

Electronic Media and Human Rights

Acknowledgment

This study is the harvest of 9 months hard work by a committed research team studying the extent electronic media influences and is influenced by human rights issues and movements. It also sought to study the extent to which Arab human rights organizations have used the Internet to promote their issues.

Seeing that this research is probably the first of its kind, we are aware of its limitations. Every time the team sat to draft a new section of the study, it would reopen a discussion on what had been written. Finally, we agreed to present the study in its current format. We apologize for any criticism. To the extent of our knowledge, this research is the first of its kind. Throughout our work we have maintained our honesty and our scientific integrity as much as possible.

The sudden death of the main researcher, Mohamed Hakem, was a shock to all of us and to all those who have known him. To honor him, we thought it would be best to continue working on the research, dedicating the final product to his memory.

This study is based on a 6 month period of open discussions and detailed browsing of the sample Web sites, leading to an analysis of what had been published on the selected Web sites during the year 2006. In addition, the results of a workshop conducted by HRinfo, in which editors of the selected Web sites, representatives of human rights organizations, and media and human rights experts participated, were integrated into the study. The research

also included a daily follow-up period of the selected Web sites over a period of one month.

This study was prepared by sociologist Mohamed Hakem, research assistant Abdu Abdel Aziz Hamada, and HRinfo executive director and legal researcher Gamal Eid. Ziad Mekky and Nafissa Alsabagh translated it.

HRinfo also expresses its gratitude to Sally Sami, Shehab Fakhry, and Randa Abul Dahab, for their efforts in editing and providing valuable assistance for this study to finally see the light of day.

We also would like to thank editors of the sample Web sites, human rights organizations, and the media and human rights experts, who, through their discussions of the preliminary findings of our research and their recommendations, made this study what it is today.

This study was funded by Ford Foundation. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information is responsible for the results and opinions found in the study.

Introduction

Television and satellite are quite widespread all over the world and in the Arab world particularly as a result of high rates of illiteracy, the low cost of satellite, and international coverage. However, television is still restricted by censorship, internally and externally. Governments in several instances have cracked down on satellite channels and dispensed their reporters as a response to unfavorable coverage. Extreme measures included shutting down the channel as was the case of "Zawra" the Iraqi satellite channel which was banned from the air for alleged technical reasons. Meshaan Jabouri, the channel owner, threatened to sue the Egyptian government and accused it of political manipulation.

Radio and print media share the same conditions as television and satellite channels, the difference being in details.

It is thus not surprising that the Internet has become the most widespread and influential media tool overcoming the restrictions on traditional media. On the internet there are "news to break by everyone to everyone" through tools such as blogs.

The spread of Internet:

Internationally:

Recent surveys estimated the number of Internet users around the world to be 1.2 Billion, i.e. 17% of the world's population is internet users, in comparison to 1997 estimates of 70 million internet users. This means that the number of internet users in the world has increased around 17 times over the last decade. This rise in users

is an unprecedented phenomenon with regards to any of the other media technology.

In the Arab world:

The number of internet users around the Arab world in 2007 is estimated to be 29 million, i.e. 8.7 % of the Arab world's population.

In the last decade, there was an upsurge in the number of Arab Internet users. In 1997 there were around 600 thousand. This means that the number of Internet users in the Arab World has increased 50 times over the last ten years. This huge rise in Internet use predicts the future of the Internet in the Arab world, putting into consideration that that new technologies are now adopting the Arabic language, a service that was not available only a few years ago along with a poor infrastructure in telecommunications in most of the Arab countries, high communication cost, illiteracy, and implanted suspicions of the Internet raised by Arab governments.

Electronic media:

The widespread of Internet in the Arab world encouraged many newspapers and media outlets to resort to the internet, by creating their own websites. Many organizations in the region set up their own websites as well. In addition, many electronic media outlets were setup and grown to become credible amongst Internet users, to the extent that some news website have visitor hits much higher than the readership rates of a number of excellent news papers in one country. Examples of such websites are Naseej, Elaph, Muheet, Islamonline, Masrawy, and albawaba.

Many other satellites and news agencies have developed their own websites so as to reach a wider segment of reader. This reflects how powerful the Internet has become especially in terms of competition and outreach.

Human rights organizations and the Internet:

Despite of suspicions surrounding the concept of "human rights" in the region, regarding it as a double standard, the human rights movement in the Arab world, and internationally, succeeded to assert itself as a pressure group with a frame of reference against many governments, particularly the oppressive ones.

The new generation of the human rights movement manifested itself with the establishment of the International Criminal Court, despite the ferocious US opposition, and thus transforming the role of the movement from mere advocacy to prosecution. The insurmountable effort played by human rights organizations for the ICC to see light has deeply consolidated the role of non-governmental organizations and human rights organizations, whether in the Arab World or in the world as a whole, responding strongly to all those who were suspicious of human rights organizations.

Most criticism of human rights organizations are led by governments infamous for their oppression and manipulation of ideological and religious beliefs to justify the continuing sufferings they inflict on their own people.

It was not surprising that human rights organizations resort to the Internet in order to promote their goals and campaigns. However,

organizations varied in how they used this important tool.

Thousands of visitors, everyday, visit international human rights websites, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, AMAN, and HRinfo, as they provide information to the public, journalists, and researchers, providing also an opportunity for the participation of activists.

Preface

About this study:

This study seeks to identify the relation between the Internet and human rights, more precisely how big news websites handle human rights issues.

In this context, the study answers two main questions:

- * What is the significance of the culture of human rights in the discourse of news websites?
- * How and to what extent do human rights organizations use the internet to further achieve their goals.

The research is limited to Arabic news websites and Arab human rights organizations.

The importance of this study:

The significance of this study is in its contribution to the following areas:

1- Offering an objective insight into the relation between the Internet and human rights, given the fact that – to the extent of our knowledge - there isn't any Arabic study tackling this relationship. Undoubtedly a study on the relation between media discourse on the Internet and human rights is vitally important.

The relation between the Internet and human rights is a relation between two variables with a universal nature that have transcended all natural and man-made barriers, which have been substituted by communication channels between humans

regardless of their color, religion and sex. Each variable is affected by changes to the other. In addition, the relation between the Internet and human rights is an area that has not yet been intensively studied, becoming a rich area. The findings of a research into the relation between Arabic websites and human rights organizations are especially important as they can be resorted to by media and human rights organizations when preparing material and publishing them so that finally international human rights treaties the reference organizing the relationship between the collective and the individual.

2- Revealing the extent of the editors' and websites' awareness of international law and human rights.

3- Showing the extent of influence advertisement and propaganda, and in general funds, has on the websites' stance towards human rights.

4- Showing the influence religious and ideological beliefs have on human rights.

5- Revealing the extent of political influence on the media message with regards to human rights.

6- Showing the extent of the relation between media messages and the dominant culture and the role the internet has in developing this culture.

7- Providing an insight into the important promotional tools websites resort to in their quest for popularity.

8- Contributing to the awareness of the human rights culture and its consideration in media discourse.

The study's material:

1- News websites:

We have chosen 8 of the most popular Arabic news websites whom are believed to have strong influence on Arab internet users. We have chosen websites with various objectives, for example, websites that seek financial profit, websites that propagate an ideological message, and websites belonging to huge media cooperation such as websites belonging to satellite channels. The websites were also chosen in order to represent a wide spectrum of various media messages in the region. The selected websites are either based in Arab countries or abroad.

A balance in our selection of websites was maintained. Two of the selected websites belong to 2 satellite channels, another 2 websites have an ideological (religious) and propagandistic message, and the final 4 websites are regarded as media corporations addressing Arab readers in general.

The websites we covered in our study are:

www.aljazeera.net

www.alarabiya.net

www.islamonline.net

www.copts-united.com

www.middle-east-online.com

www.naseej.com

www.elaph.com

www.moheet.com

2- Human rights organizations:

We have selected 8 human rights organizations, which vary in terms of geographical location (Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan, Paris and Egypt) and nature of activity (environment, women's rights, freedom of expression, legal aid, and violence and torture). In addition the organizations were selected to represent a variety of positions with regards to using the Internet as a tool, i.e. having widespread websites, limited widespread websites, and organizations with no websites.

The organizations we covered in our study are:

- * The Arab centre for Resources and Information about Violence against Women (AMAN), Jordan. www.amanjordan.org
- * Nadeem Centre for Psychological Rehabilitation for Victims of Violence
- * The National Organization for Human Rights and Freedoms (HOOD), Yemen www.hoodonline.org
- * Habi centre for environmental rights, Egypt. www.hcer.org
- * Association for human rights legal aid. Egypt, www.ahrla.org
- * The Arab committee for human rights, Paris. www.achr.nu
- * The health and environmental development society.
www.ahedegypt.org
- * The national observatory for press freedom, publishing and creation. Tunisia. www.observatoire-olpec.org.

3- Main human rights covered by the study:

We have decided to select a specific number of rights in order to measure the extent of the relation between the selected news websites and human rights.

Four significant rights were selected as a frame of reference.

These are:

- a- women's rights
- b- Minorities and tolerance with the other.
- c- Refugees rights.
- d- Privacy of personal life.

4- Sample material used in the study:

The research team decided to study the websites' contents during the year 2006, which is a relatively large sample that satisfies the condition of stability of results.

The total number of headlines of the studied news and reports is about 5,684 headlines published on the selected websites during 2006 and during the follow-up month which came after the conclusion of the workshop held by HRinfo, hosted a number of representatives from these websites, several electronic publishing experts, and our research team.

How the study was conducted:

The scope:

The study is a survey based on news and reports published on major influential news websites and human rights organizations in the Arab World.

Methodology:

The methods used can be summarized as follow:

- 1- Using International treaties on human rights as a reference to extract concepts, key-words and a universal definition of human rights.
- 2- Compiling a list that contains names and events related to the four rights covered by the study during the year 2006.
- 3- Using search engines embedded in the selected websites.
- 4- Using major search engines such as Google and Yahoo with their advanced search technologies.
- 5- Using the websites' archive service when available.
- 6- Organizing a workshop, in which 6 representatives from the selected websites and 8 representatives from the selected human rights organizations, 9 media and human rights experts, have participated. A paper was sent from Nassej.com as they were not able to attend the workshop. Elaph's representative didn't attend despite their confirmation to attend. HRinfo's research team, the executive director and the program director also attended the workshop which was held to discuss the preliminary results of the study conducted between December 2006 and April 2007.
- 7- Conducting a follow-up research for one month after the conclusion of the work-shop.
- 8- Conducting case based analysis of the media content in the selected websites with regards to the four rights covered by this

study. Examples include: honor killing crimes, the Pope's statements, the Danish Cartoons crisis, Turabi's fatwa to permit Muslim women to marry Christian and Jewish men, and the death of tens of Sudanese refugees in Cairo.

9- Referring to a number of books and references which discussed the subject of the study.

Challenges that the study faced:

The analysis of the content news websites was relatively difficult due to a number of factors such as the lack of references and studies which could be referred to. Also, there were a number of questions that the research team had to answer. These questions included:

- How much material should be covered for this study to be credible?
- Why did we select the aforementioned sample of news websites and human rights organizations?
- Should these websites and organizations be evaluated or criticized, or should an analysis to raise the awareness of those in charge of these websites and organizations be provided?
- Should the study search for errors in the material studied or just analyze them?
- Do we have the right to criticize or blame these news websites, given the fact that its main goal is news coverage not human rights advocacy?

- What are the standards we should refer to when analyzing or discarding an issue?

This is a number of questions among many other questions we had to ask ourselves to avoid the scrutiny of the findings of the research.

In addition to that there were a number of procedural and technical problems that we have encountered. Examples include:

a- The difference in dialects in such a way that the same word could carry different meanings from one website to another. For example, " feminist movement " in some websites referred women's rights.

b- The use of metaphors in the Arabic language. For example, the word 'rape' yielded results for stories about "confiscated lands".

c- We also encountered a problem regarding the most used terms used in the human rights discourse, such as activist which also yielded results on active groups and cells.

d- Some of the selected websites did not have search engines. The search engines in some of the others were not functioning. As a result, the research team had to resort to external large search engines.

e- There was constantly the question of whether to take the readers' comments into account in our research or not.

f- The challenge of dealing with audio and video files.

Part 1: Media websites www.Aljazeera.net

1. Aljazeera.net. A general background:

A-The significance of Aljazeera.net:

Aljazeera.net is one of the most popular Arabic news sites on the web. It was launched in January 2001 and ever since has seen an increase in numbers of visitors and observers. These numbers peak during wars and political crises that hit the region.

The new-look of the Arabic site of mid Sep 2004 helped to increase the number of visitors. The new design contains four sections; news, knowledge, business and The Space it has:

- * Respect for individual privacy and common sense (4)
- * Unbiased presentation of various points of views (5)
- * To analyze objectively the variations that characterise human societies and define their cultures, beliefs and races and their implicit values and peculiarities to present an honest and unbiased reflection (6)
- * The importance of differentiating between news, analysis and comment to avoid propaganda and prediction (9)

The code lacks any overt commitment to respect international treaties but articles 4, 5, 6 and 9 imply compliance with human rights values.

E- Internal search in aljazeera.net:

There is always a main page where one can start a search. The main page provides two choices, one of them is the site-map which specifies direct links to specific topics and subjects and the

other is the direct text search in part of or the whole site. When we tried the first choice we found that human rights is not a subject or a group of subjects with links. Human rights issues are not among the small lists that fill-up the site and to persist in following-up with that choice denies us the chance to enjoy the unique features the internet provides.

1-General Search:

Searching for human rights as a term on 25th March 2007, we came up with 104 results that cover a time-span starting from 25th March and ending on 2nd October i.e., the non-detailed time-span is usually the last six months before the specified search date with results set in a chronological order with the most recent at the top.

Results indicate that the search is not restricted to the title, but also can extend to the first entry or the second entry and maybe to the text depending on the site's categorisation system. Finally it seemed that each of these results refer to new related results. The first new results titled 'Parliament Agrees Roma Treaty Causes Legal Debate In Yemen' shows five other articles the site considers related. The five results are; 'More Than A Hundred Thousand Devastated Refugees In Yemen', 'Yemeni Court Tries Al Qaeda Suspects Went To Iraq', 'Parliament Moves To Settle Houthi Dispute', '14 Yemeni Indicted With Terrorism' and '36 Yemeni Terrorist Suspects Stand Trail'. As we can see, each result suggests other related results and every related material refers to other related materials. These results provoked us to pose a number of study-related questions:

Is 6 months a sufficient time-span to survey the significance the site gives to human rights?

Is it possible that the site contains materials related to human rights issues without a direct reference to human rights? How can we access those materials? Would those materials further the goals of this study?

Is it possible that the resulting materials related to a search for human rights would have more relevance to the study than the main results?

- What about readers' comments?

2- Detailed search:

The detailed search is limited. We can search for the available materials on the website by the main entry, the first summary, the second summary or the total results. We can also search in any section of the website, both main and subsection or in any of the 22 categorized subjects which are independent of any geographical or date boundaries.

The detailed-search mode gives various results depending on the boundaries used in the search. When we searched under a title, which is a strong indicator of the relation between the search subject and the material, we came up with 37 results. While searching under the first summary leads to 116 results, the second summary yields 10 results only, text search gave us 693 results and searching overall, gave us 699 results, starting from 1st July 2006 and ending 1st January 2007. As a result, we thought it imperative to narrow the search to a time-span starting from 1st July to 31st December of the same year. We found the following:

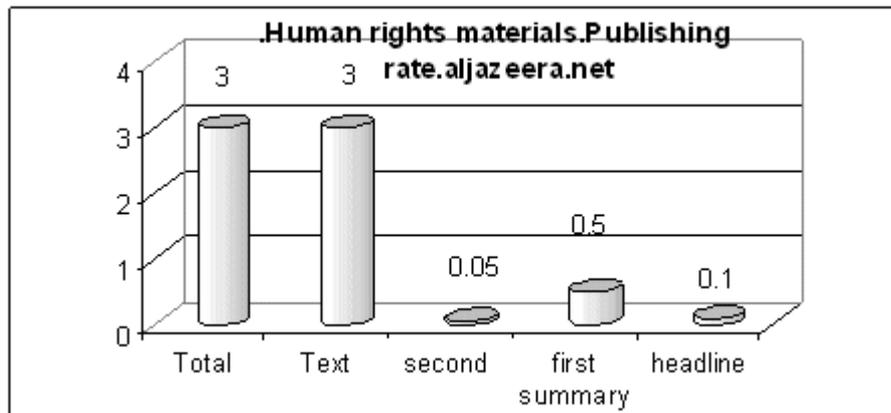
* Searching under title gives 14 results

* Searching under the first summary gives 82 results

- * Searching in the second summary gives 7 results
- * Searching for text yields 387
- * Searching for all gives 391 results, including 57 results

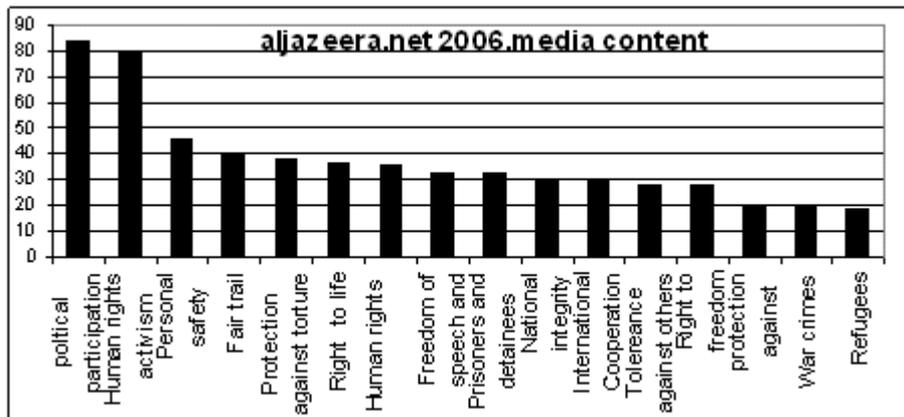
2-Human rights in aljazeera.net:

A. Publishing rate:



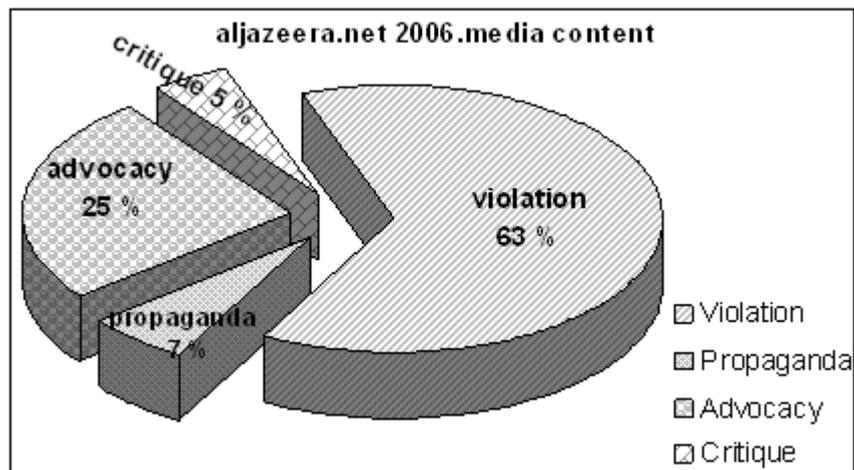
During 2006 Aljazeera.net published an average of one article every ten days that contain the term 'human rights' in the title, a strong indicator of the relevance between the media content and human rights. The publishing rate goes up to one article every two days, when the search is in the first summary, also an indicator of the second degree of the relation between the media content and human rights. The publishing rate peaks to 3 materials every day when searching under text which is a weak indicator of the relation between the media material and human rights.

B. The media content and its relation to human rights:



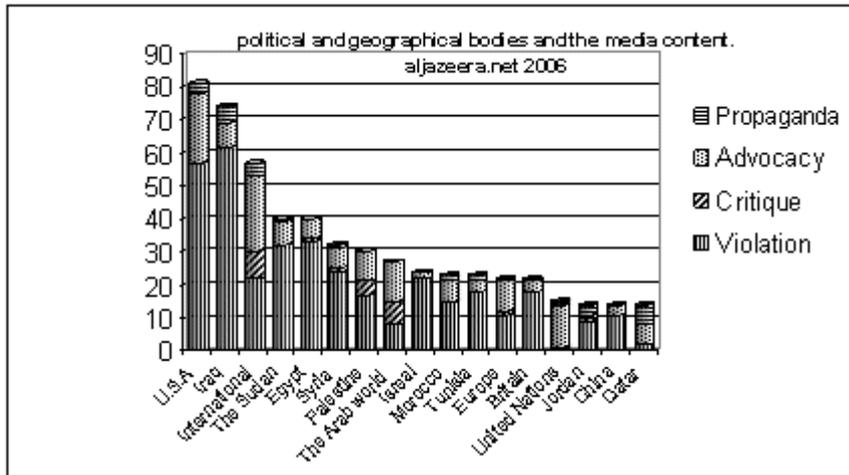
The most frequent media content among the total results is pivoted along both subjects of political activism and human rights advocates. The reason behind this is due to the news-informative nature of Aljazeera.net and its intensive source coverage especially during times of wars and political crises as in the case of the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan and the Darfur crisis and also due to the relation between these crises. We can conclude from the above results that the media material is susceptible to the news-breaking stories and groups and subsequently, the economic and social rights of the under-privileged groups fall to the bottom of the list of rights e.g., right to medical care, right to edible food, right to abode. The orientation of the media content in which the condemnation of human rights violation came at the top the list demonstrates aljazeera.net's stance on the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

C. Media content



Advocating human rights with disregard to its authoritative role came second in the media concern. Promoting the Arab state stance on human rights landed third while the fourth place with the smallest percentage was shared among critiquing concepts of human rights and the position of the UN and the international community on the Palestinian cause, Iraq and Darfur. We can see from the above chart that Aljazeera.net rarely discussed the issue of human rights, with only 36 media articles during 2006, a fact that emphasizes the political nature behind the site's concerns compared to human rights education and advocacy.

D. The relation between the media concern and political and geographical bodies



The relation between media concern and political and geographical bodies, especially states, reveals a concentration on a principal group of countries; US, Iraq, Sudan and Egypt, and particularly on violations of human rights records for each of those countries and more particularly regarding rights to political activism, advocating human rights, individual safety and fair trial. Qatar has a low profile in Aljazeera.net coverage and in cases when it does rise to the surface, the media concern focuses on the issues of education and advocacy of human rights.

E- The Four Rights



The media content related to issues such as minorities' rights and tolerance of others scored the highest rate of frequency with 63

subjects related to minorities. The reason behind this is the erupting of two conflicts during 2006. The first was the cartoon drawings published on the Danish 'Jyllands Posten' and subsequently republished by many western newspapers. The second was the Pope's speech at a German university. Both incidents sparked Muslim anger and led writers and journalists in media outlets including Aljazeera.net to invoke the significance of human rights in confronting the western 'other', at the same time that Aljazeera.net dealt with minorities' issues in the Arab region as a matter of lesser importance.

Take the Kurdish cause, for instance. The Kurds are a national minority with a non-official population number, dispersed over Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. In this perspective the Kurdish cause received a share of 3 titles only. The Kurdish day of Newroz, a national Kurdish holiday and marks the beginning of spring, was mentioned only twice as a part of two reports discussing the Kurd's situation in Turkey. The issue of the Polisario front was opened for discussion 6 times.

Aljazeera.net rarely approaches controversial issues involving the Arab Gulf region, especially the Bedouin or those deprived of the right to a nationality. In the wake of the discovery of oil and the quick riches that followed in the region, these peoples were first called 'Bedous' then 'of an unidentified nationality' and finally 'Bedouin', derived from the daily usage of the term 'without passport'. The word Bedouin appeared only twice, first under the title 'The Practical Dictionary for Human Law' which discussed the right to nationality as a human right and its relation to national identity. A JSC episode which discussed the issue made no direct

reference to the Gulf States in terms of their particular violation of human rights. The second incident was under the title 'Kuwait Goes Easy on Bedouin', considered to be a propaganda measure aiming to improve the country's image.

The Ismaili Shia which is one of the Shia sects, populating parts of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen, mentioned one time only without a single chance to express their own point of view. According to the extremist Wahabi stance on Islamic faith, the Ismailis are infidels. Material related to the four groups: Most of the rare subjects that can highlight the issue of minority rights in Qatar were about organizing conferences and international forums to discuss the issue. The issue was brought to discussion in 'The Doha conference for Religions Dialogue'. The second incident was under the title 'Reform and Civilizations Dialogue at the End of the Doha Forum'.

3. Analyzing Materials Related to the Four Groups

1. Minorities and Tolerance of the Other

1.1 - The Cartoon Case

The case was one of the factors that pushed the issue of minority rights and tolerance of the other to the forefront. Aljazeera.net covered the story in various sections while beating on war drums as if a new crusade was looming on the horizon. Every media weapon was deployed, news articles, reports, essays and programs were well-stocked, Zawahiri's speech on the cartoons was flagged high at full mast as was the Al Qaeda's chief's analysis of the whole situation, the Arab Israeli dispute, Sudan, Iraq and the cartoons, was at the ready 'To Continue The Instigation March To Bring The Perpetrators Of That Heinous

Crime Committed, Those Crusaders Journalists Or Infidel Heretics’.

Aljazeera.net media content, rarely addresses issues that call for dialogue and its significance in resolving this predicament. Most of the subjects concerning minority rights published on Aljazeera.net during 2006 focused on the rights of Muslims and Arabs in the West and in Israel with 17 titles, some of them addressing Muslim rights in building mosques in Greece and Israeli worries concerning Palestinian population growth and the political struggle of Arab students in America.

1.II – Bahais

Bahais are a religious minority with a presence in a number of Arab countries. They are deprived of many rights including rights as citizens of those countries. This issue surfaced after Egyptian citizens were required to replace old identity cards with new national number cards. Submitting a proof of membership to one of the ‘three religions’, Islam, Christianity and Judaism was an imperative procedure to obtain the new identification Cards.

Aljazeera.net covered the story in a number of reports, such as:

- Public and official objections against Bahais in Egypt

In a violation of the journalistic code of ethics of Aljazeera.net which states that, ‘a piece of news, story or opinion must be attributed to an identifiable and trustworthy source, with exceptions pending on the intrinsic nature of the source’, Mahmoud Jumma of Aljazeera.net wrote, on 27 June, a report titled ‘Public and Official Objection Against Bahai Cases in Egypt’. Jumma's report did not cite his sources and left no time in lashing out with bias against the

Bahais right from the title. The report was divided into 3 sections; the introduction, opinion and counter-opinion.

The introduction came with 205 words, excluding the title, and spoke about Bahais in the third person. For example 'one of them filed a law-suit', 'the verdict recognized their religion'. Thus, the introduction gives the impression that the Bahais are a marginal minority and the report concludes that 'Egyptians: Muslims, Copts and also Jews who all coexist peacefully oppose Bahais and the government refuses to recognize them officially, while the Egyptian people oppose many of the Bahai beliefs for its threatening nature regarding the safety and stability of society'. Jumma did not bother to look at the international treaties and covenants which Egypt is incumbent to comply with in this particular issue. Two points of view were expounded in this report. The first was in favour of the Bahai right to freedom of belief and full citizenship.

Mr. Hossam Bahgat, the director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, was mistakenly described as 'the director of the Arab Society for Personal Rights'. Bahgat's share of the article was 189 words of a total of 754. While the other point of view, presented by Prof. Abdullah Samak, a professor and a head of department of Azhar University, came in at 360 words and was full of accusations against the Bahais for their alleged collusion to further the goals of Zionism, Israel and the US. In addition to the introduction, we have a total of 565 words against rights to citizenship while only 189 were in favour of such rights.

- Bahais out of the Closet in Kuwait

In a news round-up segment under the title 'Bahai out of Closet in

Kuwait', Aljazeera.net published an interview and called it a scoop. The interview was between the Kuwaiti newspaper, 'Al Watan' and a Bahai from Kuwait. Aljazeera.net did not, throughout its excerpts from the interview, report the exact the number of Bahais in Kuwait but estimated the number at 400 from various countries including Kuwait, Egypt, India, US, adding that 'there is no discrimination against them in Kuwait'.

Another story titled 'Jordanian Academics and Media in Israel' in which the Bahais were foisted into the story, despite the fact that it was about a visit to Israel by Jordanian academics and media delegates after an invitation from the Histodrut workers union in Israel.

1.III - Freedom of Belief

Freedom of belief was expounded as a theoretical concept in a report titled 'religious freedom and the Islamic Sharia', in which the right to freedom of belief was discussed from an Islamic Sharia perspective. Promoting Islamic teachings is common, through stories such as the conversion to Islam by the famous football coach Philippe Troussier and his wife in Rabat, Morocco. Another report about newcomers to Islam, seen on JSC 'Special visit', hosted the French astronomer Abdel Haq Ghaidarony who has embraced Islam.

On the other hand, Aljazeera.net has stood on guard against missionary campaigns. For instance, it ran a story about a law passed in Algeria that bans missionary activities and criminalises activities such as 'preaching another religion to Muslims', an implicit reference to on-going missionary campaigns in Algeria.

2- Women's rights

Women's rights take second place among the four rights above.

Various points of view were pitched according to the approach.

The issue was discussed 22 times in 2006 in various contexts.

'Draft Calling for Equality in France'

On May 23rd, Sayyed Hamdy wrote:

'France is going through a loud debate triggered by a female declaration, published and circulated, calling for an end to discrimination between married and unmarried women. The declaration has grabbed the attention of senior politicians, officials and political parties who have hardly had time to deal with the aftermath of revoking 'The First Job Contract' law, not to mention the run-up for the presidential election next year. The declaration, which is not lacking a sense of humour, also deals with the reality of sexual relations and the subsequent radical changes in the structure of the French family. It also established a relation between the equality demands and the current trends in France where 48.3% new-borns are out of wedlock.'

The writer shows his belief that the issue is not a serious issue when compared to the pile of tasks awaiting senior politicians after revoking The First Job Contract law. The writer attempted to downplay the significance of the issue and induce the reader to believe that women's issues can be discussed only when nothing serious is due.

'International women's day'

On 8th March and as a part of celebrating International Women's Day which was fairly covered on the site's pages, Aljazeera.net posted a scripted version of its 'Behind the News' program,

presented by Mohamed Krishan. The channel showed different points of views to maintain its unbiased stance. The guests were; Hayat El Musimy from the Islamic Labour Front in Jordan, Fadwa El Gendy, a professor in the University of Southern California and Iman Haider, a social studies professor at Damascus University.

Two subjects were raised. The first was women and the consequences of political activism, and the second subject was the means to support female political activism.

Krishan talked about women in the Arab world and how they still regard family, traditions and society in general as critical factors in political activism despite the fact that, on a global scale, female political activism is gaining grounds. The program also talked about the sensitive nature that surrounds female issues in the Arab world and attributed this sensitivity to the accumulation of outdated traditions and values.

The program raised an important question; why women are not playing an active political role despite many official initiatives encouraging women to participate. In addition, the program talked about the main ways in which we can discuss education, internal and external liberalization in all fields and not to reduce female activism to the political aspect only. The program also talked about women's rights under occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and whether it created a pressing pro-women stance, given the fact that 25% of both the Iraqi and Afghani parliament members under the occupation are females.

The guests repeatedly emphasized the idea of variation and peculiarity of the Arab world and the rich culture in the region and the lack of a need for alternative values, traditions or concepts.

The program's host argued that international treaties, which nowadays constitute the frame of reference for women's issues, belong to western experiences and western backgrounds.

One of the guests asserted 'the Islamic jurisprudence precedes international treaties by a long time' and that 'Islamic jurisprudence admitted women's rights, status, role, culture and education in addition to admitting women's role in administration, politics, education and labour'. Fadwa El Gendy argued that the Arab region is rich with violations of every right and not only women's rights. She also attributed the reason to American occupation.

'The Emergence of the Palestinian Globalised Elite'

On 10th July Aljazeera.net published a scripted version of the JSC discussion of a book called, 'The Emergence of the Palestinian Globalised Elite; Donors, International Organizations and NGOs', by Sary Hanfy and Linda Tabir. The program hosted Prof. Sary Hanfy, social studies professor at the American University of Beirut and the former director of the Palestinian Centre for Refugees and Diaspora in Ramallah. The TV program talked about European funds directed mainly towards women's rights, health, human rights, and also the European agenda 'which became funds-focused at the expense of the political sphere, especially after the eruption of the Intifada. The TV program also discussed the nature of Palestinian NGOs which are dependent on international funds and were abortively and arbitrarily, cut off from the national

liberalisation system and subsequently repudiating the developmental role that Palestinian NGOs play.

Although the book did not deny the fact that the health sector, women's rights and human rights, all saw some developments, Prof. Hanfy asks 'what's the point in building a democratic and liberal society while disregarding the reality of occupation'.

Sary Hanfy proposes the initiation of the global agenda in Palestine i.e. the relinquishing of state power in front of NGOs, rugged individuality and individualisation of the group. Prof. Hanfy supported his claim by taking up the example of leftist activists abandoning their leftist organizations to the NGOs.

Double standards

Aljazeera.net's double standards can be demonstrated with two examples. Although Aljazeera.net believes that establishing a Muslim female organization in the, west is a great achievement, it goes to the other extreme by describing the activities of an aid organization in Mauritania as acts of espionage.

The website stands on guard, warning against imperialism, foreign intelligence and missionary activities, etc. as we see in two stories; the first 'Good-looking American women in Mauritania', the other 'The first Muslim Female Club in America'. Assuming that the two stories are true, we find that Aljazeera.net portrays the western volunteers as intelligence agents with secret political and missionary plans, yet on the other hand, Aljazeera.net regards the female Muslim club in the US as a great victory.

'Good-looking American Women in Mauritania'

The London based Al Quds Al Araby adopted Aljazeera.net analysis and delved deeper and talked about young women living

for many months in the Bedouin Mauritanian society, strolling down Nouakchott streets in local attire and speaking fluent Hassaniyya and other local languages. Some of them even have a strong knowledge of Hassaniyya poetry. Al Quds said that these young women belong to the American Peace Corps in Nouakchott branch, an organization known for its Christian missionary politically-infused message, according to Al Quds.

Al Quds claims that there are those who believe that these American volunteers are Zionists sent from the US with an Israeli agenda to seduce young men in Mauritania and even infest them with sexually transmitted diseases. The more enlightened sector of Nouakchott university were leaned towards the opinion that these women had come to study the characteristics of the Mauritania society in order to disclose its weak points and strengths as a part of potential invasion plan.

While on the other hand, in a story titled 'America's first Muslim Female club', Aljazeera.net posted a summary to the Washington Post original story about a group of 13 young Muslim women from the University of Kentucky who established the first Muslim female social club, at a time when another group in the university of Baltimore is set to take the same step.

Aljazeera.net said 'it is high time for Muslim females to have an organization in order to help them promote their roles as community leaders and as an integral part of various societies'.

Aljazeera.net also focused on the story of Collins, a business-woman living in Alexandria who donated \$50,000 to the club, Collins converted to Islam in 1998. She was born to Christian

parents but took up the study of Islam when she went to visit her sister who had also converted to Islam. According to the story, she came to the conclusion that Islam is a religion that is in harmony with the mind while Christianity is based on passion.

Aljazeera.net deals with women's issues with varying standards especially in its news round-up section. While the initiatives of female Islamists receive applause and support as part of celebrating the International women's day, any calls for women's rights in Arab society are met with accusations of western collusion or categorized as harmful material that must be repressed, as in the case of Al Tourabi's Fatwa that permits a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man and the religious validity of women's testimony.

'The long Iraqi path'

On 18th June, a story was published under the title 'The Long Iraqi Path' and under the subtitle, 'Women Stand Behind the Islamic Courts in Somalia'. The story applauds the women's role in supporting the Islamic courts and attributed the reason behind this support to the plague of sexual abuse that women and girls had been through, over more than 15 years of lawlessness and war-lord rivalries. While on the other hand, the Islamic militants ingratiated themselves to the people's hearts as a pious and deterring force, capable of securing a safe environment for women as 'putting an end to raping and killings is women's top priority in the world's most dangerous city'. JSC has hosted in its programs many western activists. In an episode titled, 'America and the war on Iraq: Sufism in Iraq' which hosted Kinisha Mills, a university

student and a member in the anti-war movement (ANSWER), Kinisha talked about how she became an anti-war activist.

'Opposition and reform in the Arab world'

JSC TV hosted, in an episode about reform and opposition in the Arab world, two Arab female activists, Rola Deshty, head of the Economic Kuwaiti Society, and Naila Sharshour Hashisha, Tunisian political activist. Right from the introduction, the pair was portrayed as agents to further the American agenda for accepting an invitation to participate in a number of symposiums organized by the American think tank, the American Enterprise Institute, 'known for its close relations with the Bush administration and the neo-conservative right'.

'Religious and Sectarian Conflicts in Iraq'

Under the above title, Aljazeera.net reviewed the Emirati Gulf editorial. The editorial applauded Qatar's women's rights record and their motto 'the role of women in taking decisions'.

Aljazeera.net said that the motto reduced the women's rights to parliamentary representation or executive authorities which are legitimate rights in general yet, focusing the attention on this area implies two assumptions; that women's problems are not culture-related and the solution is to empower women to take up political office. Aljazeera.net believes that this is an escape from the actual analysis of the problems, reasons, solutions and jumping to conclusions.

Would it benefit women's causes, if all the head of governments in the developing countries were female yet without settling the world's core disputes? Aljazeera.net asked.

Qatari women's role was also highlighted in the light of the principal role played in the community and the participation in celebrating International Women's Day on 8th March under the banner 'Qatari Young Women and their role in Development'.

'Tourabi Religious fall'

Under the above title, Aljazeera.net reviewed a number of controversial issues that oppose deeply entrenched Arabic traditions and values e.g. 'equality for women'. Aljazeera.net covered a story about a fatwa or an advisory religious opinion in which Tourabi gave Muslim women permission to marry non-Muslim men (Christians or Jews) and the validity of a single Muslim woman's testimony against that of a Muslim man before the judiciary. The story was covered with one point of view only, that of 'the Islamic Judiciary Academy' without explaining Tourabi's position.

Women's rights 'case study'

As a case study of the media content of Aljazeera.net regarding human rights in general and women's rights in particular, we can take two programs that deal with women's rights 'Sharia and Life' and 'Aljazeera's Forum'.

First: 'Sharia and Life'

In many episodes found when searching the site, the program discusses the same social issues from a religious perspective, particularly the Islamic perspective. Sheikh Karadawy was the guest in the episodes at study.

'Reasons and rulings of divorce'

On 18th June 2006 and under the above title, the program's host said in the introduction that people usually speak about the legal nature and the validity of divorce, he also said he would not ignore that point but what is more important is the knowledge of Islamic judicial rulings, according to his point of view, some of the reasons behind divorce are; wrong decisions, inequality between the spouses-socially and intellectually, lack of mutual understanding, lack of emotional gratification and in-laws interference. The host ignored factors such as society's position on female issues, the importance of early marriage and the economic factors which lead to a surge in divorce-rate during the first year of marriage. Among the listed factors, he mentioned common-law marriage and exceeding a suitable age for marriage which obliges women to accede to any marriage proposals without regard to mutual understanding as an attempt to avoid potential social pressures.

The program proves the society's perception of women as a means of pleasure, Karadawy said that he believes that alimony depends on the time the has woman spent with her husband; a woman divorced after 3 months is different than that divorced after 30 years in terms of alimony. He believes this would protect the divorced woman from exploitation. Woman's inferior status was demonstrated when Karadawy described a case of a woman going out without husband's permission as enough of a ground for a man to divorce his wife. Women's inferior status was demonstrated again, when Karadawy said that it is only the right to divorce is with the man only as men are more perceptible and rational while woman are more romantic. According to Karadawy, Allah endowed

women with a strong sentimental device for motherhood. While Karadawy says that marriage should be based on a mutual and shared responsibility, he insists that the Husband is the pillar the marriage is built upon because he is the bread-winner; he also pays for the dowry and presents, and establishes the marital abode.

Despite international treaties and pacts which confirm equality between man and woman in making and revoking contracts, Karadawy believes that it is unnecessary for a woman to witness her divorce as it is unnecessary to have other witnesses present unlike when marriage is held; does equality mean that a woman can divorce her husband when he is not present? Asked Karadawy, who also insisted on the woman's acceptance of polygamy by the husband as he believes that multitude is the original form of the marital relation and that many Sahabis were polygamous.

'The Prophet's Last Speech'

In another episode, rights and ideas are presented as geographically dependent and that human rights are part of western ideas and there is no need to stick to them because they do exist as part of the region's history.

Placing human rights, in their current form, in a position of lesser importance was obvious from the sub-titles; 'Prophet's Last Speech....the First Human Rights Declaration' and, 'Women's Rights in the Light of the Speech'.

The TV host said that he felt sorry that there were many Muslims or people who are Muslims by name who cheer for the UN declaration of human rights, issued in Dec 1948, as the first declaration containing articles calling for protecting Man's dignity, rights and duties. The TV host believes that the prophet's last speech is the first declaration of human rights.

When asked about marginalization and degradation of women's status, Karadawy said that that was due to pre-Islamic traditions that the region was embracing and that those traditions had re-emerged because of a number of Islamic-judicial rulings over the historical course of Islam. the TV host talked about violence against women and said that this exists in the case of a disobedient woman, disregarding the fact that the issue of a woman's disobedience does not exist in human rights treaties or that the concept should dualised; there has to be an obedient man also. Values that degrade women were mentioned, such as denying the woman any form of intimacy and that women are to be handled with delicacy.

'Workers Rights'

In an episode about 'Workers Rights and Duties', sexual and physical violence against Asian female workers by their employers in the Gulf region, was discussed in very general terms with a passive voice that denied the victims their rights, e.g. 'they must be protected against sexual assault' and that they should have their own houses while there was disregard to the social reasons behind this phenomena and the necessity of implementing a law that would set restrictions on working-hours and punitive measures against offenders.

'Islam and HIV Positives'

In an episode under the above title, although there were many points made in favour of the woman's right to stop or continue the marital relation with an HIV positive husband there was, at the same time, bias against women by portraying them as the main culprit in transmitting the disease due to their promiscuous behaviour. Karadawy emphasises the difference between we (the East) and they (the West). While 'we' are always better than 'they', he attributes the reason behind the HIV infestation in the west to their promiscuous life-styles and that Muslim countries were not affected previously; the fact that it exists here now is because 'many people from Muslim countries have travelled abroad and brought the disease with them on their way back'. The episode did not discuss research funding in the Arab world or providing cheaper medication for patients.

'Islamic Judiciary and DNA'

On 30th April the program discussed the DNA imprint which has a great effect on social relationships, the program hosted as usual sheikh Karadawy who said that conservation of the sanctity of marriage is indispensable to the continuity of life and also said that it is important not to disclose deviations that take place in the darkness as a crucial factor in establishing a proper social life or sexual deviations would come to the open and swarm society. In a flagrant violation to article 16(d) of the treaty on the elimination of discrimination against women which states the 'equal status of men and women regarding their rights and responsibilities as parents towards their children. With disregard to their marital status, children's interest must override any other interests'.

Karadawy said it is acceptable to have a DNA test in case of legitimate marriage and particular disputed cases only, while in case of adultery, DNA tests results are not viable, even in case of having a baby, and when asked about the baby's right to recognition, Karadawy answered that it's the parents guilt that victimises the baby in the first place. Discrimination against women was demonstrated in Kardaway's permission to endow the father with the sole right to recognize his children from illegal relations 'I am with Ibn Taymia and Ibn El Kayem who approved the recognition of children of adultery if the father states so' and this also goes on a child left by parents at an orphanage.

The program hosted a micro-immunologist who confirmed that the precision of the DNA tests could reach 99 % and he believes that the Arab world is lagging far behind in applying new technologies. He gave the example of the discovery of the finger-print in the 19th century which wasn't fully-applied in the Arab world until 1930. Yet Karadawy says that the DNA test can only be taken as a valid test in criminal cases and should not be used in deciding the legitimacy of fatherhood. He also confirms, again, the idea of a superior 'East' and a lesser 'West' when he says that it is acceptable in the American society to have 20% of the new-born named after their non-legitimate fathers as the micro-immunologist had explained. Karadawy went on to say that this high ratio is not acceptable in a Muslim society due to its values which ensure marriage values, values that do not exist in the western world as a result of its promiscuous life-style, hence a Muslim society does not need to resort to DNA tests. Karadawy also says that the Islamic judiciary does not criminalise adultery per se but the declaration of

committing the act in public unless there are four men to fully witness the actual act of adultery. The program did not address issues where the female is victimized through exploitation and sexual coercion and whether it is acceptable to use the DNA test in such cases and the main goal was to protect the sanctity of marriage. Why then is the Arab world lagging behind in applying DNA techniques? And if the ratio is 20% in the US, why it is not disclosed in the Arab world? Is this part of protecting the family?

2: Aljazeera's forum:

Is one of the programs that occupy a constant place on Aljazeera.net, the program has a legal background and discusses a number of significant issues based on statistics and numbers while the TV host actively develops the program and pushes it towards objectivity.

'Challenges Facing Arab Women'

On the 11th March, Al Jazeera's forum discussed women's rights under the title 'Challenges Facing Arab Women' and also under other subtitles which are fully in compliance with international treaties e.g.: women between social values and political pressure, concepts of female development in the Arab world, a weaker role in decision-making, means to improve women's status. There was also a stress on other significant facts related to the status of Arab women. Although women have made progress in the political sphere, international statistics prove that women in the Arab world still face daily violence, exploitation and domestic slavery and it is the group that is most affected by diseases, hunger and marginalization, a situation that denies women the chance to participate actively in the processes of development and decision-

making. The host attempts to reduce the issue to 'we' the East and 'they' the West by making claims that the Arab world has its own peculiar traditions and customs and that the west encourages women to wear revealing clothes and liberate herself from many values, to abandon her religion and traditions which she was brought up to follow.

The female host opposes this point of view and explains that fashion is a not a matter of taste and that globalization and Hi-tech communication provide various choices that were not previously available. The discussion took a deeper approach when the counter-opinion was reviewed. It insisted that all the facts and incidents prove that women's issues are part of an integrated system and that women's position is very difficult as women are going through the trap-complex which the Arab communities are also going through. Also, women are an exploited group in Arab societies due to the fact that women's rights are regarded as alien concepts to Arab women and their communities, while at the same time women are an integral part of these societies or communities. She also said that liberalising the society from occupation or oppression by democratisation would help to create enough of a space for women to practice their rights fully as citizens. The program host said liberating women is part of liberalising society, she reviewed a number of statistics about economically active women, unemployed women, women suffering from poverty, women suffering from poor medical care and concluded that there has to be serious indicators regarding women's status in the Arab world with a margin of error and that we should derive results from those indicators.

The program confirms that women's rights are not an issue that concerns women only but the whole society because of the insecurity that surrounds political activism and the problems that have arisen after occupation and armed conflicts and also the steps backward in terms of civil liberties and human rights. The issue of traditions was also reviewed; how women are regarded to be merely tools for reproduction besides the discrimination they face in education.

'Unemployment in the Arab World'

Under this title, Layla El Shayeb, a JSC female anchor asked 'if female labour was one of the reasons behind unemployment in the Arab world'. She explained in other sub-titles; 'Reasons Behind the High Unemployment Rate in the Arab World', 'Arab Media Obscuration Regarding Unemployment and its Ratio', 'The Arab Labour Organization Proposals to Solve the Problem of Unemployment'. She said that the significant reasons behind unemployment are unobjective policies of poor national planning, misdirection of development and investment in the appropriate fields, poor graduate-management concerning the market needs, poor labour values, governmental corruption; more anti-corruption steps lead to less unemployment ratio. The Arab world loses up to 300 billion dollars through corruption and if the loss was used to establish economic developmental programs in order to create real job opportunities for young-men, there would have been a possibility to decrease the unemployment ratio.

3. Refugees

Aljazeera.net's approach to this issue was objective and understanding of the significance of international treaties and pacts

and, more importantly, promoting the activities of organizations funded by western countries. This is probably due to the supporting role the public showed regarding refugees rights in Iraq, Palestine and Sudan because of internal displacement. Aljazeera.net dealt with these issues in accordance with international pacts and treaties.

A - Palestinian refugees:

The issue of the Palestinian refugees was a priority on Aljazeera.net when the problem of refugees arose, the website invoked all the supporting treaties, opinions, UN reports, human rights organisations (even Israeli ones) to report the case:

- * 'UNRWA Warns of Escalation in Gaza'
- * 'UN Warns of Palestinian Exodus from Iraq'
- * 'Israeli Group Admits Nakba, Slams Zionism'

The issue of the Palestinian refugees in Iraq – estimated at 34,000, with 23,000 registered in Baghdad alone according to the UNRWA - received attention on aljazeera.net, 'The Palestinians are Victims of Human Rights Violations as Part of an Extensive Campaign Targeting Arabs in Iraq'.

Aljazeera.net's follow-up of this issue was under titles such as:

- * "Amnesty Slams Jordan 'No' to Palestinians in Iraq'
- * 'New Palestinians Refugees on Jordan Iraq borders'
- * 'Palestinians Stuck at Jordan-Iraq border'
- * 'Sistani Fatwa Protects Palestinian in Iraq'
- * 'Damascus Receives 244 Palestinians from Iraq'

B - 'Iraqi refugees'

Aljazeera.net has published a number of stories that deal with arbitrary displacement and refugees. International and American organizations were reported to demonstrate the majority of violations.

'14,000 Iraqi Families Displaced by Force'

'Sectarian Displacement Threatens Iraq Stability'

'War in Iraq Sends 12 Million Refugees Worldwide'

C - 'Somali refugees in Yemen'

Yemen's role in hosting a number of Somali refugees was reviewed as a transfer country and the main responsibility relied on as UN refugee organisations. There are 30,000 refugees in the city of Bosaso.

Aljazeera.net described the refugees lives in an episode of 'Under the Microscope', titled 'Somali Refugees Journey to Yemen', in which it said that they are crammed into crowded camps and quarters on the city's outskirts where life lacks any sense of dignity and the most basic human needs. 'The refugees have fallen into the traps of human traffickers who deceived them into believing that Yemen is only a transfer point on their way to much more prosperous countries or western countries where they can be citizens'. Despite this inhuman devastating situation, Aljazeera.net believes that 'Somali refugees in Yemen are better off than their partners left behind in Somalia or beneath the waters of the Eden Gulf where they lost their lives looking for a better one'. Another story, 'Thankful Somali Refugees in Yemen Want Out' carried an implicit propaganda for Yemen as it is considered, according to the

UN, one of the poorest countries in the world and has its own stock of problems yet Yemen did not shut the door to those refugees who fled the civil war in Somalia after the fall of Siad Berri's regime in 1991. Yemen was the only country that opened its borders wide open for them'.

4 - The privacy of personal life

Aljazeera.net discussed the issue of protecting personal life in many stories, the most important of which was breaking into computers by hackers.

Aljazeera.net played an effective role in explaining to the public information to help them deal with spying activities. The website also criticized strongly what journalists have to go through, because of the nature of their profession; permanent remote surveillance without a judge warrant in order to scare or deter away from the red-lines set by governments. Aljazeera.net's interest in the issue stems from the troubles its journalists incur in a direct and obstructive way.

On 4th May, a program called 'Behind the Scene' was aired and anchored by Fairuz Zaiani. In an episode titled 'Freedom of Arab Journalism, the Afghani Media after the Taliban', hosted Hussein Abdoghani, Aljazeera's boss in Cairo, Nedal Mansour head of the Protection of Journalists' Freedom Centre in Jordan and the Afghani writer Nour Allah Sitab. The program showed a video report about the problems Yemeni journalists face, especially from Arab governments and their employing of advanced spying technologies such as Internet censorship, defamation campaigns and pro-government propaganda. Another participant says that he was a subject to judicially unwarranted surveillance for 24 hours.

A - Spying on Bank Remittances

Under the title 'The American Program for Spying on Banks', a program called 'More than one Opinion' discussed the contradiction between the right to protect personal life and the right to safety of a person, especially after 11th September and whether the administration has the right to break into personal lives and spy on international banks remittances, tapping phone lines and spying on e-mails inside the US under the pretext of fighting terrorism. The program looked at the extent to which the Brussels based SWIFT (The International Communication or The International Remittances Organization) or its branch in the US went in order to break into customers accounts and pass the information to American organizations. This caused an outrage in Europe where it was linked in Europeans minds to the population census that 'Hitler used to identify racial and religious groups'.

B - Homosexuality:

Aljazeera.net discussed this sensitive issue, in an episode titled 'Mahmoud Hussien, a serene experience in the stagnated Arab times. Part 2'. The program hosted two leftist writers, Bahgat El Nady and Adel Refat. They talked about the relationship between the East and the West, about the French campaign, in Egypt in particular, and how far Egypt benefited from the French invasion. The program discussed the extent to which the West can be a role model and at this juncture the issue of homosexuality popped up as Mr. El Nady said that he feels 'appalled' at seeing western societies legislating laws to normalize the status of homosexuals and that nobody says that the West is a model to follow but that there are positive points that must be taken at face value as the

Mammon did when he ventured upon the Greek civilization and had their books translated.

'Jerusalem Gay Pride Outrages 3 Religions'

In 'Reports and Interviews' and under the above title Aljazeera.net interviewed sheikh Ibrahim Sarsour who described the issue of homosexuality as an intent to strip the youth of Jerusalem of their Muslim and national identities and render them vulnerable to the dangers of moral and behavioural degradation.

Sheikh Tayseer Tamimy insisted that Homosexuality is an act of abomination, while Rabbi Menachim Truman said that the parade is a desecration against this holy city and called upon the Israeli government to withdraw the permission it gave to the international gay pride to organize a week of activities in Jerusalem which will spread abnormal ideas, Rabbi Yahud Elvien also said that all the believers (Muslims and Jews) will stand up to those queers and warned to resort to force if Israel didn't stop them.

STD Infestation Among Homosexuals'

Under this title Aljazeera.net quoted the French 'Le Monde' in a study conducted by 'The French Health Awareness' which insists that '25% of the HIV positive in France are homosexuals'.

Aljazeera.net used the study results to prove that homosexuality is the reason behind AIDS, syphilis and other STDs.

'God's creation'

As always, Aljazeera.net does not waste a chance to intensify certain opinions as is the case with Sheikh Karadawy in an episode titled 'God's Creation' and under the subtitles; 'God's

Creation and Dabbling With it', 'Homosexuality Between Human Rights and Islam' , 'Homosexuality Between Sharia and Science' and 'Society's Role in Containing the Phenomenon'.

Karadawy said there are religions and philosophies that encourage austerity and body torture like Christian clerical teachings, Karadawy criticized 'the vow of celibacy priests take and to which they commit themselves to the extent that they run away from their mothers as if they were servants of the Devil'.

The program discussed homosexuality as moral values and behavioural practices.

Karadawy criticized the TV anchors when he said 'moral values and behavioural practices are culture-dependent and vary according to time' and that 'to imply that values have no frame of reference is unacceptable; all the religions prove that there are constant values'.

Karadawy insisted that the world is divided into two halves (Muslims and Westerners) and warned against the dangers of globalization on the intrinsic characters of Muslims. He also commented on pro-gay legislations and pro-gay churches and described these as 'degrading humanity'.

The TV anchor believes that 'homosexuality has an international reference which regards it as part of human rights', he also made a number of deductions when he said that he followed a number of organizations and groups in the Arab world which are formed by 'gays and lesbians' calling for their alleged rights.

The program also hosted a doctor who said that he had cured a number of cases but due to bad audio he could not elaborate

more. Karadawy condemned the region's scientists who fall with incredulity under the western civilization's effects and work to further a neo-culture that would normalise homosexuality.

Karadawy made the punishment for a homosexual man as it is for 'an adulterer' and said that there is no equality in punishment between gays and lesbians because 'female homosexuality is less detrimental as it can be considered a prelude to adultery, hence the difference in punishment'. As a constant principle, Karadawy believes that concealing the act is better than disclosing it and said 'those who commit homosexual acts, must keep it to themselves and society must not tolerate disclosing such matters. publicising sin is the biggest danger'.

4 - Aljazeera.net follow-up:

In a close study on Aljazeera.net between 21st Apr and 21st May after a work-shop held by the Arabic Network in which one of the website directors was participating there was no change regarding the analyzed material in 2006. News about the movement of human rights came in at first place during that period which saw the election of Egypt and Qatar as members of the International Human Rights Council. The same month also saw the Russian-European summit which witnessed recriminations on violations of human rights. Aljazeera.net focused, during 2006, on minority rights in the West, in a report titled 'Sarkozy Immigration Policies Trigger Worries'. The report discussed the policies of the new French president and among them his stance on minorities in France. Prof. Haytham Manna, the legal activist and spokesperson of the Arab Committee for Human Rights, said that he expects a set-back in human rights in France during Sarkozy's premiership

as he was the only elect president among the other candidates that refused to answer a questionnaire prepared by the French Society for Human Rights.

'Doha's Forum Opens Human Rights File'

Qatar has its own place on Aljazeera.net and receives propagandistic focus as it is the home for conferences discussing the status of human rights in the Arab region. On 25th April and in a report titled, 'Doha's Forum Opens the Human Rights File', Aljazeera.net talked about holding the Doha Conference for Democracy, Free-trade and Human Rights. It is noted that Aljazeera.net repeatedly published comments on the news it reported.

Aljazeera.net interviewed Prof. Manna twice on two reports. In the first, 'The Bosnian Precedent Dangers on Nationality', Prof. Manna stepped in to discuss the right to nationality as a theoretical concept and, according to Bosnian government policies, in driving people out of Bosnia on the pretext of 'cleansing the country from Islamic terrorists'. Manna also quoted international treaties concerning the right to nationality and asked which is of a more valid ground to claim that right, blood or abode.

5. Conclusion

Generally speaking, we can say that Aljazeera.net, taking in consideration the honour code the channel put forth in 2004 as a non-biased forum with the 'the view and the counter-view' motto, discussed human rights from various aspects and directed its message towards a number of levels. Qatar was presented as an oasis of democracy and human right and the Gulf region was

portrayed as the defender of Islam. Aljazeera.net rarely discussed the controversial issues of that region and those who embrace contentious points of view are an outcast minority.

For the rest of the Arab world, Aljazeera.net sends out a message to the different sects of Muslim that they must unite in face of occupation and missionary campaigns which are regarded as an indicator of western intervention. Aljazeera.net also sends out another message to other religions calling upon them to stand together in front of western imperialism and western moral degradation. The site's message to the rest of the world is that even if there is a dispute, it is part of Arab nationalism and that they are the believers in the three religions (Islam, Christianity and Judaism) and stand in unity against libertinism and communism. The media content related to minorities and tolerance received the highest frequency among the four rights. Most of the reports on Aljazeera.net during 2006 which discuss minority rights, mainly Arab minorities in Israel and the western countries, necessitated reference to human rights against the western 'other'.

Aljazeera.net dealt with the cartoon stand-off as if it were a crusade and Aljazeera.net deployed all the media weapons. Aljazeera.net's message rarely called for dialogue during this conflict.

Aljazeera.net news analysis is prone to double-standards, while establishing a Muslim female society in the west is a glorious conquest, it sees western aid organisations in Mauritania as an act of espionage. Aljazeera.net always warns against Imperialism and foreign intelligence, etc.

Female activities are event-dependent, Al Jazeera applauds female Islamist activities and the significance of their movements when they are targeting the western government, while, at the same time, it portrays Arab female activists calling for human rights or criticizing Arab societies as western agents and use this alleged accusation as a pretext to oppress any traditions or modes of behaviour foreign to the Arab region.

Aljazeera.net's approach to the refugees file was objective and understanding of the significance of international treaties and pacts and, more importantly, promoting the activities of western-funded organisations, this is probably due to the supporting role the public showed regarding refugees rights in Iraq, Palestine and The Sudan because of internal displacement. Aljazeera.net dealt with these issues in accordance with international pacts and treaties.

Aljazeera.net dealt with the issue of privacy and personal life with double standards, while it condemns governments for violating a journalist's right to privacy it strongly opposes consensual and homosexual relations.

www.alarabiya.net

1. Alarabiya.net general background

A-The significance of Alarabiya.net

Alarabiya.net is one of the most important news website in Arabic. Launched in may 2004 as the cyber electronic version of the Alarabiya satellite channel which went on air in march 2003, the website contains full texts of all the Alarabiya programs since the 2003 and seeks to have its own niche in the world of Arabic journalism. The site is quoted by other internet sites, and visited by 50,000 thousand visitors everyday.

B-The Alarbiya.net editorial policy

Alarabiya's journalist team established the website upon the principal concept of "light-hearted journalism" by this concept they confirm their intention to present a professional top-notch work that competes, in level and standard, with the best in the Arab newspapers. Alarabiya.net combines, according to its team, between the characteristics of fast TV coverage and those of written news reporting in terms of analysis and depth, besides capitalizing on the advantages that the internet offers such as news archiving, cyber links which leads the reader to move from a particular news coverage to another in the same searching direction. Alarabiya.net team insists on providing a reader with an attractive material that is both useful and entertaining for the reader through his or her journey through the web-site's pages.

C-Alarabiya.net audience

Alarabiya.net presents itself as a news web-site that "targets Arabic speakers all over the world and it always insists on providing the reader with news-coverage that is age-related in a language that makes reading the news fun and informative. The site maintained its own sphere of independence from the editorial policy of Alarabiya satellite TV in order to suit the interests of young people who represent a wide sector among the web-surfers.

D-Alarabiya.net sections

Alarabiya.net consists of six sections:

the first page contains the breaking news and news reports updated regularly, as well as the daily surveys. There is also a page for politics, one for sports and one for finance and economics. The last page is presented by the editing team as a break given to the reader after his trip through the site's pages. It has features and entertaining news that still adhere to journalistic standards.

E-Alarabiya.net promotional means

The website provides many services to its visitors:

- 1- Live broadcast service: this service was free for two years, when Alarabiya was launched before it became for members only.
- 2- The interactive library which receives a considerable focus from the website as it provides the viewers with a various number of multi media documentary content which address the viewer' senses by applying the most advanced technology in the world of interactive internet.
- 3- A whole section dedicated to homemade movies and contains a short documentary, news coverage,

personal videos, mobile videos, interactive library and the 'make your first movie' section.

4- The website also provides the RSS service which enables the readers to follow world news and all the website updates in an easy and practical way.

5- Alarabiya.net describes itself as a website which adopts an open-minded policy towards its readers whereby they can pitch-in their ideas, suggestions and opinions.

6- Alarabiya also provides news text messaging service through mobile phones which keeps the readers in touch with the day's significant events.

7- Due to the significance of the readers' comments and the interactive role played through a margin of opinion expression, the number of comments could reach sometimes more than 600 comments. This is a characteristic feature of Alarabiya.net which induced us to take up the comments as a case study for the website.

F- Searching inside Alarabiya.net

Alarabiya provides just one choice for searching which is text search and even in this case there are not any other choices to limit the search process. Reviewing the search results leads to the conclusion that the search process is not restricted to the title but it also extends to the text itself. When we searched for human rights as a term we found results for rights as a single word.

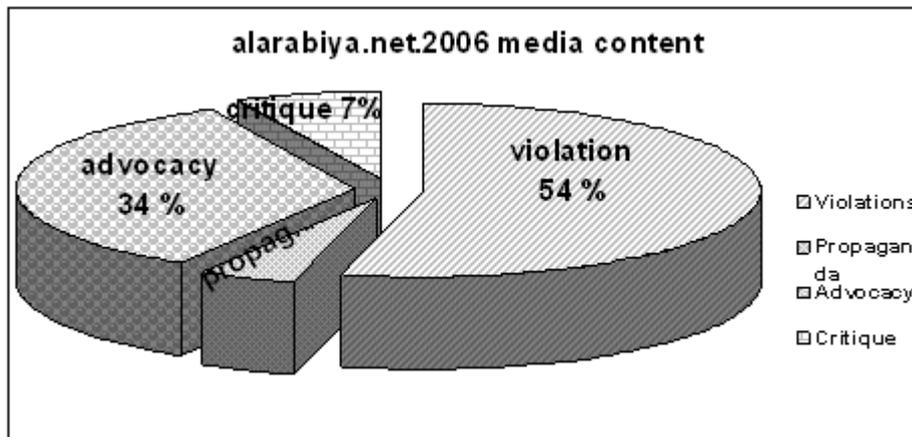
2-Human rights and Alarabiya.net

A-publishing rate

The website publishes an average of one material that has the term "human rights" every 4.3 day (3 materials every 13 days

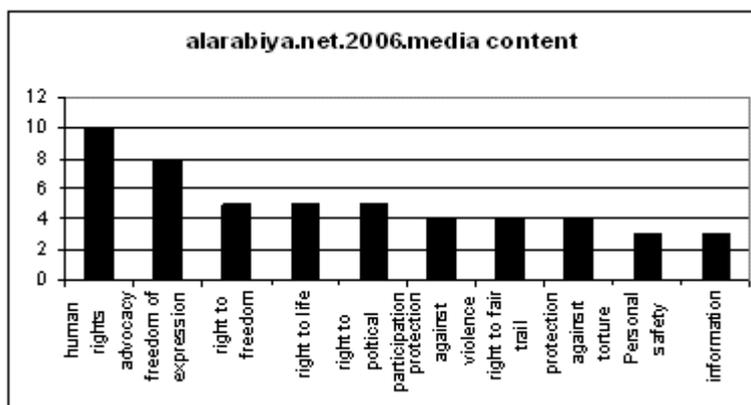
approximately) which is a very small number compared to the number of materials published everyday on the website.

B- Media content and its relation with human rights



The media content is focused mainly on human rights organizations news coverage which indicates that for Alarabiya.net covering the news of human rights organizations comes first, while concerning freedom of speech and expression comes second and the right to freedom takes third place.

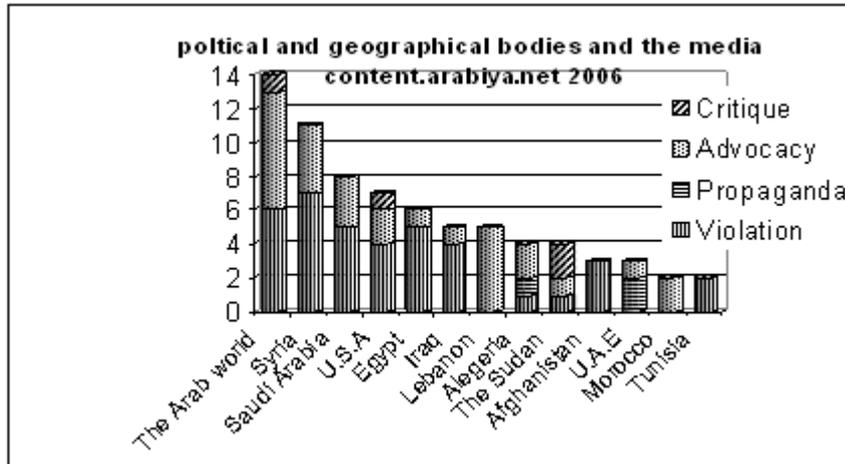
C- The media content



Violations of human rights took first place among the most frequent recurring materials, promoting human rights came second and in the third place was Alarabiya.net criticism of a number of human rights concepts or organization's stance. Lastly comes improving

the image of a number of countries, especially United Arab Emirates and Bahrain regarding human rights records.

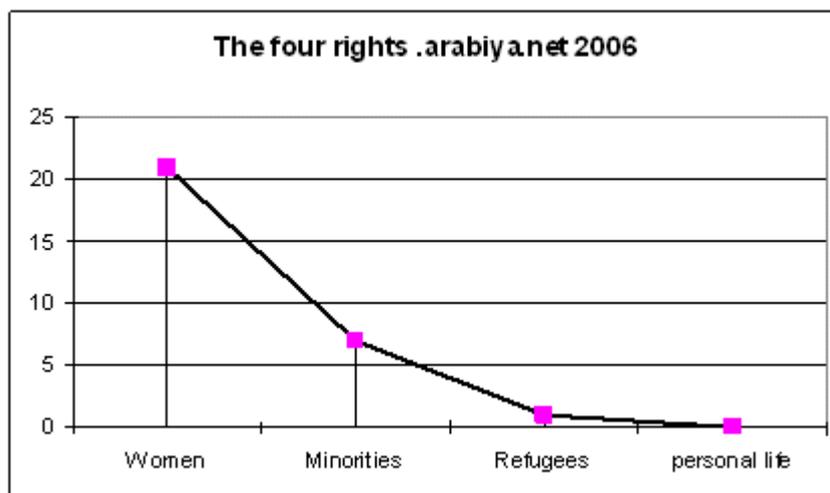
D- Geographical and political bodies and the media content



Syria and Saudi Arabia are the countries with the most recurrent frequency regarding human rights violations along with countries with a usually higher rate of rights violations like Egypt, Iraq and USA.

The Emirates came last with a media content focused on improving the country's image regarding human rights.

E- The four rights



Women's issues grabbed the focus of the media content preceding minorities rights, refugees issues and the right to personal privacy

which came last, despite the fact that 2006 has seen many issues that concern minorities and tolerance with the other such as the cases of cartoon drawings, the Pope's speech, Bahais' situation in Egypt, Sudanese refugees in Egypt, Somali refugees in Yemen, Palestinian refugees in Iraq and Iraqi refugees in general.

3-Media content analysis

A-Human rights advocacy

Examples:

On the 14th of Dec 2006 Alarabiya.net discussed human rights as a theoretical concept in an essay by Muhamed Abu Mazen entitled "Human rights ... first and last" as a part of celebrating 58 years since the universal declaration of human rights. Abu Mazin believes that this anniversary did not raise the Arab world's concerns neither on the official level nor the public level, a fact which indicates the irrelevancy of the issue of human rights in the Arab world, not only in terms of political, civil, economic or social rights, but also basic human rights and the right to life.

The essay also talked about the pretexts that Arab regimes use to justify human rights violations and maltreatments, and the lack of compliance with the universal declaration of human rights under the name of religion. He also warned that these violations create a human being who is "insecure and susceptible to joining a terrorist group or becoming a member in a militant group that slaughter in the name of religion".

In another piece entitled "Democracy is assaulting us" Muhanad Salahat discusses the media status in the Arab world, as a part of celebrating the international day for human rights, and the

hardships journalists have to go through under laws of emergency and military regimes. The writer focuses on Jordanian journalists as an example. He quotes from "Diwan el-Arab" magazine the results of an interesting survey which concludes that 40% of the participants wanted to stay in their countries, one in five of the 3180 participants said that they want to immigrate without returning back to their countries and 48% in general said they want to immigrate regardless of the intention of returning or not, which means that half the population wants to immigrate. The writer asks at the end of his piece about the reason those people want to leave their countries.

B- Critiquing human rights concepts or human rights organizations

Examples:

In a piece by Ameer Said that was published on Alarabiya.net on 21st of Dec 2006 and entitled "Bulgarian nurses and the European hypocrisy" the author criticizes the European Union and its human rights organization's condemnation of the verdict issued by a Libyan court of appeals in the case of the Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor whom were sentenced to death for allegedly infecting Libyan children with HIV. He described the European Union's pressure on the Libyan judiciary to commute the sentences as hypocrisy and political pragmatism. He also said that the Arab world's trust in the European Union and its human rights organizations became very fragile and verging on incredibility regarding political or social issues that concern the Arab world.

In another piece by Manar Rashwani entitled "The culture of failure", the writer ridicules the fact that an Arab country that is notorious for human rights abuses was able to make it to the UN

Committee for Human Rights. While many writers and intellectuals in the Arab world regarded this as slap on American politics face and a victory for the Arab people, the writer believes that it was rather a legitimization of the oppression practiced by dictatorships upon their people. He also criticized the double standards of those writers and intellectuals concluding that it is a duty that behooves the Arab people to denounce oppression "regardless of the identify of the oppressor".

C- Analysis of the media content regarding the four rights

1. Women's rights

A-Women and the veil (hijab)

The hijab was the main significant issue for Alarabiya.net during 2006 in contrast to allegations that Alarabiya.net is employing sensational sexual content in its message. The word 'hijab' appeared 94 times while cases of rape and sexual harassment came second appearing 72 times.

Examples:

Alarabiya.net capitalized on two incidents to give prominence to the pages dealing with women and hijab on the website. The incident concerns an administrative official from the faculty of law and political science in the Tunisian capital who detained veiled female students inside an office leaving them locked inside. The second is regarding the statement of the Egyptian minister of culture about the hijab, which was published in El Masry El Youm and in which he said that the veil is a relapse and that "religion nowadays is more related to appearances despite the fact that the relationship between the person and God does not depend on clothes"

Muslim Brotherhood persecutes the Egyptian minister for mocking hijab and azan [prayer calls]

On 16th Nov Farag Ismail wrote a report under the abovementioned with the subtitle "Helwan university dismisses students wearing neqab and is heading towards banning speech inside mosques". The report was an implicit attempt to confirm that the minister's statements were part of the state's policy "to fight hijab in Egypt, a move similar to the governments of turkey and Tunisia and other countries that succumbs to the western influence". The report was reviewing opinions of members of Islamic groups in Egypt.

The funeral of liberty... if I had a wife I would have stopped her from wearing hijab!!

Alarabyia.net discussed the angry reactions provoked by the minister's statements from different perspectives as it did in an essay by Amir Asaad on 19th Nov 2006 with the abovementioned title. The writer discusses a part of the minister's statement which was published in El Masry El Youm in which the latter said that "personally I don't prefer a woman wearing hijab and if I had a wife I would have stopped her from wearing it". The writer sees double standards in the minister's statement as it is fluctuating between "liberal attitudes and theocratic prohibitions".

The writer also condemns the silence of NGOs which advocate equality between men and women questioning the difference between "coercing women to wear hijab" or "coercing them to take it off". Asaad believes that the minister's statement is "in conflict with the treaty on discrimination against women which Egypt signed in 1979 with reservations, and which the national council of

women's issues struggled to ratify in full including an article related to the total equality between men and women in terms of civil rights and basic liberties".

The Egyptian parliament exonerates the minister of culture from advocating to take off hijab

Alarabiya.net followed up the story all the way until the last chapter in which the parliament absolves the minister. In a story with the abovementioned title, the case was wrapped up after the minister answered the questions of the investigative committee. "Does the Minister of culture maintain a cultural stance against hijab?" Mr. Fathy Sorour asked. "Such a stance would be flawed and irrational", the minister answered. And when asked "did you issue any decrees banning women from wearing hijab in the ministry?" the minister answered that "it never happened". Then Mr. Sorour asked "are you calling upon women not to wear hijab?" and the answer was: "I did not say that before".

Not unrelated to this issue, stories of Arab actresses wearing hijab received significant attention from Alarbiay.net:

- * Hanan Turk leaves her husband after arguing about wearing hijab
- * Veiled actresses issue a black list of anti-hijab women
- * Sabreen..I prefer a woman who serves her husband and I hate the domineering wife
- * First hijab beauty pageant contest in Tatarstan with a silk hijab trophy

On 19th of Dec 2006 and under this title Alarabiya.net covered a story about the first beauty pageant contest for "Muslim women". The contest was organized by the Russian republic of Tatarstan to choose "a Muslim beauty queen". The questions were based on religious and moral commitment and awareness of Islamic issues. They were also limited to baby-caring, cooking and house-keeping. Context activities were attended only by women.

Layla al Uthman confirms publishing a novel containing sexual content

In a report entitled "Layla al Uthman confirms publishing a novel containing sexual content" published on Alarabiya.net on 1st Dec 2006. The report discussed the role of Islamic extremist groups played jointly with the official censorship body in banning and confiscating works by the celebrated Kuwaiti novelist and writer Layla al Uthman, as well as the pressures the Islamic groups exercised on her to wear hijab, quit public life and stop writing.

B-Women and political and human rights activities

Alarabiya.net discussed women's issues as an activist and a political contender in 33 stories during 2006.

Malaysian town bans female provocative attire

On 5th of Dec, Alarabiya.net quoted a story from news agencies, that portrayed the female activists as advocates of "provocative attire". The subtitle was "woman activists object and consider the issue as one that should not concern the authorities". The story says that imposing conservative attire enraged a number of female groups stating that "the council's decision to ban wearing revealing attire that are not in accordance with the Islamic dress code, enraged a number of female groups". There were 133 comments

on the story. Most of these comments hailed the ban as an Islamic victory as part of the battle against the West, which, in their opinion, promotes nudity. Most of the comments entailed that those who oppose the ban are advocates of moral deterioration. This is seen clearly in comment number 110 which was entitled 'pandering' stating: "praise to Allah that there are still honorable men among the people of this nation who stand on guard for their country's reputation and reject moral deterioration which others deem as extremism and intolerance".

American-Saudi female running for Congress in California
Alarabiya.net published the story of the American activist Feryal Almasry who is running for congress under the subtitle "making bids on her Arab origins while her son is fighting for America in Iraq". Alarabiya.net introduced the American activist, saying that "Feryal Almasry is seeking a place in the mid-term congress elections in California next November as a member in the democratic party. She is making her bids on her Arab Muslim origins to reach out to American voters". Most of the comments on this story generally indicate the role that tribal and religious affinities play on Alarabiya.net.

Opinions and reflections: 'hope resurrection'...a documentary.
Alarabiya.net program hosted a number of civil society activist through many interviews. Under the title "personal initiatives to solve everyday problems" Alarabiya.net hosted Asma Modanat (women's rights activist). She confirmed the significance of personal initiatives in creating opportunities for the poor around the world to enable them to regain their self-confidence and discard dependence on others, she also presented a number of successful

initiatives through a documentary called 'hope resurrection'. "In Peru they turn garbage into gold", she states. The program showed a documentary about Albena Ruiz's successful project.

The program also reviewed the initiative of one of the civil society pioneers, the Bengali economist Muhamed Yunis, who is the winner of Nobel peace prize in 2006. Mr Yunis gave away 20\$ to thousands of beggars. Years before he lent a group of women what was called "the first 27\$ loan". The program also reviewed a number of other successful initiatives of civil society.

Esraa Nomani: mosque are turning into clubs for males....Muslim women have the right to sexual enjoyment
Alarabiya.net introduced Esraa Nomani as "the first Muslim woman to call for joint prayers for both sexes in the United States. She also stormed one day into a crowded prayer hall in a mosque in Los Angeles insisting on praying among men and refusing to pray in the women's section". The website made an interview with the American activist describing her ideas as controversial. Her opinions on religious matters were presented under the subtitles:

I pray without wearing hijab

I had a baby without marriage

Muslim women have a right to sexual enjoyment

Mosques are clubs for males

The feminist movement was categorized in this episode into three categories (extremist feminism, conservative feminism, and modernist feminism). A number of new terms were also reviewed e.g., the Islamic feminist movement and "Islamic femininity". The

episode questioned about the reasons why the feminist movement, which originated in the United States, could not have resonance among Arab women despite the harsh reality they are facing.

A guest and a dialogue: with Nagya Adeeb

On the 9th of July Alarabiya.net TV aired an episode of a program that hosted, Nagya Adeeb, president of "Don't Harm my Children" society in Morocco. Nagya was introduced as "a Moroccan woman who turned to legal activism after an assault on her 3 years old son. Nagya established this society to fight sexual assaults on children as a response to the hardship her son went through. She struggles today to put an end to children abuse which is regarded as one of the most heinous practices children could face".

The questions of the TV host circulated around the issue that "statistics in Morocco says that there are a limited number of cases of sexual assaults on children, and that they do not exceed a hundred every year, hence the matter does not deserve all this attention as a dangerous and major phenomenon. Aren't these cases just exceptions?" He added, "don't you think that discussing these issues in public would have a negative effect on the child's psychological health, even more so than silence?"

2- Minorities and tolerance with the other

Minorities came second in Alarabiy.net coverage of the four rights. Alarabiya.net did not ignore the bedun [without nationality] issue in the Arab gulf. The issue was brought to the forefront when minorities' rights were discussed 11 times in 2006.

There is a noticeable difference in the way the website dealt with the issue of bedun in the United Emirates, which always appears on Alarabiya.net as the modern country that respects values of human rights and working hard to settle the bedun issues on the one hand, and the more objective treatment of the same issues in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, on the other.

A-The bedun [individuals without nationality]

Examples:

Emirati bedun

In a story entitled "Emirati bedun" that was published on the 28th of Dec the issue of bedun in the Emirates and Kuwait was discussed. We find that the story, especially in the introduction, is merely propaganda on the Emirates' behalf. Nagah Mohamed Ali, the writer, says "the bedun problem in the Emirates is about to be settled as the authorities decided to confer the Emirati nationality on 1294 individuals, which is the first group among 10,000 of people without nationality about which the Emirates is seeking a permanent solution. These developments come after the wise and precise decree issued by sheikh Khalifa bin Zaid al Nahyan who ordered this problem to be resolved, thus maintaining his father's initiative who issued passports for those people and who establish a modern country built on eternal values and upholds human rights and dignities at all the times".

According to the story, 1294 individuals received passports after the committee presided by the director of protective security of the ministry of interior confirmed their existence in the country before the declaration of the United Emirates. This number represents

only 12% of the total number of the bedun yet the writer willingly claims that the problem is about to be settled permanently.

Emirate film on the shelves in Dubai cinema festival for unknown reasons

A report by Farag Ismail in 2006 with the abovementioned titled discusses the reasons behind banning a movie Hanin from the big screen. The movie discusses the right to nationality and specifically the issue of the bedun in the Emirates. The report in general promotes the Emirates image regarding human rights. Alarabiya.net cites the movie director, Mohamed al Tarify to back up the claim that the movie was not discarded because of the issue it deals with as the script was approved by the government. Alarabiya.net also cites Yousef Ibrahim, a script producer saying that "the issue of the bedun was discussed in a number of TV works" and that "there's a good space for liberties in the Emirates, as we tackle the most sensitive issues".

Saudi Arabia...the bedun in a devastating situation and hope for passports

Alarabiya.net took more liberty in discussing the bedun's issue in Saudi Arabia. On the 11th of Feb and in a report with the abovementioned title it described the devastating situation the bedun are going through after failing to acquire the Saudi passports despite incessant pleadings. The report also talked about their stalled transactions for years and the fact that they belong to well-known Saudi tribes and that their cousins enjoy their full citizenship rights.

B-The Sahrawis [people from Western Sahara]

Rabat releases Sahrawi detainees and a UN issues a report

The story was about the freed detainees and the UN issuing a report in which it recommends negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario front to reach a fair, permanent and acceptable settlement. Alarabiya.net took the chance to present an analysis of the relation between the Moroccan government and the Polisario front in the light of the UN report and subsequently managed to open the Sahrawis case for discussion.

Rabat extends negotiations with senior Sahrawi citizens regarding self-determination

The report discusses the Sahrawi issue and the efforts of the Moroccan king aiming to resolve this conflict, the king had conferred amnesty on 216 detainees in the capital Layoune, among them 30 political activists and human rights advocates.

C-Baha'is

Alarabiya.net discussed the Baha'i issue in Egypt from an objective perspective in terms of admitting the fact that the Baha'is are deprived of their civil rights e.g. documentation of marriage contracts and their right to bring-up their children in accordance with their belief.

Calls to wipe-out Baha'is in Egypt...85% of Palestinians are allegedly Jewish

On the 28th of July, Alarabiya.net reviewed a book entitled "Baha'i faith...doctrines and imperialistic goals" which was recently published by the Egyptian ministry of religious endowments. Alarabiya.net concludes the review saying that "the Baha'is, who

are about 2000 in Egypt, seek the recognition of their religion in the new identification cards which every Egyptian has to carry before 2006 in order to obtain education, work permits and medical care. These new cards only recognize three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism".

Baha'is in Egypt seeks recognition in official documents

On the 16th of April and under the abovementioned title, Alarabiya.net covered this story with subtitles that read "complains about problems with marriage, work and education", "marriage is a sensitive problem for Baha'is" and "Baha'i daily life in Egypt".

The website also discussed religious tolerance as a theoretical concept in many stories:

- * What a question: Are we living in a time of decreasing religious tolerance?
- * The rhetoric of treason is pushing Lebanon towards a danger precipice
- * Accusing intellectuals with heresy, and the flawed story
- * Promoting the value of tolerance and the culture of difference
- * Justice and tolerance will put and end to seditions

3- Refugees

Alarabiya.net regarded the World Refugee Day as a chance to shed light on the situation of the Palestinian refugees

Panorama: Arab failure in world cup

In an episode of the program 'panorama' on the 20th of June and under the subtitle "World Refugee Day" Alarabiya.net gave an extensive explanation of refugee problem and the reasons behind

seeking asylum and how those reasons vary due to political reasons, wars, natural disaster or due to deteriorating economic factors. It also talked about the number of refugees around the world which is estimated at 9 million in 2004, the majority of which are from Afghanistan, Sudan, Burundi, Congo, Somalia, Iraq, Liberia, Vietnam and Palestine. Refugees usually choose one of the following countries as an asylum: the United States, France, the UK, Germany, Canada, Sweden, Belgium, Slovakia, and Australia.

There are also refugees who left their countries for political and cultural reasons while there are others who went back home as it happened in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Sarajevo yet they are still in need for a special care, which is missing in their countries. The program afterwards shifts attention on the Palestinian refugees and highlights the traumatic situation they are going through, arguing that the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as refugees inside their land.

The third eye: refugees till death

In the program 'Third eye' Alarabiya.net aired an episode on the 24th of December 2005 which discussed the situation of the Sudanese refugees in Cairo after they organized a sit-in protest in Mostafa Mahmud square. Estimated at "more than 1500 refugees and asylum seekers from the Sudan", Sudanese refugees took their luggage to the streets in front of the UN high commissioner for refugees demanding asylum in Europe, the US and Australia. While the international commissioner suspended their application, three months had passed without any change in the situation despite many negotiations and efforts of mediation. The program

shed light on the fact that health conditions were deteriorating in a district unfamiliar to such scenes. Alarabiya.net discussed the issue with objectivity giving a fair chance to all the related parties to express their points of views by hosting a number of Sudanese refugees and representatives of human rights organizations.

4- Privacy of personal life

The issue of homosexuality was the issue most covered by Alarabiya.net with regard to the right to the privacy of personal life. The site focused on the news of politicians and artists. It also focused to a lesser degree on the problem of spying on personal lives. Yet, Alarabiya.net didn't discuss adequately problems such as the privacy of personal correspondences, breaking into houses without a legal warranty, defamation, libel and degrading treatment.

A-Homosexuality

Alarabiya.net discussed this issue under various titles related to consensual sex yet not under the banner of advocating this right or even criticizing. Rather, it sensationalized the issue, which attracted attention in the region especially among young people.

Titles included:

* The daughter of the US vice president publicly announces she is gay

* Amal Hegazy accused of homosexuality after wearing clothes for homosexuals

* More than 15,000 homosexuals got married in the UK during 9 months.

* Tetouan residents worried because of an organization of Moroccan gays in their town.

B-Privacy

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The third eye: eavesdropping and surveillance terrify Arabs and Muslims in the US On the 7th of April Alarabiya.net published a scripted version of the 'third eye' program in which it discussed what it described as the "nightmare" in which Arabs and Muslims in the United States are living, that is, eavesdropping and surveillance. The fear is that any word or an international telephone call may lead to detention and imprisonment. These practices are conducted illegally according to the opponents of the secret program which is also known as the spying program while the White House insists that this program protects Americans from any potential acts of terrorism.

Case Study

Choices of Alarabiya.net's readers during May 2007

Alarabiya.net is well-known for the huge number of comments published on its pages, which sometimes exceed more than 600 comments. These comments are quite important indicators of the public opinion or what Alarabiya.net regards as a public opinion and whether the website interferes by omitting or adding or reorganizing.

The comments also raise the questions of the degree to which the published comments are in accordance with the publishing standards. According to Alarabiya.net "we receive a great number

of comments which leaves us no choice but to choose only a number of them. We also apologize for discarding comments that carry personal defamation or slander against individuals or religions, given the fact that some of the comments are not published due to the great number of comments as well as limited time".

During May 2007 Alarabiya.net presented 13 subjects through the 'Choices of Alarabyia.net readers' page. Alarabiya.net listed the five most read stories, the five stories with most comments, the five most emailed stories, the five most printed stories and the five most saved stories.

- * The five stories with most comments
 - * Mubarak: I will not allow building a bridge between Egypt and Saudi Arabia
 - * Ten injured in Muslim Christian clashes in Egypt
 - * Egypt: 59 Muslim arrested after clashes with Christians due to church expansion
 - * Switzerland forbids Suleiman al Ouda from entering and accuses him of terrorism
 - *
 - * Dr. Nasser Al Ansary: I prefer sitting next to Yousra than sitting next to Karadawy
- Stories with most comments

During May 2007 Alarabiya.net published a number of stories that attracted a great number of comments. Such comments were related to these issues: international cooperation, the freedom of movement, the freedom of opinion and expression and minority rights.

A. Minority rights

Minority rights came in the first place after covering two stories from the five stories with most comments. Both stories are about clashes between Muslims and Christians in the city of Al Ayat in Giza province.

Ten injured in Muslim Christian clashes in Egypt

Alarabiya.net quoted an unknown source saying that clashes erupted between Muslims and Christian in the village of Bamha in Al Ayat, which is about 25 kilometers south of Cairo. The clashes erupted due to attempts to expand a church on a disputed land. Alarabiya.net did not identify their sources neither did it review the incident from the point of view of the injured party.

The number of comments on this story was 391 and they varied between condemnation and calling for tolerance from an Islamic perspective or analyzing the dispute as a conspiracy designed by some countries playing on religious differences in order to open a way for occupying Egypt as was the case in Iraq.

We find for example comment number 101 which is titled "ye shall treat the Copts well" which cited a number of religious sayings calling for treating the Copts with well and regarding what happened as a conspiracy to defame Islam and the Muslims at the hands of Muslims. Comment number 112 is entitled "he who harms one of the people of the book, has done harm to me".

On the other hand many comments were quite racist while also relying on the religious perspective by citing hadiths and verses from the Quran. One comment reads "Christians and Jews won't

befriend you unless you convert to their religion" while comment number 339 states "our country is not theirs". Comment number 340 was entitled "the Christian envy".

Many comments departed from the violent dispute in order to debate the number of Christians in Egypt and whether it is 12% or 5%. Comment number 69 was entitled "they are 5% and if they were 95% they would have killed all Muslims".

Minorities had a chance to make comments, such as comment number 117 in which "injured Copt" said "what will happen if they let us worship God in our own way".

B. Freedom of opinion and expression

Regarding the freedom of opinion and expression, one of the stories with the most comments was entitled "Dr. Ansary: I prefer sitting next to Yousra than to sit next Karadawy". Alarabiya.net introduced Dr. Ansary as an academic researcher with a doctorate in religious judiciary politics from Azhar university in 1980 and currently working as a professor in a law school in Qatar University. Before, he was also the dean of the Law and Sharia school in the same university and is considered to be one of the most public figures advocating intellectual progress and enlightenment in the Arab world. He is also known for his calls for educational reform and defending women's and minority rights as well as condemning "suicidal bombings" which he believes has no religious justification. He is an advocate of making a distinction between what is historical and what is religious.

It was quite interesting that most of the 300 comments were in Ansary's favor.

4-Alarabiya.net follow-up

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (HRInfo) conducted a follow-up study of alarabiya.net spanning the period from 21st of April to 21st of May 2007. The workshop discussed the preliminary results of the study with representative of alarabiya.net. 82 subjects were put at study with various results in terms of publishing rate of materials related to human rights. The results are quite steady in proportion compared to the results of the previous year in which news about human rights violations came first in the media content. Human rights advocacy came in the second place while criticizing human rights or human rights organizations came third.

During the month of the study Alarabiya.net focused more on these countries: Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United States, Syria, Sudan, France and Iraq, presented respectively from countries with the most to the least focus.

The French elections and Sarkozy's victory and its effect on minorities in France were among the reasons that made Alarabiya.net focus on France during that month.

5-Huaman rights slips on Alarabiya.net

Alarabiya.net made a number of slips as in a report entitled "political activist: Al Azhar did not object to belly dancing". The report reviewed different points of views about the subject, first from a moral/religious perspective represented by the MP Khodair al Anzi and Mofrag Nahar, former MP and member of Islamic Salafi Union. On the opposite side there were views of those who

supported the idea represented by Salma al Agamy, a lawyer and political activist, and Dr. Mona al Ghareeb.

The comments went to the extreme sometimes by calling for lynching the proponents as in comment 63 which believes that the issue is a departure from Islamic teachings. The same comment quotes the hadith "whoever defected from the prescribed path shall be killed".

In another piece entitled "Irish Noble winner and activist wishes Bush dead", the Irish activist, poet and Nobel Prize winner Betty Williams launches a bitter verbal assault on the American president George Bush and says she wishes to kill him in a speech in front of hundreds of students.

6-Summary

Economic factors play an active role in deriving the media content of Alarabiya.net as most of the attention was focused on the youth group and promoting the website's media image. This was the main reason why Alarabiya.net decided to present new issues and others that would pique its readers' curiosity. Alarabiya.net brought women's issues to the forefront as it covered events of rape, sexual harassment and the hijab controversies. These are issues that are generally ignored yet they are also ones that draw the attention of Arab youth. Despite that, the website did not fall into the trap of sexual sensation in presenting the material.

Alarabiya.net discussed issues of Baha'is and the bedun and the Sahrawis. The bedun issue took the first place in Alarabiya.net's media content regarding minority rights, yet the issue wasn't

handled evenly as the Emirates appeared in this specific case as the modern country that respects human rights and seek to settle the bedun issue, while in the case of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Alarabiya.net dealt with the issue more extensively and objectively.

Alarabiya.net placed the World Refugee Day on its special agenda as an attempt to remind the Arab world of the situation of the Palestinian refugees and also to explain the refugee issues extensively outlining different factors that lead to seeking asylum, which range from political to economic factors.

Most of the stories Alarabiya.net discussed regarding the right to the privacy of personal life was concentrated on homosexuals and news of gay politicians or artists. Spying on personal life came second while Alarabiya.net did not discuss issues such as the privacy of correspondence and breaking into houses without a legal warrant, defamation and degrading treatment.

Alarabiya.net takes pride in the fact that the number of comments in some cases exceeds 600. Yet after studying these comments we found that most of these comments have a chauvinistic bent as they take the form of war of words between different Arab nationalities and even of slander and insults. Alarabiya.net occasionally interferes with the comments by omission or addition sometimes aiming to heat up the debate, which holds the website partly accountable for the content of the comments.

www.islamonline.net

1- A general view

a) The importance of Islamonline.net:

Islamonline.net is considered one of the largest and most popular Arabic websites. It sees itself as a representation of moderate Islam that introduces "a unified and lively Islam that keeps up with modern times in all areas"

The website received the international ISO (ISO9001: 2000) in December 2004, thus becoming the first institution of its kind in the Arabic sphere to get the ISO. Over all, different indicators have shown that the rate of the website's visitors is increasing at a large scale.(1)

b) General editorial policy

The website defines its editorial policy as follows :

- * Global presentation: Addressing humanity; avoiding ties with or speaking for any country, party, group, council, or organization.
- * Comprehensive content: Presenting a whole and complementary image of Islam in the information and service pages.
- * Balanced approach: Adopting the middle ground of Islam, avoiding extremism or negligence, rejecting deviant or strange opinions. .
- * Objective treatment: Striving for scientific accuracy, adopting neutrality and avoiding pre-judgments.
- * Moral approach: Avoiding slander or praise of individuals, groups or states, avoiding propagandist and sensational methods, or provocation and incitement.

* Pleasant presentation: Ensuring that all contents are displayed professionally and enjoyably.

c) Visitors:

Islamonline.net presents itself as a website for "all people, Muslim and non-Muslim, without regard to geographic boundaries, religion, language, background, culture or gender" .

d) Sections:

Islamonline.net consists of many sections and pages, thus creating one of the main obstacles for analyzing it as it tackles a variety of topics and issues.

News and analyses: this section covers some political news with other related links to the same topic on the left column of the page

Shari'ah (Islamic Law): a section dedicated to all kinds of fatwas(a considered opinion in Islam made by an Islamic scholar capable of issuing judgments on Islamic law) and introduces different consultations on Hajj (s the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Islam) and Umrah (a pilgrimage to Mecca performed by Muslims that can be undertaken at any time of the year). Issues covered include Islamic history and civilization, Islam and current issues, economy, development, culture, history of the prophet and his companions, and also a special part for women's issues within the context of Shari'ah

* Da'wah (inviting and calling people to Islam - peacefully): Deals with the importance of Da'wah and its means, with a special section for women.

* Counseling: a section tackling problems, complaints or

comments made by the website's visitors regarding some issues.

- * Development: this is mainly the economic section, which covers a variety of issues.

- * Health and Science: fatwas and different topics on medical issues, most importantly among them is HIV/AIDS in addition to first aid other medical issues. There are also topics on environment and technology.

- * Culture: a section dedicated to art and culture. The section posts news on cinema festivals, national unity, arguments on hijab (veil) , in addition to covering literature, cinema, arts and theatre news.

- * Adam and Eve: tackles the relationship between men and women.

- * Problems and solutions: introduces fatwas for young people.

- * Multi media: could be considered the website's audiovisual library that also provides other services such as e-cards.

- * Forum: a section that presents some ideas or news to be discussed with the visitors.

- * Consultations.

e) Promotional tools:

The website introduces many services to its visitors, including:

1. Events calendar: contains many events on different topics with a page for human rights.

2. Islamonline radio

3. E-mail: free personal e-mails

4. Registration on the website.

5. E-bulletin

6. Links to a variety of other websites.

7. A service that allows visitors to look for a husband or a wife.

8. E-cards for different occasions.
9. Gregorian\Islamic calendar: transforming dates from the Gregorian calendar into the Islamic calendar.
10. Discussion forums: presents some ideas or news to be discussed with the visitors.
11. Consultations: An interactive section in which visitors can discuss personal issues and queries with the working team of Islamonline.net.

f) The search engine:

Islamonline.net has a strong and effective search engine. There are 2 different ways to search the website:

1. Website map
2. General and detailed search

General search:

This search comes out with detailed results for every section. When "human rights" was searched, the results were distributed amongst 27 different sections, with the "problems and solutions" section coming up twice. The news section included most of the results of the search using "human rights" as the keyword for the period from 1 October 1999 to the present time.

Advanced search:

The Advanced Search offers the ability to search either by one, all, or similar words. It also provides the ability to choose the section, in which the search is to take place, by providing categories, such as All, Management, Literature, Media, Security, etc., as well as providing subtitles to the subjects, such as All, News, Poetry, Investigations, Book Reviews.

You can also classify your topic according to the geographical area or timeline. For instance, when we searched for "human rights" using a number of options such as (adjacent words), (title and text), all (subjects), all (kinds of material), all (writer), all geographical areas and duration from (1 January - 31 December 2006), the search result was 412 stories in which the words human rights were repeated, the results were distributed in all the website's sections.

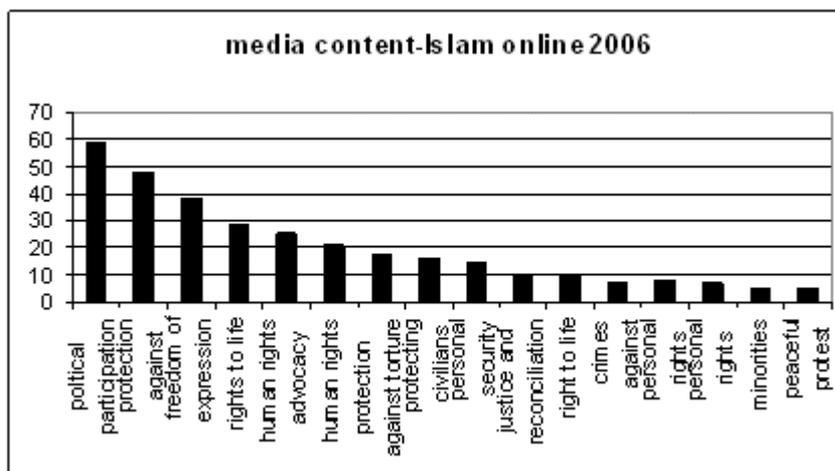
2- Human Rights in Islamonline: -

a) Publishing rate:

When searching through the content of stories, we will find that the website publishes on average 1.1 human rights stories a day.

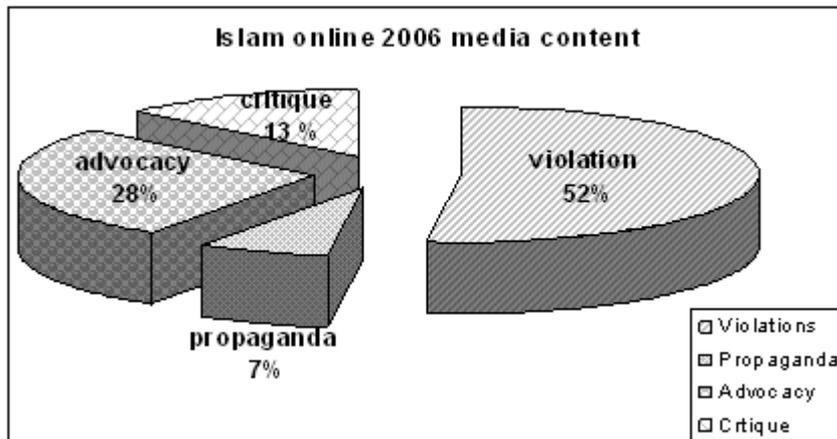
When searching through titles, the average falls to 7 stories a year.

b) Issues tackled in Islamonline.net in 2006:



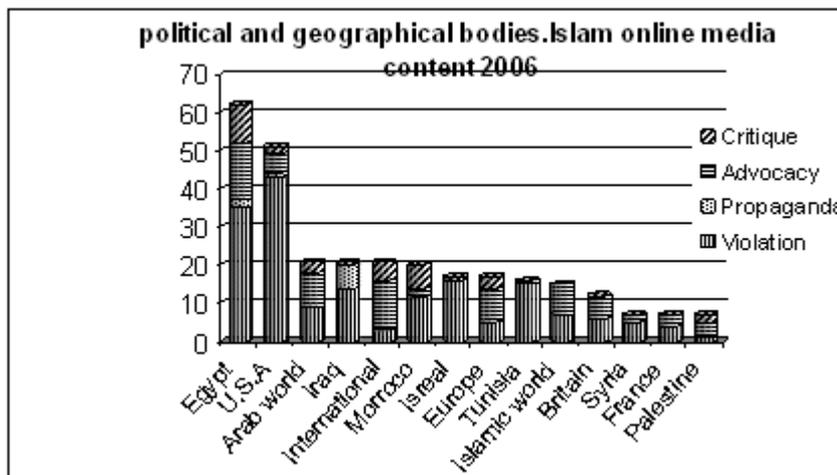
Islamonline.net resembles other websites in having civil and political rights dominating most of its interest in human rights issues, (human rights' movement, political participation and freedom of opinion and expression), however we also found the right to freedom and protection from discrimination well covered.

c) Content coverage:



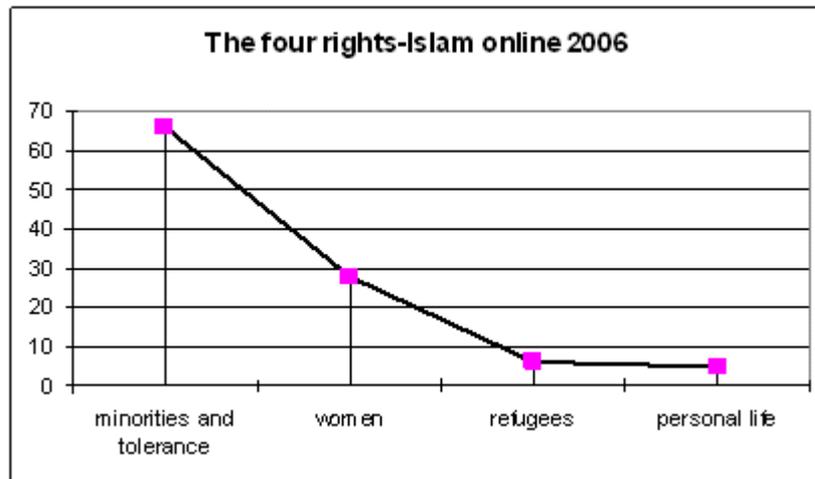
News coverage of human rights violations ranks first on Islamonline.net interest while the website's interest in human rights advocacy is also evident.

d) Political and geographical scope:



The website shows human rights violations perpetrated by the state, with most attention given to Egypt, Iraq, and the US, while at the same time showing violations in Israel, Morocco, and Tunisia.

e - The four rights



As in Al-Jazeera, topics related to minorities and tolerance ranked first amongst the four rights. This could be related to the fact that the year 2006 had witnessed two important incidents, namely the offensive cartoons of Prophet Mohammed and the Pope's statements.

1- Analysis of the four rights

a- Minorities and tolerance:

Islamonline.net divides the world into 2 blocs, the Islamic world and the Western world. It concentrates on minorities rights (the rights of Muslims in the west and Israel, and western intervention in the Islamic world).

The website concentrates on the success of Muslims in the west and their role to spread Islam and the aspects of this spreading.

The website also tackles issues related to Christian minorities in the Muslim world, while criticizing what it calls "missionary campaigns" in the Muslim world. However, it does not deal with the minority Muslim sects in the Muslim world, with the exception of the Shiites in Iraq.

The policy of Islamonline.net follows the line of Dr Tarek Ramadan's ideas illustrated in his book "Muslims in the west and the future of the Islam", in which he said that Muslims shouldn't declare war against the west, as western countries is not a war territory, but it is a land for martyrs. Here Ramadan has an alternative vision of being a martyr. For him, a Muslim martyr does not have to be killed in defense of Islam but rather work on representing a good symbol of Islam.

Examples:

The west: a land of martyrdom

On 28 September 2006, Islamonline.net posted an article written by Ramadan, which constitutes a part of his book, mentioned above. In the article, the writer says that it is no longer appropriate to resort to the old division of the world into 2 blocs, namely the Muslim World and the West, which was considered the land of war. The world, the author argues, is more complex and heading towards globalization. He emphasized that this division was not one that was stated in the Quran and the Prophet's sayings (Sunna). According to Ramadan, the division was created to describe the world at a specific moment in history. The world has changed due to political and economic developments which have led millions to be forced to emigrate to the West, seeking jobs and security in societies described as multi cultural and multi religious. The second generation of Muslim immigrants consider themselves as Muslims Europeans/Americans.

Ramadan thinks that the Hanafi school (the oldest of the four schools of thought or jurisprudence within Sunni Islam) is one that has divided the world into Islamic countries and war countries. To

him, the Hanafi School was mainly concerned with the security of Muslim believers, not governments and the implementation of Shari'ah.

Ramadan believes that the sociopolitical environment in the West was one welcoming Muslim immigrants, making them feel in their homeland. The western world, he says, guarantees freedom of belief and religious practices and protects the physical security of Muslims. In this sense, it is not a hostile environment.

In the US and Europe, Muslims are guaranteed 5 rights essential to making them feel safe in their newly found homeland. These rights are: freedom of practicing the Islamic rituals, the right to knowledge, the right of assembly, the right to independent representation, and the right to resort to law.

Ramadan argues that the right name for the west is "west countries". Thus, he sees that the role of Muslims should be "representing a symbol of the spirit and morals of Islam in their society, and to acknowledge their humanistic obligation and affiliation to their societies".

The west, in his opinion, is a "missionary place". That means that Muslims in the west should get involved in positive reform, whether this reform was institutional, legal, economic or political. He also calls upon Muslims in the west to get involved in their society to guarantee justice and to achieve true public participation.

The case of the prophet Mohamed cartoons crisis

- On 11 March 2006, the website published a statement by Montada Al-Hikma (The wisdom circle of researchers and thinkers)

on the crisis of the offensive cartoons of Prophet Mohamed. The statement argues that the current crisis between the west and Islam is not only the result of the cartoons, but also of three other factors, which are:

- 1- Accumulation of aggression
- 2- Consolidation of the negative western stereotype about Islam
- 3- Unrestricted freedom of expression

The statement proposes drafting laws that protects all religions from insults. However, the statement emphasized that while such laws are necessary, they are not sufficient to end the crisis, which is deep rooted. It thus calls upon honorable men of the Islamic and western worlds to bring an end to the negative stereotype which each side have about the other side.

Boycotting Denmark's products don't contradict with free trade
The website published an article on 1 February 2006 titled "Boycotting Danish products don't contradict with free trade". The article was asking Muslims to Boycott Danish products on the basis that such an action is not in contradiction with free trade agreements. The article criticized the political use of international agreements. It argues that the laws of power are controlling international relations not international commercial agreements and that the west is using these agreements to serve their interests.

The article mentioned some examples. One example is American pressure on China to decrease its exports to Europe, while at the same time the US is using economic pressures to float the

Chinese currency and political pressures by using the human rights card.

The cartoons... A battle without a strategy

On 23 February 2006 the website published an article titled "the cartoons... a battle without strategy". The article was discussing Islamic-Western relations, described as a relationship at risk of explosion as constantly there are people who intend to increase the tension the West and Muslims, referring to the neglect the article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which makes illegal the incitement of religious, national or ethnic hatred, by Western countries,

According to the article, Muslims have no interest in transforming tensions with the West into an open war. The writer argued that the battle must remain a battle over human rights principles and agrees on the calls for an international declaration protecting sacrosanct beliefs.

Islamonline.net published many articles and news to show that there were people in the west against the cartoons. Those stories came under different titles:

- * Bringing the case against "Jylland-Poston" to the UN
- * Europe empathizes with Muslim sentiments
- * Solana defends guarantees to prevent the repetition of such insults from taking place.

The European Council for Fatwas: assault is against integration.
The cultural section had a special file, posted on 23 February,

tackling the cartoons issue. It was titled "profanation of the sacred and the Danish crisis".

The website considered the file an attempt to hold a reasonable calm debate on the crisis by holding a series of interviews with Arab academics and writers.

The pope's statements;

Islamonline.net gave attention to the statements made by the Pope. Stories posted on the website to respond to the Pope's statements, took the form of providing information on Islam and Muslims. There were several articles, including the following:

The prophet and human rights:

On 31 May Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Geyoushi wrote an article titled "the prophet and human rights", in which he differentiated between human rights and Islam, making both of them in confrontation of one another. Al-Geyoushi criticized human rights. He found a contradiction with the world adopting Human Rights principles while at the same time the world is suffering from dire poverty, humiliation, murder. He said that world bandwagons with the aggressive and gives a blind eye to the suffering of human beings. In his opinion, the aggressor is the West and its followers, and sees that Islam came to save the world.

The rewards for following the Prophet:

On 8 February, the website published an article titled "The reward for following the Prophet", written by Dr. Ali Bin Omar Badahdah. In this article the writer argues that the victory of Muslims in the case of the offensive cartoons was not expected. He also believes

that the victory was a result of the Muslim world had resorted to economic, media, and political tools. He emphasizes that this a lesson to be learnt.

Benedict and questions about defamation:

Nabil Shebieb asked the pope some questions in an article published on Islamonline.net. At the end, he concluded that believing in Islam does not take over the identity of people. To him, what the Pope said would never change historical and religious facts. He believes that the Western civilization is approaching its end, while the Islamic civilization is about to take its toll in growing. If the Islamic civilization becomes dominant, the writer argues, that this will be in the interest of all human beings.

Arab Christians and the Islamic identity

Mostafa Soliman, Islamonline correspondent, wrote an article to respond to Andrea Zaki's book "Political Islam, Citizenship and Minorities: Arab Christians' future in the Middle East".

Soliman first introduces priest Zaki as one of the Protestants' clergymen in Egypt and that he belongs to "the liberal Christian school", which relies on a Western theological project that believes - like liberal Christianity - that political participation should be limited to secularism and civil society.

The correspondent argues that Zaki wants to "brush aside Islamic identity from both Arab Muslims and Christians, and that Islamic identity should not be the base of introducing nations".

On the other hand, Soliman expresses his disagreement with this opinion. For him, when states rid themselves from a religious

identity, citizenship will be even more challenged as multiple identities arise.

Soliman believes that Zaki ignored Islamic history and how the Islamic state treated Christians and Jews. He also sees that Zaki had not considered the fact that many Copts in Egypt have occupied ministerial positions with real decision making roles. Soliman also emphasized the fact that many Christians have contributed to the Islamic heritage through arts and poetry.

He adds that the oppression practiced against Arab Christians in some eras goes back to political circumstances and the personality of specific rulers and not to Islam itself.

The Bahais

Islamonline.net dealt with the Bahais' case from an absolutely religious perspective, without considering their case socially, totally not recognizing the sect, describing them as apostates.

Egyptian judicial report on the Bahais' case

On 17 January, Islamonline.net published a report entitled "Egyptian judicial report on the Bahais' case" that presented the stance of the state judiciary towards the case of Bahais following the Administrative Court ruling obliging the Ministry of Interior, Chief of the Personal Status Authority, and immigration department to allow for Bahais to state their religion in the religion line in all national identification documents in Egypt.

The report saw that Court's sentence was unconstitutional. It considered the ruling as a threat to national unity and that the right to freedom of belief should be restricted when it is a threat to the

nation's stability. The report added that Bahais do not follow a divine religious and therefore the religion should not be recognized.

Moreover, the report described Bahai believers as apostates who have betrayed the nation. It said that Bahais have taken an anti-Arab and Islamic stance and thus supported Zionism.

Shiekhs confronting Bahais

In an investigative report by Sobhi Megahed, posted on Islamonline.net on 26 June under the title of "Shiekhs confronting Bahais", the case of Bahais was discussed through a series of interviews with a number of Shiekhs about the Islamic stance towards Bahais. The report described Bahais as following a religion that has the most destructive preaches.

Al-Azhar refuses to enlist Bahais on IDs

In another investigative report by Adel Abdel Halim posted on Islamonline.net on 9 April, the case of Bahais was again attacked. The writer built the report on the opinions of Egyptian Muftis (Islamic scholars who interpret Islamic law and are capable of issuing fatwas) and the decision made by the International Assembly of Islamic Fiqh (Islamic rules) Egyptian Mufti's opinions and the resolution of international Islamic Fiqh (Islamic rules). The Muftis saw that it was inappropriate to recognize the Bahai belief by putting it on identification documents. They also so that it was inconvenient to abolish the religion space on IDs as this is important for civil matters such as marriages.

Meanwhile, the report highlighted the decision made by the Islamic researches Centre of Al-Azhar Institution that considered Bahais

as apostates.

While the attacks on Bahais took over most of the space of the article, there was a relatively small space given to the response of Hossam Bahgat, Director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) - an organization that has adopted the case of Bahais in Egypt - welcoming the sentence passed by the Administrative court.

b- Women's rights:

For Islamonline.net, Islam preceded the West in recognizing what Wessam Fouad, Director of Islamonline, calls "people's rights".

It is clear that Islamonline.net is interested in the relationship of women with men. However, doesn't give any notice to women's relation with society. Economic and social rights, for example, were mainly limited to rape, sexual harassment, divorce, khola' (woman's right to divorce herself), the veil, and circumcision.

Islamonline.net neglected women's rights to education, work, passing nationality to their children and their right to social insurance (pension) and medical care, especially for pregnant women.

These rights, for the website, might be more of violations of women's rights. For example, a woman having to go to work is a violation to her right to settle down at home raise children. This is not to mention the website's opposition to women's civil and political rights, such as the right to nominate for elections and occupy government positions.

Examples of such coverage include the following:

Marriage twice a week

In an article titled "Marriage twice a week", Islamonline.net contested the right of women to sign their own marriage contract whether a woman is an adult or a minor.

Furthermore, the article had the opinion that the broadcasting of news on rape, sexual harassment, murder, adultery, and prostitution is "garbage" broadcast in western media. This, the article continued, is now spreading gradually into the media of the Muslim World in an attempt to uncover hidden stories. The writer sees that the result is a decaying moral environment.

The article insists on the fact that a woman is a follower of man, since she has been created from the body of man. The writer also concentrated on the natural biological differences between men and women to further consolidation the discrimination against the two sexes.

He continues to assert that the Muslim World should learn from the failures of the West. Women in the West, he argues, did not assume their rights fully. There is a low proportion of women occupying senior political, economic, judiciary, financial and cultural positions. A high proportion of working women are working in the production industry and more 90% are in the sex trade industry. He continues referring to the fact that women constitute the majority of victims of crimes and assaults, particularly sexual related crimes. This he sees as a contradiction to former arguments that sexual freedom would protect women from crimes resulting from sexual oppression.

The website limited the role of women to motherhood and raising children. If women want to work, the website said that the woman should then give first priority to her home. This is an attitude that was embodied in responses to queries submitted by visitors on personal problems. In one response to a woman was that she should not forget that her greatest job is a mother, which is the sacred role of women and should be given top priority.

Al-Quwama and responsibility

The website stresses on male authority over women. One religious researcher of Islamonline.net said that it is necessary to understand Al-Quwama (the authority or guardianship that men can exercise individually or collectively over women) in a balanced manner in order to prevent it from transforming into absolute power or into a indifference so that everyone does what he/she likes.

The website sees that anything related to a woman should be permitted by the guardian first. This is in obedience to God's instructions.

The Saudi preacher Saad ibn Abdullah Alboreik emphasized that a man is the guardian (wasi) of a woman. That means that he is her governor in all her matters and he is responsible for her well behavior. He claims that his opinion is based on Shari'ah. He adds that the fact that all the prophets were men shows that men are superior to women. The preacher also explained that Al-Quwama means protection and responsibility.

Islamization of dress or behavior?

In an article by Aya farouk posted on the website on 14 December,

the writer argued that the hijab (veil) is a duty that must be imposed by the ruler. The main question in the article was: Is the ruler or guardian allowed to restrict dressing in sexually inciting clothes? Here the writer of course is considering any dress other than the Hijab. In the article, the writer called for a campaign against indecent clothing and to force the Hijab as it is a duty in accordance to Shari'ah and the Quran. She referred to the Malaysian experience when the state fined unveiled women for dressing improperly.

The writer also stressed on that the guardian, the government in this case, to impose Hijab on the Muslim women. In this regard, Dr. Mohamed Elsalaheen, the dean of the Faculty of Shari'ah in the University of Jordan said that the guardian can commit women to the veil and not the opposite, being unveiled.

Based on the point of view of Dr. Abdul Sabour Shahin, the writer of the article considered unveiled women, even if not Muslim, a threat to social security and stability; an wide scoped phrase that can be translated into: non Muslims are a threat to social peace. Shahin sees that the guardian should impose proper clothing even to non Muslims for the sake of social peace and stability.

Sexual Harassment:

While the website covered the incident when women were intensively sexually harassed in down town Cairo end of October 2006, it neglected the case of the Bahraini girl who was raped by 11 Kuwaiti young men in Kuwait. This is despite the fact that there 120 results to using "raping a girl" as a keyword in a search and 335 results to using "rape" as the keyword in our search.

Fatwas:

Fatwas consisted a big part of the website, as it talks in the name of Islam and hires sheikhs to give fatwas (religious opinion based on Shari'ah) from different countries, and also hires some consultants, they get the questions through discussions or e-mails. There are different titles for fatwas such as consultants, religious fatwas, general fatwas, direct fatwas, fatwas for women.

Mostly there can be no human rights background when the web site discusses the different topics from the shariaa point of view, or at least this is what is being claimed. The clear example here is a question from a young man about marrying a Christian woman, the sheikh asked the man not to go on this marriage as the results will not be good, or to call his wife to be for Islam, and in the case of foreign Christians the sheikhs accuse the west and western women of decay, immortality and bawdry. In one fatwa the shiekh considered sending a photograph from the girl to her fiancée outside the county forbidden (haram), based on that there is no certainty of marriage.

In other situations the mufti (sheikh) considered the others non believers, such as the position from Bahaais, he also forbidden listening to people of other religions to get an idea about their belief.

(3) Refugees:

Refugees' rights came second in terms of coverage on Islamonline.net and the majority of stories related to refuges were included in the News and Analysis section. Stories included:

Italy considers giving asylum to Afghani apostate:

Amir Shabana wrote a report titled "Italy considers giving asylum to Afghani apostate" that was posted on Islamonline.net on 28 March. The report covered the trial in Afghanistan of an Afghani Muslim who converted to Christianity in Afghanistan and how Western countries have been exerting pressure for the man to be released. The report focused on Italy considering granting asylum to the man on trial. The report quoted unnamed western diplomatic sources warning from the dangers of granting the man asylum as this will pose a security threat. The website described the man on trial as an "apostate", which insinuates that he should be executed.

Refugees among victims of the War on Terror

The website posted a report written by Nasiba Dawoud on 19 April on a United Nations report issued by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The UN report stated that refugee and asylum seekers escaping war and oppression in their homelands are the real victims of what is termed the "War on Terror". The report said that some countries treat refugees and asylum seekers as illegal migrants and suspected terrorists or criminals. At the least they are treated as outlaws. The report confirmed that the decrease in the number of refugees is not the result of better security, but rather a result of policies applied by both rich and poor countries circumvent legal procedures that should be respected when dealing with refugees.

Dawoud sees that after the 9/11 attacks against the US, Washington and most of the western countries adopted strict security arrangements, which have been strongly criticized as they violate human rights.

Sudanese refugees in Cairo face humanitarian crisis

On 3 January, Islamonline.net posted a report covering the killing of 27 Sudanese asylum seekers during a police storm of a demonstration in Mustafa Mahmoud Square in Cairo. The report included several interviews, including with asylum seekers, government officials, members of parliament and the UNHCR

Under the subtitle "We need a country that treats us as human beings", the website showed the refugees' suffering because the Egyptian government did not provide any support while the UNHCR was doing nothing to alleviate their suffering.

The report also covered the stance of opposition members of parliament under the subtitle "Parliamentarians demand an investigation". The report covered the stance of the Egyptian government under the subtitle "Government regrets". In addition to that, the report covered the stance of the Sudanese government and the UNHCR, which sees that the majority of asylum seekers are not real refugees but people who are just searching for a better and easier life.

2- Sanctity of private life

A: Spying on private lives:

British document calls for eavesdropping on the Muslim students:

A report from news agencies, written by Hazem Mostafa, covers British press reports of a document prepared by the Ministry of Higher Education demanding the faculty in British universities to spy on Muslim student on the basis that they might organize activities that would establish extremism and fundamentalism

amongst student colleagues. The report included the response of the President of the Muslim student union who described this document as the worst violation that could happen to Muslim students under suspicion and investigation, as if they were accused until their innocence is proven.

The report showed how the Muslim minority in Britain are suffering, especially after the Leader of the House of Commons and former British foreign minister, Jack Straw attacked veiled women and demanding that they take their veil off.

American students spy on their teachers

Moustaf El Minshawy wrote a report titled "American students spy on their teachers" posted on Islamonline.net on 20 January. The report shows how privacy is violated in the US, such as the call made by the UCLA Graduate Students Association to students to students telling them to inform on their teachers when they deal with issues related to the War on Iraq in an attempt to suppress radical teachers within the university.

El Menshawy also mentioned several other cases of violation of privacy. For example, organizers of a conference on Islam in Texas University, held in February 2004, accused the American military intelligence of spying on the conference and demanding the list of participants. Also the Google search engine has been requested by the American Ministry of Justice to provide it with the name list of users.

b- Defamation:

Fabricated sexual tapes to a Tunisian opposition man

On 11 April, the website covered a story on the violation of privacy in Tunisia. The story comes following accusations made by the Tunisian League for Human Rights against Tunisian authorities, claiming that the Tunisian authorities have circulated fabricated video tapes, including sexual snapshots to Mokhtar Aljalaly, Tunisian opposition and the former Member of Parliament, to distort his reputation.

Under the subtitle "A similar case", the writer showed a similar occurrence with one of the Tunisian opposition leaders, Naila Sharshour Hashisha, when fabricated naked pictures of her daughter were also distributed.

c- Homosexuals;

The website continues its policy of dividing the world into two blocs, a Muslim world and the West. It also continues to not tackle issues that are considered socially unacceptable. It also continues to blame the West for all the problems that the Muslim World is facing. For example the website sees that the west canceled the gap between the public and private spheres, so that homosexuals have to announce their sexuality publicly in order to demand their rights. The website considers that the West is the reason why there is issues related to homosexuality.

Arabic satellite channels promote sex and homosexuality in the Arab world

Mohamed Gamal Arafa tackled in the News and Analysis section on 16 May homosexuality. However, he did not deny that there are homosexuals in the Arab World. He enumerated incidents of

homosexuals arrested in different Arab countries under the subtitle "Arab homosexuals". Such incidents included:

- * The arrest of 26 men in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for practicing irregular sex
- * The decision by Kuwait to establish religion centers to help homosexuals.
- * Many bisexuals and gay women arrested in many incidents in Lebanon
- * Morocco dealing with the issue of homosexuality in an attempt to end the phenomenon which has taken momentum in coastal cities.
- * About 50 homosexuals arrested in Egypt when they were discovered through advertisements on the internet this is in addition to 179 sentenced in 2001 because of their homosexuality.

The writer recognized that the West had started to recognize the rights of homosexuals during the 1980s. Yet, he believes that the "phenomenon" of homosexuality in the Arab and Muslim world is a result of American and French influence.

Following Islamonline.net coverage

During the period from 21 April to 21 May 2007 there was no variation in the percentages of coverage of human rights issues found during the period of 2006.

The most covered countries on the website were the US, Iraq, Egypt, and European countries.

During the selected month, the website had continued the same approach it had in 2006. Human rights violations came first, then the call for human rights, then finally criticism of human rights.

As for the content, the website tackled human rights mostly, followed by personal safety, then personal rights, then human rights movement, minorities and finally tolerance.

The response of Islamonline.net to the research findings.

Islamonline.net sent the research team a paper prepared by Wessam Fouad that included a research done by Heba Rabea along with an interview with the information systems department in the website.

The paper sent by Islamonline to our research team came out with results that can be summarized as follows:

- * According to the findings of Heba Rabea, the website's quantitative coverage of human rights is not satisfactory.
- * The average human rights topics on the website was 1.1 a day during the year 2006. This means that during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006, the website had a total of 718 stories related to human rights out of 5944 posted on the website during the same time. This means that human rights related stories only constituted 12% of the website.
- * Using "human rights" as a keyword is not sufficient to search human rights related topics on the website.
- * Having a variety of data entry staff could be the reason for the variation in using different tags which thus affects the sorting of the content of the website.

As for the qualitative aspect of HRinfo's findings, the Islamonline document sees:

* HRinfo was bias in many points.

The "Adam and Eve" section is interested in some human rights topics that cannot only be considered civil and political rights.

* HRinfo is biased against authority

According to the document sent to HRinfo, HRinfo is biased against authority in its relation to civil society, be it individuals or organizations. For Fouad, all sections of Islamonline.net had a human rights vision founded on religious basis.

In his paper, Fouad recommended HRinfo to differentiate between the media website with a message from a website established purely for economic reasons. The latter, he said, needs deeper research tools to present a clearer vision that is more honest to its discourse and its application.

The HRinfo research team revised the statistics found by Heba Rabea. The team concluded that the variation in results is because the research team had depended on the advanced search tool on the website.

Intensive search- we used different words to study how the website sees human rights.

According to the findings of the HRinfo research team, there were 412 results, with an average of 1.1 stories a day. The results were distributed amongst all the different sections of the website.

In the News and Analysis section, there were 298 results, while in the section Islam and Contemporary Issues, there were 7 results 42 in Analysis and Opinion, 2 results in "Recommendations", 18

results in Arts and Culture, 11 results in "Adam and Eve", 5 results in "Daw'ah", 7 results in "Shariah", 2 results in "Unknown and Famous", 3 results in Problems and Solutions, 1 result in Concepts and Terms, 2 results in Files and Special Pages, 6 results in Development, and 8 results in Documents and Statements.

Heba Rabea used the word "human rights" and chose the option "use all words" to get out the results she had found in her research.

But we found out that using the two words separately could lead us to results that are not related to the topic. The word "human" can come in one part of an article, while the word "rights" can come in another part. For example in the section of "Shariah" there is an article titled "These are our feasts and nothing else" and another story in Health and Science titled "Hassan Hathout: a physician from the era of love". This article discusses the Medical Code of Honor, considering it only a paper while the conscience is the only savior of the religion. The word human was mentioned once in this article in the sentence "conscious is the only reformer as it is the voice of God in the human being"

In another article titled "Bin lakhdar opens the door for Tunisia's atomic science" there was a subtitle "The leader is to be followed". In this article, the writer talks about the Pakistani professor Mohammed Abdul Salam who won the Nobel Prize for physics and the role of the scientist Bin Lakhdar and her steps following the Pakistani professor. The word human comes in the sentence "Bin lakhedr follows the steps of Mohammed Abdul Salam and is

committed to her principle: humans must live in the place where he would be of more benefit to the others"

In another article titled "Euroscience: a civil experiment to introduce European sciences"

The word "rights" comes in the sentence "The European convention for researchers, which was founded to put specific European standards, rights and commitments towards employing researchers"

It is clear from these examples that the stories are not related to human rights and their writers do not consider them as related to human rights international agreements and conventions.

The HRinfo research team did not only use the term "human rights" as its keyword. Different keywords, taken from international human rights covenants, were used particularly those related to the four rights used in this research (Women's rights, Minorities's rights and tolerance, Refugees' rights, and Privacy). Despite the language variation from one website to the other, these keywords cover almost every aspect of life and thus it would be expected that there would be a 100% result.

Regarding women's rights the following keywords were used: women's rights, girl, motherhood, personal status law female activist, norms, veil (hijab), raising children, taking care of children, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape, violence against women, women's right to vote, female candidate, female candidates, female parliamentarian, female ambassador, children nationality, nationality, marrying a foreigner, women's education, women's

work, female servants, the right to choose a profession, wages, procreation, miss, wife, divorced women, divorce, maternal paid leave, hard labor for pregnant women, health care, women's testimony in courts, female judge, authority over women (Quwama), assaults against civilians, using chemical weapons, women in wartime, collective punishment, demolishing houses, forced evacuation, housing deprivation, nutrition deprivation, medical aids deprivation, International women's day

Regarding minorities' rights, the following keywords were used: Belief, Muslim, Christian, Jew, atheist, Bahaai, Shiite, apostate, Saharans, Amazigh, Kurds, churches, temples, prayer, tolerance, change of religion, building churches, maintaining churches, Easter, nationality, nationalization, population formation, demography, Christian community, violence, multicultural, tolerance day, racism, fascism, extremism, no nationality, Ismailis, citizenship.

Regarding the refugees' rights, the following keywords were used:

Loosing the nationality, refugee, oppression, with no nationality, the right to return, homeland, residency, race, religion, nationality, UNHCR, evacuation, deportation.

Regarding the sanctity of private life, the following keywords were used:

private life, family affairs, houses break in, monitoring mail exchange, eavesdropping, spy on mail exchange, monitoring, harassment, honor, defamation, lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals, homosexuality.

When searching using the term "human rights" as the keywords, the research team was able to find out how writers for ISlamonline.net feel about the principle's relation to international human rights treaties. The team used all the aforementioned keywords. While the percentages did not differ, the numbers did. It is believed that using "human rights" is accurate indicator to what the website considers human rights issues.

As for the variation in data entry staff, which is considered a factor affecting the results of the search, HRinfo team believes that while this information is important as it answers question of what does Islamonline.net consider human rights, the team believes that by using a comprehensive list of keywords it was able to gather all stories related to human rights issues, specifically those related to the four rights covered by this research, particularly that the research team had also searched all stories of all sections and thus excluding any chance that there was a classification error of the stories posted on the website. The research team thus believes that the chances of errors in the statistics found are very slight.

As for Wessam Fouad's opinion that HRinfo has biases to civil and political rights, using the Adam and Eve section as evidence, it is important to note that the research team had made considerations for such biases. The research team had focused on the Adam and Eve section. Also it is important to stress that the aim of the research is to study the discourse used by different media websites that have a specific message. This includes how websites tackle women's rights. While searching the Adam and Eve section, stories, as the following, were found:

- 1- "In Egypt disabled children look for someone to represent them"
6-12-2006 "Adam and Eve"
- 2- "Do women have a cause?" 21-11-2006 "Adam and Eve"
- 3- "Forgotten children: poverty and negligence " 20-11-2006
"Adam and Eve"
- 4- "Be merciful on sexual harassers" 5-11-2006 "Adam and Eve"

It is clear that the research team had searched all sections of the website, including religious sections and the section on Problems and Solutions, along with other parts of the website.

Thus it is evident that the research team had no biases towards civil and political rights over economic, cultural and social rights.

As for bias against authority, the only response the team has is that it had monitored and analyzed the content of Islamonline.net regarding human rights organizations. This was through 25 stories that were found on the website that clarify the point of view of the website on the different organizations and institutions active in the human rights movement.

The team also monitored the Fatwas section, which affects the human rights movement in a way or the other, with most cases coming from a preacher or a scholar. In this regard the research team found some stories within the scope of personal rights, such as: "Al Qaradawi calls on veiled women to revise the conditions of the veil", "In defense of the Tunisian renaissance", "Politicizing the veil", "The veil and the protocols of secularists", "The veil: Civilized considerations and scriptural evidence"

Under protection from discrimination, the research team found around 50 results from which the website's message can be clear. Here, we would like to mention one out of the 50 stories, entitled "The great prize: Sectarian violence in Egypt. The research also tackled international relations and how it is viewed by the website. This was done through several keywords, such as international justice, international cooperation, and protection of civilians.

The research team used 15 stories tackling "protection of civilians" to understand the message of Islamonline.net regarding international relations and agreements. For example, titles included: "100 thousands unexploded cluster bomb in southern Lebanon", "Israel refuses a humanitarian truce in Lebanon", "Cluster bombs still a threat to Lebanese people", "Americans calls to end Israel's massacres in Lebanon", and "The week of popular protests against the raid over Gaza".

As for Fouad's recommendation to differentiate between a website that carries a message and one that is set up purely for economic purposes, it is clear that the target of this research is studying the variable factors, ideological and economic, and their effect on human rights discourse in Arabic news websites.

5- Conclusion;

The website divides the world into 2 blocs, the Islamic World and the Western world. The human rights issues that dominated the website, were issues related to minority rights, particularly, Muslims in the West and Israel and Western intervention in affairs of the Muslim world.

The website concentrates on the successes of Muslims living in the West and their role in spreading Islam, referring to indicators of such success. Christian minorities in the Muslim World were also covered, yet the website attacked missionaries. At the same time, Islamonline.net did not tackle the different Muslim Sects or Muslim minorities in the Muslim world. The only exception in this case was the case of Iraq.

It is evident that Islamonline.net follows the lines of thought of Dr. Tarek Ramadan as expressed in his book "Muslims of the west and the future of Islam" in which he argues that the western world is not a war land (a place where we should fight or launch war), but it is "martyr land" (a place one can be martyred).

While Islamonline.net sees human rights as a product of the West, it believes that Islam preceded the West in asserting human rights principles - or as Wessam Fouad, the website's director, would like to call "people's rights" - through the Islamic vision.

It is also clear that Islamonline.net is interested in the relationship of women with men, without giving any importance to women's relation with society. Economic and social rights, for example, were mainly limited to rape, sexual harassment, divorce, khola' (woman's right to divorce herself), the veil, and circumcision.

The website thinks that many of what is considered women's rights is actually violations to women. For example, a woman having to go to work is a violation to her right to settle down at home raise children. This is not to mention women's civil and political rights,

such as the right to nominate for elections and occupy government positions.

www.copts-united.com

1- Overview

Unlike the rest of the websites selected in this study, www.copts-united.com, does not have a high number of visitors, when compared to the rest. However, because it is considered one of the essential websites tackling Coptic and Christian issues, we dealt with it as one of the most influential websites for the Arabic reader.

a) The importance of Copts - united

Copts United is one of the Arabic websites that speak in the name of Christians in Egypt. The website is sponsored by the Zurich based Copts United Organizations, which is headed by Adly Abdeer. The idea for the website began during a conference held in Switzerland in November 2004 on the rights of the Copts. It was launched in November 2005. Since then, the website began to pose itself strongly as a channel expressing Copts and Christians.

b) Promotion tools:

- * The website is designed to be interactive with its audience. It has a forum, readers' mail, and opinion polls.

- * The website has an RSS Feed service.

- * The website depends to a large extent pictures, videos and cartoons.

- * The website lacks links to other websites. The website's homepage only contains links to the Coptic Compound in the United States, the Adly Abdeer website, and the Samuel Polos websites.

c) Sections:

The Copts United website has both Arabic and English pages. The Arabic language website is renewed on a weekly basis - every Monday. The website is designed to look similar to a newspaper. The website has many sections, including: opinion, chosen articles, reportage, varieties, e- press, today's agenda, the forum, readers post, and the last page.

Content:

The website covers many issues, content includes material under the following titles: "With the Law", "She and Her Rights", "Egyptian Studies", "The Street's Beat".

Weekly content

Weekly content includes material under the following titles:

"Frankly", "We Read for You", "From the Egyptian Inspiration", "The Sports Encyclopedia"

The website showed interest in human rights and specified With the Law section to human rights issues. This section is one of the permanent ones. In this section we can find several human rights related material and documents, such as:

- * Universal Declaration for Human Rights
- * An introduction to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- * The ICCPR

The website also dedicated a space for women's issues, which are found on pages entitled, "her reportages", "Her Diaries", "Creative in the shadow".

d) The search engine:

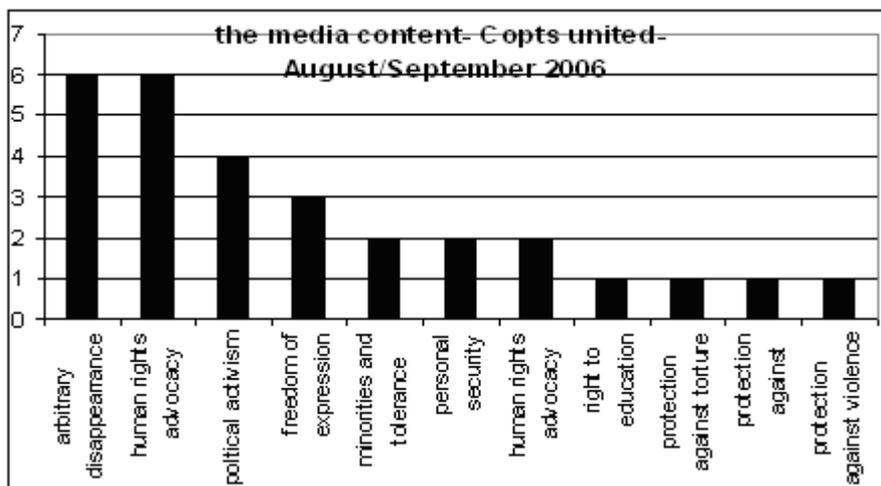
The only way you can search for material on the website is through its archive and searching by date.

2 -Human Rights on Copts - United:

a) Publishing rate:

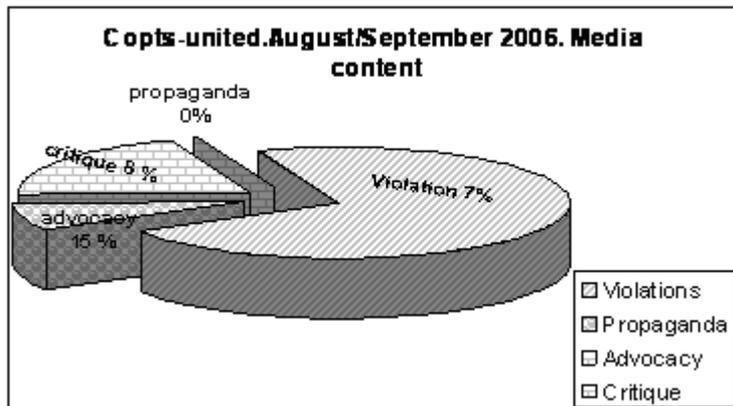
The advanced search on the website covered material posted on the website over a limited two months period. During this period the website published 0.5 human rights related materials on a daily basis.

b) Issues covered by Copts United:



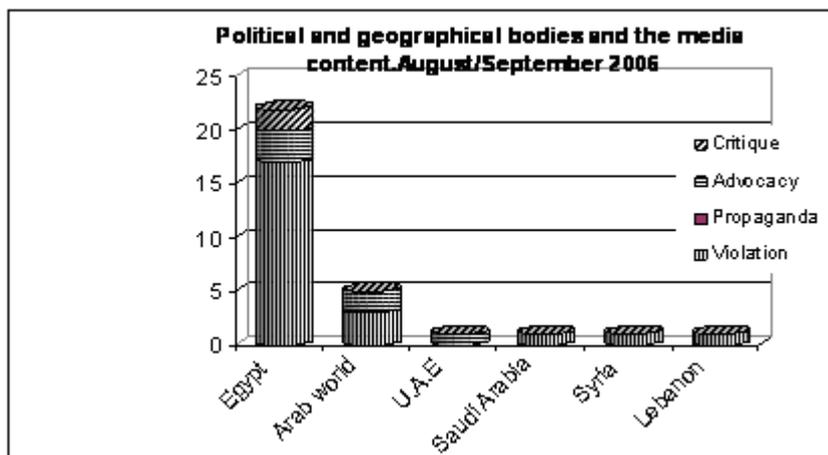
Similar to other websites, the Copts-united website gives priority to political rights, such as political participation and freedom of expression. However, the website showed special interest in enforced disappearance.

c) Content Coverage:



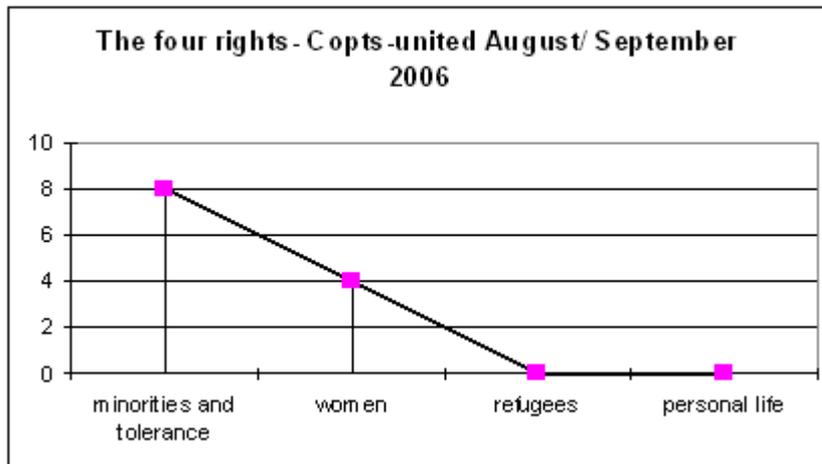
Like the case with the other websites, most human rights related materials on the website were news on human rights violations.

d) Political and geographical scope:



The website has a special focus on Egypt.

e) The four rights:



News on minorities and tolerance ranked first, similar to Islam online and Elaph. Attention given to these rights is considered natural when putting into consideration the nature and message of the website.

According to the website staff, Copts United publishes violations against minorities, especially in Egypt. The most covered violation is enforced disappearance of Christian women, forcing them to convert to Islam.

3- Analysis of the four rights:

a) Minorities and tolerance:

The website's stance towards the Western World varies. In some cases it calls for the possibility of resorting to the West to bring democratic reform and an end to discrimination. In other cases, the website focuses on the religious and moral differences with the West and shows the willingness to open dialogue and coexistence between the Muslim World and the West.

The website found in the Pope's statements an opportunity to open the debate on reform in the Muslim World, particularly with regards

to ending discrimination against minority groups as a basis for reform.

The website posts some material that can be considered to be inciting to hatred. It has taken the political position of considering the Muslim Brotherhood as an extension to the Saudi Wahabi movement.

Examples:

The Danish Cartoons crisis:

The Muslim Brotherhood falling down

On 21 December the websites posted the article of Alexander Nortof in which he discussed how the US is using the Muslim Brotherhood in its dirty war against its enemies while taking advantage of the MB's mistakes to serve American interests.

The writer sees in his article, which clearly incites hatred, how the reaction to the Danish cartoons was barbaric. He sees that the cartoons only reveals the truth of the Muslim Prophet, Mohamed, as to the writer he was a killer, executioner and instinctive sexual driven.

The writer also confirms the differences between Christianity and the American administration, emphasizing the fact that Bush does not represent Christianity.

Nortof warned his readers from American attempts to use religion for its war. To him the United States is seeking to "drive people into internal fights".

The Pope's speech

The foundations for dialogue and coexistence between religions

On 18 November, the website posted an article written by Magdy Khalil that dealt with the pope's statement. He also delivered his personal apology to millions of moderate Muslims whose feelings were hurt because of the statement made by the Pope about Islam. However, the writer still saw a division in the world between the Muslim World and the Christian West. He put forward conditions in which the two religions can co-exist. These are:

1-rejecting violence

2-mutual apology

3-equal treatment

4-respecting the differences between religions

5-unconditioned recognition of international covenants

He also argued that any inter-religious dialogue must include an agreement to respect international human rights covenants.

The writer added that the problems of Muslim countries are their attempts to void these covenants from their essence through reservations based on the importance of the Islamic Shari'ah. This is why, the writer argues, there is a continuous conflict between the international community and the Muslim countries with regards to human rights standards, especially with regards to four main dimensions: religious freedoms, women's rights, non Muslim minorities' rights, and the humane treatment of all human beings.

"The statements of Vatican pope and the conflict between the east and the west"

On 20 September, the website published a report on the

statements of the Pope and its consequences. The report covered the reactions of some Christian clerics and human rights activists, acknowledging that there is a public rejection of the statements of Vatican, and confirming the existing differences between western Christians and eastern Christians; the Orthodox and Catholics. At the same time, they denounced violent reactions to the statements in the Arab world, which included the burning of churches in Iraq.

The Bahais

The website showed more interest to the Bahais cause than the other selected websites included in this study. The word "Bahais" was mentioned in 34 different articles.

The website followed the judicial cases related to the Bahais struggle for their right, the decision reached by Egyptian courts, and the reactions that followed. The Copts United website is the only website that interviewed Bahais. It is the only website that tackled the case from all its dimensions based on the fact that Bahais are Egyptian citizens and that they should enjoy the right to belief. The website also tackled the case within the context of relations between the Muslim brotherhood and the Egyptian state and the spreading of Wahabi ideas in Egypt.

The website compared the case of Bahais in the world with their case in Muslim countries, warning against discrimination practiced against them and confirming that Bahais and Christians are minorities suffering from human rights violations.

The strayed Bahai and the lost pound

On 26 December the website published an article criticizing the

decision made by the high administrative court of Egypt canceling the decision made by the first degree court to grant Bahais the right to mention their religion on their identification cards. The article tackled the social problems that Bahais face and the economic loss as a result of this court decision. It also covered the NGOs' position that considered the sentence a step away from assuming the rights of individuals and international standards for human rights. The writer warned against repeating the tragedy of Iranian Bahais who were violently persecuted when the state considered them apostates. The writer also talked about the situation of Bahais all over the world, stating that Bahaim is recognized as a religion and thus Bahais have the right to practice their religion. On the other hand he talked about their situation in Egypt and Arab countries where their rights are not respected.

The article stressed that Egyptians should guarantee all rights their without any discrimination based on gender, religion, language, race or belief.

Let's expel Bahais from Egypt and Muslims from the entire world On the occasion of the decision made by the high administrative court in Egypt not to enlist the Bahaim as a religion in official documents, the website published an article on 23 December criticizing the court decision and religious discrimination in Egypt. The article considered the court decision as one consolidating a religious state.

The writer imagined a scenario where secular western countries turned to religious Christian states, as Muslims claim. In this case they will not recognize Islam as a religion, thus depriving Muslims

from any civil rights whether they carry the nationality or not. This way, Muslims will not find any way but to leave those countries forever; a situation similar to which the Bahais in Egypt find themselves today.

At the end of the article, the writer asked the administration of Copts United to give a special interest in the Bahais cause, considering the suffering of Bahais similar to that of Christians under the cruelty of the Islamic system.

Religious authority calls for the elimination of Bahatism

On 26 July the website published a report written by Magdy Malak reviewing the book "Bahatism, its doctrines and colonial targets". The book, which is published by a religious authority in Egypt, calls for the elimination of Bahais.

Egyptian NGOs call to delete religion from IDs and constitutional amendments

On 19 December the website published a report from the Al-Sharq Al-Awsat (Middle East) Newspaper. The report tackles a statement issued by NGOs calling to remove the religious status from official documents. The statement also considered that the denial of Bahais basic rights, while they are Egyptian citizens, is an indicator to the expansion of discrimination on the basis of religion.

According to the statement, discrimination takes place through security harassment and media campaigns against Shiites, Copts and Bahais. The statement also refers to the harassment of intellectuals who have different interpretations of religious texts.

An interview with Egyptian Bahais; a hard choice between religion and a homeland

On 3 September, Copts United published an interview with Egyptian Bahais, tackling the civil problems that face Bahais as Egyptian citizens. The interviews concluded that Egypt is taking a route away from granting full citizenship to all Egyptians without discrimination. The officials refused to issue IDs for Bahais and this way they cannot move safely, they cannot register their marriage contracts, or obtain birth certificates for their new born, and cannot even issue death certificates their lost ones.

Muslims

As the website advocated Christian issues, it focused on criticizing Islam, considering the religion to be the roots of terrorism. The website used phrases such as: we are the best- we are more religious and well mannered- we are more sophisticated and civilized in describing itself compared to Muslims. Maybe this radical stance comes as a reaction to the hostile media with regards to Christianity. The website also called Christians to stand together against Muslims, introducing the different secular powers in Egypt either from the right or left wing. It called Christians in Egypt to effectively participate in the political life and use the opportunity of having international pressure exerted against the Egyptian government to respect international standards for human rights.

Roots of Islamic terrorism in Egypt

On 23 August the website published an article discussing Islamic terrorism. For the article terrorists are not only murderers such as Osama Bin Laden, Zawahry, Zarkawy, Omar Abdulrahman, Abu

Hamza Almasry and Yasser Serry, but also elite of the Islamic society, the scholars and students, as any Muslim, according to the article, who studied Islam profoundly becomes a terrorist, as he is expected to apply the rules of Islam as mentioned in Quran, Hadith (Prophet's sayings) and scholars, such as Emarrah, Zaghloul, Hwidi, AlAwa, Karadawy, and Safinaz Kazem, who interpreted the Quran. Those are real Muslims and when they speak against Copts demanding their humiliation, torture and murder, these Muslims are applying the rules of their religion.

The article describes the Muslims' discourse on human rights, justice and equality as lies aiming at deceiving the world.

The article is clearly inciting hatred against Muslims.

The mosque and the church or schools and hospitals

On 21 August the website published an article by Dr. Hassan Hanafi in which he discusses the issue of building mosques and churches. He considered that going around building mosques and churches is not a genuine act of expression of faith. For him, this is an attempt to bring disunity and disharmony in the Arab society.

Hanafi continues saying that loyalty for homeland disappeared in favor of small fragmented identities thought to bring protection for minorities, but it is really a tool for foreign interference.

For him, people should build schools and hospitals and rebuild public establishments that benefit all people regardless of their religion. People should also put interest in teaching the common religious values such as loving thy neighbors, tolerance, social justice, human rights, individual freedom and helping people. The writer explained that the rise of religious identities is a result of the

weakness of the state. As the political system weakens, religious divisions take place as alternative identities.

Religion police... do they have diplomatic bags?

On 29 August the website published an article that was published before in Elaph website. The article is written by Iman Alkahtani. The writer criticizes the role of the religion police in Saudi Arabia. Through the article the writer stated many human rights violations committed by these policemen.

The religious police in Saudi Arabia have 460 centers in the Saudi kingdom and 5000 staff members with 351 million Riyals as a budget. This money would have been better spent on humanitarian development and fulfilling reform demands to merge this department to the police and make it an internal department for general manners instead of insulting citizens and turning the streets into religion gang wars.

The united Arab Islamic states

On 28 August the website published an article by Suzan Kustandy in which she replies to the dream of Sheikh Safwat Hijazy to establish a union between Arab countries named the Arabic Islamic states similar to the United States of America. She explained the difference between the two states. The union he tries to imitate is based on secularism, while he wants to build a racist state.

She argues that the political unity between countries does not succeed if it is built on a religious basis and added that the success of America and Europe is based on the fact that the

unification was not founded on discrimination between their citizens on the basis of religion.

At the end, she advised him to learn accepting the other and realize that this is the simplest and highest of human principles.

The party of all Egypt

On 25 August the website published a general call to establish a political party for all Egyptians and take the crescent as a symbol for the homeland, with three stars as a symbol for the three main religions in Egypt.

An interview on liberalism

In a reportage published on 31 August Maged Samir discussed the present and future of liberalism in Egypt. He interviewed many characters who confirmed that western liberalism was established after the society completed its economic, social and political formula, unlike the social situation in Egypt.

The reportage argued that one of the major mistakes of the Egyptian liberals is that they made their liberalism synonymous to westernization .This mistake led to the existence of opposing movements calling for the Islamization of the society.

On the issue of the rights of minorities, there are several other titles on the website, including the following:

- * Egypt replies to the accusations of violating minorities' rights
- * A report by the US state department confirms discrimination against Copts and Bahais in Egypt.
- * US state department: there is religious discrimination in Egypt.
- * A surprise coalition between the government and the Muslim

Brotherhood to stand against the elimination of religious identity on official documents.

Women's rights:

Copts- United is interested in poor oppressed women generally and in particular kidnapped Coptic girls. The accidents of disappearance of Coptic girls or their marriage to Muslims or converting to Islam had its influence on the website's treatment to woman's issues.

Generally, the website tackled the cause of women as an oppressed minority under Islamic rule. It is interested in criticizing Islam's violations to women's rights and the denial of Christian women's right to choose.

It published material criticizing Islam and criticized the position of the security system and media in dealing with the disappearance of Coptic women.

Copts: live free or die as real men

On 1 September and after the disappearance of the Coptic girl, Mona Yaaqoub, from Fayoum (governorate south of Cairo), the website covered the disappearance of Coptic girls.

The writer suggests the establishment of a committee composed of representatives from Al Azhar, the church and human rights organizations, to ensure that the process of converting from one religion to the other is administered away from the security.

The article compared between the support given to those who convert to Islam and the oppression and imprisonment of those who convert to Christianity.

At the end, the writer calls "all churches in Egypt to launch trips all over the country to support the Christians of Fayoum who gathered in the church to protest". And also called the Copts outside Egypt to go to the Egyptian embassies and hold demonstrations inside the headquarters till Mona returns to her father.

It is halal for a man to marry his daughter, and forbidden (haram) for our society to marry democracy

On the 1 September the website published an article by Gawad Albashtiti, taken from civilized dialogue website. The article tackled a Fatwa by Dr. Mohammed Al-Masseir one of Al Azhar famous clerics, in which he said it is allowed according to religion for a man to marry his illegitimate daughter, and for a son to marry his illegitimate sister.

The writer argued that religious scholars have focused their attention on what he considers to be trivial matters while avoiding important matters for the society. According to the article, the best thing these scholars can do is to issue fatwas on democratic reform, and find the religious proof that Islam is in favor of rights and freedoms not against them; in favor of individuals and communities at the same time; in favor of human rights and civil rights and freedoms.

Security continue to lie and manipulate a mother's feelings

On 5 September the website published a call made by the family of the kidnapped girl from Fayoum, Mona Yaaqoub, which they

directed to the president and human rights organizations, asking them to interfere to solve the crisis.

The case of Mona Yaaqoub

On 3 September the website introduced the case of "Coptic girls kidnapping" in an article. The article criticized the role of satellite TV channels "Al Mehwar" and "Dream" in what it considered to be "covering the kidnapping case" as they were afraid to lose the businessmen money who established those channels. The article argues that the reporter of Al Mehwar falsified information surrounding the incidents, neglecting the truth and published the message which the country wants to deliver.

Responding to what has been said to be Mona's will to leave her family and convert to Islam, the article defined "will" as the ability to act. It continued saying that all Egyptians do not have that ability to do what they want as the state's official media pushes the girl to convert to Islam.

The article gave some racial advices on raising children such as: "we should raise the awareness of our kids and clarify to them the differences between Christ's freedom and the dark danger waiting for them with the other religion".

The article urged the church to raise the awareness of young men. In what seems to be a clear disrespect, generalization, and hate speech, the article advises every Egyptian Christian not to allow anyone to say that any Coptic girl converted to Islam or ran away willingly, as there is no will to any Coptic girl to leave the light and go to darkness.

Converting girls to Islam between forcing, free will and the nullity of informal marriage

On 2 September the website published an article on what it describes as the phenomenon of Coptic girls' disappearance and then their appearance on satellite channels as informally married women to Muslim men. The article talked about the security systems' role and introduced the concepts of enforced disappearance according to the definition of the 1992 UN declaration and the International Agreement to Protect All People from Forced Disappearance. The writer applied the definitions to Coptic girls who disappeared and its legal effect on informal marriage contract.

Counselor Najib Jubraeil: It is necessary to send the file of Coptic girls' disappearance to human rights committees
Mona Alhoussini: it is nothing more than kidnapping for ransom

On 23 August the website introduced the opinion of Najib Jubraeil who thinks that the accidents of Coptic girls' disappearance in Egypt are within the context of a funded plan to breakdown national unity.

Women are being blackmailed

On 21 August the website published a reportage written by Maged Samir on women's work as police Agents. He considered poverty and oppression the main reasons for women to accept this kind of work.

The writer referred to the opinion of human rights organizations who believe that the role of a female police agent is not only in

robberies, prostitution, drugs and political accusations, but also they work at different ports. The writer concludes that despite of the bright slogans on equality between men and women, women are usually weak creatures who easily submit to blackmail, force and oppression. The reason here is that in many cases women are less educated, less able to earn enough money, physically weaker and need protection more than men.

Did Islam really honor women?

On 21 April Copts United published an article on women's rights and the relation between those rights and Quran. The writer argued that Islam gave women some of their rights during the period of the prophet, which was a revolution by all means during that age. Islam eliminated the habit of killing baby girls, gave women half the heritage and half the testimony. It could not do more at that time as it gave her all the rights the Arabic Bedouin community would have never accepted it. Now it is time to rethink about giving women all their rights.

The writer stated many Hadith (prophet sayings) and verses from the Quran that make women less than man and asked to eliminate those verses the same as the first Caliphate, Abu Bakr, did when he cancelled the share of weak believers in Zakat (the Islamic concept of tithing and alms). Also the second Caliphate, Omar Ibn Al Khattab, cancelled the right of warriors in the lands of countries they invade though there is a clear direct verse saying that they have that right. He considered all lands should go to the general financial administration telling the warriors that if they take all the land then there will be nothing left for those who come after them.

The writer finally asks Al-Azhar and other Muslim scholars to convene and frankly declare the deletion of specific verses for the sake of Muslims.

Refugees:

The website did not cover any stories related to the rights of refugees.

The sanctity of the private life

Copts United did not tackle the right to privacy.

4- Following Copts United coverage

The research team followed up on the material posted on the website of Copts United during the period of 21 April to 21 May 2007. During that period, it was found that human rights movement came as the website's first priority. In the second rank comes freedom to belief, then the right to protection from discrimination. Egypt was the focus of the website's coverage. The website focused mainly on covering human rights violations.

5- Conclusion

Copts united focuses on human rights violations committed against minorities, with a special focus on Egypt. The most covered violation by the website is enforced disappearance of Coptic women and their conversion to Islam. The website resembles other websites included in the study in its focus on civil and political rights, mainly political participation and freedom of expression. Above all it is interested in protection from enforced disappearance.

Revealing human rights violations perpetrated by the state against individuals or communities is the focus of the website's material. Again, the website focuses on violations in Egypt. As is the case in Islamonline.net and Elaph, Copts United focuses mainly and firstly on the rights of minorities and tolerance.

Copts United has a varying stance towards the world. In some cases it calls for taking advantage of the West to impose democratic reforms and bringing an end to discrimination. In other cases it concentrates on the religious and moral differences which separate it from the west, expressing a willingness to hold dialogue and coexistence between the Islamic countries and the west. The website took advantage of the Pope's statements to discuss the necessary reforms in the Muslim World with equality and non-discrimination as a foundation for reform.

The website showed more interest in the Bahais' cause than any of the other selected websites. The word Bahais was mentioned in 34 different articles. Copts United covered court cases before the decision of the high administrative court in Egypt was made and the reactions that followed the decision. Moreover, Copts United is the only website that held interviews with Bahais. It tackled the case from all its dimensions, showing that Bahais are Egyptian citizens who should enjoy the right to belief and full citizenship in Egypt.

The website was mainly interested in the situation of Christians in Egypt. It criticized Islam and considered that the roots of terrorism go back to the religion itself. While doing so, the website had adopted hate speech, thus contradicting itself as it uses the same

methods that itself criticizes. The adoption of this speech could be a result of the already hostile discourse against Christians in the Media.

The website dedicated a space to introduce the secular forces in Egypt either from the right wing or the left wing and called upon Egyptian Christians to participate in political affairs. It also saw that there is an advantage in international pressures against the Egyptian government to adopt and respect international standards of human rights.

Copts United showed interest in poor oppressed women, particular kidnapped Coptic girls. The incidents of disappearance of Coptic girls or their marriage to Muslims or converting to Islam had its influence on the website's treatment to women's issues. Generally, the website tackled the cause of women as an oppressed minority under an Islamic rule. It was focused on criticizing "Islam's violations" to women's rights and the denial of Christian women's right to choose.

The website published material that incited hatred and considered the Muslim Brotherhood as the symbol of all Muslims.

The website did not show interest in the rights of refugees or the right to privacy.

www.elaph.com

A- The significance of Elaph:

Elaph, launched in 2001, is one of the first Arabic-language electronic magazines. Based in London, today it commands one of the biggest audiences of any Arabic-language news site. Elaph's large, international readership makes it one of the most influential websites in the Arab world.

The website is owned by Elaph Holdings in the United Kingdom and Elaph Publishing House in Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with Int2sol in Saudi Arabia.

Elaph's CEO and editor-in-chief, Othman al-Omeir, insists that his site is impartial and does not have any political or partisan affiliation. Rather, he says, Elaph regards itself as "a window or a bridge connecting the Arab people with the world."

Reflecting on the difference between opinion and journalism, al-Omeir says he believes it is imperative to respect opinions, but that journalism is simply a civil service to meet readers' needs. It does not, he believes, necessarily imply sanctity, martyrdom, or opportunism.

B-Promotion and Services:

The website provides its visitors with many services:

- * A section on medical care, in cooperation with "IMAK"
- * A section on cars, in cooperation with "AMPA"
- * RSS feeds
- * An email newsletter

C- The Internal Search Engine: Elaph provides the reader with two choices for text search: a general search and a detailed search.

General search

Readers may search the archives of the site going back to April 2004, but results suggested that the engine was looking only at the titles of articles.

Detailed search

Readers may limit searches by date, author's name, or business name. When we conducted a detailed search, all the results were from after 14 August 2006, suggesting that the search engine was only indexing the previous five months. The results suggested that the search engine had also indexed the full text of the articles.

Google indexed many subjects that the internal search engine did not. Potentially telling examples included articles with such headlines as, "Pontiff enrages Saudi officials," and "Lost Bahai and lost pound."

D- The Organization of Elaph:

The website consists of several sections:

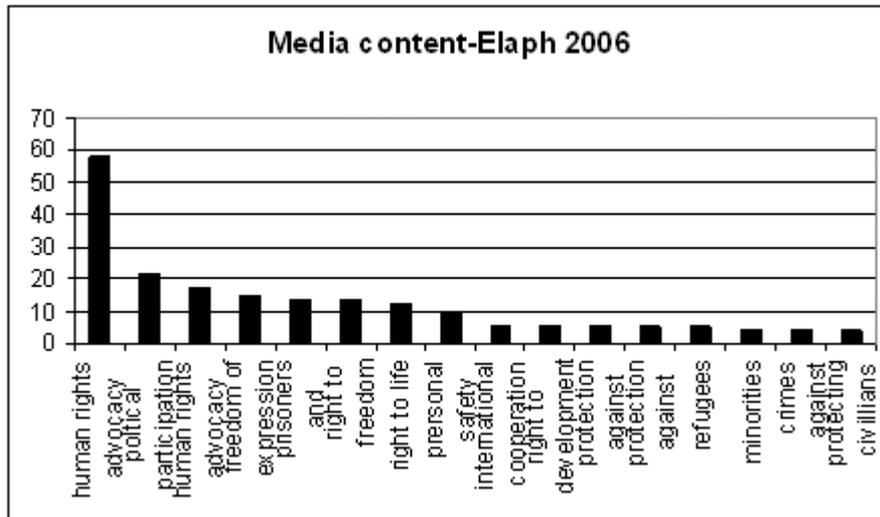
Politics, economics, culture, health, sport, music, Internet, and features. Elaph devotes significant space to its women and fashion section, which covers fashion, gossip, and high-resolution photography.

1. Human Rights in Elaph

A- Frequency:

The website publishes an average of 1.6 articles related to human rights per day. Searches of article titles only turned up 0.2 articles per day.

b- The relation between media content and human rights:

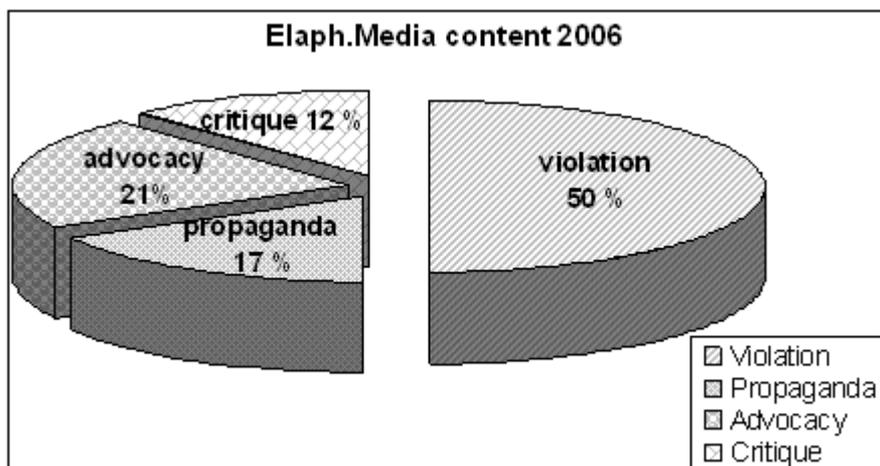


Elaph's coverage of human rights is focuses on such civil and political rights as human-rights activism, political activism, freedom of opinion and expression.

ii .Violence against women

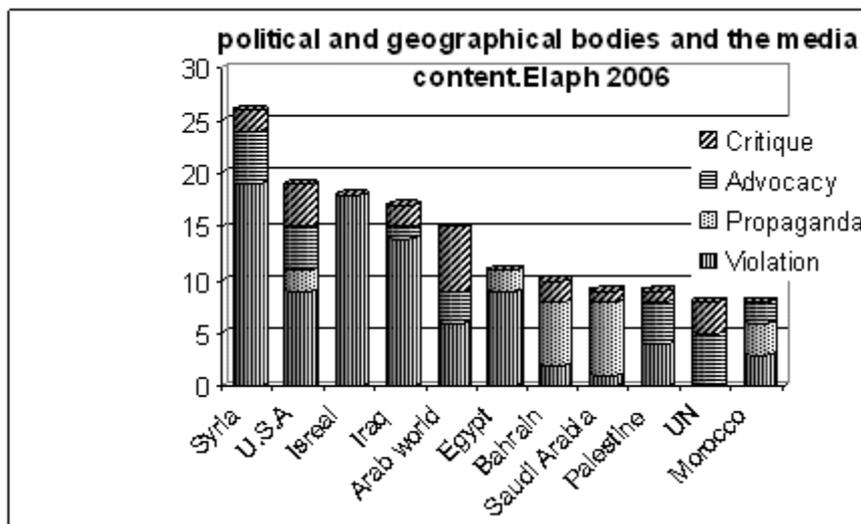
Elaph focused on this issue in the Gulf region through the activities of human rights organizations, often featuring glowing, almost propagandistic, articles on Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

c- Content



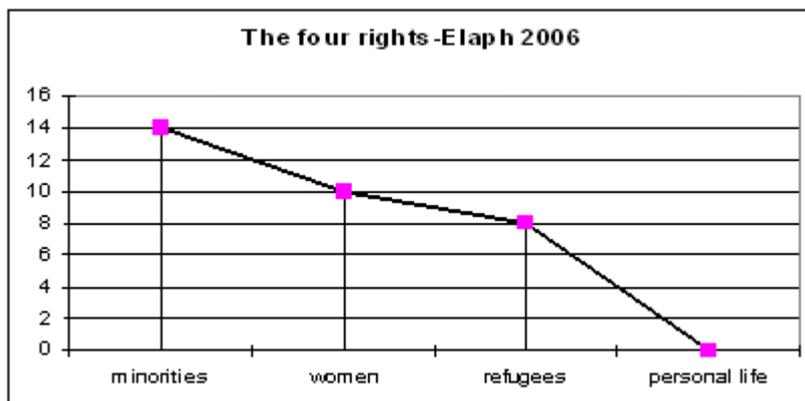
Elaph devoted most of its coverage of human rights to the abuses, but was not shy about condemning abuses, as the high percentage of critiques indicates.

d- Geographic and Political Breakdown of Content:



Elaph's coverage focused on countries known for human rights abuses, such as Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Israel, the United States, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain.

e- The "Four Rights:"



Elaph publishes more articles about minorities and tolerance of the Other than about any of the other four rights.

2- Analysis of Materials Related to the 'Four Rights'

1-Minorities and tolerance of the Other

The site published more articles on violations against minorities in Syria than on any other country in the Arab world. Here, Elaph relied heavily on reports from Syrian journalist and human rights activist Bahia Mardini.

Examples:

- * "Human rights organizations call for solidarity with Syrian Kurds"
- * "Arrests in Kamishly"
- * "Syria in 2006: Uneasy with Kurds"

On 23 December, Bahia Mardini reviewed Syrian Kurds' past year, including an exceptional census that stripped them of their official Kurdish identity and beatings and arrests of Kurds in Kameshly.

-"Extreme Tolerance"

On 18 September, Elaph quoted Ahmed Boghdady's article for the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Sayassa, in which he contrasted American society's "extreme tolerance," as evidenced by its heightened sensitivity to any hint of racism, with Arab society's racism and chauvinism, as evidenced by preachers calling non-Muslims "descendants of monkeys and swines" every Friday or referring to liberals as "infidel heretic seculars."

-The Danish Cartoons Controversy:

Elaph dealt with this issue through straight news coverage, sometimes pausing to explain the difference between freedom of expression and vilifying religions and the reaction of Muslim sheikhs. The country that received the most attention in this case

was Yemen and the trial of Kamal Alfi, editor of the independent newspaper al-Ra'i, for republishing the cartoons.

"Resentment After Jailing of Yemeni Editor"

On 25 November, Elaph reported that a Yemeni court had sentenced Alfi to a year in prison and closed his newspaper, one of the oldest in Yemen, for six months. The court further banned him from writing for six months following his release, and required him to pay for the verdict to be published in Yemen's main government newspaper.

On 1 July, the website covered an assault on lawyer and human rights activist Khaled Saleh at Alfi's trial, citing reports from the Yemen Observer.

"Pressures on Government to Free Three Journalists in Yemen."

On 13 February, Elaph published a statement from the Arab Organization for Press Freedom calling upon the Yemeni government to free Muhamed Asadi, the editor of the Yemen Observer, as well as Akram Sabra, editor of al-Horreya, and his assistant, Yehya Abed, and to stop arresting journalists for their professional activities.

Bahais

Elaph dealt with the Egyptian Bahais' court case from a human rights perspective and it was one of the two websites included in this study that was sympathetic to the Bahais.

"The Lost Bahai and the Lost Pound"

On 25 December, George Shoukry wrote a report about the Egyptian Bahais denouncing Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court's decision not to require the government to allow Bahais to

list their religion as “Bahai” on official documents as a violation of their rights as a minority.

The writer cast the court’s decision as another example of the hostile atmosphere toward minority rights in Egypt, alongside the Islamic Research Academy, and the Muslim Brotherhood’s gains in 2005 parliamentary elections. Shoukry called on the government to cease requiring Egyptians to fill in any religion on their passports or identification cards.

"Senior Egyptian Bahai: Verdict Was Based on al-Azhar Fatwa"

On 25 December Elaph quoted al-Masry al-Youm's report about the life of Amin Abu-Fatouh, a senior Egyptian Bahai.

The Controversy over the Pope's Speech

"Pope's Speech Correct. Why the Anger?"

On 16 September, Elaph published an essay by Khodeir Taher in which he criticized the angry reaction to the Pope's statement and said that the speech did not hurt his feelings. Muslims, he said, harbor views of their own faith and coreligionists that are far more critical than anything the Pope said. He asked “Why Muslims don’t react with the same anger when Muslims [in Darfur] suffer genocide at the hands of other Muslims or when Muslims kill other Muslims in Iraq? Why don't they condemn the killings and the sectarian crimes and protest against these barbaric acts committed by Muslims against Muslims, as they do in protesting against the Pope's speech?"

2-Women's Rights

Much of Elaph’s coverage of women focused on fashion and

entertainment news. The site prominently places starlets' photos to draw the reader's attention.

The story titled "What [Lebanese pop star] Haifa Said to Henry" drew more comments from readers than did any other article in May 2007, which indicates the nature of the readers.

The story speculated about what the pop star said to French national striker Thierry Henry while they sat next to each other at a farewell for al-Ahly's Walid Salah.

The preponderance of fashion and gossip stories does not mean that Elaph was wholly silent on women's rights. The site reported that women had taken high-ranking jobs, and reported on violence against women and women's right to political participation.

a. Women in leading positions:-

"Sheikha Hia Leads the UN Ship"

Elaph reports that Sheikha Hia is the first Arab woman to chair the UN General Assembly and is only the third woman to hold the post in 37 years. The report gave a brief biography about Sheikha Hia: her education, activities, her job as Bahrain's ambassador to a number of European countries, and her work as a permanent representative in UNESCO.

"Saudi Arabia Establishes Special Court for Domestic Violence"

On 18 November, Elaph quoted a Khaleej Times story indicating that the king of Saudi Arabia had issued a decree establishing special courts to work on issues like domestic violence. The article, citing Saudi human rights organizations, described the problem as one of the most persistent in the kingdom.

"Recommendation to Establish a Unit for Violence-Related Cases in Dubai"

On 27 December, journalist Baha Hamza reported the recommendations of a training course on violence against women and refugee children jointly organized by the Dubai Police Department's Administration for Human Rights and the UNHCR.

The training course focused on forms of violence against women and refugee children, as if this kind of violence were unfamiliar to the Emirates. The news report tried to improve the Emirate's image by emphasizing the Dubai Police Department's cooperation with local and international organizations such as the UNHCR.

The right to fair working conditions

"Angry Nurses Strike in Riyadh"

On 12 December, Elaph published a report from Samya el-Masry on working conditions striking Indian nurses endure in "Nafy Aam," near Riyadh. The nurses were protesting violations of their contracts. Her story covered all parties' positions, and noted that the government had resolved to stop dealing with the company that had brought the nurses' from India because of "its repeated failure in providing appropriate services to the hospital."

3- Refugees

"Why Did Human Rights Advocates Ignore the Massacre of the Sudanese Refugees?"

On 29 January Kazim Mukdady criticized human rights organizations for ignoring the "massacre" of Sudanese refugees in Cairo. Mukdady contrasted human rights organizations' "fabricated" concerns about detainees such as Saddam Hussein

and Barzan Takriti with their "weird, suspicious reaction to the massacre of the Sudanese refugees in Cairo."

The report also accused the UNHCR of collusion for ignoring the devastating problems the refugees face and blamed the Egyptian government for the "massacre."

"Calls to Stop Massacres Against Palestinian Refugees in Iraq"

On 15 and 31 December, Elaph covered the methodical killing of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, relying on pleas from human rights organizations and international bodies to protect Palestinian refugees in Iraq.

"Jordan Asked Not to Expel Khaznawey"

On 19 November, human rights activist Bahya Mardini contributed an article to Elpah asking Jordanian authorities to listen to the Syrian Yektey Kurdish Party's request to the Jordanian government that it not extradite Sheikh Khaznawey.

"The 'Third Axis' Calls for Protecting Syrian Refugees in Iraq"

On 12 October, Elaph discussed the conditions of more than 200 hundred families of political refugees in Iraq forced to live in horrible conditions "because of their opposition to a fascist regime."

The "third axis" is a liberal, secular group established by opposition figures and intellectuals in the United States including Abd al-Latif Mounir, Marah Bekai, and the Syrian Organization for Human Rights. It had recently called upon the UN secretary general and relevant international organizations to provide the Syrian refugees asylum in a third country.

"Activist's Asylum in London Makes Bahrain Uneasy"

On 29 August, Muhand Solyman criticized Britain for providing asylum to Bahraini activist Abd al-Raouf Shayb on the grounds that the activist is wanted on a criminal case, not a political one. Britain's offer, the author said, constituted an unwarranted intervention in Bahrain's internal affairs.

4. The Right to Privacy

Privacy of the Home

Like other sites we surveyed, Elaph showed interest in the right to a private life over the course of 2006.

Defamation

The covered the topic of defamation without elaborating on its position within international human rights treaties and conventions.

"Michael Moore and Pain Manipulation"

On 4 June Elaph reproduced an essay by Serdar Abdallah from Baghdad's al-Itihad criticizing Michael Moore's movie Fahrenheit 911 for manipulating interview footage of a former US soldier without his permission.

Homosexuals

The website covered news relating to homosexuality throughout the year. It did not make overt reference to human rights in its reports, nor did it refer to homosexuality as a problem imported from the West. Elaph paused to explain that homosexuality crosses cultural and religious boundaries and to explain the difference between sex and gender.

"Rania Barood to Elaph: I Am Not Lesbian... But!!!"

On 9 Elaph reporter May Mai Elias interviewed with Rania Barood,

the producer of the TV program "The Answer in Your Hand," after it aired a controversial and frank segment on society's attitudes toward homosexuality.

"Homosexuals in Lebanon"

An 18 May report by Nasreen Ezz-Addin looked at the gay and lesbian community in Lebanon and found that "the situation in Lebanon is in some ways different than in the rest of Arab societies. Though homosexuality is illegal in Lebanon, homosexuals there are more integrated into Lebanese society than elsewhere in the region. "

The report also talked about the international day of terrorism against homosexuals on 17 May—the seventeenth anniversary of the date the World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.

"The History of Homosexuality"

Khalid Montasser, on 17 October, published an eight-chapter history of homosexuality. He defined of homosexuality and homosexuals, and looked at the reaction of religions and societies to homosexuality over the ages to shed light on the revolution of gays in the modern age. He also posited motives for homosexuality and included a guide to detecting it, but in general, Montasser's treatment of homosexuality was honest and impartial. Interestingly, he also talked about the issue of homosexuality in American electoral politics.

3. Follow-up with Elaph

Monitoring Elaph from 21 April to 21 May 2007, our researchers found that its content has not changed considerably since 2006.

The frequency of its reporting on human rights in general remained the same, as did the proportion of stories that reported human-rights violations (most common), promoted human rights (second-most-common), and offered overt criticisms of human-rights abuses (least common). Elaph intensively covered human-rights issues perpetrated by the United States, Syria, and Iran.

Regarding the “four rights,” an analysis of the frequency of Elaph’s reports suggested its priorities were, in declining order of frequency: freedom of expression, the right to life, human rights and fair trials.

None of Elaph's staff attended the April 2007 workshop to discuss the preliminary results of the study, though a staff member, Nabil Sharaf, initially indicated he would come. In the end, Sharaf did not attend and offered no apology.

4. Summary

Researchers searching for “human rights” on Elaph found an average of 1.6 stories per day when using the full-text search option. Searching headlines only, that average fell to 0.2 stories per day. The website focused mainly on human-rights violations in Egypt, Iraq, and the United States. Israel and Syria also figured in Elaph’s human-rights coverage, though to a lesser degree. Elaph also published propagandistic stories on Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Bahrain. Elaph’s coverage of Syrian Kurds propelled its coverage of minority-rights in the Arab world ahead of the other sites surveyed in this study.

Elaph devoted news coverage to the Danish-cartoon controversy and ran essays expounding on the difference between freedom of expression and the vilification of religion. It offered extensive coverage of the trial of al-Ra'i's editor for republishing the cartoons in Yemen.

Elaph covered the issue of Egyptian Bahais from various perspectives, and was one of two sites studied that seemed sympathetic to their plight.

Of the sites surveyed, Elaph was the most outspoken when discussing the controversy following the Pope's speech. It published opinion pieces denouncing angry reactions from the region as unwarranted and misplaced.

Elaph's coverage of women focused on fashion and bold photos of movie stars. The site seemed to dance on a thin line between sensationalism and open-mindedness by publishing provocative photos.

Elaph covered violence against women in the Gulf region through the activities of local human-rights organizations. In the cases of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, this coverage often took a propagandistic and congratulatory tone.

For reasons that remain unclear, Elaph devoted the least amount of attention to the right to privacy among the "four rights."

During May 2007, two stories drew a storm of reader response. One was a gossip item titled "What Did Haifa Tell Henry?"

www.middle-east-online.com

Overview:

Importance:

Middle East Online is considered one of the largest news websites in the Arab World. According to the Director of the website, Mohamed Sanagha, the number of its visitors is an average of 275 thousands/day . The website is produced from London. It includes many sections, as follows:

1 - Homepage

2 - Arab Gates: There are 21 gates for Arab countries. Each gate includes the most important information about each country.

3- International news: including political and economic news, funny news, and the latest studies and researches around the world.

4- Opinions: includes a group articles written by well known writers.

5- Economy: covers economic issues around the world.

6- Technology: This section covers research and news related to the Internet. It also tackles challenges to freedom of expression on the Internet.

7- Reportages: This is one of the most important sections. It covers a variation of issues and includes many human rights related reports. The section is mainly interested in issues related to women's rights, freedom of expression, the rich-poor gap,

violence, religious freedom, and rights of people with special needs.

8- Life: tackles similar issues as those tackled in the Reportages section.

9- Culture: this section covers cultural issues, including freedom of electronic publishing.

10- Arts: covers cinema, theater and arts.

11- Literature: it includes numerous literature subjects including articles and novels, advertisements on latest books, and some poetry.

12- Tourism: includes reviews of many tourist sites inside and outside the Arab region and tourism companies' news.

13- Education: this section concentrates on calls for developing educational curricula, and covers students' news.

14- Sport: Arabic sport news particularly football.

15- Environment: including news and studies about environment, pollution, methods of protecting the environment, and issues related to the right to a clean environment.

16- Sciences: Covers scientific issues, including new technologies, environment, space, and the human.

17- Health: Concentrates on combating poverty, diseases, and calls for the protection of the environment.

18 - Cars: Car races mainly.

19- Letters to the Editor: this section involves news, analytical articles about the future of political reform in the Arab world, concentrating on regional democratic issues. The majority of the letters are attributed to well known writers. Public participation is focused on complaints and demands for the release of hostages and detainees, especially in Iraq.

20- Links: Links of the most important Arabic and foreign newspapers, whether daily, weekly, or monthly. This section also includes links to most important search engines and music websites.

Promotional Tools:

The website depends on the multiple interests in issues, written content, and images.

The search engine on middle-east-online.com:

There are many tools of search on the website. These include direct access to the different sections and the search engine. For the search engine, there are two ways of searching:

a- General search: it finds the keyword in the published subjects' headlines.

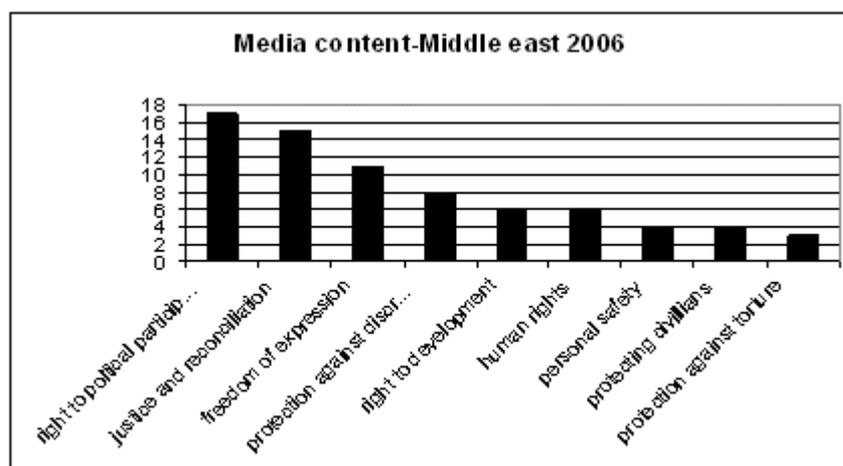
b- Advanced search: the reader can concentrate the search on certain parts within the text or within the main subjects existing on the website. A keyword can be searched in the headline, introduction of the body, the body of the text, or in the captions of images posted. The search can also be by writer. The reader can also determine the time period for the search.

Human rights on Middle East Online:

Publishing rates:

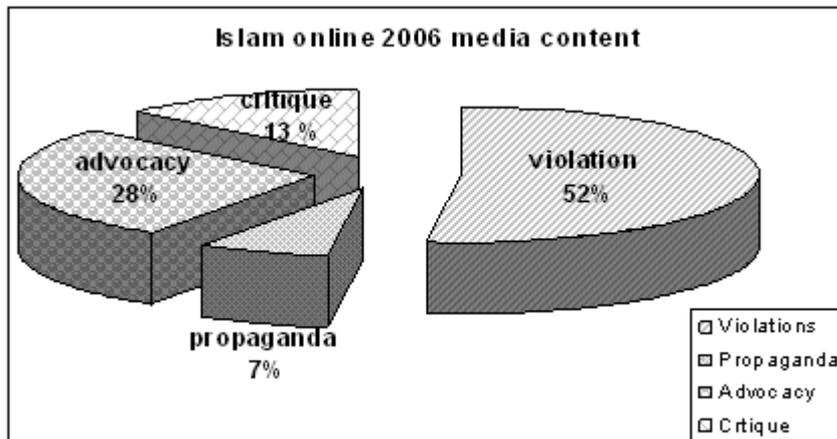
On average the website publishes one human rights related story every 3 days. This result is found through doing a search on subject, which gives a good indicator on the strong correlation between the text and human rights. When searching through headlines, the average falls to one story every 30 days or more.

Human rights issues tackled:



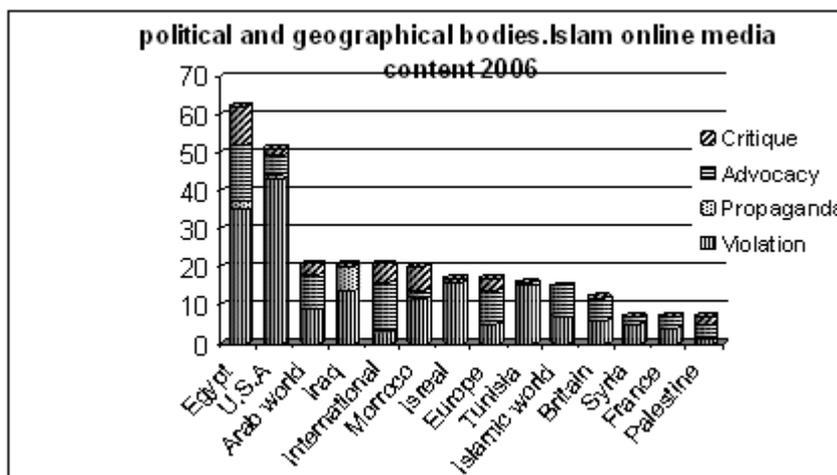
Most human rights related stories focused on political participation, human rights movement activities, freedom of expression. This reflects a more oriented political interest in human rights and those with higher voices.

Content coverage:



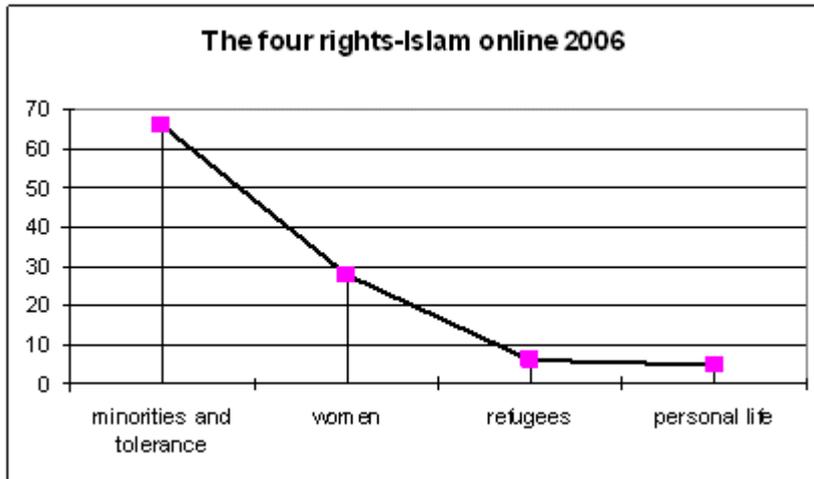
While the website focuses on covering human rights violations, it has content that could be understood as promotional material for specific countries. Some content also can be considered criticism of the concepts of human rights.

Political and Geographical Scopes:



It seems that the website had given more prominence to Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya, with material that could be understood as propaganda. At the same time, the website focused on human rights violations in Algeria, Egypt, and the US.

The four rights:



The news material on the website has a similar pattern to that of alarabiya.net. Women's rights issues came first, then the right of minorities and refugees, with the sanctity of private life coming at the end of the list.

Analysis of news content

Human rights:

Middle East Online is the only website out of all websites in this study that has criticized the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), an international organization that has served humanity during times of peace and war. The website did not only criticize the international organization but also had content that was full of accusation and insult.

Examples:

The collusive red cross

The website posted an article written by Ali Al-Sarraf on 27 May. In this article the writer described the Red Cross as an international organization that aims at concealing crimes and violations.

Al-Sarraf accused the international organization of double standards, and said that it only interferes when violations are committed by third world officials, while giving a blind eye to violations committed by the US. For the writer, the ICRC is a pretentious organization that serves the interest of great powers.

The writer called for the organization to be dismantled and banned from continuing its activities as long as it works in partnership with those who commit crimes against humanity.

Fables and Lies: The Universal Declaration for Human Rights

The website published on 11 December an article written by Dr. Khalil Hussein in which he criticized the Universal Declaration for Human Rights. He said that the birth of the UDHR was wrong as there were double standards to standards. In 1948, when the Universal Declaration for Human Rights was conceived, colonization was still rampant and the declaration did not refer to the nations and people under occupation.

According to Dr. Hussein, the declaration is a tool used by the powers in a unipolar world to impose force, achieve their interests, and justify interference into other countries' internal affairs.

For the writer, human rights is a power tool used against a number of country. For example, human rights issues are raised during north-south dialogues or during bilateral or multilateral relations by the strong party as it sees fit. The article also considered the UN Decision on 15 March 2006 to establish the International Council for Human Rights a defeat to the US.

The great democracy deception: the gulf region as an example
The website published an article on 19 September written by Mohanad Habib Al- Samawy in which he discusses democracy as neither being a universal necessity, a historical determinant, nor a universal necessity. Democracy is marketed by the US using fake symbols and statements through media targeting the world, particularly the Arab World.

The writer finds in Gulf countries, such as Qatar, Bahrain and the Emirates (UAE), an environment invalid for democracy as the only political option. He claims that the citizen in these countries does not think of democracy or demand elections and they don't attempt to form political parties. This is because, the writer continues, in the Gulf, people simply live in welfare, with a better living standard than their European counterparts, where all their daily requirements and needs are made available and achieved and where there is no human rights violations perpetrated by their governments.

The article sees that democracy is demanded when people live under very difficult circumstances with living standard falling. The writer sees that if governments raised living standards and services for its citizens and distributed wealth fairly the people won't demand democracy, thus the concept would be lacking a core to it.

Come and investigate: The Gaddafi Development Foundation investigates the Abu Saleem prison incidents

On 13 October Middle East Online posted a news story on prisoners' protest in the Libyan Abu Saleem prison. One of the

prisoners died. The news story focuses on the statement made by the Gaddafi Development Foundation regarding the incident. The foundation invited international human rights organizations to visit Libya to investigate the incident and monitor prisons' conditions, confirming that they are within international standards.

The statement, as published by the website, explained the background behind the protests by prisoners who were against a judge's decision to postpone a trial following a request made by their lawyers. The statement described the prison conditions as excellent, where prisoners enjoy good living conditions, good treatment, many visitations with an ability to contact the outside world easily. The statement used the prisoners' ability to contact media and satellite channels to say what happened to them as evidence of the good conditions they live in. The statement saw the organizers of the protest as irresponsible elements seeking to incite disturbance and chaos, harming other prisoners' interests.

The four human rights

Women's Rights:

Middle East Online is interested in women's right, which occupied the first rank among the four rights referred to in this study. The International Woman's Day was an opportunity for the website to discuss women's social and economic participation in Yemen.

Examples of articles posted include:

Yemeni women facing the trilogy of marginalization, illiteracy and social injustice

Ahmed Ghorab wrote a report from Sana'a on 9 March, in which he confirmed that Yemeni women suffer the trilogy of marginalization, illiteracy and social injustice. He argued that, though most Yemeni laws are based on gender equity, many social powers use wrong interpretations of religion to justify and consolidate discrimination and violence against women. In many cases the society neglects clearly stated religious orders in Quran favoring women's rights. Instead they follow old inherited traditions. The writer says, discrimination against women is not questionable as it is not considered a crime, but an acceptable attitude necessary to prepare females for their future role. According to traditions this role makes men always the guardians of women regardless of her position in the family or her age.

Ghorab used statistics clarifying woman's low participation in decision making positions, stressing the big difference between the large number of female voters and the number of female candidates.

In his report, Ghorab stated that the number of Yemeni voters increased from 500 thousands during the 1993 elections to 1.5 million in 1997, and then reached 3.5 million in 2003. On the other hand the number of candidates decreased from 52 women in 1993 to less than the half in 1997 and reached only 11 female candidates in the 2003 elections. The writer finds that men in Yemen are in need for the votes of women without having them to be a competitive equivalent.

Arab women discuss in Washington woman's conditions in the Arab World

A report published on the website covered a conference held in Washington discussing Arab women's conditions. The website chose a headline that brings together contradictions and raises doubt in the mind of the Arabic reader. This is especially the case after reading the subtitle, An American institution close to the Bush Administration organizes a conference on Arab women sufferings and calling for their liberation. It seems by this wording that the website was drawing a mental picture, using the unpopularity of the Bush Administration in the Arab World, unfavorable of the conference's participants and goals.

The Sudanese feminist Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim receives the Ibn Rushd Award

On 17 October the website posted a news story on the award given to the Sudanese women's activist, Fatma Ahmed Ibrahim, by the Ibn Rushd Fund for Freedom of Thought for her long struggle against injustice and her position supporting the casuse of Arab women. The website introduced Ibrahim and her struggle during occupation. Her name became a symbol of the struggle of Sudanese women against military oppressive governments.

The Tunisian woman: half a century of accomplishments

In an article, that could be considered a propaganda tool for the Tunisian regime, women conditions in Tunisia was praised. On 14 August the website posted an article written by Jamal Al-Sharif commemorating the anniversary of the Tunisian personal status law in Tunisia. The writer argues that the law is in harmony with international human rights law. He also adds that president Zayn El-Abedin Bin Ali pledged that there will be "no turning back" for Tunisian women's rights and accomplishments that have been

taking place since 1987, pledging that there will be more accomplishments. The article confirms that the era of Bin Ali will witness more gains for women as is clear in the amendments of the personal status law on 12 July 1993.

The Tunisian modernization project begins with woman
The article of Mohammed Bou Sneina published on 24 April enumerated the number of Tunisian NGOs, which is about 8600 inside Tunisia and 500 outside the country. In addition, the writer states that Tunisia has 9 political parties. According to the writer, this shows how the Tunisian civil society is one of the most vibrant civil societies in the region, especially during the era of president Bin Ali. The writer states that there are around 200 NGOs headed by women. He adds that NGOs are really important in the political electoral program of the president during the 2004 presidential elections.

The president had also marked the 23rd of April of every year as the National Day for NGOs. He was keen, as the writer describes, since 7 November 1987 to empower women enriching their transformation from complete equality to active participation in the political life and development. This plan comes after the president had worked for a long time on reinforcing women's basic rights and enriching her gains. The writer also said that Bin Ali believes that women's rights cannot be separated from the complete cosmos of human rights, and that the democratic structure cannot be completed without the successful participation of women.

Man is the problem, woman is the solution

In the occasion of the issuing of the 2006 Human Development Report, the website posted an article by Ali Al-Sarraf on 18

December. The writer argues that because man wants to remain in power, he claims superiority over women in the name of religion and thus forces this concept as rejection of it would mean lack of faith and blasphemy. The writer blames dogmatic Islamic scholars for the delay in the emancipation of women.

Reviewing the Human Development Report, Al-Sarraf asserted that Islamic moderate movements witnessed developments in their vision of women in the past five decades by respecting human rights and supporting democracy. The majority of those movements also witnessed development in the enlightened leaders among the younger generations.

At the end of his article the writer concluded that for modernization to be achieved, women have to be liberated. For him, if male domination is the problem, then we have to achieve gender equity and the liberation of women.

Syrian Women Observatory: A website monitoring Syrian Social issues.

On 15 December, the website introduced one of the Syrian NGOs working on women's rights. It introduced the Syrian Women Observatory and its website considering it one of the most important websites covering the Syrian society in general. It is also a platform for all women's rights activists and those working on the rights of people with special needs.

Quarter of Syrian women suffer domestic violence

In a report on violence against women in Syria posted on Middle East Online on 13 April, Hassan Soleiman showed that most

women in Syria who suffer from domestic violence are married. He adds that 70% of violence against women are perpetrated by husbands and fathers. In most cases, men have used violence because women have resorted to unrespectable language or have neglected their domestic duties. Because women are afraid of their family and because they have an urge to maintain family stability, they are usually silent about the abuse they suffer, particularly that the Syrian society thinks that women are shameful if they complain from their husbands. At the same time, Syria has taken great steps towards women's rights. Recently, Dr. Najah Al-Attar has been appointed as the first female vice president in Syria.

The report adds that half of homicides in Syria are committed against women in the name of honor. The writer mentions how Syrian law allows for lightened sentences against men involved in honor crimes.

Minorities and tolerance:

- The Danish Cartoons

Regarding interfaith coalition

In an article written by Dr. Gamal Eddin Benhayoun published on the website on 20 March, the writer introduced his position from the second international Imams and Rabbis conference for peace", which was held in Spain. The writer sees such a conference emphasizes the importance of religion as a tool for peace and dialogue not a cause for violence and hatred as was the case for centuries when religion was used to encourage wars and hatred"

The offending cartoons: conflict of civilizations or mismanagement of the crisis?

Adam Erkik wrote from Ireland on 8 March an article on the

reactions to the Danish cartoon. According to Erkik, the media promoted the cartoons and gave larger importance to what they really are. He found reactions to the cartoons as emotional, reducing Islam to mere symbols, while neglecting other important issues such as liberties. The writer asks when will Muslims start respecting their own religion and principles of Islam, such as democracy, liberties, human rights?

The culture of stupidity when insulting the prophets

On 8 February Massoud Ako wrote in an article that the cartoons did not offend Islam as much as it insulted callers of freedom, democracy and human rights. On the other hand, the writer asserted that burning embassies was not the appropriate response.

Islamophobia: analytical reading

On 11 October Middle East Online posted a research paper written by Khaled Soleiman in which he analyzed fear of Islam. For the writer, Islamophobia is both an old and new phenomenon. It is as old as the religion itself and was revived again following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 by Al Qaeda

The writer put forward some recommendations to deal with this phenomenon that if not dealt with could result in intolerance. The writer was not only concerned that intolerance would exist on the level of Islamic - Western relations but also that the Muslim world would witness the disappearance of tolerance and coexistence.

The writer concludes that there is a Zionist conspiracy to distort Islam and Muslims in western media. He also concluded that the

western countries evoke disturbances among Muslims and question the message of Islam to weaken the faith of Muslims.

- People without nationalities (Bedoun):

Bedoun (without nationality) in the Emirates:

The writer Mohammed Ali published an article on 28 December tackling the issue of Bedoun (people without nationality). The article was previously published on alarabiya.net. HRinfo's research team had found that there were several articles published on different websites at the same time. Regarding the mentioned article, Middle East Online commented on the article saying that UAE is on its way to end the problem of Bedoun in a manner that is much more positive than other Gulf countries who also suffer from similar problems.

- Christians

The Copts and the political rise of the Muslim Brotherhood

On 25 February the website posted a book review of a book titled "The Copts and the political rise of the Muslim Brotherhood" published by the Swasiya Center for Human Rights known of its affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The book contained a debate on the position of the Muslim Brotherhood towards Copts. The book stated that throughout its history the Muslim Brotherhood treated Copts tolerantly and recognized Copts citizenship even under the Islamic rule.

- Bahaists

Egypt: Bahaists in the cross wind

On 26 July the website published a book review of a book titled "Bahaism: Doctrine and Colonial Goals". The book calls upon Egyptian officials to stand against Bahaists' atheism and eliminate them. Bahaists in Haifa believe in peace despite the woes of wars. In a report posted on 20 July written by Michaela Cancela-Kieffer, a writer from Haifa in Israel, while the war between Hezbollah and Israel was going on. The website commented on the report, saying that Haifa is the most sacred place for Bahaists who believe that all Prophets are messengers of peace and who call for the unity of all religions

- Shiites

The website is generally interested in minorities' issues, with a special focus on Shiites. It dedicated a large space studying the relationship between Shiites and different Arab governments, especially in Egypt and the Gulf. The website introduced to its visitors numbers and statistics of Shiites and their history and the main forms of discrimination against them. It also mentioned the major political reasons behind current actions taken by governments in the region, especially in the Gulf, to manipulate the demographics. On the topic of Shiites, the website had the most important Saudi writer on sectarian issues in the region, Ali Al-Girash.

Towards a unique relation between Shiites and Gulf regimes
Ali Al-Girash's study posted on the website on 1 May dealt with the relation between Shiites and Gulf regimes. The study monitored factors of variation in the Shiite situation from one country to another in the Gulf region despite the social, cultural and political

similarity. These factors include the governmental ideological and political orientation, the constitutional system, the power and influence of religious scholars on authority, the size and power of the Shiite community, and foreign relations. The study also included a historical survey of the different phases in history with regards to the relation between Shiites and governments in the Gulf. The writer used Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait as case studies for his research.

Al-Girash argued that one of the most obvious reasons for sectarian discrimination against the Shiites in the Gulf region is the absence of fair constitutions based on equality and freedom with regards to practicing religious rituals. Another reason is the insistence of fundamentalists on questioning the national loyalty of Shiites with no appropriate punishment for those fundamentalists. At the same time, Shiites are deprived of senior positions. Also, they are not justly represented in the parliament reflecting their true presence in the community. Al-Girash also saw that Saudi Arabia plays a role in this discrimination as there is a coalition between the regime and the Wahabi school, which claims that the doctrine and thoughts of Shiites are against Islam.

As for the Shiites in Bahrain, the writer considered them the beating heart of Shiites in the Gulf area. He discussed the deprivation of the Shiite majority from voting on the national charter after king Hamad bin Eissa came to power. He also stated how the current government is trying to use the king's authorities in the constitution to change the demographics of Bahrain so as to have Shiites equal or less, in terms of number, than other sects in Bahrain. This is being done by giving the nationality to huge

numbers of non Bahrainis and hiring them in important sectors especially the army and security forces.

As for Kuwait, Al-Girash sees it as the best Gulf country with regards to the treatment of Shiites. There is a clear constitution that guarantees equality between all citizens. Kuwait also has a long experience in democracy and the Shiites there have good relations with the ruling family.

Excuse us Mr President, questioning the loyalty of Shiites is sectarianism itself

Responding to the statement of Egyptian President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak in which he said that Arab Shiites were loyal to Iran, Al-Girash wrote on 14 April an article. In the article, he described Mubarak's statement as sectarianism itself encouraging division and civil war not only in Iraq but in all the countries with multiple sects.

Al-Girash also asked the Egyptian President: are the Shiites responsible for dividing Arab countries into tiny, weak, fragile states instead of unifying them? He also asks: Did the Shiites ever fail to defend their homelands?

- Refugees:

Besides, the traditional issues of refugees in Palestine and Iraq, the website dealt with the refugees' conditions in Europe, whose numbers increased as a result of worsening conditions in Africa and the Middle East, while the US made it more difficult for refugees to enter its lands. In addition, Middle East Online gave attention to the conditions refugees are going through while travel to Europe, and those trapped on borders, particularly the

Moroccan borders, a popular passage to Europe. The website gave attention to the dangers and the sufferings that often lead to death of those trying to reach Europe.

On the other hand, the incident of the Sudanese refugees in Mustafa Mahmoud Square in Cairo did not have the same attention.

The Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue: realities and prospects

On 22 February Haitham Abu El-Ghezlan wrote on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. The writer explained the development of the issue since 1948 when around 150 thousand Palestinian refugees moved to Lebanon. At that time, the Lebanese government treated the situation as temporary, providing temporary aid. The writer also described how the situation developed through time.

The article monitored violations of the Palestinian refugees' rights. According to the writer, refugees in Lebanon suffer and face many kinds of restraints on their freedom. Discrimination against Palestinians is evident in Lebanese laws, especially when compared to the treatment of other non-citizens, and clearly with regards to the right to possession and inheritance of assets.

Palestinians in Lebanon have similar concerns to Lebanese citizens, from obtaining the Lebanese nationality to the disarmament of refugee camps in accordance to UN SC Resolution 1559.

Morocco: The land of scattered dreams

A report published on 20 July, on the occasion of the African-European conference, tackled the conditions of refugees on the

Moroccan borders where Illegal migrants are being arrested with their UNHCR documents confiscated and destroyed before returning them to the Algerian borders.

This is in violation of Moroccan law which states that no person should be deported unless to three countries: 1) Homeland in the case that the refugee application was rejected; 2) the country that issued the deportee's passport; and 3) any other country that allows the deportee to enter their lands legally.

In this case, Algeria does not stand as one of the three options stipulated in the laws, which clearly insinuates that Moroccan authorities have violated the law.

Iraqi refugees are mass migrating to Europe, particularly Sweden
On 22 December an investigation by Sofi Mongalfi tackled the increase in refugees in Europe. According to the report, Iraqi refugees constitute the majority of the 40 nationalities seeking asylum in Europe. This is of course due to the deteriorating security situation in Iraq.

The greater portion of Iraqi refugees head to Sweden because it is the most European country open for immigration, and because it is considered a humanitarian and secure country that respects human rights. The writer adds that most refugees in Sweden have already had family links that have migrated during the 1990s migration wave.

The website chose the subtitle "Europe is paying the price for America's invasion of Iraq" to describe this influx.

Refugees are terrorists according to American laws

On 28 September, the website published a report on refugees in

the US, in which Middle East Online considered Washington rejection to grant asylum to thousands in danger because of their stance against their rulers in the fight for freedoms.

The US received 41,500 refugees in 2006, a much greater number than the number of asylum seekers following 9/11, which was than 30 thousands throughout the period of two years.

Sanctity of private life:

The research team did not notice that the website is interested in the right to privacy. However, there were some subjects which were indirectly related to this issue.

Espionage:

The digital revolution is also a revolution in terrorism and criminality

The website published a report on 16 March covering an international conference held under the guardianship of the International Telecommunication Union in Doha, Qatar. The report referred to the abuse of internet, as the technology facilitates all types of violations, including robbery, sabotage of information centers, and artificial espionage. A French expert participated in the conference and recommended at the end of the report to end free e-mail services and imposition of strict monitoring of Internet use.

Washington spies on international financial institutions

The website posted on 23 June a piece of news on the confession made by the US Secretary of Treasury of spying on financial institutions claiming that this is necessary to combat terrorism. The

website treatment of this story was almost a call for the US to spy on banking transactions.

A follow up:

The research team followed up on Middle East Online during the period 21 April - 21 May 2007 - after the workshop HRinfo held to discuss the primary results of the study, in which Mohamed Sanagha, the director of the website, participated, was convened - it was found that the media content of the website concentrated the human rights movement, the right to political participation, in addition to freedom of expression, and protection from discrimination.

The website continued to give the same attention to the countries mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. However, coverage on Egypt, the US, and Libya improved. Tunisia still occupied the first rank among the website's interests.

During this month, the website's contents concentrated on human rights violations. However, it still acted as a propaganda tool for some countries. In general, the promotion of human rights preceded criticism of right concepts.

Conclusion:

On average, the website posts one human rights related piece every three days, when using a search for subject (an indicator considered more accurate as the relation of the material with human rights is clearer) The rate falls to one human rights related story over a period of 30 days when searching through headlines.

Most content material focused on the right to political participation and the human rights movement's activities, in addition to freedom of expression. This reflects the website's interest in civil and political rights and focus on groups who have a louder voice. The website concentrates on human rights violations. At the same time, however, it is distinguished in terms of providing propaganda for some countries' practices and its criticism of the concept of human rights.

Also, the content reflected a priority to women's rights related issues over the rights of refugees and minorities. Similar to the other websites, Middle East Online gives the right to privacy the least attention.

Middle East Online is the only website among others that criticized an international organization with a long history in serving humanity during times of peace and war, namely the ICRC.

The website depends mainly on studies and articles in publishing its media messages. Women's rights occupied the first rank among the four rights included in the study and the celebration of the International Day for Women was a chance for the website to discuss political and social participation of women.

In general, the website connects women's rights to poverty, ignorance and harmful social customs. Yemen and Syria occupied the first rank in violating women's rights. The website discussed violence against women, circumcision, and racial discrimination against women. It also tackled weak political participation and political abuse of women along with the absence of laws to protect

women. The website's message was in appreciation of the role of women. Women's rights in Tunisia gave opportunity for the website to use as propaganda for the country.

The website is interested in rights of minorities, particularly the right of Shiites. It dedicated a large space to study the relationship between Shiites and different governments in the Arab World, especially in Egypt and the Gulf region. The website provided numbers and statistics of Shiites and their history and the main forms of discrimination against them. It also mentioned the major political reasons for current relations and the procedures taken by governments in the region to manipulate the demographic formula especially in the Gulf. The website hired the Saudi writer Ali Al-Girash who is one of the most prominent writers on the issues of sectarianism in the region.

The website dealt with issues related to refugees, with a conventional focus on Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. However, the website added a new dimension to refugees' problems by focusing also on Europe and the US, as the number of refugees in the west increase due to the deterioration in Africa and the Middle East. It mentioned how the US puts obstacles to restrict refugees from entering American territories. It also highlighted the situation of asylum seekers trying to reach Europe via Morocco and the suffering they face, which on several occasions has lead to deaths.

However, the Sudanese refugees' crisis in Mustafa Mahmoud square in Cairo did not receive the same attention.

Finally, the website did not give any attention to the right to privacy.

Arabic Network News "Moheet": <http://moheet.com>

1- Moheet, a general preview:

A - The importance of the Moheet website:

Moheet is considered among the best online-only source of news. Other sites in its class, such as Al-Jazeera's or Al-Ahram's are associated with a major media outlet. Moheet is unique among its peers in that it is available only online, but delivers news reports of a quality comparable to its better-endowed competitors at Al-Jazeera or Al-Ahram.

Moheet has an excellent reputation because it is considered genuinely independent, a reputation that has helped it thrive since 1997. The website is a part of a network directed by "Arabia Inform" in cooperation with the United Programming Company.

The site is organized geographically, with each Arab country represented. Within each country, articles are further organized topically under headings such as politics, economics, sports, and so on.

Additionally, users may choose to browse articles cutting across geographic borders, organized by themes, including, recently, literature and culture.

News services include:

1. News from each Arabic country and Diaspora communities.
2. Politics, including special sections on:
 - a. Palestine
 - b. Iraq
 - c. Arab affairs

- d. The Islamic world
- e. Asia and the western world.
- 3 Today's harvest
- 4 Thematic dossiers
- 5 Interviews
- 6 Economics and business.
- 7 Sport
- 8 Moheet for women
- 9 Cars
- 10 Arabic and international affairs
- 11 Religion
- 12 Culture
- 13 The Arts
- 14 Computers and telecommunications
- 15 Science and technology
- 16 Books
- 17 Tourism and travel
- 18 Opinions
- 19 Issues

On 13 December 2006 the website published on its front page a photo concerning violence against woman with links to files and special reports.

b-Additional services offered to draw visitors:

Moheet offers a variety of services and tools to its visitors, such as prayer times, weather forecasts, currency exchange rates, and stock quotes.

c-Moheet's search engine:

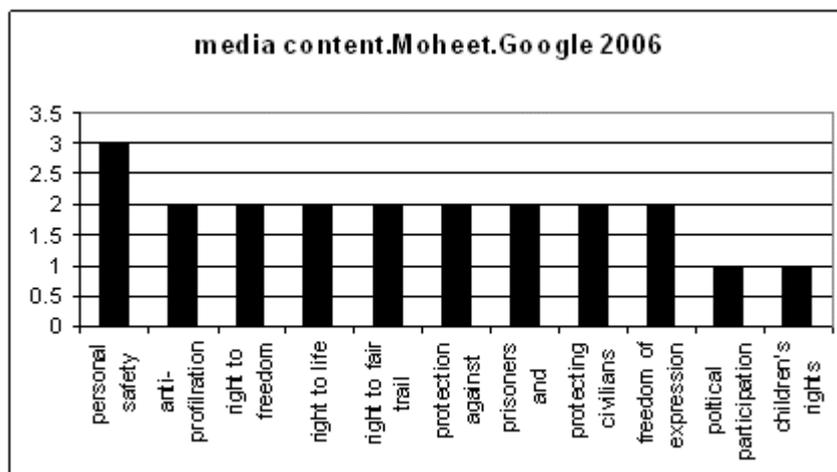
Searches conducted on Moheet referred us to its partner site, "Ask Zad," which is also operated by Arabia Inform. A search for "human rights" gave a total of 199,973 results without details or making the material accessible, because the website's archive is not available freely to the public.

Human rights on Moheet:

I- Frequency:

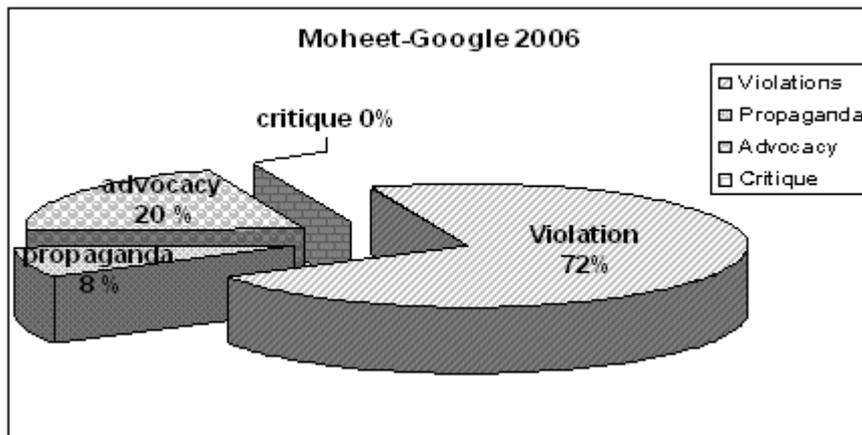
Because of the absence of a free search engine on the website, we turned to Google to search on Moheet, so this indicator reflects Google ability more than Moheet's. In this field, the website publishes, on average, 0.08 pieces of information related to human rights daily.

II-The context of the information material related to human rights:



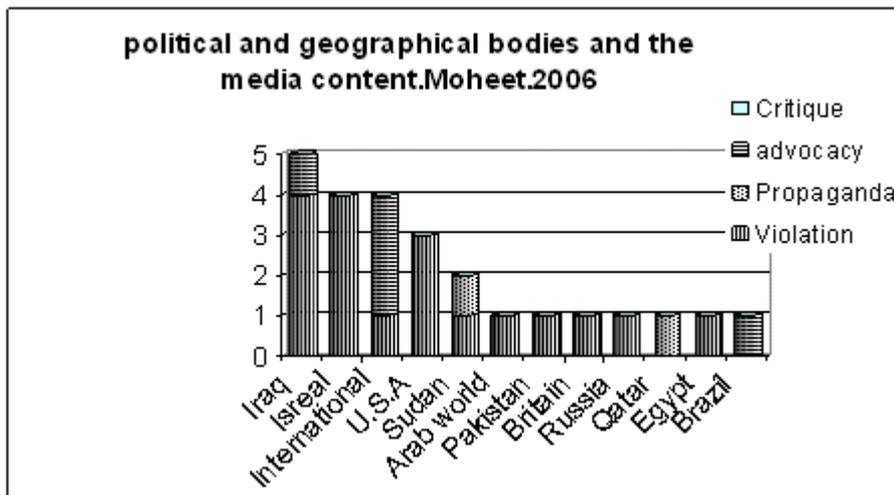
Moheet's human-rights-related coverage is distinguished by its concern for personal rights, though it should be said again that we arrived at these conclusions based on Google searches, and Google may have imperfect knowledge of what is available on Moheet's site.

III-Orientation:



Information about human rights violations and propaganda figures prominently on Moheet, as on other websites we studied.

IV-Geographical Breakdown of Coverage:



Information about Iraq, Israel, and the United States predominates Moheet's coverage, as it does most news outlets' coverage, reflecting the number of human rights violations concentrated in these countries.

The “Four Rights”

We found only three articles about the “four rights” on Moheet, too few to allow for statistical analysis.

Content Analysis:

Moheet resembles other websites included in this study in that it divides the world into the Islamic world, the Western world, and Asia. It is more specific in its divisions, in that it also dedicates a space to “Arab affairs,” with a concentration on the Palestinian and Iraqi files. This explains the preponderance of material on Iraq, Israel, the United States and international affairs on the site.

Moheet devoted heavy coverage to the Israeli-Lebanese war of the summer of 2006 and its Arab and international dimensions.

Notably, Moheet does not use the word “Jews” as much as it uses the word “Zionists” to describe Israelis. Sectarian distinctions within Lebanese society disappeared in the website's coverage of the war in Lebanon.

One of the important pages of Moheet is a forum allowing readers to discuss events and issues, which Moheet offers with the disclaimer that it is not responsible for any opinions expressed. It is a page for studies, reporting, and articles as much as a space for casual reader participation. The page included almost all the topics in our study, such as Ismailis, people with no nationality, and people from Western Sahara. Readers also raised some topics that did not appear in the website's editorial coverage, such as refugees from the Golan Heights.

Examples of Moheet's Coverage:

"Olmert on Sharon's road to the international courts"

On 8 August, Moheet republished an article by Abd al-Hadi Marhoun that originally appeared in the Emirati daily Dar al-Khaleej. The article tackled "Israeli crimes against humanity during its last war on Lebanon," including violations of articles of the Geneva Conventions that call for protecting civilians during war. The article urged judicial bodies, lawyers, and human rights activists to register the Israeli violations, and specifically the "second Qana Massacre" as the first step toward prosecuting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert before the International Criminal Court (ICC), as happened with former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The writer defined the ICC as "the first lasting court devoted to prosecuting individuals accused of committing the most egregious crimes against humanity and the most egregious violations of human rights principles and international humanitarian law. More specifically, this means genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes."

The writer covered the history of the court's establishment, its relationship to national judiciary systems, and its competence after the Treaty of Rome, and said that 100 countries had ratified the treaty establishing the court. The writer indicated the parties who have the right to send cases to the ICC and the laws that it applies.

"United Nations: 100,000 cluster bombs in Lebanon will take 10 years to be removed"

On 2 September, Moheet published a report compiled from wire

stories on the cluster bombs that Israel used in residential areas in Lebanon during the war. The United Nations estimated that roughly 100,000 unexploded cluster bomblets remained, most of them dropped on southern Beirut during the last three days of the war. To remove those bombs, the report said, the United Nations will need more than 10 years. The United Nations also said most of those bombs were made in the United States, and that Israel had used more cluster bombs than had been used in Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Iraq, and that most of this weapon's victims are civilians, and especially children, who often pick up the tiny unexploded ordinance out of curiosity.

"Human Rights Watch uncovers serious faults in Saddam Hussein's trial"

On 18 November, the website published a piece Human Rights Watch's criticisms of Saddam Hussein's trial, including the organization's charge that the trial included "serious procedural flaws that threaten the reliability of the sentence."

"United Nations declare fierce fights between the Sudanese army and the rebels in southern Sudan"

On 30 November, the website reported that "the Sudanese government refused to deploy international UN peacekeepers alongside the African Union troops in Darfur," and noting that the 3-year-old conflict had left 200,000 people dead.

"European efforts to reopen human rights center in Damascus"

On 8 March, Moheet reported on the efforts of the European Commission's efforts to reopen an EU-funded human-rights

training center that the Syrian government closed a few days after it opened.

1. Minorities and Tolerance

I. The Danish Cartoon Controversy

In general, Moheet did not treat minorities based on their rights as outlined in the relevant international conventions and agreements, but rather viewed them based on the premise "they are forces with different interests," concentrating on the national and Islamic dimension of the cases. The website appeared keen to clarify the balance between Islam and human rights conventions.

"Islamic world rises up; the foolishness of Denmark brings destruction to its embassies"

Moheet devoted a long report to the controversy surrounding Danish cartoons many Muslims deemed offensive to the Prophet Mohammed. Reporter Jihan Mostafa described the reaction to the cartoons as an "Islamic uprising against Denmark," and quoted Hizballah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah as saying, "If one Muslim executed the Fatwa of killing the Indian British writer Salman Rushdi 17 years ago, no one would have dared to insult the Prophet Mohammed today."

The website recounted the beginning of the crisis, its evolution, and the reactions of Arab foreign ministers during their meetings, and through their joint statement issued in December 2005, in which they declared their "disappointment of European human rights NGOs that did not take a strong position against the cartoons." Mostafa argued that the economic and political boycott, the withdrawal of ambassadors, the temporary closing of

embassies, especially by the Gulf countries, was the most effective way to end the struggle. She argued that press freedom should not supercede respecting religion, and blamed the West for its "double standards" for prosecuting Holocaust-deniers as having crossed a "red line," while defending those who insult the beliefs of 1 billion Muslims on free-expression grounds.

Mostafa wrote that the West had even stooped to repeating "Zionist" claims about the connections between Islam and terrorism, and said that this requires deterrent procedures from the Arab and Islamic countries, especially because the West is so quick, she said, to accuse Muslim or Arabic newspapers of anti-Semitism when they criticize Israel.

II. Kurds

"Kurds prevent Iraqi Arabs from entering their territories"

On 20 April, the website published a report on the condition of Kurds in US-occupied Iraq. They enjoy their autonomy northern Iraq especially in Arbil, Sulimania, and Dahouk under the sovereignty of Massoud Barazani's Democratic Kurdish Labor Party. The writer said that the local authorities in these cities prevented non-Kurdish Iraqi citizens from entering them unless a Kurdish sponsor affirmed that they were seeking refuge from the hell of daily violence in Baghdad, and said that this highlighted the sectarian divisions in Iraq.

"Kurdish labor party declares a temporary truce with the Turkish government"

On 30 September, Moheet reported that the Kurdish Labor Party, "the separatist group in Turkey, will cease attacks against the

Turkish government after a call from the imprisoned leader Abdullah Ogalan, in response to severe international criticisms of Kurdish militant attacks against civilians and tourists.”

2. Woman's Rights

The website reported cases of violence against women, women’s labor rights, with a special emphasis on Muslim women, and particularly how they enjoy all the rights accorded to them in Islam.

"Bullets of treachery: Politkovskaya, the martyr of the Russian bear."

The website published the life-story of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya, who was shot to death on 7 October 2006.

Discussing her reporting on Chechnya, it cast her assassination as equal to the assassination of “any other resistance leader.”

Politkovskaya, Moheet said, “was the pen that wrote the truth of what happened on the ground in Chechnya to inform public opinion in Russia and the world,” and called Russia “one of the fiercest enemies of Islam.”

"Woman and her high position in Islam"

On 16 November, Moheet published an article by Samar Ezzin on women's position in different civilizations, and particularly in Islam.

At the end of her article Ezzin indicated the type of woman she dreams of: a free woman who obtains all the rights she defends, sticks to her rights, fights for the entire community to obtain the same rights, and who seeks to keep her own dignity by safeguarding the dignity of the entire community." This way, Ezzin wrote, “Women can participate in fostering freedom, equality, and social justice in the community—the dream of every human being.”

"Cultural Harvest"

In February 2006 Moheet reported on the death of women's rights advocate Betty Friedan at the age of 85. The website said Friedan's first book, issued in 1963 under the title *The Feminine Mystique*, "helped inject blood into the arteries of the woman's rights movement in the United States."

3. Refugees

Moheet devotes special attention to Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. It was keen to reflect the role of international institutions such as UNHCR and UNRWA. The website also concentrated on Iraqis left homeless as a result of the current violence and on Sudanese chased from their homes as a result of conflict there. It presented the Sudanese government's point of view regarding Darfur and its refusal to deploy international troops under the supervision of the United Nations in Sudanese territory.

"UNRWA refuses to mediate in paying the salaries of Palestinian employees"

On 30 April, the website reported that UNRWA had refused to be an intermediary in paying the salaries of the Palestinian Authorities' employees. The agency said it considered that its mediation would harm the Palestinian cause and that UNRWA's mission is to provide the best services for Palestinian refugees and to minimize their suffering.

I- People with no nationality

"The Dubai Film Festival Launches with 115 Movies"

On 10 December, Moheet reported the opening of the third Dubai Film Festival and the strong international presence in the crowd.

Moheet focused on the most-touted movies, such as Mohammed Attareify's *Nostalgia*, which dramatizes the nostalgia of identity and loyalty through the life of a Palestinian woman living in the United Arab Emirates who feels homesick for Palestine and through a second protagonist who has no nationality but lives in the Emirates. He misses the feeling of belonging to a country.

II- Western Sahara

"The United States urges Morocco and Algeria to find a settlement for the Sahara dispute"

On 14 May, Moheet reported that the United States had urged Morocco and Algeria to begin direct, "unconditional" negotiations to find a settlement for the dispute over Western Sahara dispute, which has strained relations between the two countries for more than 25 years. Moheet reported that the United States had encouraged Moroccan King Mohammed VI to grant Western Sahara autonomy, and praised "dialogues" between the king and political parties, civil-society organizations, and Saharan tribes.

"The Moroccan King gives amnesty to all Saharan prisoners"

On 22 April, the website reported that King Mohammed VI had granted amnesty to 48 Saharan prisoners. The website considered the case here a dispute over territory "rich in phosphates and maybe oil" between Morocco and the people of Western Sahara, but did not overtly cover the issue of autonomy, focusing rather on the king's offer of amnesty.

"UNHCR warns against the escalating violence in Iraq"

On 4 November, Moheet reported on the conditions of those displaced by violence within Iraq, and, on the subject of the 1.8

million Iraqi refugees outside the country, quoted the UNHCR as saying that the agency and those countries that receive refugees were unable to meet their needs.

"A people is begging and a nation is watching"

On 1 May, the website published an article by Ashamikh Idris on the causes of Palestinians' oppression. Idris wrote that the origin and essence of the problem was "the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands since 1948," and denounced "the punishment of the Palestinian people for choosing their own representatives, while the international community calls upon the Arab world to apply democracy and respect human rights." The West accuses the Hamas government of terrorism, he continued, while a policy of hunger and siege "strengthens Muslims' enmity toward the West generally, and the United States in particular." This situation serves only the interests of "violent organizations" and harms Islam and Muslims, he concluded.

4- Personal Privacy

Moheet covered the right to privacy a few times in the past year, with particular reference to men who engage in homosexual conduct.

I. Homosexuals

Book review: Into the Looking Glass Wood, a study of the meanings of words and world.

On 10 November, the website published the opinions of Alberto Manguel on freedom of expression and homosexuality outlined in his book Into the Looking Glass Wood: a Study of Words and the World, a collection of essays recently translated from the French

by Souliman Harfoush. To Manguel, a word can spark life, and so, he writes, "I am ready to protest in the streets defending the devil's right to sell his book in the market." The article seemed keen to emphasize Alberto's Jewish roots, while noting that his demands for liberties "may not accord with the orientation of certain societies, especially when he defends the homosexuals and bisexuals and their manners."

Following-up with Moheet

The research team could not follow Moheet as they did other websites during the period from 21 April through 21 May 2006 because the website does not include links to the archive and because the daily service costs money.

Conclusion:

As with the other websites in this study, Moheet devotes heavy coverage to human rights violations. Moheet's editorial line was similar to the other sites surveyed, as was its focus on Iraq, the United States, and Israel/Palestine, three countries in which human rights violations are concentrated.

Moheet resembles other websites included in this study in dividing the world into the Islamic world, the Western world, and Asia. It also presents a special section on "Arab Affairs," which concentrates on the Palestinian and Iraqi files, and accounts for the preponderance of coverage on Iraq, Israel, and the United States.

Following up the Israeli-Lebanese war and the Arabic and international dimensions was one of the most important issues

during the year. Notably, Moheet does not use the word “Jews” as often as it does “Zionists” to describe Israelis. This means that it differentiates between the Jewish religion and Zionism as a political movement, which we count to the site’s credit.

Sectarian divisions within Lebanon disappeared in the website's coverage of the war in Lebanon. It did not discriminate between Shiites and Sunnis or Muslims and Christians.

Moheet’s forum allowing for reader participation is one of the site’s most important areas. It is a page for studies, reporting, and articles more than it is a space for casual participation by readers. The page included almost all the topics in our study, but also raised some topics did not appear in the website’s editorial coverage, such as the refugees from the Golan Heights.

Rather than concentrating of refugees’ rights as outlined in the relevant international conventions, the website tended to cast the issue as a conflict between different powers with different interests. The site also focused on the Islamic dimension and was at pains to show Islam’s compatibility with international human rights conventions.

The website tackled the issue of violence against women and women's work. It was keen to show that the Muslim woman got different rights according to Islam.

The website is interested in the case of Palestinian, Sudanese, and Iraqi refugees and in the role of international institutions such as UNHCR and UNRWA in aiding them. It presented the Sudanese government’s point of view regarding Darfur and its

refusal to allow the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Sudanese territory.

The website raised the issue of the right to privacy a few times, and particularly restrictions on the rights of men who engage in homosexual conduct.

www.naseej.com

1. General Background

A- The Significance of Naseej.com

In a report Naseej.com sent to HRINFO, it described itself as “one of the oldest and most important Arabic news websites,” saying it received 15 million visitors per month and had 3 million registered members. The website launched in 1997 and managed to develop a group of applications and services found only in the biggest international portals. Naseej.com developed the first dynamic publishing system in Arabic on the Internet with the first bi-lingual English/Arabic email newsletter. Naseej.com also developed a group of services such as a Web directory, a personalized “My Naseej” page, “Her Naseej,” directed at women, and services such as greeting cards.

B- Editorial Policy:

Naseej.com seeks to support Arabs rights to freedom, justice, and equality while preserving moral values. Naseej.com provides a group of information services and new applications that make Naseej.com quite popular among Arabic-speaking online readers.

C- Audience:

Naseej addresses Arab Internet users from around the world.

D- Organization:

Naseej.com contains a number of sections: news, sports, “Her Naseej,” and the Naseej Web Directory.

E- Services:

The website provides a number of interactive services to its visitors, including:

Email

Forums

Electronic greeting cards

Weather

Prayer times

And the ability to personalize what content is displayed

Users may also choose to display content from the directory aimed specifically at women, from Islamic websites, sports websites, online games, sports scores, and a news ticker.

F- Internal Search

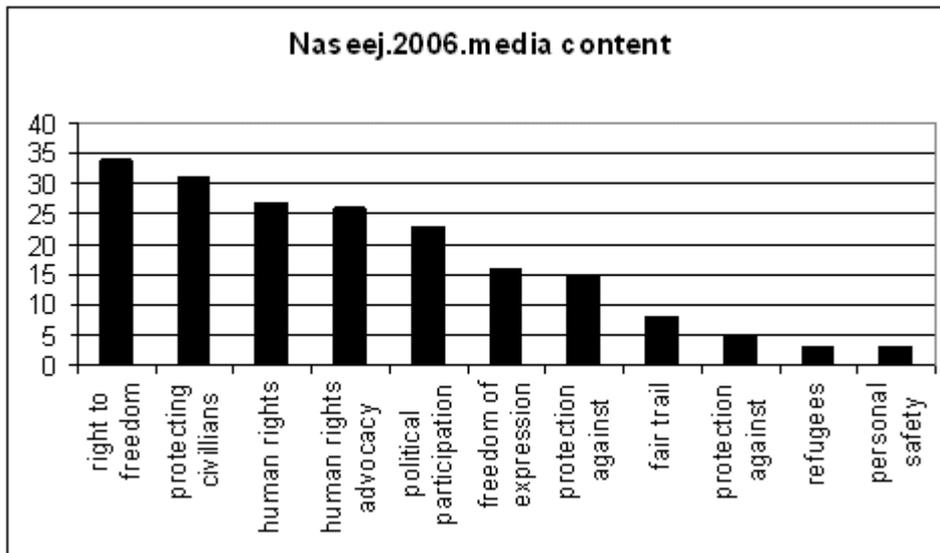
Naseej.com focuses on searching the Internet more than searching inside the website itself. Visitors to the main page are directed to a Web search. In order to search inside Naseej.com, users must enter through one of the five main portals on Naseej (Islamic Naseej, Naseej News, Naseej Sport, Her Naseej, or the Naseej Directory).

2- Human rights analysis in Naseej

a- Frequency:

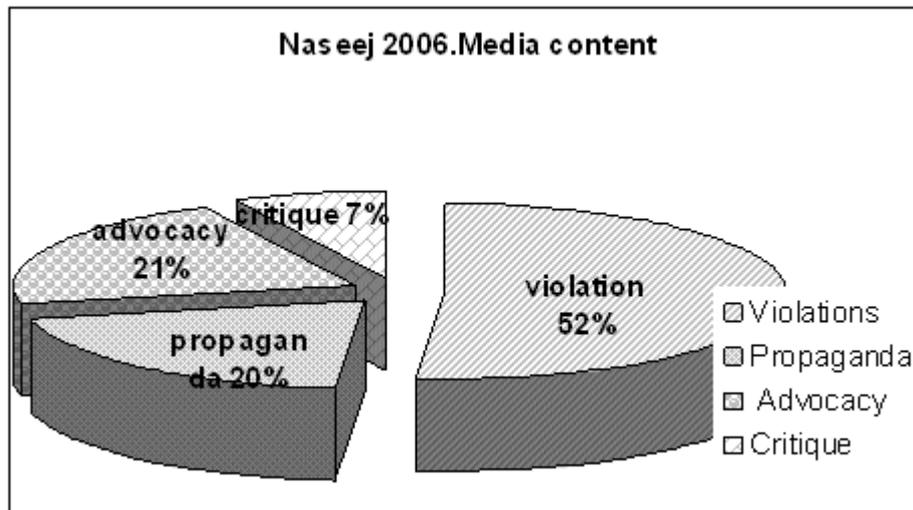
The website publishes an average of one article related to human rights every 1.5 days.

b- The media content related to human rights



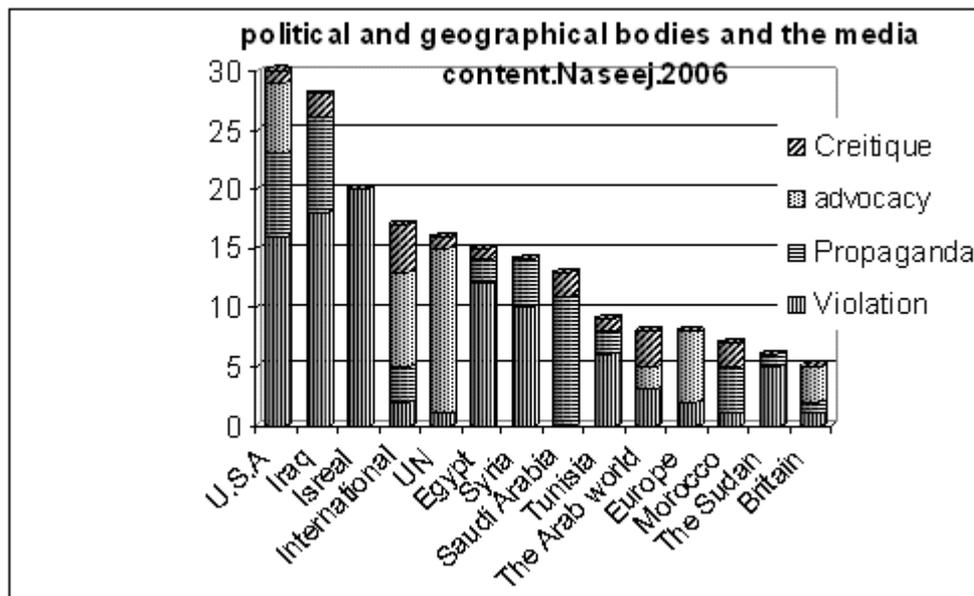
Naseej.com resembles the other sites surveyed in this study in that it favors political coverage over human-rights coverage or advocacy, yet it showed significant interests in the right to freedom and the protection of civilians.

c- Media Content



Naseej's human-rights-related content focuses on reporting abuses, though in some countries this focus is paired with advocacy or propaganda.

d- Political and Geographic Breakdown:



As with the other sites surveyed, Naseej devoted most of its human-rights coverage to Egypt, Iraq, the United States, and Syria. Coverage of Israeli human-rights abuses also occupied a significant place in Naseej's coverage.

3 – Content Analysis

Naseej.com depended on materials republished from qudspres.com over the course of 2006 yet it seemed that it took an impartial stance by reproducing the news without comment. In terms of news selection, Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia seemed to receive heavy criticism for human-rights abuses, especially with regard to abuses against women, whereas coverage of Saudi Arabia focused more on that country's putative progress in promoting human rights.

1- Advocacy

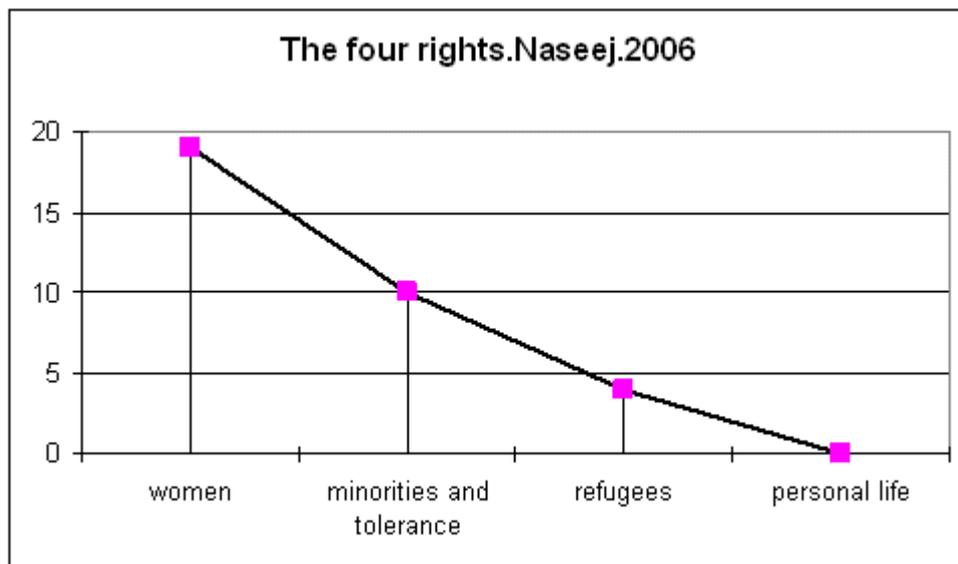
Hamid Refai, "Saudi Arabia Doesn't Need a Preacher"

On 17 December, Naseej reported on Saudi reactions to the US

State Department's annual report on human rights in the country. Naseej bristled at the attention Islamic countries received in the report. That some of the reactions Naseej quoted came from religious organizations spoke to the blurred lines between the Saudi state and religious organizations in that country. The author, Prof. Hamid Rafai, director of the International Islamic Forum for Dialogue, asserted, "Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country that follows the pure Islamic teachings and doesn't need to consult the Americans for advice on religious matters."

HRINFO also noticed the biased treatment Iran received on the topic of the rights of minorities, particularly Sunni Iranians. Naseej cited an Iranian of Sunni, Arab dissent "who believed that the report reflected a small part of the Iranian reality."

E- The "Four Rights:"



Interest in women's issues superceded interest in minorities' rights, refugees' issues, and the right to privacy.

3. Content Analysis:

Naseej relied on a partnership with qudspress.com to supply its readers with news over the course of 2006. It concentrated on human rights violations in countries like Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia, but its selection of stories painted Saudi Arabia as a country making significant progress toward greater respect for human rights.

A-Propaganda

On 17 December, Naseej reported on Saudi reactions to the US State Department's annual report on human rights in the country. Naseej bristled at the attention Islamic countries received in the report. That some of the reactions Naseej quoted came from religious organizations spoke to the blurred lines between the Saudi state and religious organizations in that country. The author, Prof. Hamid Rafai, director of the International Islamic Forum for Dialogue, asserted, "Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country that follows the pure Islamic teachings and doesn't need to consult the Americans for advice on religious matters."

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B-Analysis of Materials Related to the "Four Rights:"

1. Women's rights

Naseej's coverage of women's rights emphasized the deleterious effect of occupation on women's rights. The violence and poverty of occupied Iraq and Palestine have a detrimental effect on

women's status, the site argued. In Iraq, for an instance, women are sold as sex slaves to wealthy Gulf countries, and Iran especially.

In many reports, Naseej presented a positive image of women's participation in the workforce and public life by covering news about Saudi women's membership in the Saudi human rights organizations. This made Saudi Arabia look like a country that achieved progress in empowering women and addressing discrimination against them.

Naseej also took notice when women won international prizes or assumed jobs at the head of human-rights organizations.

The website also discussed such issues as the equality of men and women regarding the right to confer nationality upon her children, Muslim women in the West, and the debate over the veil.

"International Report: Iraqi Girls Sold to Neighboring Countries to Work in Night Clubs"

Naseej reproduced an article by qudspres.com on the sexual exploitation of Iraqi girls because of the US occupation, which has led to such widespread poverty and misery that many Iraqi girls are smuggled into the gulf region and coerced to work as prostitutes. The UN's Integrated Regional Information Network estimates the number of missing Iraqi women at 3,500. Many of these are believed to be enslaved and sexually exploited.

The article referred to a report issued by an unnamed organization that said that the Emirates are a frequent destination for Iraqi prostitutes. It further accused religious men, particularly in the

predominantly Shia, southern provinces of Iraq, of involvement in the trade. Iraqi girls, the article said, are smuggled into Iran under the guise of being sent for religious education in Qom and Tehran.

"Report Warns Against Sex Trade in Qatar"

On 5 March, Naseej reported on the National Qatari Committee for Human Rights' findings on the sex trade in Qatar and broader inequality between men and women in what career opportunities, wages, incentives and vocational-related privileges were available to them. The report also castigated the Qatari government for laws that allow only fathers to pass nationality to their children. The report emphasized "the hardship housemaids endure, hardship that, compounded with unyielding economic and social conditions, low wages insufficient to provide for a reasonable standard of living, lead some of these women to work as prostitutes when faced with failure to find a job or conduct a required legal transaction."

" Saudi Human-Rights Body Studies Women's Participation in Next Terms"

On 10 November, Naseej discussed the possibility of Saudi women's participation in the official Saudi human rights body. In a statement HRINFO regards as designed to improve Saudi Arabia's image, the head of Saudi Arabia's official human-rights council said that although no women were elected to the council in its first term, women were participating by performing "advisory tasks and conducting a number of psychological and social studies to address violence against women and related issues." He also said, "Women's participation in the next term is being weighed."

"Twenty Incest Cases Before Saudi Human Rights Body"

Naseej reported on findings of the Saudi Society for Human Rights on cases where fathers allegedly raped their young daughters. Dr. Sohyla Zein Abedeen, a member of the society, said her organization was aware of 20 such cases in Saudi Arabia over the past year, but stressed that the crimes often go unreported and that incestuous relations are not a particular phenomenon in the Kingdom.

The report also discussed issues such as alimony, paternal custody, denying mothers and children access to official documents in order to render the woman dependent on her current or divorced husband in order to provide her children and herself with their basic needs.

"Kuwaiti MPs Consider Bestowing Nationality on Arab Muslims Married to Kuwaiti Women and Their Children"

On 8 January Naseej.com ran an article from qudspres.com on the right of children born to a Kuwaiti woman to have Kuwaiti nationality. The website didn't comment on the story, or the fact that the proposal would allow women to bestow nationality only if the father was also Arab and Muslim.

"Amina Bo Ayash at the Top of a Human Rights Organization"

On 27 April, Naseej reported that Amina Bo Ayash had become the first female head of the Moroccan Organization for Human Rights—"a precedent in the Arab world," according to Naseej. The article also mentioned reforms to Morocco's personal status law that gave women greater legal equality in the family and the

appointment of female Cabinet ministers as examples of strides Morocco had made with regard to women's rights in recent years.

"Averroes Organization for Free Thought Presents Annual Award to Sudanese Writer Fatma Ibrahim"

Naseej reported that Sudanese writer Fatma Ahmad Ibrahim had won an annual award from the Berlin-based Averroes Organization for Free Thought and presented a brief biography of the writer, former member of parliament, and veteran human-rights advocate.

" Surprising Female Presence in Prince Klaus Awards"

On 30 October Naseej reported, in glowing terms, on the bestowal of Holland's "prestigious" Prince Klaus award on three Arab, Muslim women. The Dutch government established the Prince Klaus Fund for Culture and Development in 1996 to facilitate cultural exchange. The organization deals with individuals and organizations from around the world.

"16 Female Ministers of Foreign Affairs Call for Fair Share in the World of Politics"

On 21 June, Naseej reported that 16 female ministers of foreign affairs had gathered in Geneva to call for granting women more of a seat at the table in international politics, particularly as the United Nations chose a successor to Kofi Annan. Naseej noted that all the candidates were all men and that there has never been a female UN secretary general.

"Female Islamic Dress Code Stirs Debate in Germany"

On 25 November Salah Saify, reported that German society discriminates against veiled women, particularly in the job market.

He recounted Verschita Luden's problems. Luden, a Muslim teacher says the state of Baden-Wurttemberg refused to hire her because she refused to remove her veil while working. This stirred a debate in Germany about religious symbols in school. She sued the state, and lost.

Under the subheading, "A Role Model," Saify looked at the case of Sander Heibschour, who became Amina al-Mahdi after she embraced Islam. Al-Mahdi lost her job after her conversion and has reported harassment in the street and on public transportation because of her Islamic dress. The report cited Western, female, human-rights activists who defend Muslim women's right to wear the veil.

2. Minorities and Tolerance of the Other

Naseej was interested in reports of sex in churches.

"Sexual Perversions Inside Churches"

On 2 December, Naseej published an essay by Abd al-Baki Khalifa, titled "Sexual Perversions Inside Churches." Khalifa catalogued "sexual-perversion scandals" that had implicated "dozens of Catholic priests in the United States and Latin America and the Catholic organization Caritas in Croatia."

Under lurid subheadings such as "Predators: sexual perversions inside monestaries," "Lost trust in the Church," and "Sexual perversions prevail in churches," the essay mentioned a number of sexual violations committed by priests from all around the world against children. There was the case of four nuns accused of sexually assaulting minors in a church and of having sex with a

number of young girls. There was the case of allegations made against the organization Caritas that its employees had sexually abused orphaned children, allegations that the article said led many Croatian and Slovenian families to stay away from church. The writer's intent seemed to be to create a horrible feeling inside the reader's heart against those crimes and the Church in general.

"Morocco Dismisses UN Report on its Human Rights Record in Western Sahara"

Naseej reported on UN criticisms of Morocco's human-rights record in the disputed Western Sahara region alongside the Moroccan government's denials and accusations of bias.

"British Worries over Afghan Christian Convert"

On 23 March, Naseej discussed the case of an Afghan man who converted to Christianity, and worries in Britain for his safety.

I- The Danish Cartoon Controversy

"Al-Azhar's Head and Mufti Protest Danish Insults Against the Prophet"

On 8 February, Naseej reported on Egypt's "official" religious institutions' condemnation of cartoons depicting the Prophet in a manner many Muslims found offensive. The site reported that 25,000 students had gathered to protest inside al-Azhar, and that "The sheikh of al-Azhar, the mufti, and many al-Azhar professors joined in the protests. Naseej called the such senior religious figures' participation a strong signal, particularly after opposition newspapers criticized his earlier statement to the Danish ambassador to Egypt as too weak.

“Yemeni Protests Against Insults to the Prophet on the Rise”

On 30 January, Naseej ran a qudspress.com story about the escalation of Yemeni protests against the cartoons calls to boycott Danish goods in Yemen. The story mentioned condemnations of the cartoons from organizations such as the Yemeni Journalists’ Syndicate, Reporters Without Borders, The Committee of Foreign Affairs, The Arab League, The Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Yemeni Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Yemeni ruling party, and argued that international human-rights treaties prohibited the cartoon’s publication.

II- The Bedouin

Naseej covered news about Bedouin in Kuwait without approaching the issue from a human-rights perspective or discussing Bedouins’ problems in Saudi Arabia or other Gulf states. Naseej likewise never mentioned the Isamili sect, a religious minority inside Saudi Arabia, in its news coverage.

"Kuwaiti Interior Minister Calls for a Humanitarian Settlement for Bedouin"

On 4 October, Naseej ran a qudspress.com story about statements from the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior calling for a resolution to the issue of Bedouin, often called “illegal citizens” in Kuwait. Official Kuwaiti sources estimate the number of Bedouins dropped from 200,000 to 100,000 after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Activists told qudspress.com that there were more than 100,000 Kuwaiti Bedouin and that they were suffering and were denied their basic rights to live freely.”

"Kamil Awarded Kuwaiti Nationality"

On 5 November, Naseej reported that the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers had conferred Kuwaiti nationality on referee Saad Kamil, who had represented Kuwait at many international sporting events.

III- Bahais

Naseej took a hostile editorial line toward the Bahai religion and presented the views of those who are calling for its elimination. Naseej highlighted the divergence between Islamic and Bahai beliefs, and alleged that Bahais had Zionist and American connections. Naseej did not defend Bahai's right to life as citizens in their homeland with the same obligations and rights as other citizens.

"Egyptian court rules out Bahai recognition"

On 17 December, Naseej reported on the Egyptian Supreme Administrative Court's decision not to require the government to allow Bahais to leave their religion blank on official documents or to fill in "Bahai."

Naseej looked at the history of the Bahais, and speculated that perhaps the reason for dissolving Bahai organizations was that their head temple is in Israel. Naseej called Bahais "infidels," because, Naseej wrote, they believe in the divinity of their religion's founding father.

"Calls to Eliminate Bahai in Egypt"

On 30 July, Naseej reviewed the Egyptian Ministry of Religious Affairs' book, Bahai: Beliefs and Imperialistic Goals. The book calls for eliminating the estimated 2,000 Bahais from Egypt. The

website further editorialized that the ideas of the Bahai religion “deviate from the path of righteousness.”

" Al-Azhar Says No to Bahai"

On 10 April, Naseej recapped al-Azhar’s stance on the Bahais, highlighting the “wide differences” between Islam and the Bahai religion.

" Egyptian Authorities Challenge a Legal Verdict Recognizing Bahais"

On 9 April, Naseej ran a qudspress.com report that connected Bahais with Zionists, gays, the state of Israel, and the US Secretary of State. The report also referred to a statement by the director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights which considered the verdict in favor Bahais’ rights (later overturned) as "a true victory for religious freedoms and beliefs as guaranteed by the Egyptian constitution and international treaties on human rights."

"America Urges Iran to Respect Bahais’ Religious Freedoms"

On 29 March, Naseej reported that the United States had urged Iran to respect the rights its of minorities and had expressed worries about "escalating government persecution of 300,000 Iranian Bahais." Naseej’s report did not elaborate report on the violations against Bahais, but noted that Bahais were “an extremist Shia sect that believes in reincarnation, that denies the existence of heaven, hell, angles, and the miracles of the prophets. They also pray toward Akka instead of the holy mosque in Mecca, ... and divide the year into 19 months of 19 days."

VI- The Shia

Naseej's coverage of Shia in Iraq, the Gulf, Lebanon, and Egypt, and cast them as Iranian collaborators.

"Anti-Sahabi Publications Circulated in Egypt and Banned by al-Azhar"

On 5 December, Naseej ran a qudspress.com article on the confiscation of a number of books expressing "the twelver" Shia's religious doctrine. Al-Azhar banned *The Epic of Hussein* by Mortada Mutahari and *Ahl al-Bayt*, published by the Hadf House for Media and Publishing.

Naseej concocted a relationship between Egyptian Shia and the Iranian government under the subheading, "Religious leaders welcome Khameni's fatwa," and connected Egypt's Shia with Bahais by way of an American delegation that had sought to speak with Egyptian officials about the persecution of Shias and Bahais in Egypt.

"Landslide Victory for Shia Opposition in Parliamentary Elections in Bahrain"

On 26 November, Naseej reported that Shia candidates had won 16 seats in parliamentary elections in Bahrain, while the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated National Islamic Forum won only two seats.

"Angry Bahraini Shia Protests Before Parliamentary Elections"

On 25 November, Naseej reported on "riots and protests" by "young Shia men" in Bahrain on the eve of parliamentary elections. The protests were triggered by statements from the opposition,

Shia-affiliated Islamic National Agreement Party's fears of vote-rigging.

"Bahrainis Protest Massive Naturalization of Foreigners "

On 30 September, Naseej reported that hundreds of Bahrainis had protested the government's mass naturalization of Sunni foreigners because they believed it was a move to check Shia influence. Naseej reported the government's denials that this was their motive.

"Jabber Sabbah, a Historic Kuwaiti Prince"

On 15 January, Naseej ran a biography of Kuwaiti Sheikh Jabber Sabbah that drew clear connections between Kuwaiti Shia and Iran and went so far as to call Shia Kuwaitis "politically Iranian."

3. Refugees

I-Palestinian refugees

The Palestinian cause, in general, and Palestinian refugees, in particular, were among Naseej's top news priorities. The site provided extensive coverage of the problems Palestinian refugees from Iraq face.

Naseej repeatedly mentioned international treaties and UN resolutions, including Resolution 194 of 1948, granting Palestinians the right of return.

"Waving the Right of Return Violates International Law and Legitimizes the Israeli Policy of Ethnic Cleansing"

Naseej reported that the Palestinian al-Awda Center's had refused to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's offer to withdraw from parts of the West Bank in return for Palestinians' waving their right of

return. Naseej noted that this would violate international law and would legitimize Israel's policy of ethnic cleansing and acquit the Israeli government of such "crimes" as its "daily, methodical destruction operations that displace dozens of Palestinians on a daily basis." Human rights, Naseej concluded, "are not for negotiation or blackmail."

"Palestinian Writers and Academics Affirm Right of Return According to International Resolutions"

Naseej reproduced a qudspress.com article on the 58th anniversary of UN Resolution 194, which states that Palestinian refugees have the right to return to their homeland and that this right cannot be waived or fall under statutory limitations.

In this context, Naseej covered the Palestinian National Gathering for the Right of Return and a discussion held by the Palestinian Organization for Refugees' Rights in Gaza.

"Palestinian Authorities Call upon the UN to Transfer Palestinians in Iraq to Safe Places"

On 24 December, Naseej ran a qudspress.com story reporting the Palestinian Ministry of Refugee Affairs' calls to the UN to transfer Palestinian refugees out of Iraq under the auspices of the UN, given their perilous situation and attacks by armed militants who were threatening them with murder and abduction.

The story reported that 350 Palestinian refugees had run away from Iraq to the Tanaf camp on the Syrian side of the border, where they were now living in horrible conditions.

II- Sudanese Asylum-Seekers

Naseej followed the aftermath of a violent government crackdown on Sudanese refugees and asylum-seekers staging a demonstration in Cairo. They continued their daily coverage of the unfolding crisis on a daily basis for a month, then reported on the situation less frequently. The coverage was conducted through reporters or reproduced from qudspress.com.

Naseej's coverage was critical of the Egyptian authorities.

Examples of such headlines:

"Sudanese delegation in Cairo calling for refugees investigation"

"Sudanese accuse Egypt of killing 62 refugees"

"Refugees commissioner meets with Sudanese stranded in Cairo"

"Egyptian opposition calls for Minister of Interior's resignation for death of Sudanese refugees"

"Wide condemnation against police crackdown on Sudanese refugees"

On 1 Jan, Naseej covered the Egyptian police assault on Sudanese refugees gathered in Cairo's Mostapha Mahmoud Square, and quoted Hafez Abusaada, secretary general of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, who called for an international investigation, for Egypt to stop deporting the refugees, and and for the UNHCR to provide them with accommodation. Naseej also quoted Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated member of Parliament Ashraf Badr ad-Din as saying "there was no justification for this kind of violence." The article also quoted a

spokesman for the UNHCR as expressing his "deep sadness for an atrocity that cannot be justified." The report further referred to Human Rights Watch's calls for an independent and immediate investigation.

" The First Group of Sudanese Refugees Arrive in Khartoum"

On 2 January, Naseej reported that the Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs had welcomed the return of asylum-seekers to Sudan and the firing of an Egyptian security officer for using tear gas, rubber bullets, and live ammunition against the protesters.

III- Yemeni refugees in Syria

"Yemeni Human Rights Organization Urges International Organization to Protect Yemeni Refugees in Syria"

Naseej reproduced a qudspress.com story reporting that a London-based Yemeni human rights organization had called upon the UNHCR to protect Yemeni refugees in Syria from harassment from the Yemeni Embassy in Damascus. Yemeni authorities in Sana had arrested the father of one of the refugees in Syria to coerce the refugee to return to Yemen.

4. Right to Privacy

The right to private life didn't receive any attention on Naseej during the period we monitored its coverage. Searching for certain keywords as "spying" and "eavesdropping" yielded stories about spying on a football team.

Follow-Up with Naseej:

Researchers followed Naseej closely from 21 April through 21 May 2007 and found there had no significant changes since they

conducted their research in 2006. Of the subjects they were looking for, human-rights news was still the most common, followed by civilian-protection initiatives, political activism, freedom of speech, and, lastly, freedom from discrimination.

Israel, the United States, Iraq, and Egypt remained the primary focus of human-rights-related stories. Reports of violations dominated Naseej's human-rights coverage, followed by advocacy, state propaganda, and critiques.

Conclusion:

- * The website publishes an average of one article related to human rights every 1.5 days, with a strong emphasis on civil and political rights. Its coverage also showed an emphasis on the obligation to protect civilians.

- * Naseej's human-rights reporting focuses mainly on violations. Advocacy and propaganda were presented in more or less equal parts.

- * As with the other sites surveyed, Naseej devoted most of its human-rights coverage to Egypt, Iraq, the United States, and Syria. Coverage of Israeli human-rights abuses also occupied a significant place in Naseej's coverage. By contrast, human-rights-related stories on Naseej presented Saudi Arabia in congratulatory terms.

- * Women's issues were more often covered than were issues of minorities and refugees. There was no attention to the right to privacy.

* Throughout 2006, Naseej depended on qudspress.com for its news services, yet it apparently took a more passive stance on some issues. Additionally, Egypt, Syria and Tunisia came in for particular criticism, but Saudi Arabia, suspiciously, was invariably presented in glowing terms.

* Naseej's coverage of women's rights focused on how the hardships of occupation damaged women's rights in Iraq and Palestine. In many reports, Naseej showed a positive image of women's participation in work and public life. One such example, about women's prospective participation in the official Saudi human rights council, also cast Saudi Arabia in a positive light.

Naseej also covered stories of women achieving international recognition through prizes and prestigious appointments.

*Naseej addressed men and women's equal, or unequal, status in society through the question of whether a woman can impart nationality on her children. It also discussed the status of Muslim women in the West and the issue of Islamic dress.

*Naseej also discussed the issue of the Bedouins in Kuwait, without discussing the issue from an overt human-rights perspective or pronouncing a stance on the issue. Naseej did not discuss the issue of Bedouins in the rest of the Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, nor did it discuss the issue of the Ismaili sect (one of the minority groups residing in the Kingdom).

* Naseej denounced the right of the Bahais to religious freedoms and supported those who call for eradicating the Bahai faith. Naseej also focused on Bahais' "distortion" of the Islamic

teachings and accused them of “transgressing against morals,” and working with Zionists, Imperialists, and gays. Naseej didn't publish any material to support the Bahais' right to live freely like other citizens.

* On Shia matters, Naseej focused on Iraq, Bahrain, and Lebanon. In one case, Naseej reported on Egyptian Shia. In several instances, Naseej concocted a relationship between Arab Shia and Iran.

* Regarding refugees' rights, Naseej covered the Palestinian cause in general, and the cause of Palestinian refugees in particular. It also covered the issue of Sudanese asylum-seekers in Cairo, particularly after the violent dispersal of a sit-in protest.

* The right to a private life didn't receive any coverage from Naseej. Searching for keywords such as “spying” and “eavesdropping” yielded only results related to spying on a football team.

Part 2: Human Rights Organizations amanjordan.org

The Arabic Centre for Resources and Information on Violence
Against Women, Aman, Jordan

<http://www.amanjordan.org/index1.htm>

Aman was established in September 2000, after a recommendation at the end of a training workshop on 'Confronting Violence Against Women and Girls'. The workshop was organized in October 1999 by the International Institute for Women's Solidarity in Jordan, and sponsored by the Heinrich B?ll Foundation. It recommended establishing a regional centre to provide resources, information and training materials on violence against women in particular and women's and children's rights in general.

To carry out this recommendation, the international institute established the centre via its website. Providing resources and information related to violence against women and girls in the Arab region was to be the main aim of this new centre. It is also concerned with the sovereignty of law and the spreading of respect of human rights' principles in general and confronting violence against women and girls in particular. These aims can be reached following these steps:

- * Providing the legal texts such as Arabic constitutions, laws, legislations and the related international and Arabic conventions, agreements and declarations
- * Providing texts of the national, Arabic and international related plans and programs

- * Providing information on official and civil institutions working on confronting violence against women and girls on the national, Arabic and international levels.
- * Providing information on events, activities, programs, campaigns and different efforts related to the issue
- * Reinforcing the coordination between specialised officials, individuals and formal and civil institutions.
- * Encouraging cooperation between different institutions in order to spread benefits, improve performance and avoid repeating efforts. This would help, finally, minimise the waste of human and material capacities and resources available in the field
- * Providing regular training programs via the website to reinforce workers' skills in the field of confronting violence against women and treating and rehabilitation of victims
- * Providing a discussion forum among the interested and involved persons from different Arab countries to reinforce experiences and knowledge exchange and enriching the intellectual discussions and participating in raising awareness of violence against women
- * Providing different guiding services via the website such as legal, social and psychological consultations
- * Providing information on Arabic and international websites tackling the same issues
- * Providing information on mechanisms of confronting violence against women and girls on the national, Arabic and international levels
- * Reinforcing Arabic relationships and cooperation among institutions, official and civil directories, individuals and workers on the field of confronting violence against women and girls, or in

other related fields. It also aims to facilitate experiences and information exchange among them all

The Amaan website is considered one of the oldest and most important human rights websites, not only on the Arabic level but also at an international one. It occupies an advanced rank among Arab human rights organisations regarding the use of the capacities of the internet in obtaining information and delivering its message. This can be seen both in the quantity of the material and its diversity; articles, reports, researches, documents, conventions, and also the daily update of the website. On the other hand, the website does not use any interactive tools with the audience but polls.

The website now provides a service of daily updates, which gives visitors a chance to get the latest news on the website, a good service that helps spread its message and attract a larger audience.

The Arabic Committee for Human Rights <http://www.achr.nu>

The Arabic Committee for Human Rights is a non governmental organization established on 17th January 1998 by 15 human rights activists from different Arab Countries. If we look at its principles we can see it is a regional organization based on its scope and international influence. It is keen to be independent to any political loyalty and struggles to protect human rights and basic freedoms in the Arab world. It is far from being loyal to any political party, sectarian or ethnic and depends on international legacy and basic human rights conventions especially the international declaration for human rights, the international convention on civil and political rights and the international convention on Social, Economic and cultural rights.

The secretary of the Arabic committee for human rights consists of 15 people, a third of them outside the Arab World and the other 2 thirds inside it. The committee is licensed as a non profit non governmental organisation according to the French law known as law No. 1901. The committee is run basically by volunteers.

The committee works on confronting human rights violations through direct struggle aiming to stop them and creating a general awareness to condemn the violations and support freedoms and rights. The members of the committee are Arab and non Arab individuals known for their devotion for human rights and their struggle for it. Any one who wants to be a member in the committee should apply and then the application would be studied seriously, to decide on the applicant and how much he is committed and gives to his principles. The committee considers

that the basic requirement for membership is work and participation not the numbers. The Arabic committee aims to:

- * Organise work projects (missions) on issues related to economic, social and cultural rights and also civil and political rights
- * Work on evaluating the tragic results of economic sanctions applied by the United Nations or the Israeli authorities on human rights in this part of the world
- * Give enough interest to human rights violations against weaker groups and communities as women, children and minorities inside and outside the Arab world
- * Prepare reports on the issues of special groups such as displaced, exiled, refugees and migrant labour in Europe and the Gulf countries
- * Follow up the different forms of authoritarian and social violence and defy the claims of the totalitarian state that it depends on these acts for security
- * Whenever possible, it plays the role of a bridge between the southern and northern NGOs and Arabic and non Arab NGOs. It also tries to reinforce the cooperation among Arabic organisations and centres.
- * Stress all of this via an electronic news page gathering thoughts and news and achievements; a vast information exchange on daily human rights violations in the Arab world. It also aims to be platform for expressing the different struggles of activists

In the light of all these aims the Arabic committee has devoted itself to, comes the website. It is supposed to play a large role in achieving these aims but it is average in terms of the benefits from the internet. The material comes in different forms, reports,

statements, articles and book presentations. The material is huge but the website does not provide an e-mail for the visitors to use, or present the latest news. The website depends on written material and pictures only. It does not provide the option of interaction with the audience. The website reflects the spirit of an amateur. As the committee's headquarter of the committee is in Paris, the low quality of this website would be irrational even if the committee said there are not enough financial resources. Nowadays any good, well developed website does not need plenty of money; on the contrary it will save money and effort when it is well used.

Association for Human Rights Legal Aid www.ahrla.org

Association for Human Rights Legal Aid is a non governmental, non profit organisation formed by a group of human rights activists. It was licensed on 18th December 1999 to provide legal aid for victims of human rights' violations, work on spreading human rights' culture and to try to remove legislation that is not in accordance with the Egyptian constitution or to the ratified agreements and conventions on human rights. The association achieves those targets through:

- * Carrying out studies and researches on the concepts of civil society, democratic society, laws organizing the work of NGOs and specialized legal researches
- * Organizing seminars, conferences and workshops on the issues of democracy and civil society
- * Issuing a regular newsletter and publicity notes
- * Providing legal support and aid to the victims of human rights' violations according to the different legal work programs
- * Field research and fact finding missions
- * Campaigns

The association depends on videos, statements and reports on its website. It also uses the mailing list to spread its message. The association uses modern technology of the internet in a passive way, as it works as a mediator to deliver the message of Al-Arabyia and Aljazeera websites to the audience through putting their news tapes on its website.

During the workshop held by HRINFO to discuss the primary results of the current study, the association's spokesman Mr. Tarek Khater declared that the website was established spontaneously without any plans or awareness as to the importance of the internet. It tries to publish the news of the association, support human rights principles, and provide help and legal support to the victims of human rights violations in Egypt.

The website is mainly in Arabic and whenever there is money the association pays to translate some important news or reports reflecting the association's point of view. It depends on volunteering efforts. The interest in the website and developing it to achieve the association's goals was not among the priorities of its team. What made the association pay more attention to the website were its experiences that proved the importance of the internet. Some of those experiences were:

- * The arrest of Mr. Hafez Abu Seeda the secretary general of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights after a report on the incidents of Kosheh and the great role of the internet in supporting him
- * Using the internet and other means of communication helped obtain taped material on torture which was not available before
- * Internet made information on all different issues available for people
- * The videos and pictures on torture had a great effect on public opinion

The association recently began to develop the website and make some changes to increase its visitors' numbers among them:

- * A special section for documentary movies on human rights, such as the movie on the war against Lebanon last summer and movies on different issues such as detaining adults and minors in the same places at police stations
- * Using Al Jazeera and Al Arabyia news tapes

The following points hinder depending on the internet:

- * Getting used to the forms of human rights work
- * The oppressive government and its methods of blocking websites

Association for Health and Environmental Development

<http://www.ahedegypt.org/ara/arabic.html>

The Association for Health and Environmental Development is an Egyptian NGO established and licensed by the Egyptian ministry of social affairs in November 1987, number 3527. The license was amended according to new laws in 1998.

The association works on developing and applying convenient policies and systems in the fields of health and environment. Those policies and systems should be able to apply the needs rights of Egyptian society in general and especially the most marginalised classes. The association also works on raising the awareness around the issues related to the previously mentioned fields, via establishing solidarity groups, spreading of information, issuing publications and organizing training programs.

Another part of the association's work is organising and participating in developing leading symbols at the local community level to improve the reality of health and environmental conditions. It also participates in encouraging and strengthening cooperation and integration among different organisations and institutions working on health, environment and with the disabled, especially among local and regional NGOs.

The association participates in empowering marginalised groups and communities to establish organisations representing their interests and rights.

AHED works on three main programs; a health policies and systems program, a disabled program and an environmental

development program. There are also units such as a resources unit, a publications and documentation unit and an administrative support unit.

The association worked hard from the very beginning to strengthen the cooperation and coordination among different institutions working in the same field either governmental, non governmental, local, national or international organizations.

As for the website, it does not benefit from the different fields of work the association is involved in. It does not make quick updates to publish and spread the news and does not use the different tools and internet options available.

This was confirmed by Mr. Abdul Mawla Ismail during a workshop, when he said; 'there is not enough information manipulating either at the local or international level.' He added 'the association's work needs to apply many indicators and measure health and environmental problems which does not need the internet'.

Mr. Abdul Mawla stressed that the website is a part of the association's activities not the totality of them.

The website does not attract many visitors because:

- * The issues on economic and social rights along with other collective rights or what is known as 'third generation of human rights' do not find interest in an average audience, the intellectual elite or even the human rights movement. The audience in Egypt is interested in political rights

- * The nature of the association's work does not lend itself to regular updates on the website, as some studies and researches can take up to two years to reach internationally accepted indicators.

Sometimes the updating problems are related to the level of attention paid to the website.

* The website is not attractive. The spirit and message of the association is not clear on the website, as the person working on it is a technician who is not aware of the message of the association and not a human rights' activist

In spite of the notes of the association's official, the website can help solve some of the association's problems and achieve some goals; if the team considered it as an effective tool in achieving targets not just a complement to the association's image.

Habi Centre for Environmental Rights <http://www.hcer.org>

Habi centre for environmental rights is a non governmental organization established in 2001. Its interests lie mainly in raising citizen's and NGO's awareness of environmental rights and the mechanisms of defending them. It also helps people to defend their environmental rights. In this regard, the centre confirms the importance of effectuating local environmental legislations and improving them to increase the efficiency of civil society's role and the benefits of international conventions.

The centre confirms the right to obtain environmental information to enable civil society and people to participate in the decision making process regarding environmental issues. It also helps people to use the right to sue in fighting against environmental violations that affect their lives. Habi centre is interested in raising campaigns with vast participation by NGOs and public figures and using media tools (press, etc.) to help citizens to obtain their environmental rights. It also issues publications, bulletins and reports on this issue.

Habi website, in obtaining information and spreading its message depends on transfer and update speed. It counts on the written word and on images.

Mr. Mohamed Nagui, the centre's director, stated that the website had passed through two stages:

* The first stage; the main goal during that time was merely to obtain a website. Through this site the centre can define its activities and publish information for those who are interested in

environmental issues or those who might be interested in the future. The role of the website then was to publish the information on a wide scale as the internet plays an important role in exchanging experiences on the Arabic and international levels

* The second stage; began in 2003 as the goal changed to be developing the website, reclassifying it and to add photos of the centre's activities

Developing the website takes a lot of valuable time of those who work at the centre as they try to solve the many problems that hinder this development, such as finding human rights activists interested in the environmental field who can work full time on the website instead of normal technicians.

Despite the low standard of the website, its continuous updates clarify the desire of the centre's team to benefit from the internet. Unfortunately, they do not know much enough its capabilities and options.

The National Institution for Defending Rights and Freedoms, HOOD

<http://www.hoodonline.org>

The National Institution for Defending Human Rights and Freedoms is the first monitoring organization in Yemen. It works on legal assistance. The institution established its website to spread human rights culture among the Yemeni people. This role is very important in light of the current dilemma in the Arab region; the accusations against new thoughts of being loyal to and following the west along with accusations against human rights activists. The institution thinks that human dignity is a common responsibility.

It transforms the monitoring mechanism into news and then a campaign accompanied with field movement.

The HOOD website was established to achieve these goals and it has managed to succeed so far in spite of the limited number of Yemeni participants.

The website suffers from:

- * Governmental control of internet services - the connection between Yemen and the Web
- * There is untold governmental red tape
- * Most journalists do not have any legal or human rights culture

The website depends on the quantity of the topics and the speed of publishing them along with internal search possibilities. It also uses interactive tools with the audience who can add an article or a comment.

The website using a mailing list but the forms of expression on it are limited in to the written word only. There is another problem with the website in that it is difficult to reach the information and the many links as they are not all functioning.

In general, the website's capabilities should be understood according to the economic conditions in Yemen and the limited technical experiences there.

Observatory for the Freedom of Press, Publishing and Creation

<http://www.observatoire-olpec.org>

The Observatory for the Freedom of Press, Publishing and Creation in Tunisia was established on 3rd May 2001. It is a member of IFEX. It aims at:

- * Investigating the conditions of media, books and publications in all creation fields, literature, art, etc and publishing reports on them
- * Paying attention to all forms of sponsorship on press, internet, books, theatre, cinema, music and different other modes of expression
- * Proposing procedures and reforms that help to improve the legislations to guarantee freedom of expression and creation, especially Act 19 of the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Convention for Civil and Political Rights

Miss Naziha Reguiba assured during a workshop that 'the Tunisian administration refuses to license the observatory and claim that the word observatory can not be used but by the state. The observatory thus filed a law suit'

The observatory managed in a short time to take a respected position in the Tunisian human rights community. It cooperated with many Tunisian organisations and international ones. It is also a member of IFEX.

The website was established in 2006. It uses three languages; Arabic, French and English.

The website consists of many sections, among them:

- * Statements; it contains the positions of the observatory regarding national issues and causes related to freedom of media and expression in the Arab world
- * Links; it contains links to a number of Arabic and international organizations

The major obstacles that face the observatory in using the internet perfectly are:

- * The Tunisian governmental control of internet services and blocking of the website
- * Depriving activists of internet access as a punishment for their activities during the international information summit in Tunisia. It has become difficult to send e-mails on the website's updates

Many of the issues proposed by Miss Naziha have solutions. The blocking of the website or the refusal to register the observatory should not prevent from developing the website, especially as it is being updated from Morocco not Tunisia.

The oppression of the Tunisian government could be a justification for not using the internet so widely, but the website stays limited as long as it is being updated from Morocco.

Nadeem Centre for Psychological Therapy and Rehabilitation of the Victims of Violence

Nadeem Centre for Psychological Therapy and Rehabilitation of the Victims of Violence was established in 1993. The work in the centre developed from psychological therapy and the rehabilitation of victims of violence to fighting the phenomenon of torture itself and to protect citizens.

Work in Nadeem is divided between supporting victims and comparing the reality to human rights conventions.

The centre is considered the symbol of an organisation working in an important field; the protection against torture. Despite this and the 14 years continuous work, internet as a tool is totally absent. We find the name of Nadeem through search engines, as a result of its publishing its news and statements via the Arabic Network for Human Rights Information website.

Dr. Rajia Jarzawy stated in a workshop held by the network that 'the Nadeem centre uses the internet though it does not have its own website, but it is limited to any campaign and ends by the end of the campaign. The centre also uses the internet to obtain information. The reason the centre does not use all internet tools and options is that they do not realize how important the internet is. This is coupled with the advanced age of the physicians working in the centre and the difficulty for them to learn. Above all,

the centre does not have the financial resources required to hire internet specialists.

Some basic indicators to evaluate the NGO websites;

indicator	The Arabic committee	Aman	Nadeem	Hood	Habi	AHULA	AHED	Observatoire
Daily update	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Search engine	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
RSS	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-
Polls	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Visitors' comment	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Forums	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
e-mail list	-	-	1	1	-	1	1	-
Sound & image	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Arrangement on ALIXA	393,585	41,517	-	387,886	1,037,309	287,256	2,016,918	-

The table was made March 2007

In our evaluation to human rights websites and how much they have benefited from internet technologies, we depended on indicators such as the quantity of the material, its diversity (news, statement, report, publications, research, conventions, etc.), updating speed, the search engines inside the website, interactive tools, adding news, comment, polls, forums, mailing list and the

diversity of expression tools (written words, graphic, video).

Unfortunately the result was that the majority of human rights websites included in this study, except Aman, Jordan and the AHRLA, were so poor and shows an absence of internet technology.

We also notice that the Arabic human rights NGOs are still far from the internet and waste tremendous opportunities. In an oppressive situation such as the reality of the conditions in the Arab world, the internet could have become a tool to break the overcast and siege imposed on human rights NGOs. The Arabic organisations neglected this fact or surrendered to the imposed conditions which can be considered as surrender in a round in the fight against governmental oppression that human rights could have won.