

# Yemen - Media Landscape

Author(s): Laura Silvia Battaglia, Peter Wagner

Copyright © European Journalism Centre (EJC) 2024 - [MediaLandscapes.org](https://www.media-landscapes.org)

---

## Table of contents

- Introduction
- Media
  - Print
  - Radio
  - Television
  - Digital Media
  - Social Networks
  - Opinion Makers
  - Sources
- Organisations
  - Trade Unions
  - Journalist Associations
  - News Agencies
  - Audience measurement organisations
  - Sources
- Policies
  - Media legislation
  - Accountability systems
  - Regulatory authorities
  - Sources
- Education
  - Universities and schools
  - Professional development
  - Media Development Organisations
  - Sources
- Telecommunications
  - Mobile network ecosystem
  - Company profiles
  - Main trends
  - Mobile coverage
  - Mobile ownership
  - Sources
- Innovation
  - Landscape analysis
  - Profiles of main tech parks, accelerators, hackathons

- Sources
  - Traditional forms of communication
    - Summary
    - Sources
  - Conclusions
    - 5.1 Conclusion
    - 5.2 References
- 

## Overview

Six years of war have changed the Yemeni media landscape for worst in terms of number of publications, independence, freedom of the media and the press and distribution. According to Freedom House [‘Freedom in the World’](#) report Yemen received 11 out of 40 points for political rights, 10 out of 60 for civil rights, and a Not Free Status. These numbers indicate that Yemen belongs to the 25 least free countries in the world. On the scales of the Internet Freedom Scores and Democracy Scores Yemen did not even appear. Although on the 2020 [World Press Freedom Index](#) Yemen has improved one position since last year, the press freedom is still considered to be in a very serious situation (black category).

According to the International Media Support organization’s 2019 [Annual Report](#) the IMS mentoring program provided help for the Al-Mushahid startup to strengthen its editorial and journalistic capacity. Thanks to the American University in Beirut, Yemenis could also receive online training besides journalists of Gaza, and Syria. Since the outbreak of the new civil war in 2015, the TV and the radio dominate the [media scene](#), while the press is subject to suppression. Albeit by now some 7 million Yemenis have access to the internet, the availability of content and the network access is strictly limited by the Houthi government.

The Media Support organisation report of 2012 about media in Yemen explains that before 2011 there were clear red lines which President Ali Abdullah Saleh considered inviolable. Journalists were largely able to understand the risks of crossing them. But with the collapse of Saleh’s presidency came a new threatening environment, in which red lines and those who had the guns to enforce them proliferated. After enduring more than three decades of censorship, Yemen’s press should have flourished after President Saleh announced his resignation in November 2011 in the face of months of massive protests. Revolution helped a lot of new media to emerge; most of them are belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood Islah Party or have political views very close to it. But like in so many Arab countries after that period, hopes for greater freedom for the press were dashed.

The situation definitely collapsed in 2014 and at the beginning of 2015, [when Houthis occupied the city of Sana’a](#) and then expanded their presence, influence and power from the North to the South. In the North, the circulation of certain press, belonging to the official government and President Hadi was discouraged and even blocked; especially the press close to the Muslim Brotherhood vision, and the Islah Party political views was stopped, offices closed, journalists fired or even arrested and kidnapped by gunmen and militias. [Some of them disappeared](#) and no one knows where they are exactly until now. In the city of Sana’a, actually, the only press available is that belonging to Houthis militias, Ansarullah party or, if independent, which supports *de facto* the new government in the North, criticizes the loyal government of Mansur Hadi and condemns the Saudi led military campaign against Yemen.

The media is dominated through the links between the media outlets and the political parties. Most local publishers suspended their print editions, while the English language press has completely disappeared. TV channels are also strictly controlled by parties, each side operates its own program. Private satellites are only allowed to operate if they have close relations to the leading groups.

The development of journalistic professionalism in Yemen has reached a minimum term. War destroyed any ambition. Journalists who are still working take part in a propaganda game, positioning themselves with or against the loyal government and paying consequently the price. Although detentions, violent actions, and torture were already present since the outbreak of the civil war, lately death sentences were prosecuted against the voices of the opposition. Besides the insecure political environment airstrikes, urban fights, and inhuman conditions endanger journalists while reporting. As the Yemeni press is under threat from all directions and journalists are unable to report or even defend their own colleagues without fear of retaliation. The targeted intimidation and the [reportedly dead or missing journalists](#) have also affected foreign journalists. The hostile circumstances have led to the closure of most of the newspapers, television channels, and news websites.

The media market didn't develop as expected after the Revolution in 2011, but rather transitioned to a weak phase, absolutely dominated by the links between the media and the political parties. This is totally clear in the printed media market, followed by the broadcast TV market and website circulation where, with the presence of international and satellite channels and websites not based in the country, it is possible to have access to different and various views about what is happening inside and outside of Yemen.

The control of the militias over journalists is strong and dangerous for them. So, the intervention of the two *de facto* States in the country (the official government of President Mansour Hadi and the Houthi government under the presidency of Ali Abdullah Saleh) is invasive. The Yemeni press is under threat from all directions and journalists are unable to report or even defend their own colleagues without fear of retaliation.

Considering also the deaths resulting from bombings by the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthis and [the targeting of journalists by al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#), this is the worst time ever in the history of the country in terms of cost of journalists' lives.

## Media

---

### Print

The most followed Yemeni printed newspaper is *Al-thawra News* (The Revolution). It's located in Sana'a, Airport street. Founded on September 1962, it celebrated its golden jubilee in 2012. The newspaper has a pro-government stance. After Houthi rebels took the capital Sana'a in power, the newspaper followed their political agenda.

*Al-Jumhuryah* daily newspaper is a leading newspaper based in Taiz. It was founded in 1962 and distributed by Al-Jumhuryah Establishment for Journalism and Publishing. It's pro-government. Now it is controlled by the official government based in Aden. It is only printed and has a circulation of 15,000 copies.

*26<sup>th</sup> September* is a political weekly newspaper that is published by the Ministry of Defence. It's located in Sana'a. The weekly is mostly focused on local and international political issues. Currently it supports the Houthi rebels in the North.

*Al-Motamar* is a government-owned daily newspaper. It belongs to the General People's Congress (GPC) close to Ali Abdullah Saleh's views. It spreads news about the war and updates on it.

The *14<sup>th</sup> October* newspaper was founded in 1968 and initially named *In the South of Yemen* after the revolution against the British colonial rule. The headquarter is in Aden. Formerly run by the government of South Yemen before the reunification in 1990, it's now run by the State of Yemen and its publisher is the 14<sup>th</sup> October Foundation for Journalism, Printing and Publishing. By the end of 2010 the newspaper had a circulation of 20,000 copies.

*Al-Ayyam* daily newspaper was founded in 1958. The paper was shut down after South Yemen became independent under a Marxist regime in 1967. The son of the founder resumed publication in 1990 after the unification of North and South Yemen. The paper's compound in Sana'a had been the subject of an attack by a dozen gunmen in February 2008. Based in Aden, it was the most widely read newspaper in southern Yemen, when it was one of seven newspapers closed in May 2009, with the government accusing it of supporting separatism. It reappeared in May 2014 after a five-year halt.

The *Yemen Observer* is an English-language, tri-weekly newspaper. It was founded in 1996 by Faris Sanabani, aide and press secretary of Saleh, the former Yemeni president. Its editors include the Editor-in-Chief Abdulaziz Oudha, and Yemen Observer's feature writers Abdulaziz Oudha and Faisal Darem. Since 1996, the *Yemen Observer Publishing House* has diversified dramatically from a single bi-weekly newspaper to a five-armed media institution, publishing both in English and in Arabic: *Yemen Today*, *Arabia Felix*, *Sports and Spectrum*. Those are examples of the company's fast and successful expansion. *Today* has become the first English-speaking publishing house of the country, actively supporting Yemen in its socio-economic transition. It also launched magazine *Yemen Today*, the most dynamic branch of the publishing house, promoting investment and tourism in Yemen, a country which has promising potential in this field.

*Yemen Times* was founded in 1991 by Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf, a leading economist and human rights activist, who was also its editor and publisher until he died in a traffic accident in 1999. In the paper's mission statement, he wrote: "We use the *Yemen Times* to make Yemen a good world citizen." The paper is based in Sana'a. As of 2007, Nadia Al-Sakkaf is the editor-in-chief of the daily. The paper has offices and correspondents all over the country. It supports press freedom, respect for human rights, political pluralism and democracy. It promotes non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other forms of civil-society organisations. On the economic front, it supports liberalisation and open interaction with other nations. The paper and its editor were awarded the NPC's International Award for Freedom of the Press for 1995. The paper also won the Free Media Pioneer Award by the International Press Institute in 2006.

The first national English-language Yemeni newspapers were published in the 1960s in Aden. These were *Aden Chronicle* by Mohammed Ali Luqman and *The Recorder* by Muhammad B?-Sharh?. The publication of these and their sister Arabic-language newspapers *Fat?t ul-Jaz?rah* and *Al-Ayyam* ceased when the National Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (NLF) took power in the People's Republic of South Yemen (PRSY), later known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in 1967. The publication of *Al-Ayyam* was resumed after the unification of the two sectors of Yemen in 1990. During the war in 2015, the newspaper was unable to continue issuing the printed version, but continued providing online updates at their website. *Al Sahwa* was established in 1986. It is one of the official media outlets of the Islah Party or Al Islah. The paper has a website. Although the paper is published weekly on Thursdays, its website is updated daily. Rajeh Badi is the editor-in-chief of the weekly. The paper describes itself as the voice of Islamic movement in the country. Therefore, it offers the analysis of news from an Islamic angle. The paper's online version was the 17th most visited website for 2010 in

the MENA region. The offices of *Al-Sahwa* in Sana'a was attacked by gunmen in May 2011. The attacks were allegedly carried out by the Yemeni military forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

## Radio

The radio in Yemen has a significant role in [shaping the narratives](#) of the war. Since the rate of illiteracy is high, for 30% of the population radio channels are the only source of information. Due to this precious role of the radio, Houthis are waging a ruthless war against radio stations across the country. As a consequence, most of the radios either shut down their broadcasts, started to operate according to the Houthi requirements. Radio stations wishing to broadcast independent content were forced to move to other Arab capitals, such as Riyadh, Cairo, and Abu Dhabi.

All radio broadcasts in Yemen are controlled by the state-run Yemen general Corporation for Radio and Television (YGCRT). The YGCRT operates two national radio networks with studios in Sana'a and Aden. It also runs Al-Shabab Radio, a Sana'a-based radio station that broadcasts four hours per day targeting a youth audience. In addition YGCRT operates local radio stations in 10 provincial cities. Today, most of these in Sadaa, Lahj, and Zinjibar, were shut down by the Houthis.

Radios are heavily impacted by the so-called [war effort revenues](#), a form of taxes which if refused to be paid, can result in detention or execution of the staff. The aired contents consist of pro-Houthi propaganda, messages of support for Hezbollah and Iran, military recruiting campaigns, reports on the destruction caused by Saudi-led airstrikes, or popular songs calling for war.

Local radio stations are commonly referred to as "kitchen radio" because it is very common that especially women listen to them while they are cooking. Actually there are more than 10 radio channels, most of which broadcast in the medium waves, except for *Sana'a Radio* that also broadcasts in the short waves and locally in the FM. These radios broadcast in the following provincial capitals: Ataq, Al Hodeidah, Hajjah, Ibb, Lahj, Al Mukalla, Saada, Sayun, Taiz and Zinjibar.

*Sana'a Radio* is a Yemeni Radio that first began airing in 1947 at a rate of two and a half hours per week (two days per week) with a small transmitter with a capacity that did not exceed 13 kw. Broadcast programmes were about the following topics: Quran, religious Hadiths and Touachih (religious songs); then it provided some old military marches that were left behind by the Turks after their departure from Yemen. In addition the broadcaster aired songs from the drama television series *Copper*, about the American Civil War. Transmission continued in this manner until the year 1948, when broadcasting stopped for an indefinite time after the failure of the 1948 revolution because of the positive role played by the radio in supporting the rebels. The shutdown continued until 1955. Except for one week in the year, when the radio reopened its programs to celebrate the so-called Festival of Victory.

Despite severe censorship by the regime on the radio sector before the revolution, there was a creative constellation which contributed to the evolution of radio programmatically and administratively, whenever it had the opportunity to develop. During the travel of the local Imam to Italy in 1958, *Sana'a Radio* presented several programs on the injustices and tyranny of the government, on the development status of the neighboring countries and it also focused on what the southern provinces of the country suffered under foreign occupation (the British) and advocated the need for the exit of the occupiers in order to reunite the country. And once the first spark of the 26 September Revolution in 1962 appeared, *Sana'a Radio* led the initiative to broadcast the first statement of the revolution goals.

*Aden Radio* is the second most popular station nationwide. Before the union of the two Yemens in 1990, *Aden Radio* served as the national radio station of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. It broadcasts for 18 hours a day from 06:00 to midnight in Aden and Sana'a on 92.6 or 105.0 FM. Its outputs includes entertainment, music and news. The station was originally set up under the British colonial rule in 1954.

*Al-Shabaab Radio* is a Sana'a-based radio station targets young people with educational, religious, political and cultural programmes. It also broadcasts special programmes on religious and national holidays. It was launched in 2003. It broadcasts (in FM and in Medium Wave) four hours per day in two separate two-hours segments. It also broadcasts on satellite.

*Taiz Radio* serves one of the largest provincial cities in North Yemen and the surrounding rural area. It broadcasts eight hours per day. It was set up in 1963 by the newly installed Republican Government in Sana'a to allow it to continue broadcasting in the event that Royalist forces were recaptured the capital.

*Al-Hodeidah Radio* broadcasts from the Red Sea port of al-Hodeida which also is the centre of Yemen's oil industry. It's on air for 13 hours per day. It started in 1968 as a community radio station.

*Ibb Radio* broadcasts in the South Western city of Ibb and the surrounding area for five hours per day. The station started broadcasting in 2005.

*Shabwa Radio* is one of the more recent local radio stations of Yemen. It began broadcasting from Ataq, the capital of the Shabwa governorate in Central Yemen.

*Lahj Radio* is situated in Lahj, the capital of Lahj governorate, about 50 km North of Aden. It has been off air since the attack on Lahj town by Islamist rebels in 2011. Since 2012 it broadcasts via streaming from *Al-Shabaab Radio* website in Sana'a.

*Al-Mukalla Radio* broadcasts from the southeastern coastal city of Al-Mukalla, in the sparsely populated southern governorate of Hadramawt. The station broadcasts nine hours per day in FM and Medium Wave band. It has been closed by Aqap which took the city in 2016.

*Sayun Radio* broadcasts from the northeastern town of Sayun and covers the northern part of the Hadramawt governorate. It broadcasts six hours a day.

*Hajjah Radio* broadcasts from the city of Hajjah, about 130 km North-West of Sana'a on 89.2 FM.

*Abyan Radio* used to broadcast on FM from the coastal city of Zinjibar, 60 km West of Aden. Its coverage was limited to Zinjibar and the adjacent rural area. When Zinjibar fell under the control of Aqap in March 2011, various media reported that the rebels used the radio station to announce the establishment of an Islamic emirate in the area. *Abyan Radio* subsequently went off air. From January 2012 it was no longer operational.

To counter the growing Iranian influence on the ground, the Saudi Broadcasting Corporation started to develop content for Saudis deployed in Yemen. The *Al-Azam* station, located on Saudi territory can be accessed in Northern Yemen through satellite connection.

Radio Lana is one of the most popular operating FM in Yemen. The channel is backed by the International Media Support, and belongs to the few independent news sources. From early mornings till late evenings, every day except for Friday the radio broadcasts to around 3 million listeners. In 2019, Radio Lana introduced a special program focusing on mental health, dealing with political differences, and processing the death of loved ones. The radio can also be considered pioneer for

employing women as two-thirds of the editorial team.

## Television

Television is the other dominating media source besides the radio. This shows a significant departure from the data one decade ago, when 86 percent of the respondents watched television on a daily basis, whereas only 19 percent listened to the radio and 12 percent read newspapers.

A survey of media consumption habits carried out by the BBC World Service Trust in 2010 found that 86 percent of the respondents watched television on a daily basis, whereas only 19 percent listened to the radio and 12 percent read newspapers. TV viewing was equally popular among the young and elders alike. It is also widespread amongst all social and income groups, from wealthy, sophisticated citizenry to the rural poor.

Yemen has around 17 television channels, 4 channels owned by the government (*Yemen TV, Aden TV, Saba TV, Al-Iman TV* ).

*Yemen TV* is the first official channel to start broadcasting in North Yemen in 1975, joined by other Arab channels via Intelsat-59 in 1995 and later via Nilesat. After the unification of the country with Aden (South Yemen) to form the Republic of Yemen, the channel continued to be considered the main national broadcaster of the new united Yemen. After joining other Arab channels via Intelsat-59, a second channel was added in year 2000. On 19 January 2015, [the Houthis seized the channel](#). The channel then split into two factions: one pro-Hadi, the other pro-Houthi. On 21 January [the director of the channel, Tawfik al-Sharabi, resigned](#). The station's director of the pro-Houthi faction was killed, with his entire family, on 9 February 2016 [by an airstrike of the Saudi-led coalition](#), during the latter's intervention in Yemen. On 19 February 2016, [a cameraman of the Hadi faction was killed in Taiz](#).

*Yamania Television* was founded in 1980 in the South of Yemen as *Aden Channel* and was renamed after the unity of Yemen. Another channel with many viewers in the South is *Aden Live* which is run by Southern separatists via Nilesat.

Most of the other channels broadcast via Nilesat, an Egyptian company established in 1996 with the purpose of operating Egyptian satellites and their associated ground control station and uplinking facilities. The company is owned by the Egyptian radio and television union with a 40 percent share, the Arab Organisation for Industrialisation with a 10 percent share, the Egyptian Company for Investment Projects with a 9 percent share and the rest is owned by the general public, Egyptian financial institutions and other investors. The company has two ground stations, a primary one in 6th of October City and a secondary ground station in Alexandria. Nilesat operates multiple geosynchronous communications satellites all of which are stationed at 7 degrees West. Nilesat includes more than 415 video channels, 300 of which are free-to-air.

In Yemen, the offer via Nilesat includes: *Al-Saeedah* television channel which broadcasts since 2007; *Suhail* television channel which started broadcasting in 2009 and is operated by Al-Islah political party; *Sama Yemen TV*; *Belqees TV* since 2014; *Yemen Shabab TV* which targets the youth; *Yosr TV*; *Maeen TV*; *Al-Saahaat TV* which began broadcasting in 2014; *Azal TV*; *Yemen Today*; *Al-Shareyyah* since 2015; government-run *Sheba TV* and *Al-Iman Television*, an Islamic-dedicated channel opened in 2008. It is run by the government and presents moderate positions against terrorism and radicalism. Last but not least, *Al-Masirah* is the channel run by the Houthi movement via Nilesat. The channel had a significant increase after Houthi rebels took the capital Sana'a and established their power in the region. It is currently the main channel in the North of the country and spreads an oriented vision of the ongoing war. It was closed on May 2015 along with other anti-Saudi channels on Nile Sat and Euro Sat, due to a Saudi pressure on satellite companies which forced Al Masirah to restart

broadcasting on the Russian satellite Express AM44. During the conflict *Al Masirah* lost three journalists covering the war.

## Digital Media

According to the [Digital2020 report](#), almost 18 million Yemenis has a cell phone out of the population of around 30 million., a. Although 60% of Yemenis have mobiles, only around 8 million people have access to the internet, and 2,5 million use the social media. However, this low percentage can still be considered as a huge step since compared to 2019, 403 thousand new users interact regularly on social media. The number of people having access to internet has grown by 177.000 since 2019). The Top 3 most frequently visited webpages are Google, YouTube, and Facebook.

A screenshot of a cell phone screen with text Description automatically generated

Image not found or type unknown

A proposed new law to regulate the broadcast and online media was approved by the cabinet and submitted to parliament in December 2010. The draft law was principally aimed at defining the conditions under which private radio and television would be allowed to exist. However, it also aimed to regulate news websites based inside Yemen. Under the terms of the draft law, the government would have charged a fee of 20m riyals (approximately US\$90,000), for a licence to set up and run a news website. Few independent operators could afford such a sum until now. Several political parties and news organisations have established an online presence.

About 200 Yemeni news websites are accessible from within the country, but limited public access to computers and government filtering of Internet content make it difficult for ordinary Yemenis to take full advantage of them. Many of the news websites are government-controlled, Others are propaganda mouthpieces for various opposition groups.

There are a number of professionally designed pro-government sites that concentrate on news from particular regions or governorates. These include: Akhbar al-Janub (News of the South), Lahj News, Ibb News and SaadahPress.

At the time of Saleh's previous government (2009), a number of independent and opposition news websites were shut down. These included the news websites *Al-Shura.net* and *Ishtiraki.net*, *Adenpress.com* and the websites of four independent newspapers: *Al-Ayyam*, *Al-Taghyir*, *Al-Masdar* and *Al-Wasat*. Furthermore, the Yemeni government also blocked *Yemenhurra.net*, a website that covered the Saada conflict.

Several opposition parties also have their own websites which feature a combination of news and information about the organisation. These include *Al-Sahwa (The Awakening)*, the official website of Islah. *Al Masdar Online*, the news website of the independent weekly newspaper *Al-Masdar*, is also very popular, possibly the most popular website of the last years.

Websites reflecting extra-parliamentary opposition or dissident viewpoints tend to be based outside the country. Many do not



disclose their location. This might not come as a surprise since according to the [Global Information Society Watch](#) Yemen has no regulation protecting the privacy of internet users. Consequently, as the government has direct access to the servers of Yemen Net, the personal data of millions of Yemenis is subject to misuse.

## Social Networks

It's interesting to know that Internet is expanding quickly in Yemen, which has a total population of 26.737 million. The index penetration rate is 25.1 percent and a lot is done by social media. Today, 90 percent of the population has access to Internet via mobile (second hand phones) and uses social media like Facebook to access news or share updates about the war, airstrikes, attacks and casualties. Facebook became very popular even among illiterate people that share mostly pictures.

The [Arab Social Media Report 2015](#), by the Arab Social Media Influencers Summit in Dubai, shows that Facebook and WhatsApp are the most used social media channel across the Arab World, while Facebook was the most used social media channel at an aggregate level of the Arab World. In Yemen, as of 2015, 93 percent of the population who accesses Internet uses Facebook; 92 percent has Whatsapp; Youtube is also popular (41 percent), while Google+ is used by 35 percent of Yemenis and Instagram reached 31 percent. The Facebook users rate is one of the highest in all the Arab World, along with Libya (93 percent), Lebanon (95 percent) and Syria (97 percent) that takes the first place.

According to *YemenNet*, the country's main internet service provider, in 2011 alone there were 88,000 subscribers to high-speed ADSL services and about 500,000 subscribers to slower speed dial-up services. Today the market is extending its targets thanks to 3G services for mobile phones. It is a huge step considering that, until 2012, the main access to Internet was possible only at internet cafés, making the surveillance of internet users easier. Also, given the conservative nature of the Yemeni society, which discourages women from leaving the home unaccompanied and frequenting Internet cafes, there were far fewer female Internet users than male. Over the last three years, the expanding 3G market changed the habits of the population.

Until now, the government's ownership of the two main internet service providers, *TeleYemen* and *YemenNet*, facilitated state control over internet access. Regarding censorship and social media, Skype was banned by *TeleYemen* in 2010 on the grounds that it provided an "unauthorised" communications service.

99% of the Yemenis use the social media, via mobile phones. This shows a divergence from a few years ago tendency when the people mainly accessed the internet at internet cafés. Despite the widespread browsing on mobiles, only 17% of the gadgets have broadband connections (3G-5G). This might not come as a surprise in the light of the internet [price hikes](#) last September. As community networks became illegal, Houthi authorities have a free hand in raising prices. As Houthi rebels are trying to curb internet access and raise funds to fuel the war, controlling information became top priority for the parties. To react on the price hikes, Yemen's national syndicate of community launched a social media campaign and sued the Ministry of Telecommunication and Information Technology.

Facebook, and not Instagram or other mainly visual content sharing sites, became the most popular social media platform. Even illiterate people use Facebook. According to Facebook reports used in [Digital2020 report](#), females are more active regarding liking and clicking on advertisements. Facebook is followed by Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The popularity of blogs is also on the rise.

## Opinion Makers

The history of Yemen shows a large list of notable and important Yemenis, including scholars, academics, muslims clerics, jew rabbis, poets and professors. Recently the importance of Yemeni opinion makers emerged clearly during the Revolution

of 2011. Just to mention one of the most famous, Tawakool Karman is a Yemeni journalist and activist, belonging to the Islah Party, who fought for the establishing of a new country, spreading words of peace and defending women rights. Tawakool received the Nobel Prize for Peace and actually is the most famous Yemeni opinion maker and influencer all over the world.

The conflict started in 2015 polarised several Yemeni opinion makers around the parties at war. Twitter, which was an emerging social media during the revolution, became the place where some activist used their influence to orient the public opinion or, simply, became the best place to spread news about the situation in the country under the war and the siege.

Ali Abdulkhaiti, Mohammed al-Ruaba, Hayal Bafana and Hisham al-Omeisy are the most popular Yemeni influencers on Twitter, each followed by thousands, thanks also to their communication in two languages, Arabic and English. The last two give a daily on-the-ground insight about the war on Twitter. They show a clear and strong anti-Saudi position.

The critical voices take a considerable risk with their public opposition of any side. According to the [Human Rights Watch](#) Houthi forces, the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia, and different armed groups have arbitrarily detained people perceived to be security risks. Torture, sexual violence, and forced disappearances.

Over the past years thousands of people were arrested for peaceful assembling, while on other protests security forces used lethal force against the protesters.

## Sources

### Newspapers

- [Hadramout](#)
- [Muhitel Yemen](#)
- [News Yemen](#)
- [Ntk news](#)
- [Sahafah](#)
- [Sahafah24](#)
- [Yemen Akhbar](#)
- [Yemen Now](#)
- [Yemen Portal](#)
- [Yemenat](#)

### Radio

- [Aden Radio](#)
- [Alshabab Radio](#)
- [Hajjah Radio](#)
- [Lahij Radio](#)
- [Mukalla Radio](#)
- [Radio Hod](#)
- [Sana'a radio](#)
- [Sayun Radio](#)
- [Taiz Radio](#)
- [Yemen RTV](#)

## Television

- [Ade-TV](#)
- [Al Saeedah TV](#)
- [Aleman TV](#)
- [Justin TV/Suhail TV](#)
- [Sheba TV](#)
- [TV Aden](#)
- [Yemen TV](#)

## Digital media

- [Akhbar al-Janub](#)
- [Al Masdar Oon line](#)
- [Al masdaronline](#)
- [Alganob](#)
- [Al-Sahwa](#)
- [Alsahwa Yemen](#)
- [Ibb News](#)
- [Lahj News](#)
- [SaadahPress](#)

## Opinion makers

- [@Ali\\_albukhaiti](#) - Ali Albukhaiti
- [@BaFana3](#) - Hayal Bafana
- [@malrubaa](#) - Mohammed Alrubaa
- [@omeisy](#) - Hisham al-Omeisy

# Organisations

---

## Trade Unions

The Yemeni Confederation of Labor Unions (YCLU) is the only national trade union in Yemen. It was formed in 1990 by the Aden Trade Union Congress and the General Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions. The YCLU is affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions.

Yemen is also member in the Public Services International (PSI) representing workers of public services. The [General Trade Union Federation of Yemenite Workers](#) is located at Sana'a and aims to enforce trade union rights amidst the vicissitudinary situation.

## Journalist Associations

Despite the civil war, closures and Houthis-led raids, a few non-governmental organizations are still working in Yemen. One of them is the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate, affiliated to the Nation Union of Journalists. Most recently the organization announced that [38 of its members have been killed](#) in Yemen since 2014. In a statement issued for Journalists' Day the Syndicate said that "We regret that on this occasion in 2020 there are 16 of our members suffering in prisons and some who have received oppressive sentences from the Houthis in Sanaa." The organization fights to defend the rights of journalists and promote freedom of expression. All Yemeni journalists can become a member who meets the conditions. According to the latest data it listed over 1,400 members.

The Syndicate has 15 permanent employees in its Sana'a headquarters and a similar number in its five other branches. It was established with the help of a government funding in 1999 and was very effective in upholding journalists' rights during the anti-Saleh protests of 2011. It provides journalists with a range of services and facilities, including discounts on medical services and travel. It charges membership fees and continued to receive government funding through the Ministry of Finance until the beginning of the war in 2015.

The syndicate has a "freedom committee" that is on call to help journalists in trouble 24 hours a day and provides legal help if needed and promotes multiple activities, including safety trainings with international organisations (CPJ, IFJ, Media Support) and advocacy activities to save the life of colleagues in danger. Recently, before closing, the syndicate promoted a media-editor dialogue to strengthen professional solidarity between journalists and contrast incitement and hate speech against them.

Since the beginning of the civil war OHCHR documented 357 [human rights violations](#) and abuses against journalists, including 28 killings, two enforced disappearances, one abduction, 45 physical assaults; and 184 arbitrary arrests and detentions.

Acute lack of gasoline, electricity and printing paper made also publishing and distribution increasingly difficult. Online media have also been targeted, with some websites closed down permanently. All media workers experienced restrictions on their freedom of movement. International journalists have virtually been banned from entering the country. Even at that time, external coverage of developments in Yemen was sparse. The media as a whole in Yemen started to face a very serious crisis. They were under severe pressure both physically and financially. While trying to navigate the dangerous political environment, journalists were and still are also struggling to survive on increasingly meagre salaries. Many of the beleaguered outlets, some of which have had to relocate because of direct attacks against their premises, will be forced to completely rethink or even close down their operations.

In addition, the war started in 2015 forced a lot of independent media to close. Several persecutions against journalists from all sides of the fighting have been reported. A large number of journalists, activists and thinkers, particularly in the North and in the ex capital Sana'a are in jail or detained in secret locations by the rebels of the North, according to a report by CPJ. In 2015, 15 journalists were killed in the country: Awab al-Zubiry; Mubarak al-Abadi from Nabaa media Foundation; freelance Mohammed Ghalib al-Majidi; Ahmed al-Shaibani from *Yemen News*; Hashim al-Hamran from *al-Masirah TV*; freelance Almidad Mojalli; Bilal Sharaf al-Deen from *al Masirah TV*; Abdullah Qabil from *Yemen Youth TV*; Youssef al-Ayzari from *Suhai TV*; Mohamed Shamsan from *Yemen Today*, Khaled al-Washli from *al-Masirah TV*; freelance Luke Somers (the only American listed); Hassan al-Wadhaf from *Arabic Media Agency*; Jamal al-Sharabi from *Al-Masdar*; Muhammad al-Rabou'e from *Al-Qahira*. For all of these deceased journalists the motives of the incidents are confirmed. Topics covered by the victims were: 7 percent corruption, 20 percent culture, 33 percent human rights, 80 percent politics, 73 percent war. There are still two journalists for whom the reasons of death are not confirmed: freelance Abdel Karim al-Khaiwani, killed in Sana'a in March 2015 and Abdul Rahman Hamid al-Din, from *Sana'a Radio*, killed in the capital in August 2015. Generally speaking,

airstrikes, shelling and street-by-street urban combat put journalists in Yemen at risk of death and injury.

Abduction is another common practise against journalists in Yemen. Starting from 9 June 2014 when *Hisham al-Yousifi* was **arrested** by pro-Houthis forces along with eight other journalists and activists who were all taken from the same hotel in Sana'a. As of today no one knows exactly where they are held or if they face any charges. These arrests were the most prominent example of how journalists and activists in Yemen are being detained in record numbers by the rebel Ansar Allah movement (Houthis) and their allies. Other journalists' organisations in the country are: Yemeni Journalists Against Corruption, a non-profit organisation also known as Yemen JAC, that promotes good governance and fights against corruption; the Yemeni Union to Protect Journalists (RAPITA), set up in 2002 to defend journalists and monitor press freedom; Women Journalists without chains, set up to defend women journalists by the Yemeni activist Tawakul Karman, which campaigns for freedom of speech and publishes a number of books, including the well known *Press in Yemen, Margins and Violations*; *The media women forum*, a Sana'a-based NGO founded in 2004, which promotes balanced media coverage and provides media training.

Although according to the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) data the violation against journalists has decreased in the last years, the number of journalists killed since 2014 range from 18 (CPJ) till **35**. The divergence of numbers can root in the disappearances, unknown location of the detention camps, and unconfirmed deaths.

## News Agencies

*Saba News Agency* is the government's official news agency. It is the main source of news for state-run radio and television and for many pro-government newspapers. *Saba* has nine branch offices in the following provincial cities: Al-Ghaydah, Taiz, Sayun, Lahj, Zinjibar, Aden, Ataq, Al-Hodeida and Al-Mukalla. *Saba* also publishes its own daily newspaper in Sana'a called *Al-Siyasiyah* (The Political). The news agency was established in 1970. Following the unification with South Yemen 1990 it merged with the Aden-based *Aden News Agency*. *Saba* focuses on official announcements by the government. It also runs stories that reflect the government's opinion. Its website publishes news in Arabic, English and French. *Saba* also provides a photo service.

## Audience measurement organisations

Neither on the official website of the Yemeni Ministry of Information, nor on the page of the Ministry of Telecommunications it is possible to find available data on the widespread of radio and TV.

## Sources

- [Ministry of Telecommunications](#)
- [Saba News Agency](#)
- [Women Journalists Without Chains](#)
- [Yemeni Journalists Against Corruption](#)
- [Yemeni Journalists Syndacate](#)
- [Yemeni Ministry of Information](#)

## Policies

---

## Media legislation

The Yemeni Constitution allows for freedom of expression “within the limits of the law” and the laws regarding press and media are restrictive. The first relevant law is *The Press and Publications Law* of 1990. It requires journalists to uphold “national unity” and adhere to the “goals of the Yemeni revolution” that conducted the country to the unity in one State-Republic. Article 103 bans criticism of the head of State and defamation of “the image of Yemeni, Arab or Islamic heritage.” Article 104 prescribes fines and up to a year in prison for violations. The government, during the time of the Ali Abdullah Saleh presidency, has ignored calls to repeal problematic portions of the 1990 law.

In 2012, Yemen finalised a *Freedom of information law*, becoming just the second Arab country, after Jordan, to enact such legislation, to be implemented in 2013. But institutional mechanisms were not adequately funded and the information agency authorised by the bill had yet to be established in 2015. The effect of the conflict erased transparency and left State institutions unresponsive to information requests. So, the few protections that the legal system provided for journalists’ rights were effectively unenforceable during 2015 and after, due to the breakdown of government functions and armed groups’ occupation of various parts of the country.

## Accountability systems

Under existing laws, Yemeni news outlets and journalists must obtain licenses annually from the Ministry of Information, and printing houses must maintain a registry of printed materials and submit copies to the Ministry of Information. So, by law and regulation, newspapers and magazines must be government-licensed and their content restricted. High capital requirements to establish print publications can exclude new competitors from entering the market. There is no systematic regulation of broadcast media in Yemen, creating legal ambiguities and rendering outlets vulnerable to arbitrary interference.

## Regulatory authorities

In direct contravention of the Yemeni Constitution, which forbids exceptional courts, two specialised courts have been regularly employed to prosecute journalists. The Specialised Criminal Court (SCC), established in 1999 to handle national security cases, targets political dissidents and journalists, while the Specialized Press and Publications Court (SPPG) established in 2009, tries cases related to the media.

Yemen’s government usually monitors and blocks political and sexually explicit websites. If it finds violations, the consequences affect the life of the journalists: There have been reports of journalists being physically attacked as well as arrested and detained since 1990. Until the previous Saleh government, the official reasons for such journalists to be detained were “opposing the law and calling for destruction of infrastructure.” As mentioned before, the freedom of expression within “the limits of the law” actually is applied by all sides and existing parties to destroy their political-military opponents, and their propaganda machines (press and tv) due to the chaos of the war and its consequences.

In 2020 there are four journalists waiting for their execution according to the [Amnesty International](#). Based on their made-up charges – spying for Saudi Arabia, spreading fake news, broadcasting rumors – the Specialized Criminal Court in Sana’a sentenced them to death on the 11th of April, 2020.

## Sources

- [Freedom of Information Law 2012](#) (Arabic)
- [National Center for Information](#) (Arabic)

- [Press and Publication Law 1990](#) (Arabic)
- [Yemen Law for Visual and Audio Media 2014](#) (Arabic)

# Education

---

## Universities and schools

Mass Communication Training and Qualifying Institute (MCTQI) is a government-run centre based in Sana'a and is considered the only Yemeni institution that provides regular professional journalism training. It mostly uses foreign trainers, both from the Arab World and further afield. Until the beginning of the war, MCTQI offered courses in news editing and radio and TV production.

The universities of Sana'a and Aden offer courses in mass communication and media studies but are classroom-based and theoretical and rather far from the practice of modern journalism.

So, 90 percent of the accesses to professionalism in the country are still artisanal and happen through daily work on the ground. The lack of basic skills among editors and journalists is becoming ever more pronounced. Although the media has played an important role in furthering and amplifying the calls for political change after 2011, the conflict has had a negative impact on the tone and independence of the media. Reporting is often emotional and lacks of journalistic objectivity.

## Professional development

There's no professional development in Yemen and this is the reason why the need for training of journalists and media workers in all branches and at all levels is significant. Courses are required in a number of areas including safety, conflict and investigative journalism, ethics, video/photo in conflict zones, business management, online and new media. After the Revolution, different organisations established offices in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden to promote good practices in journalism, as the CDAC Network reports: Human Rights Information and Training Center (HRITC) based in Taiz, enforces laws to protect journalists and raises awareness among journalists about their rights and responsibilities, conducting some journalism trainings; Studies and Economic Media Center, a Sana'a-based non-profit organisation promotes the creation of a more professional media environment in Yemen; Equal Access is a US-based media development organisation that had an office and radio production in Sana'a until the beginning of the war, launching a 30-minute weekly radio program aimed at young Yemenis about serious issues such as unemployment and corruption. Equal Access also provided digital audio equipment to local radio stations and trained professional journalists and producers in investigative reporting, social change communications, digital audio recording and editing; also BBC Media Action established and ran a series of radio journalism training courses in Yemen to improve audience participation and help to support local governance more effectively; Danish Media Development Consultancy (DANICON) also provided support for the state-run local radio stations in Taiz, Abyan, al-Mukalla, Hajjah and Shabwa, including the supply of digital equipment and training in broadcast management and journalism; DW-Akademie has run several media training projects in partnership with MCTQI and *Yemen TV*, organizing workshops in Sana'a; *Yemen Observer*, a Sana'a-based English-language newspaper offers a variety of media services for international journalists, observers and NGO, including media consultancy and translation.

At the moment, the isolation in which the country is blocked makes this high request of trainings quite impossible. Many journalists and filmmakers already left the country and asked for refugee status in Turkey, Europe, US and Canada. Beyond

detention, kidnapping and tortures, journalists in Yemen face severe logistical difficulties simply in performing their work. With many of their offices ransacked and much of their equipment confiscated, journalists had to find new places to work. Internet and electricity – which have never been reliable in Yemen – effectively disappeared completely as the country's humanitarian and economic situation sharply deteriorated and transitioned into war times.

## Media Development Organisations

A series of media development organisations, present in Yemen between the revolution of 2011 and 2014-15, had to suspend their operations on the ground, limiting their activities to support local journalists with small funds, or equipment which is essential for their safety (like bulletproof vests). For example, it is the case of the International Media Support (IMS), which has completely suspended all its ongoing projects, or of the Rory Peck Trust and Freedom House, which keep supporting journalists from abroad, largely providing financial aid to those who were damaged, injured, kidnapped (and then released), to allow them to resume their activity or to support their families. In more than one case, the Rory Peck Trust and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) have provided an active channel for the relocation of journalists in a safer country, such as Jordan, Turkey or Egypt among the MENA countries.

The association of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism (ARIJ) is still operating through affiliated local journalists, conducting in depth and independent investigations about human rights violations, corruption, militias and politics. They don't have a headquarters in Yemen and host their annual meetings in Jordan. *Mawtana*, a Yemeni independent organisation for human rights, established in Sana'a in 2015, has the aim to contribute to the reduction of human rights violations. It releases investigative reports about the media landscape, detention of journalists and threats to independent media and media development organisations already present in the country.

## Sources

- [Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism](#) (ARIJ)
- [Committee to Protect Journalists](#) (CPJ)
- [Danicom](#)
- [DW-Akademie](#)
- [Equal Access](#)
- [Free Press Unlimited](#) (FPU)
- [Freedom House](#)
- [Human Rights Information and Training Center](#) (HRITC)
- [International Media Support](#) (IMS)
- [Internews](#)
- [Mass Communication Training and Qualifying Institute](#) (MCTQI)
- [Mawtana](#)
- [Rory Peck Trust](#)
- [Studies and Economic Media Center](#)
- [Yemen Observer](#)

## Telecommunications



## Mobile network ecosystem

Since 2004, the Yemen Telecommunication Ministry operates Yemen Mobile, the first CDMA in the region. According to the country's main Internet service provider (YemenNet), in 2011 there were 88,000 subscribers to high-speed ADSL services and about 500,000 subscribers to slower speed dial-up services. After that year the market grew to current levels thanks to 3G services for mobile phones.

Besides the 3G of Yemen Mobile, Sabafon, Spacetel Yemen, MTN Group and Y-Telecom are also present, although only with a 2G technology. [Aiden Net](#), a government controlled new internet company launched 4G in July 2020. Due to their profit orientation, which has grown since the outbreak of the civil war, all of them are continuing to provide services despite the [direct attacks on their infrastructure](#). Since fiber optic networks are deployed above the ground, they are visible and vulnerable. As the [Digital2020 Report](#) highlights, 7.88 million Yemenis used the Internet in 2019, which equals to the 27% of the population.

The population accesses the Internet more frequently from mobile phones than from landlines, especially in the case of consumers, families and private individuals. Most companies and offices are equipped with regular Internet access with wireless systems, while individual usage has moved from using Internet cafés, which were very popular before and during the revolution of 2011 and before the 2014–15 coup d'état, to individual access via new or second-hand smartphones.

As the internet access is not limited anymore to internet cafés, the surveillance of internet users became less frequent. For women, who were discouraged to leave their home without male company, this offers a huge opportunity to catch up with the knowledge of the male citizens. Today, Internet cafés are still open mainly in the city of Aden, while in the North, especially in the city of Sana'a, militias ordered the closure of most of them.

Telecommunications were extremely difficult in Yemen even before the war, due to poor infrastructure providing a chronically slow Internet connection. In the South of the country there is also limited phone coverage (as a result 80 percent of Yemeni areas are cut off the Internet). Since the war started in 2015, Houthi rebels took control of Yemen's main telecommunication infrastructures in the North, close to Sana'a, in the area under their rule. This is one of the main reasons behind the decision of Yemen's Minister for Telecommunications and Information Technology, Lutfi Bashareef, to launch the 4G network Aden Net, to end what he called "a siege on telecoms" in areas under government control. Another objective is to transfer the control of Yemen's telecommunications and Internet network to the South, and as such to deprive the Houthis of millions of dollars coming from taxation of telecom operators under their control.

However, telecommunications were limited also before the conflict because of the attempts to sabotage by some militias, from al Qaeda to Houthi rebels, in different areas of the country. These sabotage efforts targeted the distribution of electricity, as well as the telecommunication lines. One of the most important power stations in the whole country, located in the South, in the city of Mukalla, has in fact been repeatedly assaulted by AQAP militias since 2014.

The ongoing war has exacerbated things not only in villages and in the deserts or up in the mountains, but even in city centres. Since the end of 2014, during the turmoil in the North, people started experiencing lack of fuel to refill generators at home, in schools, shops and offices. Since the beginning of the war many people have often been left without mobile network, as well as electricity, for hours and sometimes even days. After 2017, the mobile network has improved in speed and coverage, especially in the cities, with a significant improvement in Sana'a. At the same time an independent network named Adennet has been established in the city of Aden, also to avoid the network's dependence on the areas controlled by the Houthi rebels. It operates only in the South, depending on the supply of electricity.

According to the [#KeptOn report](#), in 2019 Yemen accounted for the most internet shutdowns across the Middle East. The tendency seems to be worsening by the first half of 2020 due to a [damage to a submarine fiber optic cable](#) in January. While Houthis cut off 80% of the internet, the Covid-19 has also largely contributed to the isolation of Yemen from the rest of the world. The price hikes also contribute to the limited access of the net: while 450 GB internet used to cost 115\$, now 400 GB costs 160\$ and 200GB 105\$. As a response to the nearly 50% increase of the prices, a social media campaign has been launched with the hashtag „YemenNet is anti-citizen“.

## Company profiles

The main Yemeni telecommunication companies are Yemen Mobile, Sabafon and MTN. Yemen Mobile is a CDMA2000 network provider founded in 2004 by the Ministry of Telecommunication and is considered the first CDMA network operator in the Middle East. Its system is based on Huawei technologies. In 2012, Yemen Mobile implemented a ZTE network beside the Huawei network, and implemented an LG-Nortel network in eastern parts of the country. Yemen Mobile was established in 2004 as the third wireless operator in Yemen and initially provided circuit switch services besides Internet packages at a speed of 153 kbit/s as a maximum rate. By 2007, it had become an incorporated company and jumped to the top of mobile operators in the country in terms of number of subscribers and coverage.

Sabafon was the first GSM network operator in Yemen, launched in February 2001. The company organisation is represented by sheikh Hamid al-Ahmar as chairman of the company. Its five main partners are: al-Ahmar group, a huge holding active in many fields (bank, oil, power, agencies, franchising, telecommunications, fish, airlines, travel, shoes, clothes, food and beverages), the Bahrein's telecommunication company Batelco, the Hayel Saeed Anam & Co, a local group of Insurance companies, and Consolidated Constructors International Company SAL, one of the leading construction companies worldwide.

MTN Yemen is part of MTN Group Limited, formerly M-Cell, a South-Africa-based multinational mobile telecommunications company, operating in many African, European and Asian countries. Its head office is in Johannesburg. It operates in over 20 countries, and one-third of its revenues come from Nigeria, where it holds about 35 percent market share. In June 2016 MTN recorded 232.6 million subscribers across its operations.

## Main trends

According to the SimilarWeb [Mobile App Ranking](#) the absolute leaders of the most popular mobile apps are the social media and the communication programs. They are closely followed by apps enabling photo and file sharing, and content editing apps.

Imo and Wechat are commonly used apps to replace Skype, which was banned by TeleYemen in 2010 because it provided an unauthorised communications service. [Routekick](#) is still popular among Yemenis and available also in Oman. It works like Uber and provides the customer any vehicle with a driver (motorcycle, car, mini-van, truck). It works also offline.

Due to the economic crisis in the country and the lack of cash in some areas, Yemen Kuwait Bank offers a new service linked to Yemen Mobile. YK bank provides customers full remote control of their accounts through mobile phones without the need of going to the bank: Customers can cash up their account, check it, withdraw from it. It's basically the first time a collaboration between the main mobile company and a bank happens, something new for Yemen.

Other widespread apps are Imo and Wechat, used to make video calls, whose popularity is partly due to the fact that Skype was banned by TeleYemen in 2010 because it provided an unauthorised communications service.

## Mobile coverage

While since 2011 the country's whole territory is covered by 3G (in the South also 4G operated by Adennet), the number of people having actual access to the service is just slightly decreasing.

Yemen is a dangerous market for company personnel as well as destructive for infrastructure, such as mobile towers, which are often deliberately targeted. Due to the lack of stability neither personnel of the internet supplier, not the gadgets and mobile towers are secure. In this situation, solely supplying basic telecommunications services to the community becomes extremely challenging. It is difficult to perform maintenance to infrastructure in areas of open conflict. Despite the hardships, aid organizations are not giving up on Yemen. In 2015 the [Emergency Telecommunication Cluster](#) (ETC) was activated to provide telecommunication services to the humanitarian community working on the field. By doing so, ETC contributes to almost 3000 person's everyday work to solve the humanitarian crisis. Operating on 11 sites, ETC aims to enable the information sharing, provide coordination of partners and activities, and maintain the ETC helpdesk to support the response community. They are operating through satellites and power charging stations.

Satellite and radio communications have become crucial technologies to supply services in Yemen as in the rural and remote areas there is a scarcity of telecommunications equipment, infrastructure and service providers such as ISPs. Given the current political, economic and security situation, an improvement in services and infrastructures appears unlikely in the short to medium term.

## Mobile ownership

Today, more or less the entire Yemeni population of 28.25 million has, at least, one smartphone per capita, and 3G is the most common network used. The majority of people prefer to buy smartphones from companies like Samsung or Huawei, but products made by Apple are considered a status symbol. After 2015, with the beginning of the war, shops in Yemen started to sell second-hand iPhones at very low, convenient prices. Most are second-hand phones from the US market, lost by their first owners or stolen. This explains episodes like the one reported by *The Atlantic*, about the original owners of iPhones lost in USA and ended up in Yemen, who had access to the life of some families in Sana'a because of the pictures appearing when connecting to their iCloud account.

As a consequence, since 2017 the app Yemen Phone is active and available on Google Play. It is the database of Yemeni phones, with the names of all owners. Downloading it to your phone, it is possible to access Yemeni telephone directories and directory services for telecommunications companies in Yemen, searching profiles with the possibility of blocking unwanted ones.

Although there are no specific studies on geographic and social stratification, there appear to be no significant barriers to mobile ownership in Yemen and even illiterate people have one and use some of the most popular apps, like Messenger, Whatsapp or Imo, mainly due to the recent option of vocal messages and video calls. It's common to find people who have Facebook profiles and share only pictures, even if they can't read or write.

Video content is the most distributed on the networks: from religious prayers to songs for children, movies, online pranks and videos of the most popular Arab YouTubers. Many of the new Yemeni mobile users do not have basic literacy education, which serves to explain why videos are the more popular form of content searched and visualized. War content and

propaganda also has a good viewership, particularly on social media platforms, on both sides of the conflict.

Even if the government is still in charge of mobile networks coverage, militias are very careful about the contents of communication shared by users. At Houthi checkpoints, all travellers are requested to turn on their phones, and to show the installed apps, the list of contacts and the content, in particular pictures.

Censorship is one of the main trends in the mobile network ecosystem, and is applied above all to war-related content. In fact, content conveyed by the Houthi rebels of the North, in particular videos showing Coalition bombings on civilians or rebel actions against ships or government military vehicles, are commonly removed from online information channels after a few hours, yet they often remain available through less controlled platforms and search engines. As it often happens in times of war, all communication tends to be monitored. It has been proven that the Coalition has put in place a very sophisticated system of bots on Twitter and other social networks to follow and monitor key figures, politicians, journalists and Yemeni or foreign influencers still present on the ground, with the aim of restricting the sharing of content that can provide some information on the progress of the war campaign or on the violations of human rights in war.

A similar intelligence work is put in place by Houthi rebels who often check the content shared by users on online platforms, sought in search engines or saved in their devices. Their mode of censorship is however primarily physical, "limited" to the body search of the suspected, investigating and seizing their phones, looking for evidence and information on their political militancy.

## Sources

- [Adennet](#)
- [Freedom of Information Law 2012](#) (Arabic)
- [Imo](#)
- [MTN Yemen](#)
- [National Center for Information](#) (Arabic)
- [Press and Publication Law 1990](#) (Arabic)
- [Routekick](#)
- [Sabafon](#)
- [TeleYemen](#)
- [The Atlantic](#)
- [Wechat](#)
- [Yemen Law for Visual and Audio Media 2014](#) (Arabic)
- [Yemen mobile](#)
- [Yemen Phone](#)
- [YemenNet](#)
- [YKB](#)

## Innovation

### Landscape analysis

Yemen is known to be the poorest Gulf country. This also affects innovation in services and telecommunications. Even before the war, services in rural, desert and mountain areas were very poor, both in the infrastructure sector and in the distribution of electricity and telecommunications. Before the war there were high expectations on the potential developments of the innovation process. Unfortunately, the war interrupted the process of infrastructural improvement and innovation in telecommunications, as well as industrial development in the technology sector. Today, even those areas that had already known improvements in urbanisation such as the central governorate of Taiz, have been severely damaged by the effects of the war.

## **Profiles of main tech parks, accelerators, hackathons**

There are no tech parks or hackathons in Yemen, rather individuals providing accelerator-like training in tech development and marketing. The most famous is Maged al-Gamani, from the University of San'a. He invented a new social media app, similar to Facebook, which allows users to speak or text in their language and have their speech or text translated in the receiver's language upon delivery. Aodle was launched in 2014 and after Mr Maged got the international license. The idea was sold and the app is currently available on Google Play, where Aodle it's essentially an instant translator of speeches.

Because of the war, Maged al-Gamani didn't continue his projects in Yemen and abandoned his team. He's currently based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where he's developing Aodle and other connected projects. He became famous in all media in Arabic language and al-Arabiya and others reported about his innovations.

Besides, MIC Developers is the first programming company in Yemen. Based in Sana'a, the company programs apps for Pc's and smartphones, Android system.

## **Sources**

- [Aden TV](#)
- [al-Araby](#)
- [al-Masirah](#)
- [al-Saidah](#)
- [al-Tagheer](#)
- [al-Tagheer](#)
- [al-Thawrah](#)
- [al-Yemen al-Yaoum](#)
- [Aodle](#)
- [Maged al-Gamani](#)
- [Marebpress](#)
- [MIC Developers](#)
- [Odle - Voice call translator](#)
- [Republic of Yemen Radio](#)
- [Republic of Yemen Television](#)
- [Sada al-Masirah](#)
- [Suhayl TV](#)
- [Yemen News Agency](#) (SABA)
- [Yemen portal](#)
- [Yemen Today](#)

# Traditional forms of communication

## Summary

Since the end of the twentieth century Yemen has experienced a very strong religious reaction to music, theatre, cinema and any kind of public entertainment, admitted only in special occasions (weddings) or in TV shows. Theaters and public cinemas are closed and it is not possible to watch screenings except in particular places, such as foreign embassies or cultural institutes, by private invitation.

Aden, more than other cities is the most active city on this side and many artist operates publicly, despite *fatwas* and religious bans. Just to give an example, during the First Aden Singing Festival in 2008 the famous Syrian singer Assala Nasri was threatened of death should she have decided to appear on stage. The threats come from al-Qaeda, allegedly supported by Yemeni Islamic religious figures, and give the idea of the amount of courage it takes for Yemeni artists to perform in public.

Weddings and special private occasions are the substitutes of the public sphere for artists, and in private meetings it's possible to meet very famous Yemeni singers of local music, classic Arabic music or *oud* players. Their performances are often very popular on YouTube. After the 2011 Revolution, many Yemeni filmmakers tried to come up with their own productions.

The group of activists, artists, filmmakers and directors active under the name of Comra Films is very famous. It was founded by Sarah Ishaq, a dual-citizenship Yemeni-British director, who produced *Karama has no walls* (2012) nominated for best short documentary at the Academy Awards of 2014. Comra offers many services to companies like Avaaz, media industries like BBC and al Jazeera, NGO's like Save the Children, Oxfam, Human Rights Watch, International Organisations like WFP, and has already produced some movies about daily life in Yemen during the war. Some of Comra's filmmakers received threats during their stays in Sana'a and asked asylum in other countries, including countries in North America.

In 2018, the city of Aden has gone through a timid revival in arts, performing and cinema. In September 2018, the Eid al-Adha Festival in Aden showed new movies, including *Ana Nojoom bent alasherah wamotalagah (I am Nojoom, age 10 and divorced , 2014)* by the France-based Yemeni director, Khadija al-Salami. The film told the real-life story of Nojoud Ali, a 10-year-old child bride who rebelled against her father's decision to marry her off. *I am Nojoom* is a foreign production, despite the director being Yemeni.

The year 2018 has seen a renaissance of Yemeni cinema. Yemen's first locally produced film in years, *Ten days before the wedding*, has proved itself a hit with audiences and critics alike. The film tells the story of a young couple whose marriage plans were nearly derailed by the war in Yemen. Amr Gamal, the film's director, told al-Jazeera: "We wanted a movie to show what's going on inside the homes of this city and the country as a whole and how families have been affected by the state of the economy, and how the hopes of young people have collapsed."

Another film directed in 2018 is [Yemen: The Silent War](#). The short documentary depicts the Yemen War through the viewpoint of Yemeni refugees living in Markazi Refugee Camp. The film debuted with a positive reception, both the hand animation technique and its ability to capture the brutality of the civil war has been praised.

## Sources

- [Ana Nojoom bent alasherah wamotalagah](#) (I am Nojoom, age 10 and divorced, 2014)
- [Comra Films](#)
- [Karama has no walls](#) (2012)
- [Khadija al-Salami](#)
- [Ten days before the wedding](#) (2018)

## Conclusions

---

### Conclusion

The Yemeni media landscape is now at a breaking point. Undermined by a violent fight which reflects the positions of the parties who are struggling to retake or maintain the power in the country, media are reflecting one of the strongest propaganda services ever happened in Yemen. “With us or against us” is the current motto for media and journalists in the country, serving opposite political agendas. Actually there’s no way in Yemen for local journalists to work in investigative topics, except some good examples supported by the network of , the Association of Arab Investigative Journalists (ARIJ), based in Amman (Jordan), which counts some Yemeni members. Instead of being arrested, tortured or detained, Yemeni journalists are choosing the way of self-censorship. “Our mouths are gagged so yours are the alternative,” said a journalist who was forced to find a job outside the media after his outlet was raided by the Houthis and wanted to talk anonymously with CPJ. He launched a message to the international community.

### References

- Al Jazeera. [Ten Days Before the Wedding: The rebirth of Yemeni cinema](#)
- Article 19&International Federation of Journalists. *Freedom of expression in Yemen: a critical state of affairs*, Brussels, 2011.
- [BBC Media Action](#) .
- BBC. [Yemen Profile - Media](#) (2018).
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *Statistics on Arab Media - Arab Reform Bulletin* 2(11), December 2004.
- CDAC Network. [Yemen - Media and Telecoms Landscape Guide, February 2012](#)
- Committee to Protect Journalists. *Middle East, Yemen*, London, 2016
- Dubai Media City. *Arab Social Media Report*, Tecom Group, Dubai, 2015
- Freedom House. [Report Freedom of the Press, Yemen, 2016](#)
- Freedom House. [Freedom in the World 2018](#).
- Freemuse. [Yemen singer threatened to be killed if festival is allowed](#)
- Hallin Daniel C. and Mancini Paolo. *Comparing Media Systems*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- International Media Support (IMS). [Media in turmoil: An assessment of the media sector in Yemen](#), 2012.
- Internet World Stats. [Middle East - Yemen](#).
- Media Support Organisation. *Media in Turmoil in Yemen*, 2012
- Open Society Foundations. *Mapping Digital Media, Global Findings*, 2014

- Reporters Without Borders (RSF). [Yemen](#).
- The National. [Despite Yemen war, cinema returns to Aden](#).
- VOA. [Yemenis find solace in Cinema after years of war](#).
- YouTube. [Oud players in Sanaa](#), series.

---

Copyright © European Journalism Centre (EJC) 2024 - [MediaLandscapes.org](#)

Document generated on 22/12/2024