

DAMANAT

A STUDY ON THE WORKING PAPERS OF THE GUARANTEES OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION POLICIES IN YEMEN

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

Dhamant foundation in various fields of arts and culture holds much to be read, through a comprehensive approach to what the researchers have done in their respective fields and through their experience and knowledge.

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

Artists Experiences

Looking at the experiences of the artists and researchers themselves, as models of the artistic and creative milieu and the role of cultural policies in this, it will become clear to us that they represent individual cases, there is no great role for the official cultural institution in their industry, that is, they grew up and worked in the absence of cultural policies aimed at creating and building creators, they are just creative individuals who have engaged in cultural work and

have even tried to institutionalize their cultural work by launching initiatives or working in civil society institutions (CSOs) and benefiting from external support for cultural work, away from the official cultural institution and close to youth initiatives organized outside formal frameworks.

Between social awareness and prohibition

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

Digital Development:

Worksheets reflected to what extent such digital evolution and modern communication techniques reflected an important gate or window that breaks the dominance of censorship. Although it has not led to the development of new art or artistic forms, or at least this

has been limited, it is a window that has gone beyond censorship. It allowed many actions and voices in various fields to reach the public, without being subject to the authority of the observation. We note, however, that the recommendations have been so preoccupied with the urge to do education, and rightly so, that many arts in Yemen are still in their infancy. The main obstacle in the arrival of the message remains the large gap between the artist and the recipient, which makes the technical messages, especially in the fields of literature and art difficult to reach, or difficult to understand, due to the recipient's weak culture of the visual and reading. This remains an obstacle in terms of modern means of communication, despite the widespread use of technology and social media, most Yemenis who suffered from literacy illiteracy, continued to suffer from digital illiteracy, the financial status, the power outage and the problems of the Internet make digital networks and social networks ineffective in Yemen unlike other Arab countries at least.

The Impacts of War

War has played a role in crystallization of the future of freedom of expression in various arts and fields in which all of singing, theatre, journalism, photography, and plastic art have been affected by the war. Like what happened to singers with detention, put into prison, and

suppression for their voices, plastic art, photography, and newspapers were also suppressed, ill-treated, closed, and suspended; sometimes their members were killed.

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

Deterioration into the Worst

Instead of development that Yemen may make in different fields of arts, we see that things show a quite reverse trend. For example, journalism, which had achieved big steps in its field, has undergone a retreat in the last decades where most newspapers were closed; and freedom of expression and reporting work are moving backwards. The retreat of pluralistic and cultural journalism occurred in coincidence with the suppression to the press and journalists. While what appeared in Yemen such as new medias, channels and news websites, it is just attributed as a reflection of the war situation as well as the retreat in freedom of

expression through embodying a political information which inspires its subject, adjust its speech and works due to the war within the scope of attractions and oriented speech, which in return reflects the existing situation of conflicts in the country. Apart from this framework, there may not be a sufficient space for the growth of arts through which an embodiment of freedom of expression may occur.

Apparently, such setback has occurred to the arts, as well. So, we find that singing which had a remarkable development during the previous periods has stopped in a specific point, that is, reproduction of the product. Similarly, the popular heritage forms which had paved the way for the emergence of various forms of singing such as Sananian, Lahji and Hadrami had saw a different development or underwent an artistic retreat. However, at the level of speech it has started to cover the political speeches that glorify violence and foment hatred like what is called " Al- Zamil" and "Al-Shilah", as a form of enthusiastic songs to be performed during the activities of the militant and religious groups.

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

horrific when the cinematic work becomes in the form of youth initiatives and civil organizations that cover only one or two events.

The Laws

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

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

Investment in Art

Many working papers have complained, in one way or another, about the absence of investment in arts. The absence of cinema houses is due to the absence of support for which the artists demand, and the absence of the cultural production are attributed to the absence of artistic economy so that movement of funds is working through it. However, the investment is sometimes subject to the political conflict such as radio stations, websites and newspapers that convey the artistic product or is communicated through which makes the artistic producer him/herself and the investment to be subject to the political attractions, devoted and embodied in their speech. In this context, the movement of funds earned from the artistic product can only cover the initiatives and the projects of the Yemeni community to be an alternative economical option or a margin for the operation of the arts and be connected with them. This support, however, lacks to the study of the needs of the arts as it is only temporary and rare; which only contribute very little to the growth of the artistic movement but with the exception of raising the awareness and the community work or creating an artistic and cultural movement and artistic-cultural economy.

