

DAMANAT

DIGITAL ARTS AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION COMPANIES

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Massive Studios

Status of Companies Working in the Field of Art

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Full Independent Companies Working in a Commercial Way

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

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

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

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

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

Companies Working under Supervision of a Party or Political Organization.

Any political organization needs a media or an advertising hand that presents its artistic or literary or cultural productions which serve the purpose of such a political organization. One of the most famous experiences is the experience of the Socialist Party which it had and still has its own newspapers that promote its vision. Then comes Islah Party which is the smartest one to use the private sector and the companies working in the field of art to its favor. The party, too, established, during the period of political pluralism in Yemen, companies that were working to host artistic, cultural activities and even training activities in the field of arts which serve its approach. This party had newspapers including magazines on kids like Osama Magazine, which represents one of the most important artistic experiences in the field of illustrated stories being the most widely spread and oldest one in Yemen.

The General Public Conference Party had also its own contributions in this field and ended up with establishing its own television channel and radio broadcast as well as establishing some companies that fulfill the needs of these channels of cultural, literary and artistic products. The scene was completed with the appearance of Houthis who excelled all these political organizations, to impose the sole artistic scene as a violent exclusion policy by providing the Yemeni people with massive cultural, literary and artistic products which only serve the group, including Zawamil, illustrated story magazines, printing of advertisement posts and many other business works that use art in promoting.

Companies Owned by Community-Based Organization

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

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

Individuals-Owned Firms and Individual Endeavors

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

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

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

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

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

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

Business Firms But Associated with Government in Works and Promotion

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

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

Fully Independent Profit-Driven Firms.

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

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

Firms Working under Commercial Firms and Yemeni Businesses' Houses.

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

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

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

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

Firms that are Sponsored by Political Parties:

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

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

Firms that Belong to Community-Based Organization

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

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

Private Firms and Individual Experiments

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

The Artistic Experiment " Massive Studios"

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

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

A Future Vision

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

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

Concluding Recommendations

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