

# DAMANAT

## WOMEN PRESS FREEDOM BETWEEN THE CUSTOMS , POLITICS AND RELIGION ,

MONA AL-MAHAKERI



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

**Dr. Mona Al-Mahakeri**

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

## **Introduction:**

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

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

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

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

### **South Yemen**

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

#### **The Official Press**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## North Yemen

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Women's Newspaper**

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

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

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

### **Al-Yamania newspaper**

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

### **Women and Development Magazine**

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

### **Lamees Magazine**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

- **Conclusion**

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

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