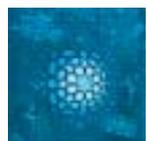


## **PART I**

# **Changes in human development in Arab countries during 2001-2002**

**This section looks at the period in review (2002-2003) and traces changes in, and impacts on Arab human development arising from trends and developments at the national, regional and international levels. In doing so it revisits the status of the “three deficits” identified in the first Arab Human Development Report (in freedom, knowledge and women’s empowerment) and highlights progress and continuing shortfalls since that report was issued in July 2002.**



# Changes in human development in Arab countries during 2001-2002

*Starting with this second issue, the Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) series initiates a new practice of including an opening section devoted to assessing recent trends and events that have influenced human development in the Arab region. The assessment includes events that took place on both the external (regional and international) and the internal (Arab country) levels, and covers the period since work began on the previous report in the series.*

## INTRODUCTION: THE STATE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

### THE CONTENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The concept of "human development" has gained popularity since 1990 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adopted the term with a specific connotation, advanced a new index (the HDI) to measure it<sup>1</sup>, and started publishing an annual report on the subject.

The human development concept, as it has evolved over the years, is based on an intellectual heritage that places people at the centre of development and which culminated in the first Human Development Report (UNDP, 1990). The concept maintains that "people are the true wealth of nations"<sup>2</sup> and that human development is a "process of expanding people's choices". Since freedom is essential for the exercise of choice, freedom is a fundamental requirement of human development. "Choices" is an expression of the more sophisticated con-

cept of "entitlements" introduced by Amartya Sen<sup>3</sup>, as an expression of people's basic right to these "choices". The concept stipulates that human beings, simply by being human, have an inalienable right to a decent living in body and soul.

Two important implications flow from this concept: first, human development rejects outright any form of discrimination among human beings on whatever basis: gender, origin or belief. Second, human well being is not limited to material dimensions but extends to the individual's moral participation in society and to all aspects of a decent life, such as beauty, human dignity and self-fulfillment.

People's entitlements are, in principle, unlimited and grow rapidly with human progress. Yet at any level of development, the three main entitlements, in the opinion of the Human Development Report, are "to live a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to possess resources necessary for a decent life". Human development, however, does not stop at that minimum but goes beyond it to include other entitlements such as "political, economic and social freedoms, opportunities for production and creativity, the enjoyment of liberty, self-fulfillment, and respect for human rights".

Thus, human development is much more than the development of human resources. It is a genuinely humane approach to the comprehensive and integrated development of human beings and societal institutions aimed at achieving the higher goals of human existence: freedom, justice and human dignity. The human development process rests on two essential foundations: the first is the building of human capacities that allow for access to an

*Human development is a genuinely humane approach to the comprehensive and integrated development of human beings and societal institutions aimed at achieving the higher goals of human existence: freedom, justice and human dignity.*

<sup>1</sup>The HDI has undoubtedly been a major improvement over GDP per capita as a measure of development.

<sup>2</sup>The phrase was first used in Frederick Harbison's famous book, *Human Resources as the Wealth of Nations* (1973)

<sup>3</sup>1998 Nobel Prize winner in economics in recognition of his work on poverty and famines.

advanced level of human well-being. Foremost among these are the capacity to live a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and for all people to enjoy freedom without discrimination of any kind. The second foundation is the efficient utilisation of human capabilities in all areas of human activity as well as in economic production, civil society organisation and political life.

*The challenge of building human development remains a very serious one for the vast majority of Arabs.*

#### THE CHALLENGE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

Arab countries have made significant strides in more than one area of human development in the last three decades. Nevertheless, the predominant characteristic of Arab reality today seems to be the existence of deeply rooted shortcomings that stand as obstacles to building human development. As noted earlier, the first AHDR summarised these shortcomings as the three deficits of freedom, women's empowerment and knowledge. Taking these shortcomings into consideration, as the first AHDR did by exploring an alternative human development index, shows that it may be premature to celebrate the achievements of Arab countries on the traditional

HDI. Indeed, the challenge of building genuine human development remains a very serious one for the vast majority of Arabs. From a positive perspective, the realisation of human development in the Arab world requires transcending these deficits and transforming them into their opposites: advantages enjoyed by all Arabs and assets they can be proud of before the rest of the world.

In order to build human development, Arab countries need to embark on reconstructing their societies along three clear principles:

- Full respect for human rights and freedoms as the cornerstone of good governance leading to human development.
- Full empowerment of Arab women, recognising their right to equal participation in politics, society and the economy as well as to education and other means of building capabilities.
- Active knowledge acquisition and its effective utilisation in building human capabilities. As a key driver of economic progress, knowledge must be brought to bear efficiently and productively in all aspects of society, with the goal of enhancing human well-being across the region.

This, in essence, is what it will take to transcend the crisis of human development in the Arab region. It is, however, by no means the ultimate target for Arabs. Meeting the challenges of the future requires building Arab productive capabilities in the face of the rentier nature of Arab economies and societies. It demands the reform of governance at the national and pan-Arab levels on a solid foundation of freedom. It calls for strengthening Arab co-operation and it entails maximising the benefits and minimising the risks of globalisation.

#### BOX 1

#### The Sheikh of Al-Rabwah, Muhammad ibn Abi Taleb al-Ansari al-Demashqi – The Human Being

"Since MAN (insân in Arabic) is the cream of the world, the essence of the universe, the radiating centre in the oceans and the encirclements, the collector of the dispersed contents of the earth and heavens, the descendent, the outcome, the elite and the fruit of existence and its *raison d'être*, it was imperative that we conclude this book by noting his apparent characteristics and the wonders of his creation and his manners. We have given in it (i.e., the book) a description of the three generated ones, the seven regions, the seas and their contents, as well as their characteristics and those of the countries. Nothing remained except man, who is the goal of all this and to whom belongs a collection of characteristics, not a single self. He is the empowered successor on earth and the one charged with carrying out God's prescriptions. He is a created being, charged and empowered.

Among his characteristics is that God Almighty combined in him the powers of the two worlds and qualified him to inhabit the two houses (i.e., the world and the hereafter). He is just like an animal in his lust and hunger to develop the earth; and he is like angels in knowledge, worship and guidance. Therefore, in return for man's worship and devotion to developing His earth, God nominated him to be His successor on earth. He prepared him to sojourn next to Him in His Paradise and the House of his Throne. This man is composed of two opposite things and two separate substances far removed from each other: one of them is gentle, a heavenly soul, enlightened, all-encompassing, live and perceiving. The other one is dense, an earthly body, inferior, dark, dead and insensitive. That is why he was called "insan", which is the dual of ins (human)."

Source: "The Choice of Time in the Wonders of the Land and the Sea", quoted in: Ahmad Sedqui ad-Dajani, 1994.

### How Do Arabs Feel About the Three Deficits?

A large-scale international study (World Values Survey) presents an opportunity to compare Arab attitudes towards knowledge, good governance and gender equality with those expressed in other regions.

The following results are based on field surveys in a large number of countries throughout the world, including four Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco) that comprise about half the Arab people.

In addition to the Arab region, the surveys provide enough data to compare the Arab region to eight other country groupings: other (non-Arab) Islamic countries, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, South Asia, USA/ Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Latin America, East Asia, and Western Europe.

According to this survey, Arabs value knowledge and good governance strongly but take an ambivalent stand on gender equality.

Among the nine regions, Arabs expressed the highest preference for the role of science in the service of humanity. Arabs also topped the list of those supporting the statement that "democracy is better than

any other form of government" and expressed the highest level of rejection of authoritarian rule (a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections).

On the empowerment of women, the Arabs came third in rejecting that "a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl" while expressing the highest approval that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women". In other words, Arabs stood for gender equality in education but not in employment. In human development terms, Arabs expressed support for building the human capabilities of women but not for their utilisation.

Evidently, Arab public opinion strongly supports the focus of AHDR1 on the two deficits of freedom/good governance, and knowledge. But AHDR1 might have been ahead of Arab public opinion in stressing women's full empowerment in both education and employment according to the paradigm of building human capabilities and utilising them effectively.

Figure 1

#### Democracy is the best form of government

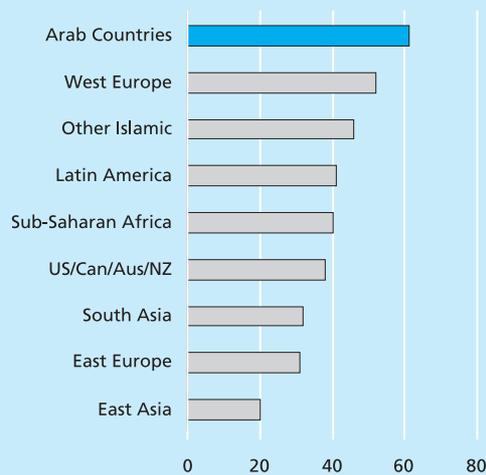


Figure 2

#### Rejection of authoritarian rule

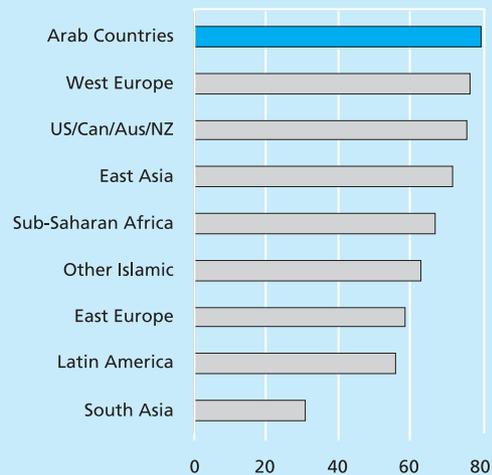


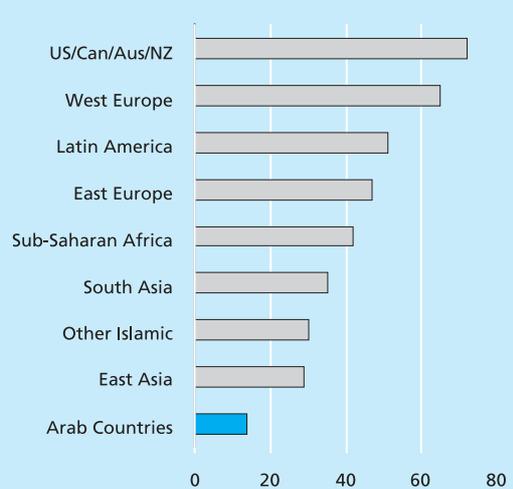
Figure 3

#### Gender equality in higher education



Figure 4

#### Gender equality in employment



Source of WVS data: Inglehart, R., Background Paper for AHDR2.

### Mohammad Hassanein Heikal

#### The First Arab Human Development Report: For Whom Did the Bell Toll?

In our daily lives, we are accustomed to the sound of the bell as a last call. The first ring to reach our ears was that of the school bell calling us to knowledge and learning. It was followed by other summonses: the train bell announcing our last chance to start a journey; the bells of places of worship beckoning us to prayer; the ambulance or fire engine siren telling us that the usual right of way had changed, and that a new urgency took precedence; the alarms in buildings alerting us to the danger of fire or attempted burglary.

- The bell rung by the AHDR and heard by Arabs and others the world over carried echoes of all the bells ringing through our lives. It was a call to knowledge and learning, an announcement of the last chance to join the trip to the future, an appeal for cleansing, an injunction to make way for an urgent priority, and finally a forewarning of imminent danger – urging us to hasten to douse the flames of a still-small fire waiting to engulf the region in a formidable blaze.

- The truth is that the AHDR was a bell that rang at the last minute of the last hour in the contemporary Arab age – ringing within the framework of a history radically different from anything humankind had experienced before. Indeed, that experience can be fairly summarised (despite the precautions imposed on simplification) by noting that the world has passed a number of milestones:

- The first was the French Revolution, late in the eighteenth century, that arrived after aeons during which human beings lived as subjects of emperors, kings, sultans, and princes. It crystallised the concept of nationhood: a particular people living on territories with set borders. This concept gave rise, among other outcomes, to the idea of one market that guarantees the interest of the group and, as such, the state market appeared.

- The second milestone was the attempt at German Unification, at the end of the nineteenth century, which redefined the concept of the nation as a unifier of a people connected by kinship, neighbourhood, language and culture, and the experience of a continuous history. In this concept, the nation has ties more extensive than the borders of territories belonging to one people and to a national state. The notion of a wider market materialised to fulfill these more extensive interests, one that might be called "the nation's market" and which, by extension, was sometimes called "the region's market".

- The third milestone was the shedding by the

United States of its oceanic isolation in the early twentieth century. This was a significant indication that the US, largely self-sufficient though it was, realised that it too needed the world as much as the world needed the US. With this transcontinental meeting – accompanied by great strides in energy generation, aviation and communication – the features of one world appeared, pointing towards a "world market".

- The fourth and final milestone was passed after World War II and after the revolution in electronics, space and satellite technology emerged and developed. The crisis of political doctrines that climaxed with the end of the Cold War in the last decade of the 20th century led to a profound shift -- in effect, a global transformation. Its thrust has been to convert the "world market" into a "market world" transcending all national, regional and continental borders.

- The danger and the significance of present trends is that the current transcontinental "world market" will indeed turn into a dominant "market world", one that will accommodate, absorb, usurp, and dominate without stopping at any physical or political obstacles. This would ultimately lead to a double impasse:

On the one hand, local and regional identities would be incapable of resistance, and would surrender, leaving the market to govern peoples and nations and manage world affairs.

On the other hand, the power of law would give way to that of the market. As such, international rights symbolised by the United Nations in New York would cede to the authority of the New York Stock Exchange. The strongholds of this authority, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and multinational firms, would dominate world affairs. The market would become the plotter of intelligence operations, the order-giver to armies and fleets, and the director of missile payloads.

The AHDR probably came out at the last minute of the last hour to pose a fateful question to the Arab people:

- If we want a world owning "the market", then where are we in that world conceptually and actually, in terms of our capabilities and contributions?

- If we accept a market owning "the world", what will be our position and role in that circumstance? What will be our orientation and what impacts will follow?

In short, where are we?

*The AHDR was a bell that rang at the last minute of the last hour in the contemporary Arab age.*

#### AHDR1 Web Site Statistics

<http://www.undp.org/rbas/ahdr/>

Year	No. of downloads	No. of complete downloads
2002	978,000	792,000
2003	346,000	303,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,324,000</b>	<b>1,095,000</b>

## CHANGES IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SINCE 2001

### THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Work on the first AHDR (2002) started at the beginning of 2001; as such its analysis stopped at the end of the twentieth century. On the other hand, since the first draft of this second report was initiated at the beginning of 2003, the timeframe under review in this section is limited to just two calendar years. This is, of course, a very short period in human development terms. Basic human development indicators do not change significantly over short periods. Moreover, updating such indicators requires up-to-date databases, resources that are all-too-scarce in the Arab world, as was sharply underlined in the first report.

In an attempt to maximise information based on weak or incomplete data, this section adopts a qualitative analysis. It focuses on deducing trends inherent in events considered to have an important bearing on various dimensions of human development in the regional and international context of Arab countries. At the time of writing, trends portend momentous alterations that may change not only the status of human development, but the very face and pattern of life in the region for some considerable time.

Certain events may take place over a very short period of time, yet leave a profound impression on human development. Such is the case with changes in human rights and other forms of legislation affecting people's civil liberties. This section records several recent events that have had negative impacts in Arab countries, notably in the two areas of freedom and good governance and the advancement of women.

Furthermore, qualitative analysis also requires sound and comprehensive data. Most of the databases available to support such analysis reflect the viewpoints, if not the prejudices, of the party gathering the data. To minimise this problem, especially in relation to Arab-related events, the authors have resorted to more than one source besides diligently monitoring the mass media during the period

under study, including bulletins and reports prepared by the Arab Organisation for Human Rights, and electronic mail lists of human rights violations in Arab countries.

### ON THE INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

The first AHDR (2002) may not have given sufficient attention to the regional and international dimensions of the human development impasse in Arab countries – at least, this is what a majority of the Arab critics of the report have felt. The publication of the report after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and their extremely serious aftermath, amplified this feeling, although work on the report had started well before those events.

The authors believe that exaggerating the impediments to Arab development imposed by regional and international challenges is futile and self-defeating. This all-too-frequent resort may provide a comforting escape, yet it is still highly counterproductive. Taking refuge in externalities weakens the resolve and undermines the capabilities required for self-reliant development. It also leads to underestimating the task of self-improvement upon which Arab dignity and the national, regional and international prospects of the region must be constructed. Hence, the strategic choice of the first report was to focus on the reform required within the Arab world.

The decisive factor in soundly confronting the regional and international challenges facing the Arab world will be the quality of Arab capabilities in various spheres; knowledge, production and politics. Such capabilities and creative energies, in turn, cannot be unleashed without widening the range of people's freedoms and guaranteeing good governance in practice. History and logic further indicate that a strong system of Arab co-ordination leading to regional integration will be an indispensable source of strength and a condition for success in these endeavours. This system can be seen as "an Arab Free Citizenship Zone", where every Arab would enjoy the full rights of a national in each and every Arab country. Such a system would undoubtedly

*The decisive factor in soundly confronting the regional and international challenges facing the Arab world will be the quality of Arab capabilities in knowledge, production and politics.*

*Governments, stating considerations of security and stability, have found a new justification for their ongoing warnings about the perils of freedom.*

strengthen the negotiating capacities of Arab countries in highly competitive global arenas, and position Arab countries on firmer and higher ground in the third millennium.

It is now clear that the human impact of September 11 and its political and security consequences have decisively altered international public opinion and sentiment, and thus the parameters of the external challenges to development in the Arab region. A new historical era is rapidly unfolding; not only because of the high human toll, which was a great tragedy, but also because of the political and security consequences of that cataclysm. The fateful events of that horrific day woke the world, especially its rich and powerful countries, from a dream of comprehensive security and invulnerability. The need to rebuild global security has become all the more urgent now, yet the proposed means to reach this end vary. Without question, the killing of innocent human beings violated all human and heavenly laws.

Worldwide anti-terrorism policies have been largely military and security-oriented in nature. The long-term goal of draining the economic and political sources of terrorism has almost faded away.

In the current war against terror, the security policies and restrictive procedures introduced by some advanced countries and adopted in several parts of the developing world, including the Arab region, have created a situation inimical to human development. Governments, stating considerations of security and stability, have found a new justification for their ongoing warnings about the perils of freedom. A flawed yet highly influential rationale has gained ground: if the world's leading democracies find it necessary to backpedal on human rights and civil liberties, other states much further behind on the road to reform may be well advised to pause. After all, in the narrow logic of security, governments with the most to lose by granting freedom are

thus most justified in ruling with an iron grip. The expedience of that logic has not been lost on regressive elements in Arab and other developing countries.

Events befalling Arabs abroad and widely broadcast in the media intensified popular disaffection in the region. The US Administration resorted to establishing and enforcing procedures that at times contravened the most basic human rights, according to the (American) Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights (New York, 2002), which found that "over the last year the US government has taken a series of actions that have gradually eroded basic human rights protections in the United States, fundamental guarantees that have been central to the US constitutional system for more than two hundred years...too often, the US government's mode of operations since September 11 has been at odds with core American and international human rights principles."<sup>4</sup> Those procedures, which included ethnic profiling and secret evidence, violated civil and political liberties, particularly those of Arabs and Muslims. They revoked the right to a just trial before civil courts, thus legalising detention without charge and administrative arrests without due process.

The US introduced ethnic profiling of Arabs and Muslims, whether they were naturalised citizens, legal residents, students or visitors. Contrary to a long-established principle under the law, these people became guilty until proven innocent. Many ordinary people were arrested for no reason except their affiliation to Arabs or to Islam. The US required fingerprint records of visiting nationals from 25 Arab states and also instituted registration with security forces, which led to administrative detentions in some cases.

These measures resulted in reducing the number of Arab students in the United States, quite markedly in the cases of some countries (Table 1). Important knowledge acquisition opportunities for young Arabs were thus cur-

<sup>4</sup>The American Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights report (New York, 2002) documents details of the erosion of civil liberties. Among them:

- "The FBI may now be privy to what books an individual checks out at the public library or purchases at the local bookstore.
- The USA Patriot Act could result in long-term detention of non-citizens who have never been charged with a crime.
- The Justice Department's list of the young men targeted for government questioning was compiled strictly on the basis of national origin.
- The Administration has in fact been using the term "unlawful enemy combatant" - a term not found in international law - as a kind of magic wand, waving it to avoid well-established standards of the US and international law.
- Even if suspected terrorists are eventually tried and then acquitted by military commissions the Administration reserves the right to continue to detain them indefinitely.
- In too many cases, opportunistic governments expressed support for the fight against terrorism, while presenting their own domestic insurgencies as conflicts perpetrated by terrorist groups analogous to at least Al-Qaeda."

tailed. The harassment of Arabs living abroad, furthermore, created a climate that undermined the welfare of Arab expatriate communities, damaged the vital process of cultural interaction between them and host societies and interrupted valuable scientific, technical and cultural exchanges between Arab countries and the West.

Perhaps the gravest repercussion of the war on terror is that it gave ruling regimes in some Arab countries spurious justification for curbing freedoms through an expanded definition of terrorism, which found institutional expression on the pan-Arab level in the "Arab Charter for Anti-Terrorism". This document has been widely criticised in Arab and international human rights circles, since an expanded definition opens the door to abuses such as censorship, restricting access to the Internet and suppressing the printing and publication of any material construed as "encouraging terrorism". Moreover, the Charter neither explicitly prohibits detention or torture, nor provides for questioning the legality of detentions. Furthermore, it does not protect personal freedom, since it does not require a prior judicial order authorising the wire-tapping of individuals or groups (Amnesty International).

### THE IMPACT OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

The first AHDR concluded that the Israeli occupation of Palestine constitutes a severe impediment to human development. This occupation distorts policy priorities, retards human development and freezes opportunities for growth, prosperity and freedom across the region, and not in the Occupied Palestinian Territories alone. The harsh indignities arising from occupation extend to all the Arab people, yet the worst repercussions are borne by the Palestinian people themselves.

Occupation denies Palestinians freedom and human dignity and aborts their internationally recognised right to self-determination. Occupation squanders Palestinian resources,

<sup>5</sup>Israel's might in the region is not to be underestimated. For example, Israel is among the few countries that very likely own nuclear weapons, even if this is not usually acknowledged (US State Department, from infoplease.com). Israel has refrained from ratifying the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Centre for Non-proliferation Studies affiliated with the "Monterey Centre for International Studies" categorises Israel's ownership of chemical weapons as "probable", and its ownership of biological weapons as "possible", given that Israel has not ratified treaties on banning chemical and biological weapons.

#### BOX 5

#### UNHCHR: War on terror infringing on human rights

The late UN High Commissioner for human rights, Sergio Vieira de Mello, noted publicly that the US-led "war on terror" was hurting human rights and exacerbating prejudices around the world.

Governments across the globe have invoked the "war on terror", announced by President Bush after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, to justify activities that Sergio Vieira de Mello said are "damaging human rights in the indus-

trialised and developing worlds.

"Arabs and Muslims at large are experiencing increasing incidents of racial discrimination ... singling out, finger pointing and...in some instances (violence)," he said.

"We must at any cost prevent civilians from becoming what some irresponsible people call 'collateral damage'," he continued, nothing that "In Iraq ... civilians have suffered enough."

Source: Reuters Web Site (www.reuters.com), visited on 24/12/200.

TABLE 1

#### Number of students from some Arab countries in the United States before and after the September 2001 events

Country	Number of students in the United States		
	1999	2002/2003	% Reduction
Saudi Arabia	5,156	3,581	31%
Qatar	338	250	26%
Oman	459	345	25%
Yemen	188	181	4%

Source: Data collected from Arab Missions by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Arab League to the United Nations.

undermines Palestinian human capabilities and destroys individual and communal security and human lives.

The occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands exerts a direct and continuous burden on the economies of affected countries and diverts resources from development to military and security objectives. The threat of Israeli domination also creates a pretext for deferring political and economic reforms in Arab countries in the name of national solidarity against a formidably armed external aggressor<sup>5</sup>.

Israel's believed possession of a large arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which Arabs consider represents a double standard because it is not subjected to an international watch or a regional or international deterrent, drives the Arab region and surrounding countries into an intense arms race that diminishes resources that could otherwise be applied to development.

In 2002, Israel's government, under the guise of the international war on terror, attacked almost all Palestinian territories, de-

*Occupation distorts policy priorities, retards human development and freezes opportunities for growth, prosperity and freedom across the region.*

### Human Rights Watch Report 2002, Middle East and North Africa: Jenin

"Israeli security forces were responsible for extensive abuses, including indiscriminate and excessive use of lethal force against unarmed Palestinian demonstrators; unlawful killings by Israel Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers; disproportionate IDF gunfire in response to Palestinian attacks; inadequate IDF response to abuses by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians; and "closure" measures on Palestinian communities that amounted to collective punishment."

"During its investigation [of IDF operations in Jenin], however, Human Rights Watch documented unlawful and deliber-

ate killings, and the killing or wounding of unprotected individuals as a result of excessive or disproportionate use of force. Such cases are in violation of the international humanitarian law prohibitions against 'wilful killing' of non-combatants. The organisation also found instances of IDF soldiers deliberately impeding the work of medical personnel and preventing medical assistance to the wounded with no apparent or obvious justification of military necessity... There is strong prima facie evidence that in some of the cases documented grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, or war crimes, were committed."

Source: Human Rights Watch World Report 2002: Middle East & North Africa.

*The number of Palestinian deaths resulting from Israeli action in the past two years is, in proportional terms, comparable to the death of about a quarter of a million people in the US.*

stroyed farms and homes, disrupted the Palestinian Authority, used unarmed civilians as human shields, and committed, most markedly in Jenin and Nablus, atrocities and what a highly reputed NGO, Human Rights Watch, called 'war crimes'. (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

In April 2003 the UN Commission on Human Rights, with a majority of 33 out of 53 votes, strongly condemned "the violations by the Israeli occupation authorities of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem", including "the practice of 'liquidation' or 'extrajudicial executions'", and expressed its grave concern "at acts of mass killing perpetrated by the Israeli occupying authorities against the Palestinian people" (Commission on Human Rights, Resolution 2003/6, Geneva). The resolution "reaffirms the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to resist the Israeli occupation." Occupation forces opened fire on ambulances that month.

#### The human costs of Israeli occupation

Israeli occupation has wrought death and destruction in the West Bank and Gaza. By April 2003, 2,405 Palestinians had been killed, and 41,000 injured as a result of Israeli actions since September 2000. These are not mere statistics but people whose lives have been destroyed, their hopes dashed, their futures

aborted and their families bereaved. Most of those killed were civilians (85%) and a significant proportion were children (20%). UNICEF estimates that 7,000 children have been injured.

The conflict has also claimed Israeli casualties. Over the period (September 2000 – May 2003), the Israeli defense forces reported a total of 781 Israelis dead and 5,468 injured (<http://www.idf.il>) including soldiers, settlers and civilians. The loss of innocent lives is always an unacceptable human tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

Given that the population of the West Bank and Gaza is about one hundredth the population of the US, the number of Palestinian deaths resulting from Israeli action in the past two years is, in proportional terms, comparable to the death of about a quarter of a million people in the US. The number of injuries is comparable to four million in the US.

In addition to considerable casualties, Palestinian human development has suffered from the loss of freedom, livelihoods, destruction of basic infrastructure and an alarming decline in health conditions. Palestinians were subject to blatant violations of basic human rights, including the right to life, freedom, food, education and employment.

It is very difficult to find a historical equivalent to the division of the occupied territories into clusters. While it shares a few similarities with past segregation policies in the US, it resembles most the Bantustan policies enforced by the former apartheid regime in South Africa.

Collective punishment through closures and curfews affects nearly three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks divide these territories into 300 separate clusters. Most occupied towns, villages and refugee camps have suffered from extended curfews and closures. Nablus, for example, has been virtually under continuous curfew during the past two years. About 15,000 Palestinians have been denied freedom of movement through detention with 6,000 still in prison, including 350 children.

Closures and curfews have also deprived people of basic services and supplies, creating

<sup>6</sup>Other nations also suffered casualties in the conflict: the crushing of the young American peace activist, Rachel Corrie, by an Israeli bulldozer is just one example.

a major humanitarian crisis. They prevent access to medical care and restrict the movement of medical personnel and supplies. Heart, cancer and renal patients cannot obtain treatment or cannot afford it. Pregnant women are cut off from antenatal care and are forced to give birth at home or even at checkpoints. Forty-three women delivered babies at checkpoints, nine of whom were stillborn.<sup>7</sup> Parents cannot have their children immunised just as health risks are multiplying. Children and teachers cannot go to school. Malnutrition is rampant with 30% of children under 5 suffering from chronic malnutrition and 21% from acute malnutrition.<sup>8</sup> Psychological trauma is widespread, particularly among children. Families, friends and communities find themselves physically isolated, unable to meet and support each other.

While Israeli construction of settlements and a separation barrier, "the wall", further tightens Israel's stranglehold on the Palestinian people, Israeli destruction of Palestinian property and infrastructure undermines hope for a viable Palestinian economy. Between October 2000 and April 2002, physical damage amounted to US \$ 305 million. In mid-May 2002, after Israeli incursions into several West Bank towns that left almost 260 Palestinians dead, an international donor survey assessed physical damage at more than US \$361 million.<sup>9</sup> It was one of these incursions (into Jenin) that Terje Rød Larsen, UN Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories described as "horrific beyond belief" and "morally repugnant." His outcry and that of the international community did not restrain the destruction. By September 2002 the damage had nearly doubled to US \$728 million.

Israeli actions have deprived large segments of the population of job opportunities and income. GNP has been more than halved and total income losses to the Palestinian economy are estimated to be between US \$3.2 and US \$10 billion (in addition to the cost of destroyed public and private property). About three fourths of Palestinians are now living in poverty (measured at under US \$2 a day). The

BOX 7

### Human Losses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Sept 2001- April 2003)

- 2,405 dead, including 451 children and 265 students:
  - deaths by live ammunition: 1,455
  - by heavy weapons: 496
  - by assassination: 219
- 41,000 wounded, including 7,000 children and 2,981 students.
- 2,500 permanent disabilities, with 500 children affected.
- 9 journalists killed, including 7 Palestinians. 75 journalists wounded  
167 journalists assaulted

Sources:

- The Palestine Monitor: 28 September 2002 – 17 April 2003)
- Health, Development, Information, and Policy Institute
- B'Tselem report: Illusions of restraint: Human Rights Violations During the Events in the Occupied Territories 29th September - 2nd December, 2000
- Palestinian Ministry of Health
- UN Special Rapporteur of Commission on Human Rights, March 2002
- Ministry of Education, 17 January 2002
- General Union of Disabled Palestinians
- UN Special Rapporteur of Communication Human Rights, March 2002
- Information from the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate

BOX 8

### Material Losses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 19 months (until April 2003)

- Houses damaged: 11,553
- Houses destroyed: 4,985
- Schools destroyed: 323
- Mosques destroyed: 30
- Churches destroyed: 12
- Wells destroyed: 134
- Trees uprooted: 34,606
- Land sequestered: 1,162 donums\*
- Land Destroyed: 17,162 donums

Source: The Palestine Monitor

- Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 3rd June, 2002
- Palestinian Humanitarian Disaster, U.S. Agency for International Development, July 10, 2002
- Ministry of Education, 17 Jan 2002, Information for Ministry of Education schools
- Palestinian Council for Justice and Peace
- Al-Mezan 2001
- LAW Society, 29th Nov 2001 (figure from beginning of 2000)

\*A donum is 1,000 sq. m. of land.

number of poor people has tripled since September 2000. Two thirds of the workforce in Gaza, and half of the workforce in the West Bank, are unemployed. Palestinians are now more dependent on food aid than ever before. The World Bank estimates that if the conflict is resolved and the closure lifted, it will still take at least two years for the Palestinian economy to restore pre-September 2000 per capita income.

Current unemployment rates in the West Bank and Gaza are more than double those

*About three fourths of  
Palestinians are now  
living in poverty  
measured at under US  
\$2 a day.*

<sup>7</sup>The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS)

<sup>8</sup>Report by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and Johns Hopkins University, 2002

<sup>9</sup>Physical and Institutional Damage Assessment – West Bank Governorates, March-May, 2002 by the Donor Support Group, Local Aid Coordination Committee, May 2002

*Occupation posed to Iraqis a new challenge of a different order, one which they will only be able to meet if they are empowered to determine their own future.*

that prevailed in the US during the Great Depression. The decline in GNP in the Palestinian territories is also significantly greater than the GNP decline during that period.

Insecurity and desperation are among the unquantifiable, yet profound, human costs of occupation. Through affinity, empathy and intense media coverage, the Arab public identifies with the suffering. Furthermore, it witnesses, daily, the dwindling credibility of Israeli claims to respect for democracy and human rights.

### *THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ*

At the first draft stage of this report, a coalition led by the USA was preparing to wage war on Iraq ostensibly aimed at ridding the country of weapons of mass destruction that the coalition claimed Iraq possessed, as well as replacing a totalitarian regime by a democratic one. As the report was being completed, Iraq fell under Anglo-American occupation, following a war led by the United States, Great Britain and other partners.

This war against Iraq was waged without a mandate from the Security Council of the United Nations. Answering questions at a press conference in the Hague on March 11, 2003 the UN Secretary-General observed that: "If the US and others were to go outside the Council and take military action, it would not be in conformity with the Charter". In the event, the war was conducted in the face of strong popular opposition not only in Arab countries but also across the world, including in member countries of the coalition.

Although the full impacts of this war were not clear at the time of writing, the initial phase of military operations and the entry of occupation forces into Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, had had severe adverse effects on Iraq and its people.

Undoubtedly, the heaviest losses sustained by Iraq were the killing, injury and displacement of its citizens. Attack strategies and ammunition, including cluster bombs that did not distinguish between civilian and military targets, led to the killing, mutilation and dismemberment of a large number of Iraqis, in-

cluding many children, who will carry disabilities and disfigurements for life. Shrapnel covered large areas; parts of some bombs have not yet exploded and continue to threaten Iraqi civilians, particularly children. On 19 March 2003, Human Rights Watch urged the United States Secretary of State and the British Foreign Secretary to refrain from deploying cluster bombs in civilian areas, because of the unexploded ordnance they leave behind, which continues to threaten civilians well after hostilities cease.<sup>10</sup>

While the physical destruction has been enormous, it is the cultural destruction that has been particularly dismaying. The pillage and plunder of the Iraqi museum, the library and the Centre for Iraqi Arts under the gaze of occupying forces is a violation of the first Geneva protocol which stipulates the responsibility of occupying forces for the protection of cultural objects and religious places in order to preserve the cultural heritage of people who are subjects of occupation. Also the persecution of Iraqi scientists raises fears about its impact on scientific research and technological development in Iraq and more widely in the Arab region. These fears are underlined by the unprecedented restrictions imposed on some Arab scientists and students in Western universities.

This war has overthrown a totalitarian regime that oppressed the Iraqi people and deprived them of a wide spectrum of rights and freedoms. This regime had inflicted on Iraqis all manner of persecution and torture news of which was only whispered about before, while the aftermath of such acts is now revealed daily. The excesses of the previous regime did not stop at Iraq's borders; the attack on Kuwait in 1990 threatened Arab national security and caused harm to Arab collective action. The invasion and occupation of Iraq and the consequent destruction were not restricted to physical structures but also extended to the institutional infrastructure of services and security. Chaos spread and large numbers of Iraqis lost both livelihoods and security. This has posed to Iraqis a new challenge of a different order, one which they will only be able to meet if they are empowered to determine their own future in accordance with international law; if

<sup>10</sup>Human Rights Watch, A letter to the United States and its allies on compliance with the laws of war, 19 March 2003

they are freed from occupation, and if they are allowed to recover their wealth and helped to build a system of good governance fully representative of the Iraqi people. These are the essential circumstances that would enable the people of Iraq to carry out quickly the reconstruction of their country from a human development perspective.

The repercussions of the occupation of Iraq do not stop at Iraq's borders. Developments in Iraq are bound to have significant consequences on human development throughout the region. For most Arabs, the war has been seen as an attempt at restructuring of the region by outside forces pursuing their own objectives.

In contrast, this series of reports on human development in Arab countries aims at stimulating the formulation of a strategic vision by Arab elites through a process of social innovation aimed at restructuring the region from within, with the ultimate objective of building human development in the Arab world. That vision of self-determined change is at the centre of the current report on building a knowledge society in Arab countries. There can be no doubt that, from a human development perspective, internal societal reforms based on scrupulous self-criticism are the most desirable and sustainable alternative to mapping the region's future from outside.

### ARAB INTEGRATION

Six successive decades have witnessed some accomplishments in Arab integration, but the failures were larger, whether in terms of raising the level of integration and bringing it nearer to its final goals or of building Arab human development.

Looking at accomplishments, the 18 Arab states signatories to the Arab Free Trade Area treaty (AFTA) have been active in implementing its provisions. Trade was liberalized in 60% of products traded between states parties by January 2003. It is expected that all trade between states parties will be liberalized by January 2005.

At the level of global integration, eleven Arab states acceded to the World Trade Organization Agreement and five others are in the process of acceding to it. It is not clear, however, whether the current or future Arab member states will be diligent in taking advantage of the GATT provisions, which allow accession to regional trade arrangements. Doing so would mean that the membership of Arab states in WTO and AFTA would complement each other, which would enhance the ability of Arab countries to attract foreign investment from various sources to the whole Arab region.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a rush to adopt integration methods invented to suit the situations of developed societies although these have proved to be a failure in many developing country groupings. AFTA, for instance, is limited to trade in goods, which does not lead to the establishment of an Arab common market for services, capital and labour; nor does it imply the establishment of institutional infrastructures to regulate and control the flow of goods and services and factors of production.

In view of limited popular participation in decision-making processes at the country level, the Arab integration pattern has been marred by the weakness of such participation, namely neglect of the process by which Arab citizens are made aware of the measures and decisions which affect them and of which they are supposed to be the key beneficiaries. Thinking on trade has been limited to discussing the requirements of inter-trade liberalization and the resulting damage to existing interest groups and the struggle over exceptions from the liberalization process. Little thought has been given to the role of integration in enhancing productive efficiency and competitiveness at the pan-Arab and global levels.

In sum, the situation of Arab integration still falls short of the "Arab Free Citizenship Zone" called for by the first Arab Human Development Report.

*For most Arabs, the war has been seen as an attempt at restructuring the region by outside forces pursuing their own objectives.*

*A vision of self-determined change is at the centre of the current report.*

<sup>11</sup>This cannot be guaranteed in the cases of individual accession to global arrangements or association agreements with the European Union, for instance, without an Arab regional arrangement in the form of a customs union or a common market, because in the case of individual association there will be little incentive for foreign firms to locate their industries in the associated Arab country in view of the abolition of trade restrictions between that country and the associated industrial countries.

## DEVELOPMENTS IN FREEDOM AND GOOD GOVERNANCE AS REFLECTED IN INTERNATIONAL DATABASES

*Arab countries, on average, continued to evince the lowest levels of freedom among the world regions compared.*

This section is based on freedom and good governance indicators as accessed through international databases.<sup>12</sup> The authors recognise the disadvantages of relying on such international sources, yet are obliged to turn to them for lack of better alternatives from the region on this crucial dimension of human development. It is to be hoped that such Arabic alternatives will develop in the future, possibly inspired by this series of Arab Human Development Reports.

### LEVEL OF CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES (1990-2000)

The first AHDR (2002) measured freedom by using values of the indicator developed by Freedom House, which at that time stopped at 1998. At the time of writing this report, the indicator was available only up to 2000/2001 (Freedom House, 2002). It should be noted that freedom scores, as developed by Freedom

House, are far from perfect measures and may reflect certain biases inherent in their source. Yet they constitute the only database currently available for measuring essential freedoms over time.

Figure 5 shows that while the general trend saw freedom rise worldwide, in most Arab countries it fell, with an apparent decline during the early 1990s. Arab countries, on average, continued to evince the lowest levels of freedom among the world regions compared.

In fact, according to this indicator, five Arab countries were among the ten least free countries in the world during 2000/2001.

### INDICATORS OF VOICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

International databases also provide indicators of voice and accountability (Kaufmann et al., 2002), which are among the essential requirements of good governance and which the first AHDR used to illuminate its case. Figure 6 illustrates that, despite a slight improvement in Arab countries between the two years considered, when it comes to voice and accountability, the Arab region still ranks lowest in the world.

### PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION IN BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS

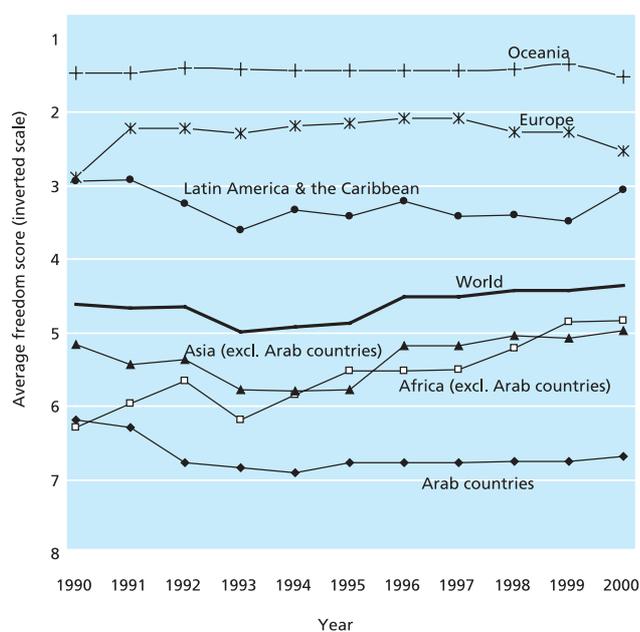
Figure 7 presents the latest evaluations of perceptions of corruption in business transactions worldwide according to Transparency International (2002). The lowest values of this indicator are the worst (i.e., the most corrupt).

The figure does not indicate a noticeable improvement in the position of Arab countries in comparison to other world regions evaluated between the years 1998 and 2002. However, the position of one country, Egypt, improved slightly.

### EVENTS INFLUENCING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ARAB COUNTRIES

This section documents important events influencing Arab human development on the

Figure 5  
Freedom scores, weighted by population size:  
the Arab region and other world regions, 1990-2000 (average values)



<sup>12</sup>Specifically, the 'Freedom Score' published by the US-based "Freedom House". For technical and practical reasons, the first Report made use of this indicator, despite some important reservations. These reasons include a long time series and a detailed database on various political and civil freedoms. In the absence of other comparable sources, the score is maintained here.

national level and examines their effects, both positive and negative. It focuses on two areas: widening freedoms and establishing good governance, and the empowerment of women. (Improvements in the field of knowledge acquisition, while also crucial, require a longer time horizon for assessment).

Probably the most far-reaching change that could have significantly improved prospects for human development in most Arab countries -- had it been adopted and launched effectively -- is the wide-ranging reform initiative declared by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah at the beginning of 2003. The initiative covers the following dimensions:

"Self-reform and the development of political participation as two basic spring-boards for building Arab capabilities and making available all the conditions conducive to comprehensive Arab revitalisation; the strengthening of Arab co-operation and joint Arab capabilities; attaining the requirements for positive involvement in the arena of world competition; and the achievement of sustainable development." (Documents of the Arab Summit, March 2003, Al-Ahram, Cairo, in Arabic).

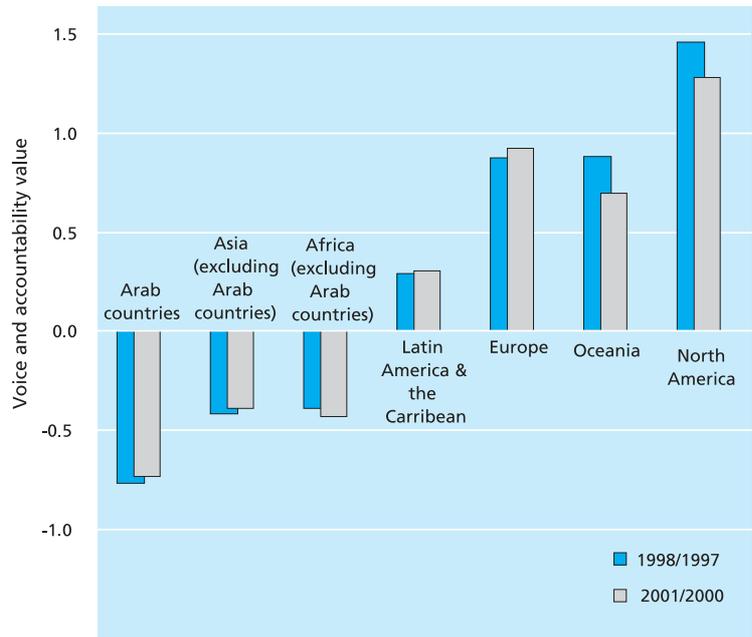
This initiative was to be presented to the Arab Summit during its March 2003 ordinary session in Bahrain. However, an urgent summit (held in Sharm El-Sheikh) took place before the Bahrain meeting and its communiqué lacked any reference to this initiative. Evidently the extraordinary circumstances under which the Sharm El-Sheikh summit was held, namely the looming invasion of Iraq, resulted in an agreement to postpone this initiative, at least for the time. As a result, the initiative was deferred to the next ordinary Summit, to be held in Tunisia.

*EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF FREEDOM AND ESTABLISHING GOOD GOVERNANCE*

While underlining the generally low rating of Arab countries on freedoms and the virtual absence of good governance, the first AHDR (2002) celebrated positive improvements in these key areas in two Arab countries: Morocco and Bahrain.

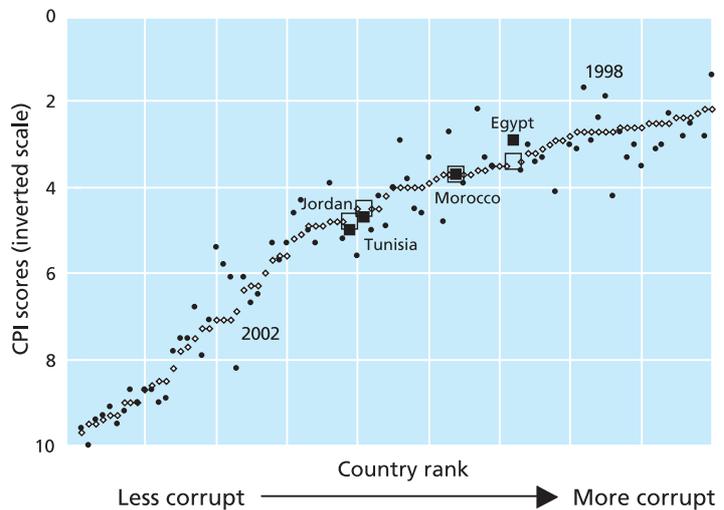
Encouraging developments in Bahrain

Figure 6  
**Voice and accountability:  
the Arab region and other world regions**



1997/98-2000/2001 (average values)

Figure 7  
**Perceptions of corruption, Transparency International: position of Arab countries in the sample, 1998 and 2000**



seem to have continued. The State Security Act, a statute and symbol of coercion in the country, was repealed. It was also announced that the country will guarantee the freedom to form non-governmental scientific, cultural

*In most Arab countries the march of freedom continued to encounter obstacles.*

and professional societies as well labour unions, and that strikes are a legitimate means of defending the rights of workers. Moreover, the establishment of "political societies" was permitted. The scope of freedom of speech was widened with the assistance of the judiciary. The Prince of Bahrain declared that the country had been transformed into a constitutional monarchy. The first legislative elections in more than 20 years were held, despite boycotts by some political movements. The government resigned after the announcement of the election results, and the legislative council, comprising elected and appointed members, held its first session on 24 December 2002. Less encouraging was the issuance of a decree (47 of 2002) allowing the confiscation or banning of any publication considered to hold the official religion in contempt, or criticising the king or the policies of the government. (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

In Morocco legislative elections, judged to have been honest, were held. They were notable for a quota reserved for women on national lists, which contributed to a large number of women winning seats. The government changed afterwards.

Positive developments in the field of freedom and good governance included the issuance by the Sudanese President of a decree permitting opposition parties to engage in political activity, provided that they keep to peaceful approaches.

In a development that protects the rights of the Berber minorities in Algeria, the "Amazig" language was classified as a national language and will be taught in the educational curriculum.

Djibouti permitted the establishment of opposition parties and political pluralism. A number of opposition newspapers were allowed in Syria and Tunis while Egypt and Syria moved to authorise private (non-governmental) broadcasting stations to operate.

Parliamentary elections were also held in Yemen in April 2003 – the third such elections since unification in 1990. About 1400 candidates competed in 301 electoral constituencies under relatively peaceful conditions and with a 70% voter turn-out. At the

end of the month, results were declared in 280 constituencies. One woman won.

A number of detainees in Syria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Morocco were released and several Government officials in Libya and Egypt were tried and convicted upon charges of corruption and profiteering.

Qatar held a referendum in April 2003 on a permanent constitution that allows for a consultative council composed of 45 members, two-thirds of whom are elected, with the right to question ministers and expel them with a two-thirds majority. This preliminary constitution did not allow the establishment of political parties. The Prince preserved the authority to appoint the prime minister and cabinet.

Yet in most Arab countries the march of freedom continued to encounter obstacles.

In one Arab country the deaths of detainees as a result of suspected torture persisted; 11 cases in total were recorded during 2001, all of whom had been detained for public law offences (The Arab Organisation for Human Rights, in Arabic, 2002). The extraction of confessions under torture and the trial of opposition members affiliated with Islamic movements before exceptional courts were also documented occurrences (ibid). The harassment of Islamic activists accelerated with the aim of restricting their participation in legislative elections. In addition, demonstrations were suppressed (including those protesting economic decisions made by the government).

In another Arab country, laws and procedures curtailing freedom, notably press freedom and Internet access, were enacted. A law stipulating the addition of further firm restrictions on freedom of assembly was issued; and the arrest of activists against normalisation of relations with Israel continued. Legislative elections were postponed. However, towards the end of 2002 promises were made to conduct elections in the spring of 2003, to allocate a quota for women in the legislative council and to "raise the ceiling" of freedom for the media and unions.

In a third Arab country, the prince made a statement prohibiting the existence of political parties.

In yet another country, the President of the Republic reduced the mandate of members of parliament, and the level of participation in elections (May 2002) decreased to less than 20%. In two provinces with minority constituents, it fell to just 2%. Freedom of speech and expression remained under severe restriction, while a presidential statement characterised those criticising their country's policies as "traitors" punishable under the law. The persecution of human rights activists persisted and reportedly more than 1,000 political prisoners went on a hunger strike to demand their release (Arab Organisation for Human Rights, in Arabic, 2002). The Constitution was amended to allow the current President to remain in office for a fourth term: (the former Constitution stipulated only three terms).

The Al-Jazeera satellite channel was subjected to a number of injunctions restraining its activities in several Arab countries on a variety of claims.

Emergency laws were extended in a number of Arab countries, in one instance for three consecutive years. Moreover, the trial of civilians before military tribunals and exceptional State Security Courts persisted in six Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Palestine).

Some Arab countries opted to impose constraints on popular expressions of support for the Palestinian resistance by harassing its activists, and even confronted popular demonstrations with violence. Security forces' suppression of demonstrations against the occupation of Palestine in an Arab country caused the killing of one university student and the serious wounding of ten others.

The issue of freedom in Arab countries has become a casualty of the overspill from the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. The conflict between popular sentiments and official positions has led to security forces responding with force, tear-gas bombs and rubber bullets to quell popular demonstrations against the war on Iraq in more than one Arab country. Five men were killed in two Arab countries; two members of a people's assembly were arrested in a third country despite their parliamentary immunity.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organisations in many Arab countries suffered more legal and practical constraints.

In one Arab country, a law on NGOs was passed which was widely regarded as restricting their activities. It came after the Supreme Constitutional Court had ruled the previous law unconstitutional, for formal reasons.

In another country, an association for citizen rights was closed by an order from the Minister of the Interior, after it allegedly committed financial and administrative violations. A number of activists in professional unions were arrested, apparently for being involved in resisting normalisation with Israel.

In a third country, the President of the Association for Human Rights and some human rights activists were tried under the charges of introducing and distributing publications without permission, as well as spreading false news abroad.

## THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The cause of women's empowerment, and that of freedom in general, was dealt a strong blow when the elected legislative council in an Arab country rejected a government proposal aimed at allowing women to exercise their political rights. Moreover, the constitutional court in this country refused two challenges filed by two women activists demanding political rights for women.

In Bahrain, women won the right to vote and to stand for election to municipal and legislative assemblies. This important constitutional victory, however, was dampened by the failure of women candidates in both elections – seemingly for reasons of a societal nature.

On a more positive note, in a historical precedent resulting from the allocation of quotas for women on national lists, Morocco's recently elected Parliament convened with thirty-three women members, the largest number ever.

Other affirmative action for women included Djibouti's decision to allocate quotas for women in legislative councils (a minimum 10% share for both men and women in party electoral lists was established) and similar

*The issue of freedom in Arab countries has become a casualty of the overspill from the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.*

*The core challenges to human development in Arab countries, as epitomised in the "three deficits", are still critically pertinent.*

steps in Jordan allocating a minimum of six seats for women.

More broadly, the ruler of the United Arab Emirates affirmed the right of women to engage in political activity. In Qatar, a woman won, for the first time, a seat in a local council and, at the beginning of 2003, a woman was appointed minister of education. The Kuwaiti government adopted a draft law allowing women to join the security forces. In the Sultanate of Oman, women were allowed to drive taxis and to carry passengers of both sexes. In Yemen a woman was appointed as a State Minister for Human Rights and one woman entered

Parliament in a 2003 election. And in a sudden development early in 2003, Egypt joined other Arab countries in allowing women to serve on the Judiciary by appointing a female attorney-at-law as the first woman judge on the Supreme Constitutional Court and appointing two women as commissioners before that court.

The political emancipation of Arab women called for in the first AHDR evidently still has a long way to go; yet the new progress made in this period is evidence of a greater receptivity to women's empowerment at the executive levels of governments and state institutions.

*Evidently, the core challenges to human development in Arab countries, as epitomised in the "three deficits" identified by the first AHDR, are still critically pertinent. Arguably, those challenges are even graver than before, especially with respect to freedom. World and regional developments unfavourable to Arab human development have exacerbated these negative trends.*

*The second part of this report aims to make a continuing contribution to Arab human development through a detailed study of one of the three cardinal deficits – knowledge. This study culminates in a strategic vision for building the knowledge society in Arab countries.*