



2016 Post Arab Spring;

What is the current status of the women of Yemen?

February 2016 marks the 5-year anniversary of the Arab Spring. This month is of particular relevance to events in Yemen as the struggle for removing President Ali Abdullah Saleh, one of the many despotic and corrupt leaders that have abused their power for decades started in January 2011 and ended in his formal removal in February 2012 with the unchallenged election of his equally corrupt deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi in February 2012. In February 2014 democratic elections were scheduled but failed to materialize due to Mansour Hadi's inability to unite internal warring factions and create a stable secure political climate. As a result of the leadership's complete incompetence to steer Yemen out of its ever-spiraling decline into the abyss of chaos and poverty elections have been postponed to 2015. With all of the uncertainties that Yemen's civil war and epidemic lawlessness brings, one thing remains constant and reliable, that is, the ever widening gap between the wealthily and privileged pre Arab Spring elite and the malnourished and desperate citizens who are kept as a weakened underclass.

Like the other Arab Spring countries, much was promised to the hopeful majority of citizens, but very little was delivered in terms of real progress or advantage for its venerable women and children.

Before the Arab Spring, Yemen's female populations lived in the shadow of old tribal proverbs such as "A girl leaves the house only twice: to her husband and her grave." The greedy elite amassed huge wealth by controlling the country's oil profits excluding the growing youth population by drowning them in joblessness and neglected aspirations. In 2013, the World Bank estimated that 40% of the youth are unemployed. Women faced daily life plagued by the dangers and instability of civil war, poverty and domestic violence. In the 5 years of post Arab Spring initiatives and with numerous international agencies involved in Democratic change and liberal values, one would expect there to be a significant upturn or opportunities for the youth and its women. A brief review of the current statistical findings of the region reveals that this is clearly a false assumption. For the past several years, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report has ranked Yemen the worst country for women based on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. What then has become of liberal values to take women out of their subordinate social/political positions? The repetitious cycle of power abuse by those puppet leaders handpicked to serve western political objectives is the reason for the stagnating political landscape. The betrayal of the leadership is typically represented in the example of Yemen's female Culture Minister Arwa Othman who in September 2015, was awarded by Human Rights Watch and was honored for her so called "work in advancing women's rights". In her acceptance speech she called for tolerance in her country and dedicated her award to "brothers and friends from the Jewish community."???!!!! Why were her fellow sisters in Islam spurned? Women played an intrinsic role in Yemen's protests (Conservative estimates suggest that 30% were women in 2011,) many died and were injured in the slaughter that followed. In 2013, Othman headed a committee on "rights and freedoms" as part of the process for constitutional reform. The committees were responsible for drafting recommendations for changes in the constitution. Many of the recommendations supported women's rights such as enhancing women's political participation, combating violence against women and ending child marriage. These superficial laws have not

translated into any real progress of change for women as they are not meant to serve society and exist to silence protest that Democracy has arrived as the master and savior of oppressed women in the region. The handing out of defunct global awards such as the Nobel Peace Prize to Yemeni Women such as activist Tawakkul Karman are another example of token gestures that are meaningless to the million suffering under economic mismanagement, decaying services and poor health prospects.

One outstanding 'gift' of liberal Democratic change is Yemen's current food crisis. Peter Salisbury, a journalist and analyst with Chatham House who specialises in the Yemen conflict said, "A big chunk of the population is now on the verge of starvation, that also means huge long-term consequences for the health and economic prospects of Yemenis... Malnutrition slows down kids' mental and physical development and Yemen has a very young population." The IMF reported in 2013 that half of Yemen's 24.4 million citizens live below the poverty line. That leaves a staggering 12 million people struggling to survive on a daily basis. A figure that beggars belief when one understands Yemen's oil production produced revenues of \$2.662 billion in 2013! The affect of the starvation catastrophe according to FEWS NET, is that parts of Yemen have been witnessing exceptionally high levels of morbidity among young children, along with a rise in cases of malnourished children. Data from Abyan governorate revealed a fourfold increase in admissions of malnourished children this year, from 136 in 2014, to 557 in 2015; similar trends were seen in other Yemeni hospitals.

The World Food Program has been working with the Arab coalition and other partners on the ground to ensure food shipments are distributed across the country, but funding and access remain major problems which again links to the disaster by design reality that exists in the Muslim world when the inhumanity of nationalism replaces the pure Islamic morals as represented in the Quranic Ayah:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ﴾

"The believers are nothing else than brothers. So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy." [Al-Hujjurat, 49:10]

With the control of oil markets at the mercy of Capitalists who manipulate the stock market to serve their own agendas, the recent drop in global oil prices has placed Yemen at a disadvantage economically, further escalating the poverty calamity in the country and contradicts the authority of Islam serving the interests of Muslims.

﴿الَّذِينَ يَتَرَبَّصُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نُسْتَحِذْكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعُكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَالِلَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾

"Those who are waiting for you. Then if was for you a victory from Allah they say, "Were not we with you?" But if (there) was for the disbelievers a chance they said, "Did not we have advantage over you and we protected you from the believers?" And Allah will judge between you (on the) Day (of) the Resurrection, and never will Allah make for the disbelievers over the believers a way". [An-Nisaa 4:141]

Gender experts are quick to blame the political failures on "entrenched patriarchal structures and the rise of Islamists and Islamic Culture". But this is another one of the liberal lies designed to hide the real cause of political ineptitude that is a matter of design NOT natural disaster. Since March, an Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia has been conducting air strikes in Yemen in an effort to curb the expansion of the country's Houthi rebels, who have been fighting government forces for control of the country. Such nationalist activities have no place in Islamic politics. It is only the return of the Khilafah (Caliphate) upon the method of

the Prophethood that will cut the ropes of our leaders who follow the commands of foreign agents in fighting their fellow Muslims instead of coming to their assistance in times of poverty or disaster. In November 2015 Al Jazeera reported, "Thousands of people have died in the conflict, which has sparked a massive humanitarian crisis. More than 1.5 million people have been displaced, and many more are struggling to access the basic necessities, including food, water and fuel."

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), around 14 million people in Yemen - more than half the country's population - have become food insecure, and of those, around seven million are classified as severely food insecure.

"It's a country that cannot take any further shock," quoted Abeer Etefa, the WFP's spokesperson for the Middle East region, "It's a very serious situation. We are doing our best so that we don't see a deterioration of the situation that's already extremely compromised."

A report was released in November 2015 by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). The report found that the problem of food insecurity in Yemen (a country that already has history of malnutrition and poverty) has become increasingly worse and that the decline is set to continue.

By mid-October 2015 the average wheat flour prices were 47 percent higher than the February average, the report noted, while diesel prices in October were 270 percent higher than in February. At the same time, household income has fallen as residents struggle to make a living.

The report also stated many residents in southern and western Yemen are facing an "emergency" state, the second most severe category of food insecurity after "catastrophe/famine". The situation is particularly grave for displaced people and those trapped in active conflict zones. The risk of acute malnutrition also remains high due to the high disease burden and reduced access to healthcare."

With the West's policy to bomb Yemen freely, food distribution is very difficult. With the sincere Islamic leader in place in charge of the global armies of the Muslim world, it would be impossible for such a situation to exist. The nature of a true Islamic leader is clear in the hadith of the Prophet (saw):

«إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيُتَّقَى بِهِ فَإِنْ أَمَرَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَعَدَلَ كَانَ لَهُ بِذَلِكَ أَجْرٌ وَإِنْ يَأْمُرُ بِغَيْرِهِ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهُ»

"Only the Imam is a shield, behind whom you fight and you protect yourself with, so if he orders by taqwa and is just then he has reward for that, and if he orders by other than that then it is against himself." (Muslim)

The true outcomes of "Democratic Progress" after the Arab Spring are that the western regimes have won many benefits in the disorganization and lack of Islamic political will. Until real Islamic political solutions are in place in a comprehensive manner we can only expect a prolonged Arab winter of discontent and disaster.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Imrana Mohammad

Member of the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir