

A Report  
“Status of Women Journalists in Media”

by

Radhia Shamsheer  
Cultural Media Centre  
Aden, Yemen

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### Preamble

Media, in all its audio-visual and print forms, is one of the most dangerous double-edged weapons nowadays for the positive and negative impact it has on both individual and society.

Media has witnessed rapid developments that now it has its arts, professionalism, and tools from which comes the role of the media competence in the propagation of the values of participation to establish principles and fundamentals relating to the art of journalistic and media work, to pass the conventional roles media and journalism play, and to draft an agenda that includes the priorities of economic, political, and societal challenges for the purpose of instilling contents of change that can be aired to the public through media.

It can be concluded that media is a humanitarian message if could be delivered to the reader, viewer, and listener. This demands serious specialization and developed growing technology, which are two distinct characteristics of modern media. Not to mention the essential role of social media as it has become indispensable with for a vast majority of the public; via media people communicate, get acquainted and chat more closely despite the geographical distance separating them.

Hence, it was necessary to start with this to communicate and stress the critical role and status of media in human's lives and the journalist's whose message is usually political in its very nature-the journalist who is linked to the public affairs, and the more he is linked to the society, the more active he becomes and the broader the horizons his innovation and creation becomes.

Since this paper is addressing the women journalists in media nowadays, it is crucial we spotlight the participation of woman in journalism and media, more particularly in Aden, to draw a comparison between yesterday's and today's status of woman journalists.

### Historical Facts about Journalism and the Role of Women in Journalism

In the 1930s of last century, Aden witnessed the emergence of cultural and sports club, which was reflected in the entire cultural activity and the establishment of news, cultural, and religious paper.

The first newspaper in the Arabia and Gulf was Fatat Al-Jazeera (The Island Girl), founded by the late Mohammed Ali Luqman. This was followed by a number of newspapers in the years between mid of 40s and the independence on November 30, 1976. This includes but not limited to:

- ✓ Al-Nahda
- ✓ Al-Yaqada
- ✓ Al-Fadool
- ✓ Al-Ayyam
- ✓ Al-Mostaqbal
- ✓ Al-Amel
- ✓ Al-Ba'ath
- ✓ Al-Decoder

The question then raised is: Did these newspapers contribute to raise awareness on the importance of woman's participation in the public life? And to what extent this contribution was effective and awakened woman from her sound sleep?

During the period (1945-1965), journalism played a role in addressing societal issues and woman's rights in journalistic work "writing", which was a new area for woman that helped her break out of the routine jobs she was limited to and helped prove herself. Those newspapers covered a lot of woman-related issues as well as political and social topics.

The magazine Fatat Shamsan (Samshan's Girl) founded by editor-in-chief, Mahya Najib, played an unparalleled role in the adoption of women's and country's issues and "Aden the Colony," where the first issue was published in 1962. In terms of time and space, it was the Arabia and Gulf women's magazine.

A question that springs to mind is: What was media like in Aden after independence?

Aden, the metropolis of Southern cities, was known to have founded the first radio FM in the territory, Arabia, and Gulf in 1952, and the first TV in 1962. All competencies and capabilities of media in both the radio and TV were from the people of south and Aden. Women also had their roles and status as broadcasters, sound engineers, program designers, and news editors at the Aden News Agency. Besides, there was the issuance of 14 October Newspaper in January 1968 that reflected the vitality of the country, which attained independence on November 30, 1967, and shed light on what was on the ground in Aden and other southern cities.

Worth to be mentioned that woman figured prominently in all forms and means of media, more specifically the Yemeni Women General Union, founded on February 6, 1968, which played a role that cannot be overlooked or undertaken lightly where they:

1. Prepared Al-Osra program, where women presenters in Aden Radio took over and hosted guests of different backgrounds; they were health and law specialists and pediatricians. They discussed issues relating to woman work and other social issues.
2. Prepared and presented Al-Osra (Family) and Community TV show.
3. Prepared and directly observed Nissa Al-Yemen magazine representing the Central Council of the General Union of Yemeni Women. The magazine uncovered the struggle women waged in the south and the level they reached, especially in regard to starting conversations and discussions on family law, the Conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Yemen, then the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, was a signatory to the agreement of (CEDAW). The magazine also achieved a significant level in hiring female journalist that had the experience in the fights women around the world, including Arab women, went through and had the experience in conducting interviews with women working in montage and in different facilities.

In 2008, Friedrich Ebert Foundation published a book about woman and media in the Arab world, and on page 68, there is a statement about woman and media in Yemen that reads: “Although Yemen was introduced to print journalism at an early stage of history, woman journalism was introduced more than a century after the advent of journalism; it was when Nissa Al-Yemen Magazine was published in 1982 as the first women print”.

This magazine was published in the south of Yemen just before the south and north united in 1990; it was published by the Central Council of the Yemeni Women Union, headed by the editor-in-chief “Aida Ali Saeed”, the Secretary General of the union that was founded in 1968. How unfortunate to see such a document published by such a prestigious and respectful foundation fail to reflect the historic facts as they should be.

Concealing such historic facts has its connotations in the marginalization and exclusion process. The upright reality before us tells: “The first issue of Nissa Al-Yemen magazine was published in "March 1975"; the editor-in-chief of issue number zero was Aisha Mohsen. It comprehensively covered the occasion of the first anniversary of the enactment of family law. The magazine was the document carried by the delegation of the General Union of Women of Yemen, who participated in the Mexico Conference "Mexico". The conference resulted in the United Nations announcing the adoption of the first woman contract entitled “Equality...Development...Peace”. The magazine continued to be published quarterly until it ceased publication upon the announcement of merging the General Union of Yemeni Women with the Yemeni Women Union.

#### Women Journalists in Media

Media and journalism are two of the professions that underwent multiple developments during the two decades of the third millennium, during which these developments were characterized by several democracy-related issues. Additionally, it is believed that the Arab spring might have played a key role in enabling women, particularly, to be heard, to use their pen, to be political analysts, and to be newscasters, all of which contributed to bringing about a change in Arab society, of which Yemen was an integral part in the fall of oppressive regimes that wasted its people’s wealth at the expense of integrated human rights system; regimes that deprived its people their right to a dignified life, work, education, good health, safety, and security.

What is the role and status of women journalists in media both in the north and the south currently?

The answer to this question, taking into account the current reality data, proves conclusively that it is extremely low in the field of journalism and media, as it is commonly believed that this career is packed with risks and very often may lead to being sued. An obvious example of this is what happened to Aidaroos Ba-Hashwan, editor of Yemen Times Newspaper, after presenting factual information on the degradation of environment in Al-Mansoorah District.

Since the liberation of Aden and some other southern governorates in 2015 devastating war, one may say that appointing Ms. Nadira Abdul-Qudoos as the editor-in-chief of 14 October Newspaper conveyed a lot of messages, of which the most prominent was the woman’s right to hold decision-making positions. Yet, this poses a question: Why did this journalist not continue her role of work in her major, to which she dedicated years of her life since graduating from media college as a specialist? This could be attributed to the reactions to this appointment, i.e., the male ego and lack of accountability that was characterized by occupational violence.

During the period (1974-1982) the woman journalist, Radhia Shamsheer, held the position of editorial-secretary of Al-Thaqafa Al-Jadeedah magazine, a political, economic, and intellectual magazine that

ranked high among the cultural magazines of that era: Qadaya Al-Assr, Al-Tareeq, Mawaqef, Al-Thaqafa Al-Hadeetha AL-Iraqya). Like her colleague Nadira Abdul-Qudoos, it was decided to cancel her appointment and appoint a man instead.

These experiences make us wonder what positions women hold in the fields of media and journalism. The answer obviously shows that there is a gender-based employment discrimination. A woman only edits news at the Aden News Agency, works on some television channels, presents some children shows, or broadcasts and covers woman-related events in the press and television.

Although many of the female journalists and media professionals are highly competent, only a few of them were appointed or are being appointed for managerial and executive positions that are relevant to journalism or media.

As such, and in order for them to be able to combat this employment discrimination, these women need to strive towards their own entity or consider the following recommendations as a road map for them. These recommendations center on:

1. Equal opportunities in decision-making positions
2. Increased awareness on the role and significance of media in all its forms in countering efforts to eliminate women's roles at work.
3. Reviewing women journalists' websites in order to remove any gender-based discrimination and achieve their ultimate goal to establish the human values and principle enshrined in the international conventions and laws.
4. Giving special attention in training and qualifying women journalists who work in the various media outlets.

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