



Arab Human Development Report 2009

Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries



United Nations
Development
Programme

Regional Bureau
for Arab States

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Foreword by the Administrator, UNDP

Since its inaugural edition in 2002, the Arab Human Development Reports have stimulated debate and brought attention to the opportunities and challenges for enhancing human development in the Arab region.

Part of the reason for that impact stems from the fact that the Reports' central thesis—that reform is necessary and that sustainable change can only come from within—has the authority of having been written *about* the region by a team of independent Arab scholars, policy analysts, and practitioners *from* the region.

The path breaking first Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) presented three development “deficits” which stunt human development in the region, related to the acquisition of knowledge, political freedoms, and women’s rights. This year’s Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries examines human development through a human security lens.

The Report calls on policymakers and other stakeholders to move away from a traditional, state-centric conception of security to one which concentrates also on the security of individuals, their protection and their empowerment. It argues for governments and other partners to prioritize the “liberation of human beings from those intense, extensive, prolonged, and comprehensive threats to which their lives and freedom are vulnerable”. In so doing, it draws attention to a multitude of threats which cut across different aspects of human development in the region, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to advancing development, security, good governance and human rights.

In 1994 the United Nations General Assembly affirmed that the Human Development Report is “not an official document of the United Nations”. This regional report was prepared in this tradition of independence, which since 1990 has brought critical development issues to the fore at the global, regional, and national levels worldwide.

As has been noted in the forewords to previous AHDRs, they “are, deliberately, not formal UN or UNDP documents and do not reflect the official views of either organization. Rather they have been intended to stimulate and inform a dynamic, new, public discourse across the Arab world and beyond” and “some of the views expressed by the authors are not shared by UNDP or the UN.”

By providing a platform for debate which reflects the way in which a number of the most pressing development challenges are seen by some of those who live them day-in and day-out, this Report can play an important role in framing the development agenda in the region for years to come. UNDP hopes that governments, civil society, international and regional bodies, and the global development community, will find this fifth AHDR useful as a tool for motivating an open and serious discussion about human development issues in the Arab world.



Helen Clark
Administrator, UNDP

Foreword by the Regional Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States

The present *Report* is offered as a contribution to the debate on development underway in the Arab region. Entitled the *Arab Human Development Report 2009: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries*, it is a continuation of the well-known *Arab Human Development Report* (AHDR) series that, since 2002, has brought together eminent scholars and advisers from the Arab region to conduct frank, realistic analyses of development challenges in the region. The first AHDR identified gaps in knowledge, freedom, and women's empowerment as the three critical deficits, and the three follow-up reports analyzed each in depth and in turn. Their research and analysis resonated in Arab countries and around the world, providing a platform for policy dialogue and debate, and re-focusing the development agenda firmly on people's well-being. The present *Report* is intended to sharpen this focus with a new and independent look at the region through the lens of human security.

While the AHDR since 2002 has taken up a variety of development topics, the unifying theme is that of human development. Human development is a way of looking at development that is about much more than the rise and fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. It is about understanding that people are the real wealth of nations, and that investing in their human development is the surest way to achieve sustainable, stable economic growth.

The starting point for the present *Report* is that, since the publication of the first volume in the series, the region's human development fault lines have grown more

complex, and in some cases deepened. While there has been some improvement in quality of life in some countries, there are still too many people in the Arab region living insecure lives, too many people living under persistent pressures that inhibit them from realizing their potential as human beings, and too many traumatic events cutting lives short. In some Arab countries, more than half of the population lives in hunger and want, with no means to look after their families or safeguard their own quality of life. Recent fluctuations in global food prices as well as the current global economic crisis have sent even more people into poverty and malnutrition. Health systems leave many beyond their reach. Water scarcity looms as an existential threat on the horizon. And armed conflicts take their grim toll in the destruction of human lives.

In analyzing these and other threats to human security in the Arab countries, the scope of the *Report* is broad. But there is a common thread tying the analysis together. The AHDR 2009 argues that the trend in the region has been to focus more on the security of the state than on the security of the people. While this adherence to the traditional conception of security has in many cases ensured the continuity of the state, it has also led to missed opportunities to ensure the security of the human person, and has left the bond between state and citizen less strong than it might otherwise be. And it has hampered the region's embrace of diversity, curtailing opportunities to welcome population groups of differing origins and inclinations into the national project. The result is an all-too-common sense of limited opportunities and personal insecurity, witnessed in the world's highest levels of unemployment, deep and contentious patterns of exclusion, and, ultimately,

strong calls from within for reform. Indeed, the pursuit of state security without attention to human security has brought on sub-optimal outcomes for the state and citizen alike. And in the long run, the government that pursues state security without investing in human security is the government that achieves neither.

The *Report* argues that the inverse is also true: that indeed human security and state security are two sides of the same coin. Ensuring human security leads not only to more opportunities for human development, but also enables states to benefit sustainably from the environment, to earn legitimacy in the eyes of the governed, to benefit from diversity, to fortify economies against global vicissitudes, to reach a higher level of food security, to imbue societies with health, and, last but not least, to be able to address sources of conflicts, and possibly avert them. Approaching human security in this way, the present report was able to use the concept as a lens through which to view a broad range of dimensions affecting people's lives: environmental security, the state's performance in guaranteeing human security, the human security of vulnerable groups, economic security, nutrition and food security, health and human security, and the human security impact of conflict and occupation.

While the primary responsibility to provide for human security lies with the Arab state, the *Report* also argues that the policies of international powers have not been helpful. Foreign interventions and occupations have had devastating impacts on human security in the region in the immediate sense, while also damaging long-term prospects by making it difficult for the voice of reform to be heard above the din.

Like its predecessors in the AHDR series, the present *Report* is an independent work authored by experts deeply rooted in the Arab region and its development dynamics. Like all UNDP Human Development Reports, it is neither a UN consensus document, nor an articulation of UNDP policy, nor an official publication of any government. In a region full of agendas, this is a document that caters to none. Instead, it is a self-critical look in the

mirror, captured in text and disseminated to a broad audience in order to stimulate informed, constructive debate. Not everyone will agree with all of its messages, but the thorough reader will find the *Report's* analysis quite balanced, with messages offered in a constructive spirit to enrich the thinking of all actors interested in promoting the human security of the people of the Arab region.

The AHDR 2009 is the fruit of a two-year research process drawing on the efforts of many dedicated people. I congratulate and thank all who took part in its preparation. A core team of researchers and authors contributed the bulk of the analysis. I am very grateful to them for their tireless commitment and inquisitive spirit. A distinguished Advisory Board made up of Arab scholars and former senior-level policy makers provided strategic and thematic advice. I am thankful for their wise counsel and their devotion to fair analysis. The *Report* also benefitted from the views of over 100 young people from all over the region, who taught us about human security from their own perspective. I appreciate their engagement, and I am hopeful for their future. I am also indebted to Kemal Derviş, former Administrator of UNDP, for his encouragement of this exercise and the guidance he provided. I take this opportunity to welcome the new Administrator of UNDP, Helen Clark, and to thank her for supporting the publication of this report. And I owe a particular note of appreciation to my colleagues in the Regional Programme Division of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, for their wholehearted support and substantial undertaking. May these tremendous efforts be rewarded with a stimulating debate in the interest of human security and human development for all the people of the Arab countries.



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* Salim Nasr: Distinguished sociologist, policy analyst and author, whose intellectual influence on the reform of Arab governance extended well beyond his native Lebanon, and whose prized collaboration with the Report Team was sustained through a long and courageous fight against illness.

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFED	Arab Forum for Environment and Development
AFESD	Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development
AHDR	Arab Human Development Report
AI	Amnesty International
ALO	Arab Labour Organization
AMF	Arab Monetary Fund
AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
AOHR	Arab Organization for Human Rights
BWC	Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHS	Commission on Human Security of the United Nations
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DALY	Disability-Adjusted Life Years
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DOTS	Directly Observed Treatment Short courses (method of detection and treatment of tuberculosis)
DPA	Darfur Peace Agreement
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia of the United Nations
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDI	Gender-related development index
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEM	Gender empowerment measure
HCV	Hepatitis C virus
HDI	Human development index
HDR	Human Development Report
HIC	High income countries
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HPI-1	Human poverty index (for developing countries)
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IBC	Iraq Body Count
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IFHS	Iraq Family Health Survey
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMB	International Maritime Bureau
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWM	Integrated Water Management
JAER	Joint Arab Economic Report
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement of Sudan
KUNA	Kuwait News Agency
LAS	League of Arab States
LDC	Least developed countries
LIC	Low income countries

MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MIC	Middle income countries
MMR	Maternal mortality ratio
MNF	Multinational Forces of Iraq
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Services of Sudan
OAPEC	Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PPP	Purchasing power parity
R&D	Research and development
SAF	Sudan Armed Forces
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SEDAC	Socioeconomic Data and Applications Centre
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SPLA	Sudan's People's Liberation Army
TDS	Total dissolved solids
TFG	Transitional Federal Government of Somalia
TFR	Total fertility rate
TPES	Total primary energy supply
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-POGAR	Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

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