

Yemen

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Yemen (Arabic: اليَمَن *al-Yaman*), officially the **Republic of Yemen** (Arabic: الجمهورية اليمنية *al-Jumhuuriyya al-Yamaniyya*) is a country located on the Arabian Peninsula in Southwest Asia. Yemen has an estimated population of more than 23 million people and is bordered by Saudi Arabia to the North, the Red Sea to the West, the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden to the South, and Oman to the east. Yemen's size is just under 530,000 km², and its territory includes over 200 islands, the largest of which is Socotra, about 415 kilometres (259 miles) to the south of Yemen, off the coast of Somalia. Yemen is the only republic on the Arabian Peninsula. Its capital is Sana'a.

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History

Republic of Yemen	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Motto: <i>"Allah, al-Watan, at-Thawra, al-Wehda"</i> "God, Nation, Revolution, Unity"	
Anthem: <i>United Republic</i>	
	
Capital (and largest city)	Sana'a 15°21′N 44°12′E
Official languages	Arabic
Demonym	Yemeni, Yemenite
Government	Republic
- President of Yemen	Ali Abdullah Saleh (GPC)
- Vice President	Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi ^[1] (GPC)
- Prime Minister	Ali Mohammed Mujur (GPC)
Establishment	
- Unification	May 22, 1990
Area	
- Total	527,968 km ² (49th) 203,849 sq mi
- Water (%)	negligible
Population	

Between 2200 BC and the 6th century AD, Yemen was part of the Sabaean, Awsanian, Minaean, Qatabanian, Hadhramawtian, Himyarite, and several other kingdoms, which controlled the lucrative spice trade. It was known to the ancient Romans as *Arabia Felix* ("Happy Arabia") because of the riches its trade generated. Augustus attempted to annex it, but the expedition failed. In the 3rd century and again in the early seventh century, many Sabaean and Himyarite people migrated out of the land of Yemen to North Africa and the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula following the destruction of the Ma'rib Dam (*sadd Ma'rib*). In the 7th century, Islamic caliphs began to exert control over the area. After the caliphate broke up, the former North Yemen came under the control of imams of various dynasties, usually of the Zaidi sect, who established a theocratic political structure that survived until modern times. Egyptian Sunni caliphs occupied much of North Yemen throughout the eleventh century. By the sixteenth century and again in the nineteenth century, north Yemen was part of the Ottoman Empire, and during several periods its imams exerted control over south Yemen.

In 1839, the British occupied the port of Aden and established it as a colony in September of that year. They also set up a zone of loose alliances (known as protectorates) around Aden to act as a protective buffer. North Yemen became independent of the Ottoman Empire in 1918 and became a republic in 1962. In 1967, the British withdrew from Aden. After the British withdrawal, this area became known as South Yemen. The two countries were formally united as the Republic of Yemen on May 22, 1990.

Politics



Yemen is a Presidential republic with a bicameral legislature. Under the constitution, an elected president, an elected 301-seat House of Representatives, and an appointed 111-member Shura Council share power. The president is head of state, and the prime minister is head of government. The constitution provides that the president be elected by popular vote from at least two candidates endorsed by at least fifteen members of the Parliament. The prime minister, in turn, is appointed by the president and must be approved by two thirds of the Parliament. The presidential term of office is seven

- July 2008 estimate	23,013,376 ^[1] (51st)
- July 2007 census	22,230,531
- Density	42/km ² (160th) 109/sq mi
GDP (PPP)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$55.433 billion ^[2]
- Per capita	\$2,412 ^[2]
GDP (nominal)	2008 estimate
- Total	\$27.151 billion ^[2]
- Per capita	\$1,181 ^[2]
HDI (2007)	▲ 0.508 (medium) (153rd)
Currency	Yemeni rial (YER)
Time zone	(UTC+3)
Drives on the	right
Internet TLD	.ye
Calling code	967

President Ali Abdullah Saleh with then Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney.

years, and the parliamentary term of elected office is six years. Suffrage is universal for people age 18 and older.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh became the first elected President in reunified Yemen in 1999 (though he had been President of unified Yemen since 1990 and President of North Yemen since 1978). He was re-elected to office in September 2006. Although he had been reluctant to run again, popular demonstrations and editorials offering support in major newspapers helped persuade him to run. Saleh's victory was marked by an election that international observers judged to be generally "free and fair".^[3]

Parliamentary elections were held in April 2003, and the General People's Congress (GPC) maintained an absolute majority. There was a marked decrease from previous years in election-related violence.

The constitution calls for an independent judiciary. The former northern and southern legal codes have been unified. The legal system includes separate commercial courts and a Supreme Court based in Sana'a. Since the country is an Islamic state, the Islamic Law (Sharia) is the main source for laws. Indeed, many court cases are debated according to the religious basis of law, and many judges are religious scholars as well as legal authorities. Unlike Saudi Arabia and other Islamic states, however, consumption of alcohol by non-Muslims is tolerated.

Governorates and districts

Further information: Historic Governorates of Yemen and List of cities in Yemen

As of February 2004, Yemen is divided into twenty governorates (*muhafazah*) and one municipality.^[4] The population of each governorate is listed in the table below.

Division ✎	Capital City ✎	Population 2004 Census [5] ✎	Popul 200 est. ^[6]
'Adan	Aden	589,419	634,71
'Amran	'Amran	877,786	909,99
Abyan	Zinjibar	433,819	454,53
Ad Dali		470,564	504,53
Al Bayda'	Al Bayda	577,369	605,30
Al Hudaydah	Al Hudaydah	2,157,552	2,300,
Al Jawf	Al Jawf	443,797	465,73
Al Mahrah	Al Ghaydah	88,594	96,766

Al Mahwit	Al Mahwit	494,557	523,23	
Amanat Al Asimah	Sanaa	1,747,834	1,947,	
Dhamar	Dhamar	1,330,108	1,412,	
Hadramaut	Al Mukalla	1,028,556	1,092,	
Hajjah	Hajjah	1,479,568	1,570,	
Ibb	Ibb	2,131,861	2,238,	
Lahij	Lahij	722,694	761,16	
Ma'rib	Ma'rib	238,522	251,66	
Raymah		394,448	418,65	
Sa'dah	Sa`dah	695,033	746,95	
Sana'a	San`a'	919,215	957,798	19
Shabwah	`Ataq	470,440	494,638	20
Ta'izz	Ta`izz	2,393,425	2,513,003	21



Governorates of Yemen (Arabic names)

The governorates are subdivided into 333 districts (*muderiah*), which are subdivided into 2,210 sub-districts, and then into 38,284 villages (as of 2001).

Before 1990, Yemen existed as two separate entities. For more information, see Historic Governorates of Yemen.

Geography

Yemen is in the Middle East, in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, bordering the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea. It is west of Oman and south of Saudi Arabia.



Tihama on the Red Sea near Khaukha

A number of Red Sea islands, including the Hanish Islands, Kamaran and Perim, as well as Socotra in the Arabian Sea belong to Yemen. Many of the islands are volcanic; for example Jabal al-Tair had a volcanic eruption in 2007 and before that in 1883.



Map of Yemen

At 527,970 km² (203,837 sq mi), Yemen is the world's 49th-largest country (after France). It is comparable in size to Thailand, and somewhat larger than the U.S. state of California. Yemen is situated at 15°N 48°E.

Until recently, Yemen's northern border was undefined because the Arabian Desert prevented any human habitation there.

The country can be divided geographically into four main regions: the coastal plains in the west, the western highlands, the eastern highlands, and the Rub al Khali in the east.

The Tihamah ("hot lands") form a very arid and flat coastal plain. Despite the aridity, the presence of many lagoons makes this region very marshy and a suitable breeding ground for malarial mosquitoes. There are also extensive crescent-shaped sand dunes. The evaporation in the Tihama is so great that streams from the highlands never reach the sea, but they do contribute to extensive groundwater reserves. Today, these are heavily exploited for agricultural use. Near the village of Madar about 48 km North of Sanaa dinosaur footprints have been found, indicating that the area was once a mud flat.



The town of Hajarin

The Tihamah ends abruptly at the escarpment of the western highlands. This area, now heavily terraced to meet the demand for food, receives the highest rainfall in Arabia, rapidly increasing from 100 mm (4 inches) per year to about 760 mm (30 inches) in Ta'izz and over 1,000 mm (40 inches) in Ibb. Agriculture here is very diverse, with such crops as sorghum dominating. Cotton and many fruit trees are also grown, with mangoes being the most valuable. Temperatures are hot in the day but fall dramatically at night. There are perennial streams in the highlands but these never reach the sea because of high evaporation in the Tihama.

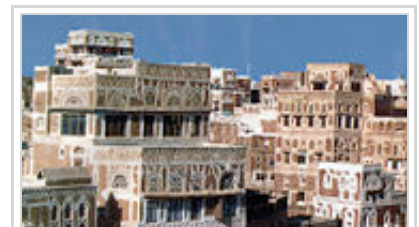
The central highlands are an extensive high plateau over 2,000 metres (6,560 feet) in elevation. This area is drier than the western highlands because of rain-shadow influences, but still receives sufficient rain in wet years for extensive cropping. Diurnal temperature ranges are among the highest in the world: ranges from 30 °C (86 °F) in the day to 0 °C (32 °F) at night are normal. Water storage allows for irrigation and the growing of wheat and barley. Sana'a is located in this region. The highest point in Yemen is Jabal an Nabi Shu'ayb, at 3,666 meters (12,028 ft).

The Rub al Khali in the east is much lower, generally below 1,000 metres, and receives almost no rain. It is populated only by Bedouin herders of camels.

Economy

Further information: Telecommunications in Yemen, Transportation in Yemen, and Internet usage in Yemen

Remittances from Yemenis working abroad and foreign aid paid for perennial trade deficits. Reports average annual growth in the range of 3–4% from 2000 through 2007. Its economic fortunes depend mostly on declining oil resources, providing around 90% of the country's exports^[7]. The World Bank predicts that Yemen's oil and gas revenues



will plummet during 2009 and 2010, and fall to zero by 2017 as supplies run out. In 2008 the UK's Royal Institute for International Affairs warned that economic collapse in Yemen could threaten stability throughout the region from northeast Africa to Saudi Arabia and, citing armed conflicts with Islamists and tribal insurgents, described Yemen's democracy as "fragile". These concerns have prompted the desires of leaders and diplomats from the West and elsewhere to preserve Yemen's economic stability.^[8]

As such, the country is trying to diversify its earnings. In 2006 Yemen began an economic reform program designed to bolster non-oil sectors of the economy and foreign investment. As a result of the program, international donors pledged about \$5 billion for development projects. In addition, Yemen has made some progress on reforms over the last year that will likely encourage foreign investment. Oil revenues increased in 2007, probably a result of higher prices. Substantial Yemeni communities exist in many countries of the world, including Yemen's immediate neighbors on the Arabian Peninsula, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Horn of Africa, the United Kingdom, Israel, and the United States, especially in the area around Detroit, Michigan, and in Lackawanna, New York. Beginning in the mid-1950s, the Soviet Union and China provided large-scale assistance. For example, the Chinese are currently involved with the expansion of the International Airport in Sanaa.

In the south, pre-independence economic activity was overwhelmingly concentrated in the port city of Aden. The seaborne transit trade, which the port relied upon, collapsed with the closure of the Suez Canal and Britain's withdrawal from Aden in 1967.

Since unification, the government has worked to integrate two relatively disparate economic systems. However, severe shocks, including the return in 1990 of approximately 850,000 Yemenis from the Persian Gulf states, a subsequent major reduction of aid flows, and internal political disputes culminating in the 1994 civil war hampered economic growth. As the fastest growing democracy in the Middle East, Yemen is attempting to climb into the middle human development region through ongoing political and economic reform.

Since the conclusion of the war, the government entered into agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to implement a structural adjustment program. Phase one of the IMF program included major financial and monetary reforms, including floating the currency, reducing the budget deficit, and cutting subsidies. Phase two will address structural issues such as civil service reform.

In early 1995, the government of Yemen launched an economic, financial and administrative reform program (EFARP) with the support of the World Bank and the IMF, as well international donors. The First Five-Year Plan (FFYP) for the years 1996 to 2000 was introduced in 1996. The World Bank has focused on public sector management, including civil service reform, budget reform and privatization.



Sana'a, the capital of the Republic of Yemen, is an ancient walled city of 6,500 houses, over 100 mosques, and a wealth of traditional architectural styles



Assab'en Street in Sana'a, Yemen. Memorial of the revolution of September 26, 1962

In addition, attracting diversified private investment, water management and poverty-oriented social sector improvements has been made a priority for the implementation of the programs in Yemen. These programs had a positive impact on Yemen's economy and led to the reduction of the budget deficit to less than 3% of GDP during the period from 1995 to 1999 and the correction of macro-financial imbalances.^[9]

In 1997, IMF and the Yemeni government began medium-term economic reform programs under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) and Extended Fund Facility (EFF). This program was aimed at reducing dependence on the oil sector and establishing a market environment for real non-oil GDP growth and investment in the non-oil sector. Increasing the growth rate in the non-oil sector was one of the government's most important objectives. Programs also focused on reducing unemployment, strengthening the social safety net and increasing financial stability. To achieve these reforms, the government and IMF implemented containment of government wages, improvements in revenue collection with the introduction of reforms in tax administration, and a sharp reduction in subsidies bills through increased prices on subsidized goods. As a result, the fiscal cash deficit was reduced from 16% of GDP to 0.9% from 1994 to 1997. This was supported by aid from oil-exporting countries despite the wide-ranging fluctuations in world oil prices. The real growth rate in the non-oil sector rose by 5.6% from 1995 to 1997.^[10]

The World Bank is active in Yemen, with 22 active projects in 2004, including projects to improve governance in the public sector, water and education. In 1996 and 1997, Yemen lowered its debt burden through Paris Club agreements and restructuring U.S. foreign debt. In 2003, government reserves reached \$50 billion. The government has recently done a number of regulatory reforms and Yemen now ranks 98th on the World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" index.^[11]

Foreign relations

The geography and ruling Imams of North Yemen kept the country isolated from foreign influence before 1962. The country's relations with Saudi Arabia were defined by the Taif Agreement of 1934, which delineated the northernmost part of the border between the two kingdoms and set the framework for commercial and other intercourse. The Taif Agreement has been renewed periodically in 20-year increments, and its validity was reaffirmed in 1995. Relations with the British colonial authorities in Aden and the south were usually tense.

The Soviet and Chinese Aid Missions established in 1958 and 1959 were the first important non-Muslim presence in North Yemen. Following the September 1962 revolution, the Yemen Arab Republic became closely allied with and heavily dependent upon Egypt. Saudi Arabia aided the royalists in their attempt to defeat the Republicans and did not recognize the Yemen Arab Republic until 1970. At the same time, Saudi Arabia maintained direct contact with Yemeni tribes, which sometimes strained its official relations with the Yemeni Government. Hundreds of thousands of Yemenis found employment in Saudi Arabia during the late 1970s and 1980s.

In February 1989, North Yemen joined Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt in forming the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), an organization created partly in response to the founding of the Gulf Cooperation

Council, and intended to foster closer economic cooperation and integration among its members. After unification, the Republic of Yemen was accepted as a member of the ACC in place of its YAR predecessor. In the wake of the Persian Gulf crisis, the ACC has remained inactive. Yemen is not a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

British authorities left southern Yemen in November 1967 in the wake of an intense rebellion. The People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the successor to British colonial rule, had diplomatic relations with many nations, but its major links were with the Soviet Union and other Marxist countries. Relations between it and the conservative Arab states of the Arabian Peninsula were strained. There were military clashes with Saudi Arabia in 1969 and 1973, and the PDRY provided active support for the Dhofar rebellion against the Sultanate of Oman. The PDRY was the only Arab state to vote against admitting new Arab states from the Persian Gulf area to the United Nations and the Arab League. The PDRY provided sanctuary and material support to various insurgent groups around the Middle East.

Yemen is a member of the United Nations, the Arab League, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and also participates in the nonaligned movement. The Republic of Yemen accepted responsibility for all treaties and debts of its predecessors, the YAR and the PDRY. Yemen has acceded to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. The Persian Gulf crisis dramatically affected Yemen's foreign relations. As a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 1990 and 1991, Yemen abstained on a number of UNSC resolutions concerning Iraq and Kuwait and voted against the "use of force resolution." Western and Persian Gulf Arab states reacted by curtailing or canceling aid programs and diplomatic contacts. At least 850,000 Yemenis returned from Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf.

Subsequent to the liberation of Kuwait, Yemen continued to maintain high-level contacts with Iraq. This hampered its efforts to rejoin the Arab mainstream and to mend fences with its immediate neighbors. In 1993, Yemen launched an unsuccessful diplomatic offensive to restore relations with its Persian Gulf neighbors. Some of its aggrieved neighbors actively aided the south during the 1994 civil war. Since the end of that conflict, tangible progress has been made on the diplomatic front in restoring normal relations with Yemen's neighbors. The Omani-Yemeni border has been officially demarcated. In the summer of 2000, Yemen and Saudi Arabia signed an International Border Treaty settling a 50 year old dispute over the location of the border between the two countries. Yemen settled its dispute with Eritrea over the Hanish Islands in 1998.

After the departure from the Persian Gulf states, as many as 15,000 Yemenis migrated to the U.S. Many Yemenis can be found in the south end of Dearborn, Michigan. In the early 90s, Yemenis went in search of manufacturing jobs. They continue to work in the U.S. and routinely send money back to their families.

Kidnapping of foreign tourists by tribes was an ongoing problem in Yemen as late as early 2006. In many instances, the kidnappers attempted to use hostage taking to gain leverage in negotiations with the government. One victim of kidnapping was former German Secretary of State Jürgen Chrobog, a man who himself had conducted negotiations with kidnappers while in office.^[12]

Yemen has historically enjoyed good relations with Somalia, its neighbour to the south and fellow Arab League member. Ethnic Somalis for the most part blend in well with Yemeni society, as they share centuries of close Islamic, migratory and Arab origin. Non-ethnic Somalis such as the Bantus face the greatest hardship, as they are shunned by both Yemeni and Somali society. The *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, estimates that 110,600 Somali refugees and asylum seekers lived in Yemen in 2007.^[13]

Yemen also maintains good relations with Djibouti, its other Somali neighbour to the west across the Red Sea. With a rapidly expanding economy, a stable government, huge investments from fellow Arab nations in the Persian Gulf, and a strategic maritime location in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, Djibouti stands as an important ally. While Djibouti is largely inhabited by Somalis, it is separate from the Somali Republic and holds its own seat in the United Nations and the League of Arab States. On February 22, 2008, it was revealed that a company owned by Tarek bin Laden was planning to build a bridge across the Bab el Mandeb, linking Yemen with Djibouti.

Religion

Islam makes up 99 percent of the population in Yemen, including Shaf'i Sunni and Zaydi Shia, but there are small numbers of the people from Yemen who are Jewish, Christian, and Hindu.^[14]

Religion in Yemen consists primarily of two principal Islamic religious groups: 55% of the population are Sunni and 42% are Shi'a.^[16] Sunnis are primarily Shafi'i, but also include significant groups of Malikis, Salafis and Hanbalis. About 35% of Yemenis are Shafi'i Sunnis, 5% are Maliki Sunnis, 15% are Salafi Sunnis.

religion	percent
Islam	99%
All others	1%

Demographics

The Population of Yemen was about 21 million according to July 2005 estimates, with 46% of the population being under 15 years old and 2,7% above 65 years.

Yemen has one of the world's highest birth rates; the average Yemeni woman bears seven children. Although this is similar to the rate in Somalia to the south, it is roughly twice as high as that of Saudi Arabia and nearly three times as high as those in the more modernized Arab states of the Persian Gulf.

Yemenis are mainly of Arab origin.^[1] Arabic is the official language, although English is increasingly understood by citizens in major cities. In the Mahra area (the extreme east) and the island Soqatra, several ancient south-Arabic Semitic languages are spoken.^{[17][18]} When the former states of north and south Yemen were established, most resident minority groups departed.^[19]

Yemenite Jews once formed a sizable Jewish minority in Yemen with

Yemenite Jews once formed a sizable community in Yemen with a distinct culture. They also occupied key industries including silversmiths and their influence on Yemeni culture is still discussed within the souks. However, most of them emigrated to Israel in the mid 20th century, following the Jewish exodus from Arab lands and Operation Magic Carpet (Yemen). In the early 20th century, they had numbered about 50,000; they currently number only a few hundred individuals and reside largely in Sana.

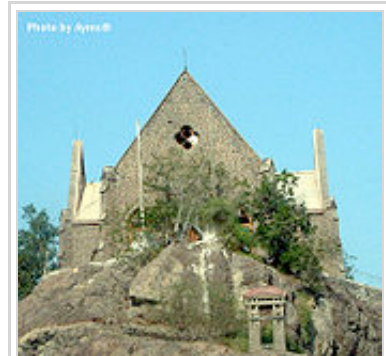
Arab traders have long operated in Southeast Asia, trading in spices, timber and textiles. Most of the prominent Indonesians, Malaysians and Singaporeans of Arab descent have their origins in southern Yemen in the Hadramawt coastal region.^[20] As many as 4 million Indonesians are of Hadrami descent and today there are almost 10,000 Hadramis in Singapore.^[21] Fifty years ago, there were Hadramis who emigrated from Yemen to Somalia but this emigration has stopped now due to political and civil unrest.



High-rise architecture at Shibam, Wadi Hadramawt

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Shi'is are primarily Zaidis, and also have significant minorities of Twelver Shias^[23] and Musta'ali Western Isma'ili Shias. About 32-38% of Yemenis are Zaidi Shias, 4% are Jaffaris Shias and 6% are Musta'ali Ismaili Shias.



A non-operational old church in Aden.

The Sunnis are predominantly in the south and southeast. The Zaidis are predominantly in the north and northwest whilst the Jafaris and Ismailis are in the main centers such as Sana'a and Ma'rib. There are mixed communities in the larger cities. Less than 1% of Yemenis are non-Muslim, adhering to Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism.^[24]

According to the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Yemen hosted a population of refugees and asylum seekers numbering approximately 124,600 in 2007. Refugees and asylum seekers living in Yemen were predominately from Somalia (110,600), Iraq (11,000) and Ethiopia (2,000).^[13]

The Yemeni diaspora is largely concentrated in the United Kingdom, where between 70,000 and 80,000 Yemenis reside, also just over 10,000 Yemenis reside in the United States and 2,000 live in France.^[25]

Human rights

The government and its security forces, often considered to suffer from rampant corruption, have

been responsible for torture, inhumane treatment and even extrajudicial executions. There are arbitrary arrests of citizens, especially in the south, as well as arbitrary searches of homes. Prolonged pretrial detention is a serious problem, and judicial corruption, inefficiency, and executive interference undermine due process. Freedom of speech, the press and religion are all restricted.^[26]

Human Rights Watch reported on discrimination and violence against women as well as on the abolition of the minimum marriage age of fifteen for women. The onset of puberty (interpreted by some to be as low as the age of nine) was set as a requirement for marriage instead.^[27] Reports of other forms of hostile prejudice directed towards disabled people, and ethnic and religious minorities were also reported. Censorship is actively practiced and in 2005 legislation was passed requiring journalists to reveal their sources under certain circumstances, and the government has raised the start-up costs for newspapers and websites significantly. In violation of the Yemeni constitution, the security forces often monitor telephone, postal, and Internet communications. Journalists who tend to be critical of the government are often harassed and threatened by the police.^[28]

Since the start of the Sa'dah insurgency many people accused of supporting Al-Houthi have been arrested and held without charge or trial. According to the US State Department International Religious Freedom Report 2007, "Some Zaydis reported harassment and discrimination by the Government because they were suspected of sympathizing with the al-Houthis. However, it appears the Government's actions against the group were probably politically, not religiously, motivated".^[29]

The U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants reported several violations of refugee and asylum seekers' rights in the organization's 2008 *World Refugee Survey*. Yemeni authorities reportedly deported numerous foreigners without giving them access to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, despite the UN's repeated requests. Refugees further reported violence directed against them by Yemeni authorities while living in refugee camps. Yemeni officials reportedly raped, beat and robbed camp-based refugees with impunity in 2007.^[13]

Languages

While the national language is Arabic (Yemeni Arabic is spoken in several regional dialects), Yemen is one of the main homelands of the South Semitic family of languages, which includes the non-Arabic language of the ancient Sabaean Kingdom. Its modern Yemeni descendants are closely related to the modern Semitic languages of Eritrea and Ethiopia. However, only a small remnant of those languages exists in modern Yemen, notably on the island of Socotra and in the back hills of the Hadhramaut coastal region. Modern South Arabian languages spoken in Yemen include Mehri, with 70,643 speakers, Soqotri, with an estimated 43,000 speakers in the Socotra archipelago (2004 census) and 67,000 worldwide, Bathari (with an estimated total of only 200 speakers), and Hobyót language.

Foreign language in public schools is taught from grade seven on, though the quality of public school instruction is low. Private schools using a British or American system teach English and produce proficient speakers, but Arabic is the dominant language of communication. The number of English speakers in Yemen is small compared to other Arab countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, the UAE and

Saudi Arabia. Private schools have also started to teach French alongside Arabic and English.

Culture

Yemen is a culturally rich country with influence from many civilizations, such as the early civilization of Sheba. However, in today's society, Yemens' inhabitants believe that for the sake of the newer generation to come ahead, that the society is in dire need of change for the greater good.

Qat

Qat, also known as Khat (*Catha edulis*) is a large, slow growing, evergreen shrub, reaching a height of between 1 and 6 meters, in equatorial regions it may reach a height of 10 meters.^[30] This plant is widely cultivated in Yemen and is generally used for chewing. When Khat juice is swallowed, its leaf juice has a caffeine-like effect. It is deeply rooted in Yemeni culture, which it has exported to its neighbours across the Gulf of Aden, Somalia, Djibouti and, to a lesser degree, Eritrea (where it is mainly consumed by ethnic Arabs of Yemeni and Rashaida origins). Khat is chewed by men and women.



The National Museum in Sana'a

Cinema

The Yemeni film industry is in its early stages, there being only two Yemeni films as of 2008. Released in 2005, *A New Day in Old Sana'a* deals with a young man struggling between whether to go ahead with a traditional marriage or go with the woman he loves.

In August 2008, Yemen's Interior Minister Mutahar al-Masri supported the launch of a new feature film to educate the public about the consequences of Islamist extremism. "The Losing Bet" was produced by Fadl al-Olfi. The plot follows two Yemeni jihadis, who return from years living abroad. They are sent home by an Al Qaeda mastermind to recruit new members and carry out deadly operations in Yemen.^[31]

World heritage sites

Among Yemen's natural and cultural attractions are four World Heritage sites.

The Old Walled City of Shibam in Wadi Hadhramaut, inscribed by UNESCO in 1982, two years after Yemen joined the world heritage organisation, is nicknamed "Manhattan of the Desert", because of its "skyscrapers". Surrounded by a fortified wall, the 16th Century City is one of the oldest and examples of urban planning based on the principle of vertical construction

The ancient Old City of Sana'a at an altitude of more than 7,000 feet has been inhabited for over two and a half millennia and was inscribed in 1986; the historic buildings that are seen today were built before William the Conqueror crossed the English Channel in 1066. Sana'a became a major Islamic

centre in the 7th Century and the 103 mosques, 14 hammams (traditional bath houses) and more than 6,000 houses that survive all date from before the 11th Century.

Close to the Red Sea Coast, the Historic Town of Zabid, inscribed in 1993, was Yemen's capital from the 13th to 15th Century, and is an archaeological and historical site. It played an important role for many centuries, because of its university, which was a centre of learning for the whole Arab and Islamic world. Algebra is said to have been invented there in the early 9th Century by the little known scholar al-Jaladi.

The latest addition to Yemen's list of World Heritage Sites is the Socotra Archipelago. Mentioned by Marco Polo in the 13th Century, this remote and isolated Archipelago consists of four islands and two rocky islets near the Gulf of Aden. The site has rich biodiversity. 37% of Socotra's 825 plants, 90% of its reptiles and 95% of its snails are unique and do not occur anywhere else in the world. It is home to 192 bird species, 253 species of coral, 730 species of coastal fish and 300 species of crab and lobster, as well as a range of Aloes and the Dragon's Blood Tree (*Dracaena cinnabari*). The cultural heritage of Socotra includes the unique Soqotri language.

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See also

- Military of Yemen
- Jambiya the Yemeni dagger
- List of Yemen-related topics
- List of newspapers in Yemen
- Lists of Yemenis
- Arab diaspora
- Arab Singaporean
- Yemen Times
- Yemen Observer

External links

Government

- Yemen Parliament (<http://www.yemenparliament.com/>)
- Chief of State and Cabinet Members (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/world-leaders-1/world-leaders-y/yemen.html>)

General information

- Country Profile (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/784383.stm) from the BBC News
- Yemen (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ym.html>) entry at *The World Factbook*
- Yemen (<http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/yemen.htm>) at *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
- Yemen (http://www.dmoz.org/Regional/Middle_East/Yemen/) at the Open Directory Project
- Wikimedia Atlas of Yemen
- Yemen travel guide from Wikitravel

Other

- IRIN Yemen (<http://www.irinnews.org/ME-Country.aspx?Country=YE>) humanitarian news and analysis
- French Center for Archeology and Social Sciences CEFAS (<http://www.cefasc.com.ye/homeng.html>)
- AAYSP: American Association of Yemeni Scientists and Professionals (<http://www.aaysp.org>)
- Yemeni Students Association Abroad (<http://www.ysaa.org>)
- Voter turnout, Gender quotas, Electoral system design and Political party financing in Yemen (<http://www.idea.int/countryprofile.cfm?CountryCode=YE>)
- [8] (<http://www.yemeniamericanculture.org>)
- Report on the eruption (<http://www.cnn.com/2007/TECH/science/10/01/yemen.volcano/index.html>) from CNN
- Crisis briefing on clashes in Yemen (http://www.alertnet.org/db/crisisprofiles/YE_CLA.htm) from Reuters AlertNet

Preceded by North Yemen concurrent with South Yemen	Government of Yemen 1990 to date	Succeeded by <i>current</i>
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