

RELEASE IN PART
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From: Verveer, Melanne S <VerveerMS@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, January 20, 2011 10:43 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw:

Report from Newsweek reporter who traveled with you and broke off in Yemen. You might look at the parag about [redacted] (towards end) and her perceptions of the trip.

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From: Kyle Gibson [redacted]
To: Verveer, Melanne S
Sent: Tue Jan 18 23:31:13 2011
Subject: Re:

Hi, Melanne,

I'd be delighted to talk to you.

I saw what I would describe as the extremes of the lives of women in Yemen. Visited a shelter for women fleeing abuse (also for women just coming out of prison) and met privately with several of them, including a young woman (19) who was forced into marriage twice: first when she was 7 then again when she was 15. "I'm just a product, to be bought and sold," she said to me. Her father had sold her both times, and she'd just learned that he was in debt again and hoping to sell her into marriage a third time to cover his debts. She would love to work and/or get an education so that she might never have to marry again. Oddly enough some of the worst scars on her body--an enormous welt on her forehead and burn marks on her arms--were inflicted by her stepmother years ago. I met another woman who claimed her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law encouraged her husband to beat her because she was "too spoiled." If true, the beating of women and girls is so accepted in Yemen that sometimes women themselves are complicit--(possibly/probably having been beaten themselves). A third woman had fled to the shelter after having been stabbed by her brother on the orders of her husband, because she did not want to engage in certain relations with her husband that are forbidden by the faith. She showed me her knife wound, which is healing now, but it was a serious stabbing.

From there to the other end of the spectrum--a meeting of the Gender Network, which the U.S. embassy folk arranged for me to be invited to, in a private home. 32 women, at least half Yemeni, all NGO officials, all bright, educated, feisty, extremely well-informed on the issues. But one of them there said to me, "don't think there are a lot more like us out there in Sanaa--this isn't just the creme de la creme, it's the whole creme." And an illuminating night at the home of [redacted] and her husband, (who will be lucky if he continues to get away with saying the kinds of things about Saleh that he said to us. [redacted])

[redacted] even as he waxed on about Saleh's corruption and the culture's outrageous attitudes towards women and girls). They both seem fearless. And both underscored that Yemen is going backward when it comes to women--that this has been the trend since unification. For example before unification, there had been a woman judge. Not now. More child marriages now, more abuse. I asked [redacted] if she agreed that the culture renders all females as something other than complete human beings and she said, "without a doubt."

Would be happy to discuss more of the Yemen visit with you, whenever it's best for you. I'm in New York tonight through Friday if you want to talk by phone, and I'm in DC [redacted] all weekend and next week. Meanwhile have shared my notes with Gayle about the incredible tour with Secretary Clinton--in fact I know that Gayle sees you tomorrow. One of the images (not photographed) that stays with me is from the first stop in Abu Dhabi, the image of Secretary Clinton in her blue suit surrounded by all those sheikas, all in black. For some reason I was struck by what one of the younger sheikas said as she shook HRC's hand: "It is an honor to meet a woman of your caliber." One could read a lot into that. And that raucous town hall meeting in Yemen!

Which is to say every detail stays with me--the heartbreaking and the hopeful. I look forward to chatting with you.
Best,
Kyle

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On Jan 18, 2011, at 5:03 PM, "Verveer, Melanne S" <VerveerMS@state.gov> wrote:

Kyle, how did things go in Yemen? I'm eager to hear. I'd love to catch up with you.

Melanne S. Verveer

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