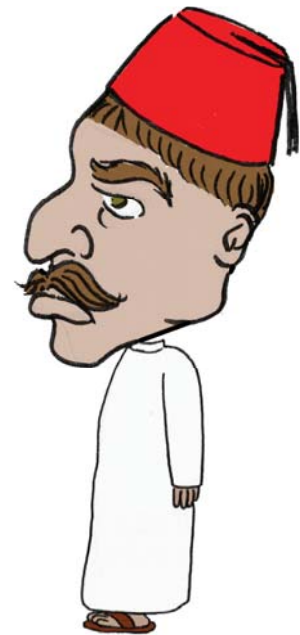
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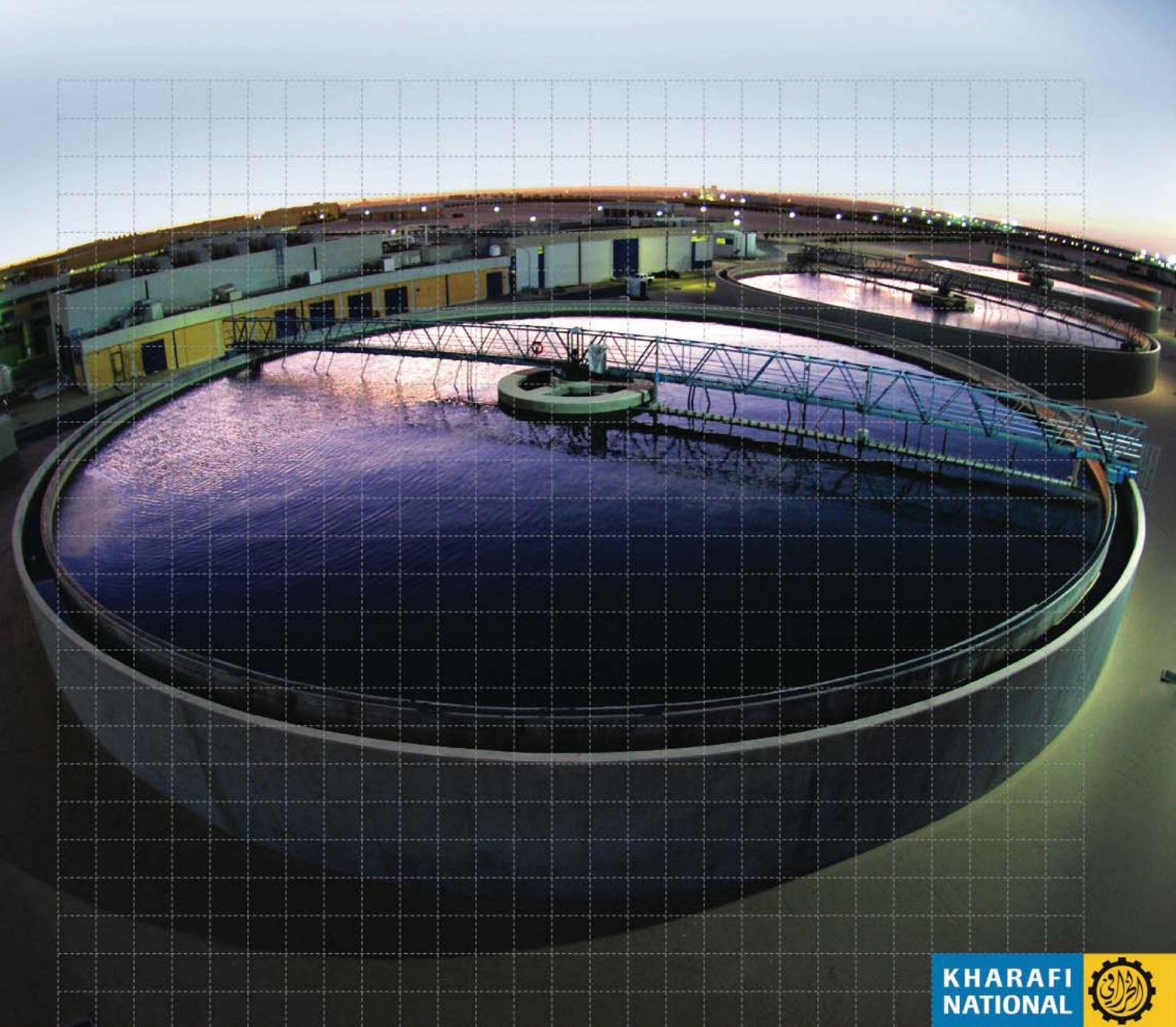
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