

Yemen

Most pleasant is your land and most forgiving is your lord

Several years ago, I accompanied *Bayt Zakat* on a trip to Sana'a to preview a development project for the Yemeni people. We had multiple meetings with the social activists, as well as field visits to orphanages and other places. A hundred articles would not be enough to describe the sufferings of these people who are known for their kindness and generosity. I don't know my way in or out of the politics of the situation, but in my opinion, the only benefit we can hope for from Operation Decisive Storm is that this nation might be saved from its first enemies of illiteracy and ignorance. According to the UN's published statistic, although I've heard even higher numbers, the illiteracy rate in Yemen is 30% for men while it rises to 60% for women. Common childhood illnesses and infections such as tonsillitis are a leading cause of death among children, and the highest percentage of orphans in the Arab world is in Yemen. To top it all off, there is the *khat* epidemic which is spreading amongst women and even children. (A plant native to the region, khat is an addictive stimulant which causes episodes of excitement and euphoria. Significant agricultural resources in Yemen are used in the plant's cultivation.) Chemically processed khat can be considered a main cause of cancers. Now there are the wars in Yemen, but what this country needs are education and development programs in parallel with Kuwait's continuous financial support. For instance, Sana'a University was built by Kuwait, as well as many schools and hospitals. Gratitude is still being expressed by Yemenis towards Kuwait and its people.