

يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



## Introduction



I am not being admired by many, due to the fact that I can not hide my anger when ever I see that planning was not perfect in Qatar. Poor Education, ugly buildings and low quality of work in Roads, slow work and unefficiency in Government Ministries make me too angry to be elected. It may surprise some people when they come to know that most of the day I think about Qatar more than thinking about myself and my children- However, I always treated all Qatari children like my own children , I loved them more than anybody could imagine and I was fighting" seems alone" for the best for them. Only sometimes, when some Qataris, generous Qataris show me some support, reach out and say something like appreciating what I was doing for them.

I always felt that I had a difficult mission and I needed to be strong and resourceful. I knew that a complete cure to Qatar's problems was impossible, but I had to live with the burden that I was not always welcome everywhere.

Finally, I would like to say thanks to my parents, family, children and friends for doing their best for me.



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I have always felt that I was sent to exile in my own home country Qatar. I was isolated by the media because I raised my voice against corruption and deteriorated quality of Education and Government services. The practice continued in an indirect way when I wanted to attend conferences and seminars. Most of the time I was not welcome and refused entrance.

There was always a hidden power cracked down on me by Qatar government bodies when I opposed policies.

I am writing a book that I wish that it will be allowed to be released by the authorities.

I always felt that one day I would go exile on my own or shall be forced to leave my own homeland Qatar. Interestingly, I presently author this book in Qatar still do not have to flee to Europe or U.S.A.

I came from a middle class background, but my father Ibrahim Al Jefairi was the grand son of a famous captain in Qatar whose name was 'Ibrahim Al Jefairi'. The name of their famous huge boat was Maqdim.

I always thought that if the Qataris agree to reward me for the hard work that I do in promoting democracy and human rights, then they should allow me to go to the parliament. I had guessed before hand that one day perhaps later, Qataris will be happy with me and allow me to share politics with them.

It was in Lebanon in 1970 when I was sent to study. When my eyes opened in Beirut Arab University and I could feel the difference between the closed society in Qatar that I was part of, where there was no freedom to express myself, and the one which was liberal and promised all kinds of freedom especially when I did my evening English and business courses in the American University of Beirut.

I had a dream to see the Qatari woman walking out the restricted society to be equivalent to American women joining U.S astronauts flying aboard the space shuttle on a mission to the space. We Qataris need to be able to feel that we are directly involved in charting the future of our own country.



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Low-income Qatari earners should have better access and make better use of various resources including land, labour, infrastructure and technology among others.

Lack of democratic freedom is regarded as a pressing problem.

I want to see Qataris to build bridges, we need to encourage engagement and not segregation. Face veil in Qatar for example is a barrier to integration.

We do not mind some native Qataris that wear the NIQAB since hundreds of years still wear it, but we do mind that those others who wear the face veil for the purpose of begging or hide crimes which is badly affecting our image. Islam in Qatar is a sign of moderation and not extremism.

I observe the five fundamentals of Islam. It is not in Qatar's benefit to put more barriers. Some people became to feel that the veil has become a sign of extremism. Everyday, I wanted to be a changed man .I am serious about leaving my Non- active part behind. People will be surprised of my new serious outlook. I have a big heart for the Qataris, I am sincere, faithful and they will see that I am a good person.

I am also good with Animals, I have always asked my friends the European expatriates to form societies calling for tougher laws for protection of animals.

We need to draft laws that are more comprehensive regarding animal protection.

Women grow up in Qatar facing great barriers to mixing with unrelated men in public and dragged into arranged marriages.

I am now writing this book and then submit my work to the Qatari Government. If my book is banned then I shall try Arab publishers outside Qatar and leave individual bookstores inside country the choice whether to risk importing them.

I felt that I was like the purity ring of Qatar expressing my faith towards this country exactly like I never had sex outside when I was married to my wife.



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When I was not allowed to write in the Qatari press or speak in Doha conferences, I was disappointed that my freedom of thought which is protected by the Qatari constitution was violated. I was never given the opportunity for being in the spotlight. I would have had a platform where I could raise awareness for poor quality of education given to Qatari children and so many other great causes. I started writing only when I realised that there is a lot more important things in life than wearing expensive watches or driving new cars .

Whenever I felt that I was not allowed to write in the local Qatari press or attend international conferences, such isolation was an experience of a journey of self discovery that I intend to continue.

I am glad that my journey was not easy and such difficulty changed my life forever and made me more stronger and if this will continue, Qataris will see a new 'Hassan Al Jefairi'.

I work very hard. I run a business. I am writing a book. I am a social, environment and human right activist and I feel that some have exaggerated by isolating me, not allowing my message to reach the Qataris, my own people whom I very much love.

The Arabic media in Qatar was never fair to me. I could be a good example to some Qataris, I read a lot . I do not drink, I write without pay, I have never taken drugs, I always try to adhere to the rules, I stand in the queue etc., then I shall cover transformation of a peaceful quiet writer in to a Qatari super star being seen every where in Doha.

There is nothing I could loose more than my severe loss of my son 'Fahad Hassan Aljefairi', so special, so handsome, so young, with all his life full of energy, love to the others, loving Qatar in reality and it is some thing incredibly almost unbearable of the idea that my own good son could be snatched from the world in such a lousy car crash. I still question what happened on that day nearly a year ago. I admit that despite of my faith to God, I am still reluctant to accept that my Prince Son had gone.

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I think what would be interesting about Fahad if he did not die is the stunning theatre of Qataris watching him change before their eyes of a shy blushing child into a member of the future Qatari parliament, If my training and planning for him worked according to what I thought. There was a wonderful feeling from the Qataris about Fahad that they wanted to do something for him but they wished that they could. My unhappiness due to my son Fahad's death transformed me into someone with the courage for writing, speaking and doing the best for Qatar and the Qataris without any fear along with the feeling that I always had that nothing could ever happen to me or to my family worse than the death of Fahad.

I therefore started breaking boundaries such as speaking freely and campaigning for human rights and equal opportunities while I needed the publicity to feed my needs and prove myself desirable, but I did not get what I wanted. But now I feel I am near the end and that I am one day going to be part of the show "Music of death", there is no going back. When I die, I want to leave the same feelings to the Qataris that Fahad left but with a different taste. I thought that if I could make my voice heard then I could fill that whole vacuum. The Journalists who came to know me treated me like a friend and thought that I was a figure, but they could not do more than feeling sorry for me. Qatari Government officials are faced with many photographers and television crews camped outside their doors, but once they are not on the position any more, photographers will not block their path when they walk away. Once they loose their titles, photographers will not bother to give them chase on foot.

I write my apology to Qataris that I misrepresented them due to my ignorance in playing diplomacy. I was so open and frank when I wrote and spoke causing embarrassment to the people that I love. Their patience with me made me feel a shame of myself storming out attacks and accusations in all gatherings, but they, the Qataris should also from their side apologize for making me a racist in loving them too much, but I love nonqataris too.



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There is still room in my heart for all people of different nationalities, colours, regions and races. I was created not only to appear to love others but to love them in reality. I have always wanted to be the champion defending the minority groups. I speak and write trying to fight for a better life for every one, but I hope that one day there is not going to be any criminal action to be pursued against me because my offence was not directed at an individual.

I do not know if I can persuade my local citizens that the problems of democracy are a price worth paying, but I have commitment to meet the class standards expected from a future member of Qatar Parliament, therefore all my efforts are focused on serving people. I never felt that there is anything to hide. I am always acting normally. I have always wanted Qatar to be transformed into a global tourism and investment hub. I love all cultures and nationalities but I have in my heart special love for the Indians, perhaps because of the historical trade ties between my grand fathers and India. My family long affair with India dating as far back as 1870. When my great grand fathers came to Qatar after ruling Qaband.

My grand father is the grand son of Sheikh Mathkooor original Arab from Alnussour tribes the grand son of Banikhaled originated from the Arabian peninsula. They ruled Qaband, while AlQassimis ruled Lenjah on the Persian side of Arabian Gulf. Some of AlQassimis that ruled Sharjah and RasAl Khaimah had to immigrate to Lenjah due to the continuous royal family fighting. Some members of my family "Alnussour" had also to immigrate together with Alqassimis being their allies in 1829. They traded and owned 40 ships. The beginning of each summer, they loaded their boats with dates from Basra, loaded persian carpets from the persian coasts and then returned with sugar, cinnamon and thick wood from Africa or brought materials and clothes from India. They loaded fresh water to their boats from Sharjah and Lenjah, but they had to fight with Abu Dhabi people because there was not any fresh water in Abu Dhabi at that time.

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My grand fathers “Alnussour tribes” decided to help and support Sheikh Mohd binkhalifa AlQassimi to get his rule back which was taken away from him by the Persians in Lenjah, then they had to resist the British in 1809 when the British set fire all over the city of Lenjah. My great grand father Sheikh Mathkour was killed in the Islamic year 1295 Hijri. Sheikh Mathkour was the son of Sheikh Jubara who belonged to the famous Arabic family tribes Banikhaleed. Alqassimis and my grand fathers Alnusours were allies since 1232 Hijri.

They were famous with tough and aggressive fighting together with AlQassimis against the English. They were more famous of building the air towers of the old houses that would make air circulation to the house and keep it cooler. They were related to Almueen family which belonged to Alshummari family the famous Arab tribes. My great grand father Sheikh Mathkour ruled Qaband from the year 1276 Hijri to 1286 Hijri, but then he was killed by the persians in the city of Shiraz capital of Persia at that time. My grand fathers together with AlQassimis did a hard work spreading Islam overseas.

In 1805 my grand fathers together with AlQassimis and wahhabis had to fight the English. Therefore Britain accused them of piracy and slavery trafficking human from Africa to the Gulf. Britain accused them of piracy and that they were supporting the wahhabis and decided again to attack them saying that they threatened the smooth sailing of the British trade ships.

AlQassimis and their allies my grand fathers refused to be called pirates and insisted that they were only defending themselves and that if they did not attack first, than they will be attacked. They thought that their marine movement was active because they had the right to spread salafi mission that was lead by Mohammed bin Abdul wahab in Najd. They said that the reason behind their continuous attacks against the ships was due to their fight and clash with the rulers of Muscat at the time, and that Britain was siding and supporting the rulers of Muscat. They used to sail in groups of ships. Each group was consisting of 70 ships. There were 200 men on board each ship.



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Our grand fathers went to India and had many friends. Indians are kind people. We Qataris trust them and accommodate them males and females in our Qatari houses together with our families.

Indians are the largest community in Qatar because we Qataris admire India and its people. India has a great history, culture, writers and poets. If we can well recruit them, sure they will help us to transform Qatar into a top investment destination.

Back to myself, I always wanted a private life, but the other side of me wanted my message to reach the Qataris, therefore I needed the reporters so badly, not for my sake, but for the best of Qataris and expatriate's quality of life.

I wish if I knew how to be funny and a lovely friend, then I could have had the media on my turning side. Sometimes they see me turn on people but I never meant to be cruel or hysterical. Sometimes, I am over active and then I can be seen everywhere in Doha.

Some are sick and tired of hearing about me. I am always joking to some friends asking them to pack their suitcase and head for the far desert if they are sick of seeing me. I just can not wait to see Qataris highly educated mastering highly sophisticated technology, Healthy and Sportive.

I just realised that the Arabic press was not fair to me as I have been always the most active Qatari but I never had what I deserved equivalent to the efforts that I made. I want to live a simple life, but I do need to make sure that people hear what I want to say. Some few appearances in the media will help. Even If I was in outer space, there are going to be things to do for Qatar. I shall not give up despite of the low level of the amount of Arabic media coverage which I am getting.

I still remember when I was sent screaming and crying to my mother's house after I was told about the death of my son Fahad. It was a very difficult moment when my brother the Ambassador Khalil and my cousin Police Major Ahmed Jassim Al Jefairi saw me crying and screaming "mother, I want to see my mother",



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that was the first time that men of my family saw me so powerless like a baby. I felt that it was not right that my son would never be back again. They all saw the 54 years old man searching here and there for his mother. It was a rare moment that I would be ever in a such situation. I never thought that any thing this much could happen any time. It is not so common in Qatari culture that men cry like babies. Even, when I was a child badly behaving and sometimes get away with anything or was punished by my father, I do not remember if I cried.

Easy Job is created for GCC natives to work for Government, this is why there is a severe shortage of nursing staff, due to the nature of the job, natives generally stay away from opting nursing as a career and will prefer an easy office job.

If the media was fair with me, then I would have used the publicity to draw attention to build quality education to meet our needs for nursing and other technical jobs.

I am trying to serve Qatar and its people very carefully realizing that there is a possibility that I serve Jail sentence for violating the publicity law. This is the price later I am going to pay to risk my freedom for promoting democracy and human rights, but this is an important role in my life that I take responsibility for my involvement in politics. In the future, I plan on taking more of an active role in the decisions that are made for Qatar and its people, even If I pay with my freedom as a price for my decisions. Although I have lived scared during the last 4 years, but I am ready to continue even If one day I get a jail sentence.

I am sure that if I end up in jail, the media in Qatar that is either owned by the Government or by persons who are related to Government will never use any pressure to release me. People who like me will also be afraid to do something for me, but I make my own decisions on the basis of information from my own sources.



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When I am ordered to go behind bars, I shall continue my praying and reading non-stop. Every one will be afraid to see me if I am benefited from visits or to talk to me when I have telephone access. I also doubt if I shall get the usual level of medical care that are afforded to other inmates and perhaps I would be left to die.

I expect to face a horrible experience and now when I sleep, I am severely depressed and feel that soon I shall smell like a dirty rat kept in a cage. I feel that when I am ordered to serve a certain period behind bars, then I shall be serving more time than 90% of people assuming good behaviour. One thing I am sure of is that definitely I shall refuse any preferential treatment which I doubt that the Jail officer will offer me. I shall not accept any earlier release because I myself as a civil rights activist and always question officials about the preferential treatment that some important persons to the Government, yet get. I wonder if one day I can raise this issue that would trigger an outcry and allegations of unequal Justice.

No one will dare to make for me small gathering when I get out of Jail, but my mission afterwards will be to make sure that those who made me go behind bars for no reason other than asking for a better quality of life for every one will pay a fair price.

When I was the area manager of Gulf Air in Qatar, I never allowed myself to be linked with any aristocratic persons. When it comes to a lot of social activities, partying and meeting new friends, it can be a priority, but Qataris think that conferences and forums are only organised for propaganda and that there is no serious out come from these lectures and seminars, there fore majority do not attend, but when I go and speak, I end up speaking either to expatriates who can not vote or just talking to myself.

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When I write, it is the same story, my articles are not published in the press, neither printed in Newspapers or Magazines and then my writings will end up in the dustbins. I make regular visits to conferences and receptions. Photographers started to like me when they see me in these Hotels. I am being photographed smiling and joking with participants but owners and auditors of the press have instructions not to make me appear in the press, but those who work in the media became my friends, always comforted me until I became more confident and less concerned about media boycott. I have found my new sense of style in writing and am in slim shape after training for a Qatari record-breaking non-stop social activities from early mornings to late evenings.

If the Arabic Qatari press would have had allowed me to write my daily columns, then I would not have asked for money in return. My priority is to convey my message to my own people. Still a lot of Qataris do not know me, neither recognizing my mission nor understanding what I say. I am not threat to H.M. the Emir, but I am a threat to those corrupted. The more I am unknown, the more my words are not important. If they are able to hide me, then I am causing less headache for their heads. H.M. The Emir of Qatar was smiling and talking nicely to me whenever he met me, but of course officials on lower Government positions did not like my continuous interference and questioning.

Some told me that if I had a fair media coverage for my activities, Qataris can never foresee a day when there won't be an interest in me. I do not mind being a cash crop for newspapers owners in Qatar in terms of covering my activities and publish my articles as long as Qataris can come to know me better, but even with that, they either do not want to do it, or perhaps they are instructed not to do it.

I feel it is important to publish my sufferings, but the Qatari press was not fulfilling its responsibility in promoting creativity among the Qataris, but Qatar is doing much better than some other Arabic countries which place hundreds of activists behind bars and they will remain prisoners at the facility.



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Many of them have yet to be officially charged with any crime. However, talking about myself, life is not a bed of roses for an ambitious man like me fulfilling my role as a good citizen, “or perhaps bad to those corrupted,” I am also active in making people aware of their human rights, by participating in lectures and forums and try to say what I know so people can benefit from my humble storage of knowledge before I die, but I am not allowed to conduct public programs that reach out to Qataris especially in democracy and freedom of speech. I was not allowed to be a main speaker on the panel in order to share my recipe for success at International Conferences. I grew up in a family of hard working father, watching my father go to work everyday.

People ask me if I chose business because my father is a business man, but my grand fathers were in the trade and my great grand fathers did the same, so perhaps trading is in the genetic system of my blood circulation. What remains to be seen is that somebody going to take some message after I die and say Hassan Aljefairi at least was trying for a change even if he was not able to do it. There are a lot of things that I could do, but I wish I was allowed to write. I could have been offered a job in journalism. The Qatari constitution gave me the right to work hard and gain extra income , but for some illiterates, such constitution is only an ink on a paper. I might have made it sound easy, but it was not easy. Somebody is trying to take my rights away from me. Some told me that I was gifted from God with little ability to write. Such ability could enable me to have a better life, but my writings are banned in magazines and newspapers and can not be published, then they worth nothing.

There were days during this struggle when I told myself that I was giving up, but something like a little signal came to me from God kept me continuing my struggle. I thought that fighting corruption is something big, then I shall fight for it.

Making a change for the Qataris worth dying for it, but this fight had never became interesting, because I felt like it was within inside the Qatari family, the people whom I ever loved.

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Some times, someone told me to stop, some threatened my future, my business, my family and taking my Qatari Nationality away from me. Some one told me that I could not do the change but I reassured myself that I could, but there was a lot of disappointment and a lot of bad times.

I had to fight any way to get what I want in life. And in the end I have to take charge of myself and have the courage to admit making a mistake and start again. I want to see women fighting their way to the top, not being felt sorry for and appointed. I want to see them technicians, nurses, doctors, surgeons, engineers and chartered accountants, but if you count how many Qatari ladies working with such professions, you will end up with a very small number.

A woman could barely manage with two children, but it is becoming more difficult when the number is getting bigger. If some continue to take my rights of free speech and freedom to write away from me, I shall continue to have this headache and collapse, or perhaps I end up with brain haemorrhage when I am admitted one day to the hospital's intensive care unit. If I am still survived, I want to campaign for green issues for many years because until now it has not become fashionable to do so in Qatar. I want to inspire Qataris to the cause by bringing a new green culture to their brains. I want to be remembered as a great campaigner, but also faithful to Qatar and it's people. There is absolutely no way that I can raise my big issues if media in Qatar would not agree to be the fuel of my engine that needs to drive Qatari people towards the goals that I have for them. Without a media support, nothing from my side could happen and my social engine will stop running. I could neither write much for quality education for children nor those with disabilities.

I want to survive to continue to campaign to take diabetes more seriously as a public health challenge. Another health issue is that some people could be contracted virus from a blood transfusion. At the end, social issues make me even more determined to just get on with things.



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I have always needed the Arabic media support to persuade Qataris to use more natural products and buy them in reusable containers, paint the walls of Government buildings with light green in order to promote environment consciousness to recycle every thing and act environmentally friendly. If the Qatari authorities will let me write, I shall be a workaholic who spend all his time writing, why not? I have no criminal records and I do not socialise a great deal or go to many parties and have not been involved in sex scandals. I lately started writing my Qatari local slang language poetry. My poetry has been criticised for using simpler language, but some said it was made of a new work of art on the sounds of words that are known to all Qataris. All readers use the words of my poetry language in their daily life, so no one has to refer to a dictionary if he is a native Qatari.

I would be more famous with poetry if Arabic media cooperated. The music in my local poetry will completely disappear once it is translated to English. It is so simple , but so local too. My poetry tries to use my imagination that Qatar is being a very beautiful princess that I was falling in love with, but how lonely I was and how much unhappy and depressed if I was sent to exile away from Qatar.

According to my poetry, each day I was separated from Qatar “my princess” was hell. I missed her each and every day with such sadness. I missed her very much. I loved her before oil was ever discovered, I loved her when Doha town was a dusty gateway lawless tribal area bordering empty desert. In my poetry, I was like a hero who found a lover. It was love at first sight .It developed quickly over the years and then we became two souls inside one body. One day I was there to receive her. I was in a state of panic and instable. I thought a miracle would happen. Qatar came walking through a dusty lane and I was on to her immediately. I had my arms open when she walked towards me and I hugged her forcefully.

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I told my princess that I was deeply sad due to lack of Democracy in the region. We were told since so many years that approach to Democracy in GCC should be gradual. Our participation as GCC citizens has to come in stages, but when I wanted to be involved, I have never been welcome. It was only a talk for propaganda, to show western countries that Democracy in GCC is the “will”, but in reality Governments are not being honest. They are not serious about transparency or equality among all individuals. They kept on emphasizing the words of adherence to acceptable norms and respect for the rule of law, but in the end of the day, a citizen like me, end up in the road worth zero have no participation at all.

I started writing more local poetry, because sensitive social and political issues remained untouched, I did not want to go to Jail so soon, therefore I started treating cultural, religious and light social issues as my subjects. I avoided social problems and political issues.

In the beginning, I did not want to write about my mother Fatima bint Hassan bin Ali bin Saleh Albaker who was the cousin of Abdul Rahman Albaker, who was from Qatari origin living in Bahrain during the time when Bahrain was under the umbrella of the British colony. The British who controlled the region deported Mr. Abdul Rahman Albaker to Saint Helena, the famous Island in the middle of no where in the ocean where Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled after he lost the Battle of Waterloo to the British. My mother's cousin, Abdul Rahman Albaker was a national leader fighting for freedom of the Bahraini people and their rights. He was popular and supported by the Bahrainis due to his bravery and love for Bahrain. He was arrested by the British and was sent to exile to the isolated Island Saint Helena.

Albaker family is originally from Qatar, but some members of the family migrated to Bahrain and became Bahrainis. Many families are divided between Bahrain and Qatar.



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In his exile, Albaker wrote a book “from Bahrain to Saint Helena”.I am not sure if this book is available in Qatar but still banned in Bahrain.

My mother Fatima Albaker is the grand daughter of Khalil Albaker the founder of one of the first Quraan Schools “Madrassa” in Qatar, that is why his daughter, my grand mother Amina khalil Albaker could read Quraan, but could not write. At that time children were taught how to read Quraan but did not learn writing.

My grand mother is the sister of Ahmed Khalil Albaker, the owner of the famous Albaker pharmacy. She is the cousin of Abdulaziz Albaker, member of the advisory council. She is the grand daughter of Saleh Albaker, the father of Ahmed who owned the first coffee shop in Qatar called Qahwat Albaker located in Souqwaqif. She is the sister of Ahmed Hussain Naama who is the brother of Abdulla Hussain Naama the first Qatari Journalist, the owner of the first Qatari newspaper called “AlArab”, whose nephew is the famous Qatari poet Dr.Hassan Ali Alnaama.

Mr.Hamid Alnaama is the author of the book “Alhawala”, talking about Qatari Arabs who migrated from the Arabian peninsula to the persian coast of the Arabian Gulf. My mother is the daughter of Hassan Albaker one of the first Qatari labourers in “Zekreet”Dukhan when the Qatari started drilling for oil before the fifties.

“I really have no choice but to turn 55, there is a lot that I want to do, I still have more to write, there is a lot that still I did not say, I wrote a lot and I did a lot, but those officials have always hidden my activities. I want the Qataris to know that I tried to do something for them, but how? I am not in the picture, the officials want only their pictures to be seen”.

The frustration that I feel when I drive on the broken roads of Doha, holes every where and ugly low quality buildings on the sides, this is the richest country in the world, it should not be like that. My mind would explode, there is not a lot that has changed



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. I give credit to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashed Almaktoom for making Dubai beautiful, but we have more money generated from Oil and Gas, why can not we have good roads and make Qatar beautiful? Some areas in Qatar still can not be livable and bearable. Whenever I open my mouth and speak criticising the Government's poor services, I feel I am like isolated spending weeks up a tree watching crocodiles eyes glowing red beneath me, no one dares to rescue me. The love that I have to my people will make me patient and help me out. Every night, I felt before I slept that crocodiles would sit at the bottom of the tree staring at me. I would stay still, keep together and not falling out of the tree for them. Whenever I opposed the officials, I was met in return with red eyes. My nightmare began when I decided to do something for Qatar and its people. I thought, I was going to be welcome and greeted by my own people, I never thought that I would be thrown by my own horse on the rough road, but the horse would not let me climb back in to the saddle and would refuse to take me back home.

I was preparing myself for the worst, but I was not dead, I was still out there, but my people did not want to get me.

I have seen myself in my nightmare when I was a sleep facing death warrant threatening my life if I did not quit. I saw myself very much frightened and afraid of death, but then I thought everyone had to die and that calmed me down, but afterwards I again saw myself taken to an underground chamber and left alone mostly very calm. Some came but when they saw me, they started whispering until there was a complete silence. Everybody felt the death. Recalling the years spent writing and speaking, I felt better because I thought that I explored my human side, but if it did not work, then history is history, it was the way it was, no one could change it. The happiest time in my life was when I felt that I did my best for Qatar and its people, whether I was right or wrong, I did what I thought that it was the best. Other happy times for me when I was surrounded by children. It was wonderful. Other good times when some felt that my poetry sometimes had imagination power.



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Few people liked the words of pride, admiration, sadness and love. In some of my poems, I always wanted to write about poverty among some Gulf nationals and extreme richness on the other side, while some GCC millionaires were made because they had more price for their buildings rented to Ministries, got more than one free land, being favoured with business contracts, given licenses to own Newspapers and made influential to have more power in hands. They were able to obtain easy visas, sponsor big companies and be Agent for Large Industries. Other nationals were shaped seeing all this happening feeling of defeat and so ordinary.

The Gulf nationals no longer take pride in their identity attributing this deterioration to the failure policies adopted by the Governments in addressing the Educational, social, economical and demographical issues.

Also extremism is clear, not on the level of citizens, but political officials who are trying to use religion to further their Agenda. Some want to censor freedom of expression. They have the power to veto any cultural event. This practice will damage the Image of Gulf countries known for its culture and heritage.

Due to poor quality of Education in Qatar some years ago, we were unable to graduate Qataris to meet the needs of technical, industrial, health and engineering requirements.

Therefore, we had to recruit technical and skilled manpower from abroad, Qataris became the native minority. Such economic development to some is a success, but to me is a failure because we Qataris are totally isolated and not part of such development. We need in Qatar more American and British best elementary and secondary schools to graduate Qatari native children to meet the requirements of Weil Cornell and Texas Universities in Qatar. Qatar Government is to pay the fees of any Qatari child whose parents chosen for him to study in a Private British or American elementary school. The pupil will also learn Arabic and Islamic religion as additional subjects.

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According to my brain, failure to do so will make Qatari natives negligible in 15 years.

Our children will not be able to find jobs in the oasis of economic prosperity. Qatar can be a Jewel in the crown only if Qatari natives are involved, but in reality this glory will come with price. If the present trend continues, Qataris will be less than 8% after twenty years.

Failure to graduate Qatari doctors, engineers etc, means that foreigners continue flocking in, transforming demographics and we Qataris will end up strangers in our own land. To uphold the national identity, Qataris have to act like me, open-minded, respect other religions and cultures, encouraging the sense of good citizenship and falling in love with the Qatari land and its roots.

I did my best to have quality self-education, but my Qatari identity is always there, existing.

Qatari local press should cooperate with me to promote quality education among Qatari children. Speaking English is one of the means of getting along but this does not mean that our Arabic language will be abandoned and our local culture will be lost. I am trying to make Qataris to admire me for the free hard work that I do for them, but they only can see an angry man in me, out of control and not being patient. People are wondering if an angry man can get ahead, but they always say that I am too angry to be elected for the future Parliament, but very few like me for my anger.

However, I have always preferred to show my own people that I was angry instead of being sad, because Qataris are used to see angry men or sad women, but not to see men sad. Things go wrong everywhere in Qatar causing me continuous psychological shocks making me end up with emotional stress, that is why I am seen angry. Such feeling never came to me when I was in Europe. Some times, I am nearly six months living in England and I can not remember not even for one time that I was angry. I am leading a life with lots of obstacles and sudden changes. My nervous system is a very sensitive and whenever I see Doha road in a miss, my brain can not bear this stress.



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When I was a child I was over active, that is why my relatives frightened me by telling scary superstitions and ghost stories. That was wrong mechanism. Perhaps, this is why when I see illiterates do not know how to manage money for better life and quality, I become suddenly angry.

It may surprise people to realise that most of the day I do not think about being diabetic. I do not have any symptoms, I shall not let diabetic control my Agenda. However, I am no stranger to tragedy. A year ago my son Fahad was killed in a car accident, what worse than that diabetic could do to me? My love to Qatar and it's people will defeat this silent killer and will force it to hide below the average level by being lively, active and be every where in Qatar. I shall step up my role as a top adviser for the Qatari people. Every day I read up to six hours, I watch documentary films, I attend seminars, lectures, forums, conferences and I listen to Aljazeera and BBC radio all the time. I do that to gain knowledge in order to advise the Qatari people that I love, then it is up to them to listen and do what I thought it was the best for them.

Perhaps some of my advises are right or could be wrong, but I always wanted the best for them. I am writing letters with practical advise, a sort of guide to quality life, for the Qatari children to read after my death. Waste management is one of the issues that worry me. I saw how much plastic waste the cities in Gulf countries produced that can be recycled. The plastic can be washed, dried, separated and arranged in trays. The plastic then go in to a machine which presses them in to thick sheets.

I am also urging for a deal to be signed with the British Museums. Qatar will pay to use the prestigious British museum name for 25 years as a part of a cultural exchange that will see paintings and Antiques from British museums exhibited in Qatar museums. The British museum will staff and manage the Qatari museum and lend it works of art, but it will also build up its own major art collection. Experts said that concrete mixed with sulfur a major by-product of gas processing, could be used instead of asphalt to pave roads.

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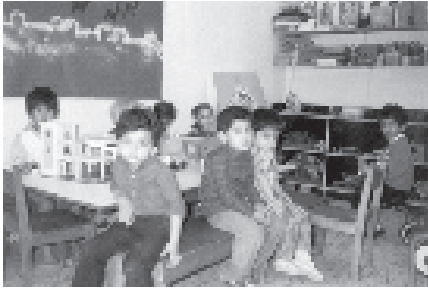
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Buying smaller vehicles and increasing the price of gasoline in Qatar might reduce the traffic congestion on the roads. Qatar should work towards designing new vehicles that are environment specific. People should also be encouraged to use public transportation. Qataris spoil themselves buying things that they do not need, but it is more fashionable if they act according to my Art of living changing and shifting to simpler and basic way of living.

There are many ways to recycle the massive quantities of construction and demolition wastes that are being generated. Before I die, I want to see this country carrying out reforms, whether in the fields of human rights or all other freedoms. The shura council is a consultative body that has no authority. Its recommendations are referred to the Board of Ministers for approval, but life can not continue like this in Qatar, the Government in the long run must protect the right of Individual to express his views in literature, argument and politics. I wonder if the UN committee against torture will come and examine Qatar's authorities implementation of the convention against torture. I do not know if one day myself or any other Qatari activists will be taken to Jail and remain ill-treated or tortured before or after taken to trial.

I heard that Qatari legislation failed to define torture in accordance with the international standards. This if myself or other Qatari activists can be placed at increased risk of torture, perhaps with the lack of access to good Qatari lawyers or doctors or notify our relatives of the details related to the arrest. There are no rights groups in Qatar that will urge Government to free activists or express concern that any one of us is abused to give forced confessions.

If rights groups exist, then open letters can be sent to the authorities about any physical or psychological abuse. Sometimes authorities in the Arab world hire individuals who are related to the Government to beat and threaten activists. If I criticise road bad conditions then any time I can be accused of insulting the state leaders of writing inflammatory materials. Other famous practices in the Arab world that Activists are being deprived from sleep or their families are threatened.



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Some are beaten with cables or forced to remain standing for so long. Being a diabetic, my wound will never heal and my bleeding will continue to death.

It is better for the Qatari Government to have a moderate peaceful Activist like me instead of facing extreme fanatic Activist. I have always wanted expatriates to have fun time in Qatar, socialising and laughing. Doha players did not bring only expatriates together, but a Qatari like me to socialise with community members. The players are very much a family affair and I met some of them. We Qataris shall build a new Doha players, The bomb will never stop a peaceful Qatari man like me share expatriates love and happiness.

The Qatari Government had never trusted individuals like me and gave freedom. The state continued to discriminate against me, being their own son while foreigners have the right to write. Even my basic opportunity to speak in forums, participate in conferences and write in the Qatari Arabic press was denied. I was neither allowed to gain independence nor benefit from the small skills in speaking and writing that God gave to me. Not only ladies in Qatar need empowerment but also Qatari men like me.

All systems in Qatar need to be modernised. I am not being treated like mature. When I say a rich country like Qatar does not have good roads and better quality education for the children, I am being accused of mentally imbalanced. I imagine that if I place one of my articles in the internet, a virus will be sent and the website will be smashed. I do not get enough trust while Arabic writers enjoy many freedoms. I am not allowed to share decisions affecting the life of the Qataris who according to my belief, they need a man like me who loves them a lot.

I think that with co-education Qatari girls will be able to deal with men, able to protect themselves and then when they become ladies, they will be able to travel and study at any educational institutions abroad. Some of them, can not find relatives free to accompany them. Co-education will graduate a Qatari lady who is more independent. Co-education in Qatar University will make Qatari students boys and girls meet, understand and like each other

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marry and make families, better than being forced in to arranged marriages that thirty four percent end up with divorce. Qatari women themselves do not want to help or support me to break these cultural barriers. GCC government presently uses women's presence in politics as a decoration for the assemblies or ministerial cabinets. Qatari women should either fight for their freedom or at least to support activists like me to fight for them. Why do not they invite me to start and help them to run civil societies to educate women with their rights.

I want to be the most prominent Qatari rights activist. The Qatari security men walked me out of the conference room when I was asking the Qatari Prime Minister. The Qatari Security Government men refused my entry to many conferences. One day I had a letter of invitation to attend human rights and democracy conference in the Sheraton. They took the letter away and refused to give it back to me, refused my entry but allowed me to have coffee. The Government forced me out of the Arabic local newspaper and did not allow to give me any press coverage in the Qatari Arabic press to win the municipality elections and then I was totally banned from writing in Qatari Arabic daily newspapers. I am afraid that later my passport is seized banning me from travelling abroad.

If you work in politics and something happens to you in Gulf countries, people have very little to do for you. I had the feelings of loneliness when I spoke about human rights. People were afraid to talk about it and I felt isolated. I was never openly praised, because some thought that some action could be taken against them by the authorities. Some may have had sympathy for me in their hearts, but were scared to show it out.

An activist in Gulf countries can be praised, but if he is arrested, then individuals will hesitate to raise the issue. There are no organisations or human rights societies to defend the accused. Activist can not also start political movement because the law has so many restrictions.



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With the growth of Qatar economy have come some pressing issues one of them is that we Qataris are becoming a smaller minority in our own country where English is the business language of the private sector that is building the country.

Qataris are learning poor and below average English language and then when they are graduated from high schools, they are isolated from the work in the private sector which needs English language speaking graduates.

Poor education in elementary and secondary schools graduating Qatari men and women that can not meet the practical and technical requirements of the labour market needs. There fore, thousands of new comers arriving in the city of Doha every week most of them workers underpaid with little rights. Many housemaids are being abused. Among the Qataris, many time, I found myself lonely activist speaking and fighting for construction workers and housemaids rights. The most serious mistake that we Qataris had ever made was allowing children to work as camel jockeys.

I am a Qatari and I want some people to work for me, but I do not want to sponsor any one, but this strange law here in Qatar is forcing me to sponsor the person who works for me.

Domestic servants who feel being mistreated by their employers should be allowed to resign and work for another employers. I do not know who brought this sponsorship law to us, we did not ask for it. Some might misuse this law and will start abusing their workers or force women in to prostitution. I am not talking about Qatar only, but it is same situation there in all GCC countries.

If I continue with my activities, any thing could happen like politically motivated criminal case can be filed against me or might count some threats as I am insider pointing a finger inside Qatar not from abroad. People here are not used to see activists, perhaps I am one of the very few Qataris. Workers complain about below minimum average wages, unpaid salaries, dangerous work conditions and threats to deport them if they protest.



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Every time I had a chance to speak in public, I asked GCC governments to have good intentions to raise minimum salary level for construction workers, better accommodation condition according to the internationally accepted standards and seat for each labourer in the transport.

There is still no active civil society in Qatar and most of non-government organisations here are financed by the Government. A lot of people here do not know what human rights are. Even I myself care about women rights more than women themselves. Women do not care about their own children being abused given deteriorated education in Government schools, left alone with housemaids and it seems to me that I do care more about children than their own mothers. Media means in GCC can be owned only by the influentials, the space of freedom is becoming smaller and ruling families distancing themselves away from their own people, gaining more money and power. We need International standards related to free elections and real human rights, but not those have used for Governments propaganda. Our traditional society might start fading but modern alternative is not coming.

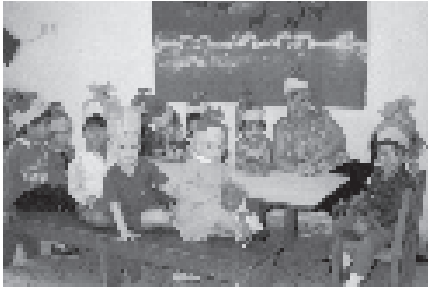
I am nervous, but in my situation it is normal to feel nervous. I am prepared to face anything.

Human rights issues:-

1. Luckily in Qatar, there is no system for Muttawa religious police who say about themselves that they can not be judged. They will arrest women if they are not covered from head to toe when they go out in public. These religious police men can question, arrest women and take the car away from the driver and drive them together with the car to their headquarters.

They do not care even if women are sick suffering health complications. Some officials defend the Muttawa because they serve their government's Agenda.

2. Another situation when Human Rights watch called to release a woman forcibly divorced by a court because her family claimed her husband's tribal lineage was not good enough for them.



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3. Foreign workers should be allowed to freely practice their religious rights in the Gulf region.
4. Foreign workers can not stay here permanently or bring their families since this would mean a decline in the remittance flows to their homelands.
5. Some Gulf countries do not allow the formation of trade unions even for their nationals.
6. The culture of female circumcision does not exist in Gulf countries, the widely practiced in Africa removal of the clitoris.
7. I heard that there is a humanitarian tragedy in Darfur. The majority of the seven million populations in Darfur are Muslims but they are being killed for being non-Arabs. I hope that this is not true.
8. Higher minimum salaries for construction workers in Gulf countries, building high rise towers by their sweat and blood. They must have all the rights to rest, have food and safety measures to protect their lives and payment of compensation to the workers who had died in a work site accident. Workers must be provided with helmets and safety boots.
9. Changing the sponsorship system in the Gulf can make Job markets more efficient by giving the foreign workers the right to change jobs. By not allowing a worker to move from one job to another, you are denying another employer the opportunity to benefit from his services. Such sponsorship system does not exist anywhere else in this world. It exists only in GCC countries.
10. The right for Qataris to work in the private sector must be protected by making closer cooperation between the government and the private sector to promote the Qatarisation process. A priority to be given to a national if available for the post otherwise the employer will not get a permission for recruitment.
11. Minimum wages to be fixed in GCC for foreign workers and insurance to be made compulsory for persons coming to GCC to work.
12. Bilateral labour agreements between labour exporting countries and GCC are essential to protect rights of workers and employers.



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13. Qatar have to promote democratic values and development of the country using the money generated from oil and gas wisely. Qatar must change the sponsorship system that is leading to abuse of power, must improve living conditions of labours in camps and open more debates on issues like freedom of speech and free media. Qatari Government should stop pushing the society to become more conservative or tribal by holding seminars and curriculums giving overdose courses of obeying culture and extremism in religion. Qatar Government should encourage its citizens to express their honest feelings in seminars and forums. Qatar has more responsibilities towards protecting human rights especially after being elected by the General Assembly to be admitted together with Angola, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Egypt to the U.N's top rights council.
14. I urge Qatari Government to speed up transparency and reforms in Qatar.
15. I urge Governments of Gulf countries to free jail reformists and allow establishing political parties. There are some members of the ruling families who support reforms.
16. Qatar to approve a national strategy to fight corruption and to approve a plan that opens Government officials to investigation. There is a need for reducing, simplifying procedures and for applying the principle of accountability to all officials regardless to their positions. We need a reform agenda starting with a severe crackdown on corruption.
17. Qatar was added to a Washington black list of countries trafficking in people. Being on the black list, violating countries could face sanctions.
18. Israel must tear down West Bank barrier. It is causing deaths and suffering among Palestinians.
19. Some members of Royal families in Gulf countries were at the centre of British reports they received a huge commission for a multi-million dollar arms deals.



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They accused Iraq Government for not providing enough back up support to the U.S forces. U.S officials say that they are there in Iraq because they have a mandate from the U.N.

A mandate that came on the request of the Iraqi government, they said.

I support the Arab peace initiative to resolve the Arab Israeli conflict. I call to review of the Palestinian and Israeli school curriculum to remove those portions that create hatred between the Muslim and Jewish communities.

Interfaith groups in the U.S can learn from the history of Spain and its culture of co-existence.

There is always a need for a dialogue of religions. There was a story of a Hindu priest, a Christian pastor and a Muslim Imam would sit and discuss problems to find solutions to the problems of the town Rameshwaram in Tamil Nadu. It is in the interest of everyone to see respectful dialogue and continued friendship.

One of the peaceful missions is Microsoft nonprofit project, one laptop per child priced at \$100.

Developing countries made commitments to distribute the laptops to millions of school children. Microsoft has offered discounted Windows to a few developing nations priced at \$30 or less.

In the Muslim world, it is time to leave behind extreme radical views and follow the principle of coexistence. Extremism will lead our nations to down fall. Promoting extremism in the Islamic countries will lead societies towards a decline and this is not the path to take the future generations forward.

Due to extremism, thousands are being killed in tribal sectarian clashes. Sunni and Shiite groups exchange gunfire in Islamic countries where sectarian violence left thousand of people dead every month. Authorities are not doing enough to send army troops to restore orders.

I have always asked people to differentiate between Zionists and Jews. The Palestinian people are suffering because the Zionists took their land. The Jews are all over the world. They are not the enemies. They did not take the Palestinian land, but the Zionists did. There fore the enemy are the Zionists not the Jews.

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Sometimes art and culture can bridge the gap, some said that it was not so much a clash of civilizations we were dealing with, as a clash of ignorance. Artistic communities could contribute to improving understanding and relations between U.S.A and Islamic world. Islamic artistic arts have limited reach to be distributed beyond their country of origin.

There are lots of respectful verses for Christians and Jews in the Holy Quraan. I do not hate moderate Jews who are asking for peace with the Palestinians. I look at their eyes and I ask them to do something to reduce the suffering of the Palestinians. The Zionists created "hate-Jew" literature in the Arab world. I would like to thank those Christians who joined hands with the Palestinians and launched a joint front to face the far extreme Zionists. Those Christians who declared solidarity with the Arab Muslims on the Palestinian issue. Christians in the Middle East have very good relations with their Muslim neighbours. They live together sharing the same language and culture and religion, but politicians create problems for political gains.

I wish I would have died before reading that a 17 year old Iraqi yazidi girl was shown on the internet lying in the road as men kick her and throw a large rock or concrete at her head.

According to local official, she was murdered by her brothers and uncles after she converted to Islam.

On April 23, gunmen stopped a bus carrying workers, dragged out 23 Yazidis and shot them dead.

Human rights in Iraq also continuously expressed serious concern over a rapid rise in so called "honour killings" of women accused to have betrayed their families in Kurdish Iraq.

We need to work with the west and the U.S together against ignorance, hatred, terrorism, extremism, corruption and abuse of state of power. Qatar, European Union, U.K and U.S.A are to be for technology, faith, Justice, humanity and peace in the region. Some said that the root of the on going violence in Iraq does not lie in religions but in different political ideologies .Aljazeera channel was criticized for broadcasting footage that provoke violence.



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**April 19, 2006**

"We need roads like Norway has"

#### QATARI BASKS IN THE SPIRIT OF NEW FREEDOM

DOHA: A Qatari national who has been openly criticizing the country's officialdom on key social and economic issues at global conferences in recent days, says had he tried to raise his voice against the system three years ago, he would have been sent to jail.

"But there is freedom in our country now and I can publicly discuss issues that were a taboo a few years ago," says Hassan Ibrahim AlJefairi.

A small businessman, Al Jefairi says he is hated by officials for his open criticism but they cannot do a thing since "the leadership has given us this freedom of speech".

"Had I tried this three years back, for instance, I would be spending time in jail." According to Al Jefairi, when he began speaking critically on some sensitive social, political and economic issues at public forums three years ago, many eyebrows were raised.

People got furious with him and he was even threatened." Some people told me that if I did not discontinue with what I was doing, I would be beaten up, but I did not listen," said Al Jefairi.

He has been speaking critically on issues ranging from privatization of state run services, improvement of public services and treatment of citizens and expatriates with "little respect" by bureaucrats and government clerks, role of women in society and that of the local media.

Qataris are not critical by temperament since their family values and culture do not permit them to criticise elders and the system, he says." They are afraid since they are not used to criticism."

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According to Al Jefairi, despite the country's leadership having given the green signal to people to exercise freedom of speech, there are people in the local media who do not encourage free speech.

He said he once went to a local Arabic newspaper's office and wanted a critical article published, but the editor-in-chief turned him away suggesting that since he knew English, he could instead get the material published in a local English language daily.

"I was given to understand that while our Arab dailies cannot publish anything critical, the English newspapers were free to do so," said AlJefairi.

Qatar has the highest per capita income at \$45,000 and it is next only to Denmark and Norway in that respect." So, what we want now is that Qatar should have roads like Norway has and hospitals and schools that we find in Denmark."

Where Qatar has some pluses it also has severe challenges to combat. It has the highest divorce rate in the world and is about to enter the Guinness Book of World Records for the highest number of deaths in road accidents.

"Qatari families are losing two of their members on an average every week; The death toll in road mishaps is disturbing," says Al Jefairi." We as a country also have the highest rate of diabetics in the world."

Al Jefairi has filed nomination for the May 15 election to the board of directors of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), but says that he is not sure of his win since the Chamber is all about big businesses and their influential owners.

Small traders have little chance of making it to the QCCI board since Chamber members tend to vote for big businessmen in order to maintain good personal and business relations with them.

Al Jefairi has inherited a small real estate business from his father and has set up on his own a jewellery shop. His hobby is writing.

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## **FREEDOM OF PRESS A FARCE, SAYS QATARI**

DOHA: A Qatari member of the audience at the 6th Doha Forum on Democracy Development and Free Trade yesterday said press freedom in the GCC was a pers were either controlled by the government or their owners were close to the powers that be.

He also blasted the officialdom in the region saying that it was self-serving. The man identified himself as Hasan Al Jaffiri during question and answer sessions at the forum yesterday and said he was contesting the May 15 election to the board of directors of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI).

Speaking in English, Al Jaffiri commented on key social and economic issues facing the region at two important sessions, namely, "strengthening partnership between public and private sectors" and "models of economic cooperation and integration.

At the second session, the GCC secretary general, H E Abdul Rahman Al Attiyah, was also present and Al Jaffiri directed his questions to him. "Why aren't we educating our people in accordance with the needs of the job market," he asked.

Senior officials, he said, were getting plots of land allotted and getting lion's share of initial public offerings (IPOs) whereas the common man was being ignored.

"Are we going to see our women as pieces of decorations or going to actually empower them in" the name of women's empowerment," asked Al Jaffiri.

We need more job opportunities," he said, stressing that more than 80 per cent of those employed in the private sector were foreigners.

And, only those-people who are pro-establishment are invited to global conferences." Why is the opposition being ignored," he wondered.

-THE PENINSULA





## PROXY VOTING IN QCCI POLL VIOLATES

The practice of proxy voting in the election to the board of directors of Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) violates the country's Constitution since it infringes on the principle of equal rights and opportunities guaranteed to citizens, says a poll contestant.

Hasan Al Jefairi told The Peninsula yesterday that he might challenge the forthcoming QCCI poll on the above ground in the Court of Cassation, Qatar's highest court.

Apparently unfamiliar with the concept of (stays) granted by supreme courts on controversial legal and electoral practices in advanced countries, Al Jefairi said he had raised objections to the proxy voting system to the QCCI election committee in vain. "They told me the practice is legal since it is provided for by the law governing the Chamber."

Three other poll contenders had objected to the system, said Al Jefairi. "I will first try to get them along to move the court but if they drag their feet, I will take up the fight alone."

According to Al Jefairi, there are rumours that money had changed hands in securing proxy votes. "I had pointed this out to the poll committee in writing," he said.

Some Candidates had collected proxy voting authorisation forms by the hundreds and already got them signed by eligible voters. It is illegal and unethical for a candidate to get proxy voting authorisation signed by voters without attending the poll manifesto.

These candidates would now "dump" these signed forms with the election committee for counting as ballots, said Al jefairi. "Is this a democratic practice?"

"Our Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to citizens, so where is the equal opportunity in this case," asked an angered Aljefairi "Come what may. I am going to challenge this system in the court."



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### **SOME TRYING TO MANIPULATE QCCI POLL: AI JEFFAIRI**

DOHA: There is an influential lobby of businessmen that wants to manipulate the election to the board of directors of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce Industry (QCCI), says a contestant who has decided to boycott the May 15 poll on the issue of proxy voting.

It is this cartel that has collected proxy voting authorization forms by the hundreds and got signatures of eligible voters in alleged violation of the principle of equal rights and opportunities guaranteed by the Constitution, says Hasan Al Jaffiri.

"have decided to boycott the election," he said yesterday, adding that he had already communicated this to the poll committee-Even as Al Jefairi was speaking to The Peninsula, figures trickling in from sources suggested that the ratio of proxy voting authorizations collected by some candidates had already breached the quorum requirement level of 50 per cent.

Of the total number of eligible voters at 4,400, proxy votes accounted for a hefty 2,500 or 56.8 per cent.

This means that the QCCI election is now all set to be held on May 15.

Interestingly, the proxy voting authorization process will be on until May 14, a day before the election is scheduled.

Asked what options he had now that it was almost certain that the election will be held as scheduled, Al Jefairi said: "I have communicated my objections on the proxy voting system to the poll panel and would like to first exhaust peaceful means to resolve the issue."

If the committee refuses to listen, he said the option to challenge the election process and outcome in the court might be exercised." It's a question of democratic principles, as enshrined in our Constitution being compromised, so I will not give up on this issue," said Al Jefairi.

He said he had a meeting with four other contenders who had expressed reservations about proxy voting, and they were all of the opinion that the issue was worth fighting for.

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"However, I am not sure up to what level are they willing to take this fight for democratic principles with me," he said.

Talking of the lobby, Aljefairi said, it had its eyes on the powerful trading committee election since being on this panel would mean yielding a lot of influence.

"They would be in a position to make recommendations to the government on key issues related to trade and industry if they dominate this panel," he said.

Al Jefairi said that his relentless campaign had earned him many enemies but so far no threats had been issued to him.

"The election committee is unhappy with me, so are some in the QCCI. but it doesn't bother me since I am fighting for fairness and justice," he remarked.

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## MIXED REACTIONS TO SADDAM'S EXECUTION

doha - Many Qatari intellectuals have welcomed Saddam's execution calling it a "right decision" which will bring "good to the region". However the decision has also been opposed by the youngsters and those working for the human rights organizations.

Saddam, say Qatari intellectuals, has been responsible for committing "crimes against humanity" and that only a death penalty could justify the crimes that he had committed." It's the right decision taken at the right time. It's completely legal too and, Saddam was given a fair trial. He had a lawyer who fought on his behalf? said Yusuf Behzad, a senior Qatari lawyer who runs the law firm Behzad Law Office, Hassan Ibrahim al Mulla al Jefairi, a Qatari writer who plans to contest next year's Advisory Council election said, "Saddam's execution would deter Arab dictators from taking extreme steps such as mass execution of their own people. This decision is right and neither I, nor my other Qatari friends grieve about it," Jefairi said.

Jefairi said that Saddam made Qatar pay through the nose for both his military expeditions." Qatar had to spend billions during the two wars. While Saddam borrowed money from Qatar during the Iran-Iraq war, we spent a good sum on deputing our army in Kuwait," he said. He said that Saddam promoted dictatorship and the members of his own family "Even his sons had adopted dictator-like qualities. We, in Qatar, heard horror stories about how they would resort to shooting even when they had a small altercation over a girlfriend," he said. Jefairi said that Saddam never promoted aspects like "democracy" and "freedom of press" in Iraq.

A prominent businessman called the decision to execute Saddam a "legal" affair and declined any further comment "The execution carried out on Kid, hardly matters. It's justice that has prevailed," he said.



**14 may 2006**

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Six QCCI members threaten boycott if proxy voting allowed  
STAFF REPORTER DOHA

At least six key members of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), some of whom are contesting its board election scheduled for tomorrow, have threatened to boycott the poll if the proxy voting system is not removed.

All the six had earlier filed nomination for the election but some of them withdrew from the race later.

The members have communicated their protest to the election committee headed by Mubarak Al Khalifa in writing individually, dubbing shadow voting as detrimental to transparency and fairness.

"We are taking strong objection to this system, which is unfair and undemocratic. If the election committee fails to remove it and bring in transparency in the poll process, we will boycott the election," said Yousef Ahmed Al Kuwari, a candidate.

With him were Suliman Haider and Hassan Aljefairi, two other contenders. Addressing a press briefing yesterday, the trio gave the names of the three other fellow protesters as: Mohamed Jaber Tawar Al Kuwari, Mohamed Isa AlMohannadi and Mohamed Abdullah Al Sulaiti

There are around 4,400 eligible voters and many contenders have already collected 2,500 proxy votes, said Yousef Al Kuwari. "This is unfair. This is against the principles of equal rights and opportunities that our Constitution guarantees," he said.

"Three more candidates are likely to join us in our campaign," said Yousef Al Kuwari. With barely a day left for the election to be held (it is scheduled for tomorrow), he said the option of going to Qatar's highest court was open.

THE PENINSULA



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**13 July 2006**

### PROMINENT QATARI URGES DOHA PORT TO BE PRIVATISED

DOHA - Prominent and outspoken Qatari, Hassan Ibrahim Al Mulla Al Jaffari, has in a letter addressed to the Planning Council criticised the administration of the Doha Port and said that to make its services efficient, it should be handed to either the Dubai International Ports Authority or some U.S. or British company for management.

Privatization of the Port's administration can be an effective means to ensure that tanker handling and clearance procedures are made simpler and efficient.

Al Jaffari has also expressed concern over the condition of roads in Doha, saying that most of them are closed and some that are open to traffic have potholes. This shows that there is a lack of urban planning, he said.

Talking of public services, he has said they are not efficient and there is a need to cut down the red tape. Privatizing the services provides an effective means to make these services efficient, he said.

THE PENINSULA

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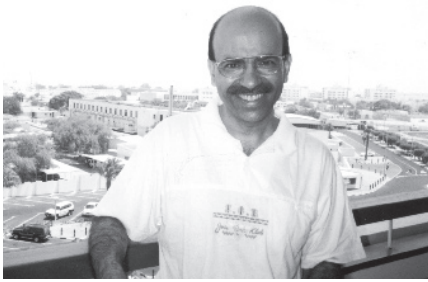


**14 May 2006**

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Al-Jufairi said no one in the QCCI felt that elections were being held." There is no poll fever and there are no real electoral programmes." He said all candidates did not get equal chances.

Al-Jufairi said the failure of the QCCI elections will reflect negatively on the expected to be held next year. Sulaiman Haidar, Yousef bin Ahmed al-Kuwari and Hassan al-Jufairi said they would go to the court if needed to register their objection to the results. Al-Kuwari said the head of the election committee was "unqualified for the post" because he lacked the legal knowledge needed to solve any problem that he might face during the process



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
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## TOP BUSINESSMAN URGES FAMILY-RUN BUSINESSES TO GO PUBLIC

DOHA - An effective way to ensure that Qatari nationals are lured to the private sector is to encourage family-owned businesses to go public.

Already, a dozen family-owned enterprises here have agreed to go public and four of them have applied for approval from the Ministry of Economy and Commerce.

This was disclosed by prominent businessman and social activist, Hassan Al Jefairi, yesterday. He was actively involved with a conference which was held recently to discuss ways and means to convince family-owned businesses to go public.

He said two more family-held enterprises were on their way to submit applications for approval to switch to public shareholding status.

As generating employment opportunities for citizens outside the government sector remains one of the biggest challenges before the planners, a wiser way is to have more and more public shareholding companies which can employ Qatari nationals, said Al Jefairi.

Qatari nationals prefer to be employed in the government and semi-government sectors and avoid working with small private sector companies." But they won't mind working with listed companies since they know they would enjoy almost the same benefits as their counterparts in the state and quasi-state sectors," he said.

And in case a Qatari employee of a family-turned public shareholding firm faces any problems in future, the government is there to intervene on his or her behalf. The government can also come to the rescue of a company if it meets any financial woes, he said.

"This kind of job and future security is hard for a private sector or family-held company to provide to an employee," said Al Jefairi.



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He said he is about to write a letter On the issue to the Ministry of Economy and Commerce" I raised this issue at a conference and was asked to forward a letter to the ministry."

The switchover for a family-held business would be in its own interest because it has been generally noticed that disputes between third-generation family members become bitter threatening its very survival.

Al Jefairi said that several months ago, he wrote a letter to Qatar Post enquiring about their plans to go public. "I got a reply that the corporation indeed had plans to go public in future, but no time-frame was given," said Al Jefairi. He said that he suspected that public corporations were going slow in the matter of privatization since they had access to easy oil and gas-generated money.

THE PENINSULA



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## **QATARI MOTORIST BLAMED FOR DEADLY SAUDI CRASH**

Doha - Last week's ghastly car crash that claimed the lives of six Qatari nationals in Saudi Arabia, was allegedly caused by a reckless Qatari motorist who is since at large, survivors of the accident, claimed.

The accident claimed the lives of Qatari youth, Majid Al Hamar and Fahad Al Juf-fairi, both aged around 20 years. A family of four including the parents and two daughters, also perished in the crash after the car they were driving in was hit by the 4x4.

Survivors Mohammad Al Dulaimi and Naif Al Mansouri, narrating the horrifying incidents of that morning, said, a 4x4 bearing Qatari number plates was being driven recklessly on the Qatar-Saudi Arabia highway, near the town of Al Assih on the border.

Mohammad Al Dulaimi somehow managed to avoid the errant 4x4 from crashing into his car.

However, the 4x4 slammed into Majid Al Hamar's vehicle, which, in turn, hit the car in which the family was traveling.

Both the vehicles were destroyed in the crash and their occupants, killed, they said.

Survivors said, the errant driver did not even bother to stop his 4x4 following the accident and instead, sped away towards Doha. Ambulances, they said, took about 90 minutes to reach the accident site on the highway.

They said, Majid Al Hamar and Fahad Al Jufairi were known in the society for their spirit of charity and kindness and an award should be constituted to preserve their memory.

THE PENINSULA

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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**Carnegie Mellon**

**July 13, 2006**

Mr. Hassan Al-Mulla Al-Jefairi P.O. Box 8811 Doha, QATAR

Dear Mr. Al-Jefairi:

Please accept my deepest condolences on the tragic death of your beloved son. I can only imagine the depths of your sadness, but my heart shares in your grief.

Fahad was quite a special young man. His numerous talents and vibrant personality distinguished him among his peers, who greatly respected him as a student leader and loved him as a friend. Everyone who knew him was impressed not only by his intelligence and maturity but also by his kindness and good humor. Fahad will be sorely missed at the Qatar campus and as a member of Carnegie Mellon's global community. We are all richer for his having been a part of the university. Though I had the opportunity to meet him briefly on only two occasions, I was quickly struck by his intellect, his poise, and the promise he held to be a great leader for Qatar and the university as a whole.

A father should never have to confront his son's death. I fervently hope that your faith, your love for your son, and your memories of him help to ease your and your family's pain and give you peace.

Sincerely,

Robbee Baker Kosak



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



## 20 August 2006

### Call to privatise Q-Post services

A PROMINENT Qatari has called for privatising the country's mail services. Hasan Ibrahim al-Jifairi, in a letter addressed to the Qatar Postal Corporation, has sought the ending of monopoly in mail services,

"Monopoly of mail services by Q-Post is unjustified and is killing the spirit of competition", al-Jifairi, a former regional manager of Gulf Air, told Gulf Times.

Al-Jifairi, who plans to run for elections of both the Central Municipal Council and the would-be Qatari Parliament, noted that privatising mail services had been a success both in Japan and Jordan and made them more efficient.

He urged Q-Post to sell some or all its mail activities to private companies "who could do a better job".

He said that privatization would make Q-Post's services more efficient and faster.

"It would be more useful if mails are being delivered to subscribers at their homes or offices as people need not have to go to Q-Post to collect their mails," he added.

"Thousands of subscribers regularly flocking to Q-Post offices to collect their mails adds to traffic congestion, increases pollution rates and he has also sent copies of the letter both to the Advisory Council and Central Municipal Council.

Gulf Times



**11 Sept. 2006**

## QATARIS HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT 911/ AND ITS AFTERMATH

EVEN after five years, the 911/ attacks on the US by Al Qaeda continue to generate heated debate.

A Gulf Times survey among a cross-section of Qatari citizens drew mixed reactions.

Prominent Qatari social activist and businessman Hassan al-Jifairi said that the attacks were a terrorist act because innocent civilians were targeted.

Such atrocities cannot be justified or tolerated, notwithstanding the flagrant bias shown by the US towards Israel as well as the Israeli encroachment on the rights of Palestinians," he said.

Commenting on the unintended side effects of the attacks, al-Jifairi said the US was not serious about promoting democracy in the Middle East before the attacks. But afterwards, in his opinion, the US realised that dictatorial regimes in the region and the absence of freedom of expression provide the ideal environment to terrorists.

Asked whether he considers the attacks as a type of Jihad (holy war) al-Jifairi said it cannot be Jihad as Islam prohibits targeting children and women even in wartime" About the tight security measures at airports after the attacks, he said Arabs still face annoying delays, prejudice and discrimination, especially in European and US airports.

I think the Western media has promoted phobic trends against Arabs and Muslims around the world," he said, noting that this has led to a decline in the numbers of tourists from the Gulf states spending summer holidays in Europe or America.



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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**13 Oct. 2006**

### THAI HOSPITALS URGED TO OPEN DOHA BRANCHES

DOHA - A prominent Qatari businessman and activist has called on big hospitals in Thailand to open branches in Doha so people from the region can access their services at reduced costs.

Hasan Al Jaffri said in a statement yesterday that an increasing number of GCC nationals are visiting Bangkok for treatment and they are spending from their own pockets.

Some 62,000 people from the UAE alone visited Thailand for treatment between June and August this year." The figure gives you an idea of how popular the hospitals in Bangkok are becoming with GCC citizens." Al Jaffari said that in view of this, big hospitals in Thailand like the Thai American Hospital, should consider setting up operations in Doha for the benefit of people in the region as a whole



**26 Oct. 2006**

### RENTS UNLIKELY TO FALL AFTER ASIAN GAMES, SAYS ANALYST

DOHA - Residential and commercial property rents are unlikely to fall after the Asian Games as the demand for housing will remain high over the next few years.

According to a prominent businessman and market analyst, Hassan Al Jeffairi, the inflow of the foreign workforce is expected to continue over at least the next six years due to the mega projects being launched in various sectors.

"As we all know, Qatar is set to spend an astronomical \$120 bn on various infrastructure and other projects over the coming six years, the influx of workers is to continue, keeping the demand for housing up," Al Jeffairi told The peninsula in an interview last weekend.

This means that every year, some \$20bn is to be spent on an average on development and other ventures. This is a big sum.

The rent situation may ease only a little bit after the Asian Games, but it is unrealistic to expect any drastic changes because supply still remains problematic, said Al Jeffairi.

Rents are the single largest contributor to inflation and it is sad that because of the rise, a large number of expatriates had to send their families back home.

"It is the middle-income expatriate who is making a crucial contribution to the socio-economic development of the country and if he is made to live here without his family, his efficiency will be affected.

There are some families which are forced to stay in office premises. I know many such families"

Expatriates are not the only victims, Qatari employers are forced to pay higher salaries and house allowances to workers with the result that their overhead costs are going up and profit margins are thinning.



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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



Rising commercial property rents are putting additional pressure on Qatari traders and businessmen. "My own family was paying QR700 as monthly rent for a small single-shutter shop.

The rent has now gone up to QR4,000," he said.

The Asian Games has been mainly responsible for pushing the rentals up, The entire infrastructure development linked to the Games started to be built in a hurry.

Take Dubai as an example, They have began planning for the 2016 Olympic from now, that is, 10 years in advance. This is the way things should be done," said Al Jefairi.

Monopolies are also playing their role in pushing the rate of inhav sole dealerships of all famous food brands that are imported here.

The imports remain monopolized since the past half a century or more, so no one else can bring these brands here for distribution. This explains why the prices of some prominent brands are high

The brands include all types of food items including milk and dairy products, juices, biscuit sugar and canned food, among other things.

The Peninsula



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



## **JEFFAIRI BLASTS DEMOLITION OF NEW BUILDINGS**

DOHA - Prominent businessman Hassan Al Jefairi has blasted the government for wasting money, time and effort by demolishing new buildings in some areas of the city on the grounds that they were built haphazardly and without the Master Plan having been prepared. They are now building many towers and I am afraid they may raze them too, after a while," Al Jeffairi said. The authorities say that the Master Plan for the city was not ready when the buildings now being razed were built "My question is, why the master plan was not made earlier. What were the authorities doing at this while.



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**28 Oct. 2006**

### PROXY BUSINESSMEN URGED TO RE-INVEST PROFITS

DOHA - Expatriates managing shadow or proxy businesses should learn a lesson from enterprises like the National Showroom, Shezan Hotel, Lulu and Lamcy hypermarket chains and UAE's Choit Ram, says a prominent Qatari businessman.

"The local and foreign partners in the above businesses have both benefited from these enterprises. They are re-investing their profits to advance their ventures," says Hassan Al Jeffairi.

Shadow business operators are, on the contrary, suffering as they are unable to become progressive and competitive." Since they have no inclination to re-invest their profits in these businesses, the ventures suffer" he said.

A major disadvantage of a proxy or shadow business is that the profits generated are not ploughed back into the economy, so it hurts the national interest as well. Since shadow businesses are illegal, their operators have to be on guard all the time. "There is a psychological disadvantage here, too."

Proxy businesses are unable to spend on research and development (R&D), which can advance a business and make it competitive. They cannot go public either and mobilise funds for growth or diversification and so, are forced to remain uncom-petitive and backward,

"No one is benefiting from these businesses, neither the citizen whose name and licence are being used for a token fee nor the expatriate who is managing the business."

There are a number of examples all over the GCC which show that expatriate entrepreneurs who are running their businesses legally with local partners have become success stories.

"Who hasn't heard of Choit Ram in UAE or the partners in Lulu and Lamcy hypermarket chains, for instance. They are good examples for proxy business operators all over the region."

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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



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The shadow businesses can easily benefit from Qatar's flexible commercial laws. They can become limited liability companies (LLCs) where a foreigner is legally permitted to own 49 per cent equity in a business with a Qatari with a majority 51 per cent ownership.

For any business to convert into an LLC is not a difficult thing at all. A number of small enterprises are now turning into LLCs.

Al Jeffairi is also severely critical of family businesses. It is high time they merged and went public. Family businesses develop serious problems after the third generation.

The UAE is a good example where many family businesses have struck joint venture deals and gone public. That is the reason why there is so much development there.

Take some Qatari contracting companies as an example. Despite some of them being big, they are not able to deliver and do a job as perfectly as their foreign rivals would. This is why development work is not of international standard here, he said.



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**1 November 2006**

**RELEASE QATAR COVERAGE**

Qatari activist Hassan al-Jifairi lauded Al Jazeera as a beacon of democracy in the Arab world and an unprecedented experience for Arab nationals, who he said are sick of their state-run TV news coverage.

"Al Jazeera brought back humanity to the Arabs, it inspired other channels that came up just to challenge the dominance of Al Jazeera or even try to abort its enlightenment efforts," he said.

Al-Jifairi said that Qatar pays a heavy price for the absolute freedom and impudence it gives to the channel.

"Qatar's hosting of Al Jazeera comes at a high price. Qatar's relations with many countries are tense over Al Jazeera's coverage and reportage," he said, while observing that the channel's search for truth has landed the Qatar government in trouble with several countries.

"Qatar can not extend gas pipelines to Kuwait through the territory of a country which is irked by Al Jazeera's coverage of its affairs.

"We face difficulties in transporting goods at the border cross points with that country, al-jufairi said

But al-Jifairi also slammed the channel for what he described as a "poor representation" among the channel's staff.

"Qatar is full of talent. The world should know that Qatar, the home to the greatest Arab news channel, has its own pool of talent and not just oil and gas reserves," he said, adding that Al Jazeera rarely hosts Qatari intellectuals.

Al-Jifairi was also critical about the coverage Al Jazeera affords to local issues.

To my knowledge, there are no restrictions from tackling local issues. I have repeatedly raised this issue with those who are in charge of the channel. They told me that, they did not receive any instructions banning coverage of local issues, but Qatari issues are not a matter of interest for the larger Arab audience," he said.

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"Al Jazeera gives the opportunity to any one who would like to speak about the misery' in Iraq and Palestine. But they do not do the same when it comes to Qatar," he said.

He said Al Jazeera is a worldwide brand now and if it had skilled marketing team, it could take over its costs and do without the state's support.

"Qatar has sacrificed so much for Al Jazeera so far. It is time to handle the issue of financing by convincing multinational companies like Toyota and Coca Cola to place commercials on the channel," he said, while noting that some Al Jazeera staffers told him that countries that are upset by the channel are banning their companies from buying time from the channel.



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**13 November 2006**

RIGHTS PROTECTION A MUST FOR ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY:  
NHRC

QATAR MARKS NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

"Qatari people don't like to participate in events like these said Hassan Al Jifairi, a Qatari businessman. He complained that there are no equal opportunities given to Qataris while distributing the country's wealth.

يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**13 November 2006**

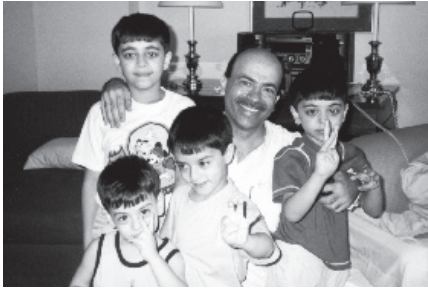
Outspoken Qatari activist Hassan al-Jifairi slammed the talk about democracy, human rights and rule of law in the Gulf states as "embellishments", saying that there were glaring violations of basic human rights in these countries.

"There is a wide gap between theory and practice in all the Arab countries. Communist regimes were speaking about equality and partnership in everything, but some leading communist leaders lived a luxurious life . Leaders of Arab countries monopolise money and power," he said.

Al-Jifairi said that the flaws in the social welfare system in the Gulf countries constituted a threat and challenge to human rights.

"While some GCC citizens control vast areas of lands on the coast and in vital zones, some others cannot even buy small houses," he said, while stressing that there is a pressing need to enact the principles of human rights.

He also complained about what he called "inequality" among citizens In Qatar with regard to the number of visas granted to them." The influential people are granted up to 500 visas while the average citizen is given only two or three visas," he said.



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**23 November 2006**

### SALARY HIKE HAILED; CALL TO RAISE PVT SECTOR WAGES

Both Qataris and members of the expatriate community welcomed the hike in salaries of government employees. They said the long-awaited move, would help many citizens meet rising expenses. Meanwhile, the move also brought to the fore demands that the government introduce certain regulations for fixing minimum salaries in the private sector.

The Deputy Emir and Heir Apparent His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani has issued an Emiri Decree no 44 of 2006 on Wednesday, increasing salaries of civil service employees by 40 percent. The hike will be effective from December 1.

"I would say this would help many Qataris finance their rising costs of living. The Qataris had for long been demanding that salaries meet the standards that they have become used to. A number of them, I guess would use the increased amount in meeting their debts," said Qatari writer and business man Hassan Ibrahim al Mulla al Jefairi.

The decision to hike government salaries will have a direct effect on those working for organizations that come under direct government control. Jefairi said the new decree would ensure that a Qatari government employee gets a minimum take home salary of QR 9,000 per month. The average salary he said would stand at around QR 15,000 pm.

Though officials from semi-government bodies welcomed the decision, there were demands that a new regulation be introduced which fixes the minimum salary in the country. And such demands came from both expatriates and Qataris.

"I sincerely hope that, the hike meets the long-term demands of Qataris. But then considering the inflation in the country, it's very essential that the salaries in the private sector are also increased. Otherwise the already grave financial problems of those working for the private sector, will only increase," said Jefairi.





**16 december 2006**

#### QATAR-BAHRAIN LINK

THE 45km 'Friendship Causeway' project linking Qatar with Bahrain, work on which is due to start in 2007, will enhance the eco between the two countries and benefit both equally in all fields, a cross-section of Qatari and Bahraini nationals told Gulf Times.

Qatari businessman and activist Hassan al-Jifairi said the causeway would be of immense importance to both Qatar and Bahrain. They would be able to reach Bahrain without crossing Saudi territory. I think Bahrainis would get priority in recruitment in gas projects in Qatar. It would reduce the unemployment problem in Bahrain which in turn would defuse the political situation," he said.

He-added that the project would strengthen the already strong social ties between the two countries. "You can hardly find a Qatari or Bahraini family which does not have relatives in the other country."

On the economic side, he said the causeway would streamline the flow of goods and enhance economic cooperation, "There will be no third party between the two countries and the distance also will be less," he said, while calling for building another causeway linking Qatar to the UAE.

He said the huge cost of the project necessitates a comprehensive plan of economic integration between the two countries so that the project can generate returns.

"The governments of the two countries should provide incentives to businessmen to encourage them to invest in the other country. Qatar can benefit from Bahrain's position as a major financial hub and vital transit point in the region," he said. Dismissing fears that the project may adversely affect the conservative Qatari society if Bahrainis flocked to Qatar with their open-minded lifestyle, he said Qatar was an open society and had no such fears. "We will have access to more entertainment and recreation spots." Gulf Times



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**17 Dece 2006**

### PROMINENT CITIZEN CALLS FOR COMPULSORY MUSIC CLASSES IN SCHOOLS

doha - A prominent Qatari has asked the authorities concerned to make the teaching of music compulsory in schools, colleges and universities in the country to help inculcate in the younger generation the values of love, peace and creativity.

"Music teaches you good manners and makes you a man of taste. It is a symbol of civilisation and culture," says Hassan Aljefairi, who has plans to contest the forthcoming elections to the Advisory Council.

In a communication addressed to the Ministry of Education, Qatar University and the Education City yesterday, he said the teaching of music should be part of the country's edulearn music so that they grow up to be peace-loving and responsible citizens. All this chaos and accidents we see on the roads here every day will vanish if we begin teaching music to our younger generation," he said in remarks to The Peninsula later.

"If you are a music lover, you will automatically learn to respect other motorists when you are driving, for example," he said.

Boys should be taught guitar and for girls, piano is the best instrument to learn. Playing the drums, for example, helps one give vent to one's anger. "But not many of us know these things," he lamented.

The teaching of music is part of curricula in almost every civilised country. "But here in Qatar, we think music is contradictory to the tenets and teachings of Islam, which is not true."

When Muslims settled in Spain as victors, they introduced music to its education system and declared it as a science, said Aljefairi.

Studies show that Arabian horses are the best dancers when they are made to hear the music they love. The Egyptians are the masters in this art of making the horses dance to music.

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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



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A number of researches have been conducted on dairy farms in some advanced countries and it is now a proven fact that the farms where cows are made to listen to music, give more milk.

Some parents in Qatar think that loud music would make their children violent, while soft music would turn them weak and soft. This is not true. Music, whether loud or soft, plays an important part in a man's life. It makes him a cultured man, a man with feelings."

"Music teaches good manners. It teaches taste. It teaches one to differentiate between loud and soft sound and know what is melody and rhythm."

Al Jefairi said that recently an opera was held in Qatar and millions of riyals were spent on it. "However, eighty per cent of the seats were vacant and Qataris were conspicuous by their absence. It made me very sad to realise that they did not watch the opera

The Peninsula



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary

4 January 2007

RESIDENTS TAKE REFUGE IN 'BISHT' TO BEAT COLD  
QATAR WITNESSES FREEZING WINTER AFTER 45 YEARS

DOHA - Qatar is witnessing this kind of freezing weather after almost 45 years, says a Qatari citizen.

A number of other people, including nationals and expatriates, The Peninsula spoke to yesterday confirmed they were exposed to this type of piercing cold in this part of the world for the first time in decades.

Hassan Al Jefairi, another Qatari national, who is in his early fifties, said he did not remember the exact year, but there were continuous rains one winter in the 1960s and the weather had become extremely chilly and treacherous.

"Even then, I don't think the mercury had dipped to eight and nine degrees Celsius, which is the case now. It's extremely cold. I swear it's like the European chill," he said of the weather prevailing here now.

"I don't remember the temperatures ever dropping to below 10 degrees Celsius in our country, which is the case now. This is a record winter we are witnessing."

Qatar was exporting oil in the 1960s and people had money, but there still were a lot of limited-income citizens who could not afford to buy winter clothing as their prices had doubled due to high demand, said Al Jefairi.

"I remember as a child that my father owned an agency of electrical appliances and among them were heaters. The heaters were all sold out then as they are now. People are looking for heaters everywhere but not getting even one," he said.

There was also demand for shoes and socks among Qatari men then. Used to wearing sandals, they could not bear the freezing cold any more and began wearing shoes and socks.

"History is repeating itself. You can see many fellow Qatari men wearing shoes and socks now even as you find them dressed in traditional robes, including the black woolen gowns we call bisht which we occasionally wear," said Al Jefairi.

يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



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He said that he is pained to see some low-income expatriate workers braving this freezing weather with no woolen clothing to protect them.

The long-time Indian resident, Hajika, said that during his 41 years of stay here, he had been to the desert in the cold, but never ever had he witnessed such extreme weather.

THE PENINSULA



## يوميات حسن الجفيري Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**6 Jan. 2007**

### BISHT IS IN VOGUE DURING WINTER

As winter has descended in right earnest, Qataris have brought out their traditional winter wear

The bisht, a usually black robe-like garment can be seen at many official events, during important visits and events like weddings and is generally presumed can only be worn by royalty or high officials. However, Qatari national Hassan Al jefairi said "Any citizen of Qatar has the right to wear the garment. One would be mistaken if they think it can only be worn by senior members of society or royalty."

With the city in the midst of freezing cold weather, Al Jefairi had brought out his woolen bisht, which has been passed on to him by his forefathers. Bishts can also be made of light or material like cotton.

Al Jefairi told The Peninsula: "My great grand father (Ibrahim Al Jefairi) imported the material from Basra in Iraq along with dates. These were brought to Qatar by dhow."

His particular woolen bisht was woven by hand and the zari (the golden thread on the edges of the garment) imported from India The garment was designed and tailored here by traditional Qatari artisans at the Souq Waqif.

The material is cut and then sewn by hand after the height and girth of the wearer are measured. Sadly sewing and tailoring of bishts is a dying tradition. The problem is the new generation (the artisans' children) who want an easy life and easy money," he said

The price of a bisht ranges from QR400 to QR 50,000 and sometimes even more.

"People still wear the bisht in severe weather. However, earlier where the wool was imported only from Iraq, due to the ongoing troubles there, we are bringing in the material from countries like Syria," said Al Jefairi



**20 Jan 2007**

#### POOR RESPONSE TO CMC POLL REGISTRATION

AS voters registration for the upcoming election to the Central Municipal Council (CMC) comes to a close on Sunday, only 514 new voters have enrolled their names.

Speaking to Gulf Times, Qatari activist Hassan al-Jifairi, who intends to contest the election, yesterday blamed the CMC's poor performance during its current term for the "unenthusiastic response" to enrolment in the voters list.

There is an overwhelming feeling of resentment among nationals at the performance of the CMC. The number of new voters should have been at least doubled as the list has not been updated since the last CMC election held four years ago.

Al-Jifairi said that many of the new voters were mainly motivated by the prospective candidates who urged their friends and relatives to register." The public always mocks the CMC as a lame body which has not made any achievement so far." he said.

Asked about his prospects, Al-Jufairi admitted that his chances were poor as voters generally made their choice on the basis of "friendship and personal relationships."

"I am not good at making friends or developing social relationships. I am always involved in the international conferences frequently held in Qatar," he said.

He also criticised candidates who were solely concerned about the personal interests of the voters in their constituencies rather than issues of public concern.

"Every candidate should know that he would be representing the whole country and that he has to defend the interests of both the nationals as well as expatriates," he said.

Gulf Times



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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**27 February 2007**

#### CANDIDATES CAN SEEK FUNDS FROM FIRMS

"CAMPAIGNING FOR CMC POLL WILL COST BETWEEN QR50,000 TO QR100,000 FOR A CANDIDATE'

DOHA - Candidates trying their luck in the April 1 Central Municipal Council (CMC) poll are allowed to solicit sponsorship from companies to finance their campaign, according to an aspirant.

A candidate has to spend between QR50,000 and QR100,000 on his canvassing. The costs vary with the quality and quantity of the banners, posters and pamphlets to be printed: among other things, says Hasan Al Jefairi.

He is contesting the CMC election from Al Markhiya (Constituency No 3) where Qatar University is located.

He said that during a refresher course organised for the CMC candidates, it was disclosed that the contestants are permitted to mobilise funds from companies to finance their campaign.

"This is not the right thing to do as donor companies can seek favours from a candidate if he wins," said Al Jefairi. There are a large number of construction, contracting and mainipal permissions for their various projects.

Since there is no restriction on these companies to donate funds to the CMC candidates, it is natural that they would put pressure on a beneficiary winner to do their work out of the way.

Asked if he would also be seeking funds from companies, Al Jefairi, said: "No way. I am going to spend on my canvassing from my own pocket." He was talking to The Peninsula after the end of a refresher course here yesterday.

He said that those attending the course have been told that there is no article in the law regulating the CMC which prevents a contestant from seeking donations from companies.

"We have also been told that we can canvass on the day of the voting. This is not a good practice too," said Al Jefairi.



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He, however, has no plans to challenge these issues before the authorities. "If I am elected, I will raise these issues in the CMC

The refresher course is organised by the Permanent Election Committee at the Supreme Council for Family Affairs. The National Democratic Institute based in Yemen is conducting the course.

The candidates (125 in all) have been divided into batches and each batch has been asked to attend the course for two days. The contestants are basically explained how to conduct their poll campaigns.

According to Al Jefairi, he had earlier suggested that instead of 29 municipal constituencies that will go to poll, the number should have been four to five or a maximum of six. This would have ensured that tribal affiliations do not play any significant role in voting.

However, no one took heed of his suggestion. He said; "I am afraid people are going to win just because they belong to one tribe or the other and not due to their qualifications, sincerity and manifesto." Talking of voters, he said there is less enthusiasm among a majority of the electorate as they feel that during its two terms the CMC has not been able to do anything worthwhile for the people.

The Peninsula



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## 1 March 2007

### EMIR, SHEIKHA MOZAH WALK INTO DEBATE

Delegates to the "Forbes CEO Middle East Forum" were in for a pleasant surprise as the Emir suddenly walked into the venue yesterday to hear a debate on "Media and the Middle East" which lurried out to be lively.

The Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was accompanied by wife H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missnad and daughter H E Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani.

As the dignitaries made their way to Al Mirqab Ballroom at the Four Seasons Hotel a little before the start of the panel discussion, people sitting in the audience, suddenly realising who they actually were, stood up in respect. No sooner than they had taken their seats at a table in the front, the discussions began. The Emir listened to the debate quite intently and so did his wife and daughter.

A highlight was that during the question and answer session, a Qatari national, Hassan Al jefairi, raised his hand, stood up and raised a question to waddah khanfar, Al Jazeera Networks' Director General, criticizing the media organisation for being a burden on the national economy.

"Why can't you become self-sufficient by generating revenue from advertising," he asked. Privatize the Channel if you can't make it break-even, Al Jefairi said. Khanfar in his response tried to convince him that being a news channel, it was difficult to solicit commercials.

At the end of the panel discussion, the Emir and his wife shook hands with the delegates as they queued up on both sides of the foyer. Both of them talked freely to people who approached them.

The dignitaries spent no less than 15 to 20 minutes before leaving the venue. Al Jefairi later told this newspaper that this was the first time that at a conference he had stood up and spoken, that too critically, when the Emir was sitting.

"This is a sure enough sign that Qatar is opening up. It is getting democratic.

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In no other GCC state a common citizen can dare stand up to speak publicly when the ruler is sitting. He would be whisked away and arrested," said Al jefairi.

He said that he was immersed in reading a newspaper when he suddenly raised his head and was struck by awe and surprise as he saw the Emir talking to someone in the lobby of the hotel. He said he stood up and embraced him.

Al Jefairi said that the fact that the Emir and his family had walked into the venue of the Forbes Forum with no security, made him very happy. "There were just two men with the royals," he said. "The change is in the air," he added.

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**3 March 2007**

Prominent Qatari speaks against face veil

IT'S A RELATIVELY NEW PHENOMENON FOR QATARI WOMEN:  
HASSAN AL JEFAIRI

DOHA - Qatari women wearing the face veil in public is a relatively new phenomenon. Earlier, women from only a handful of tribes were using the veil, says a prominent citizen.

Hassan Al Jefairi, who is contesting the Central Municipal Council (CMC) election from Al Maizer, said he is against women covering their face completely while in public for a number of valid reasons.

Of late, one can see many veiled women begging and it is difficult to identify them. People naturally tend to assume that they are Qataris, said Aljefairi.

Veiled women can pose a lot of challenges to maintaining security as well. There are many women government employees in front office jobs. They have to deal with the public on a day-to-day basis.

In case a woman employee is veiled and someone has a genuine complaint against her, identification becomes a problem, said Al Jefairi.

There are a number of veiled women teachers in the country who give lessons to children with their faces covered completely. Lip movement of a teacher is very important for a child, especially when he is learning a language which is his mother tongue.

"I raised this point at a conference on mothertongue which was held here recently and my comments were greeted with applause," he said.

The issue (of veiled women) was raised at the Doha Debates recently and Al Jefairi said he not only attended it, but put forth his views boldly. Present in the audience was H H Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al Missned, he said.

He pointed out that he finds it strange that while a Qatari woman can talk freely to a male driver or a cook employed by her family, she covers her face the moment she sees a male compatriot. "This mostly happens in the lifts in government buildings."

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Asked what he attributes the phenomenon to, Al Jefairi said it has basically to do with modern and segregated living and the declining importance of neighbourliness. "There is a new culture emerging," Also, the fact that the country does not have a co-education system, is aggravating the phenomenon. Neighbourliness plays a key role in shaping one's personality. It helps in building primary social relations as children from both sexes mix freely and play. Their families come closer and they themselves have strong emotional bonds when they are grown-ups. "I have many childhood friends," said Al Jefairi.

"And, needless to say that co-education can play a very important role if we have to get rid of the problem of women veiling their face." Co-education was non-existent here in times gone by too, but neighbourhood living made up for it in a way.

In the earlier days, you could see Qatari women vendors in souq areas and quite a lot of them were selling all kinds of goods, said Al Jefairi.

The Peninsula



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**9 March 2007**

Issue visas to salesgirls, urges CMC candidate

**WE NEED SOCIAL COHESION AND STABILITY, SAYS JEFAIRI**

A prominent Qatari has urged the authorities concerned to provide work visas to single women so they can come here and work in shops, offices and companies.

It is a matter of great concern that most outlets selling lingerie have male salesmen, which is not a desirable practice in a conservative society like Qatar's, said Hassan Al Je-fairi. In a communication addressed to the social affairs division at the Department of Labour, he said that men should not be allowed to work in shops that sell exclusively female garments.

And, especially if it comes to buying lingerie, a woman would usually avoid visiting a shop which has male sales personnel. "So, give visas to single women so they can not only work in lingerie shops but also in other outlets as well as offices," he said.

Al Jefairi, who is contesting the April Central Municipal Council (CMC) election from Al Maizer, told this newspaper that the authorities presently give work visas only to single women to work in the hospitality and healthcare industries, education sector and Air lines.

Since single male expatriate workers form a substantial chunk of the local population, the authorities may be fearing social instability if young and unmarried women are allowed to come here and work.

"So, we need to be selective and issue visas to women from good families. Anyway, a woman who is willing to come here and take a job for a monthly salary of QR2,000 or QR2,500 will definitely have a good character, because if she is morally corrupt, she can earn this much money in a day in her home country itself. There is no need for her to look for a job overseas," said an outspoken Al Jefairi.

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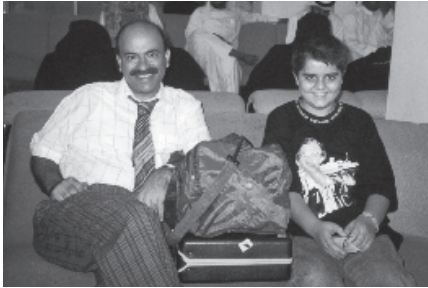
As it is, two-thirds of the Qatari population consists of men, so young males, especially the single expatriates, have little chances of socialising with a woman who is from his country and of his age.

This is a violation of human rights not to make opportunities available for single and unmarried men to mix and socialise with young women, fall in love and get married and live a happy and stable family life," he remarked. "I have written all these things in my letter."

"Let me be clear that I am not talking here of bringing over women with suspicious character and encourage immorality. What I am saying makes sense as it would add to social cohesion and stability," said Al Jefairi.

"Go to Al Musherib area on a Thursday or Friday evening and you find single workers from the Industrial Area crowding the streets. It looks like you are in a prison or in a military camp as you can't see a single woman around.. This reflects badly on us as a society." Any woman passing by, is ogled at.

"The situation being this, can we hope to attract foreign tourists? What would they think of us, particularly when they visit Al Musherib area on a Thursday or Friday evening"



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### 15 March 2007

Shortage of housing a CMC poll issue

DOHA - The shortage of housing units and shopping complexes is a major poll issue in Al Markhiya, which has some 750 voters.

Known for fearlessly criticizing higher authorities at public fora, Hassan Al Jefairi, is a star candidate trying his luck in the April 1 CMC election from here. He is right now busy conducting a survey of the problems the area faces.

Al Markhiya is an important ward as it is home to Qatar University and has an educated and enlightened electorate.

"I am meeting a lot of people in the area to gain support and they are asking me why the government cannot develop land so houses and shopping complexes can be built, Al Jefairi, who kicked off his election campaign with much fanfare on Monday, told The Peninsula yesterday.

It is ironical that despite an acute shortage of housing, there is so much land in the area lying waste. It can be developed and used to build residential units and shops, he said.

"We in the constituency need more houses and shops providing basic services like dairy products, tailoring, groceries and haircuts, aside from a bank and post office, but there is no developed land. You need land with basic infrastructure like sewage, electricity and water pipeline networks to build structures on for housing and commercial purposes."

Roads in the area have potholes as they are not regularly repaired and maintained. Even the newly-built roads are dirty. There is no fencing along the main highways to stop sand washing it up.

Al Markhiya is quite close to West Bay where a number of high-rise buildings are coming up. "This means, we have an opportunity to build tourist spots in our area," said Al Jefairi.

He said that he was trying to create a sympathy wave for himself in the constituency since the public perception is that he is an anti-establishment man.



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"People know me for my open criticism of public policies. They also know that I am thrown out of global and regional conferences here for posing critical questions."

According to Al Jefairi, his fiercest rival is a sociable person with a lot of friends, neighbours and contacts in the ward. "But I am convincing my constituents that they can trust me to take their issues to the authorities concerned."

"I am not allowed to write in Arabic newspapers," he said. Talking about the local media, he said that they give coverage to only those prominent people who praise the government and its policies. "They shun you the moment you criticise the government." Al jefairi stated: "I am for equal opportunities and objective criticism is a good thing."



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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**23 March 2007**

CMC candidate lashes out at "biased moderator' in the last DCF

A prominent Qatari who is bitterly critical of public policies says he was not allowed to put forth his viewpoint fully at the Cultural Cafe at the Doha Cultural Festival (DCF) last year.

"I was given only two minutes to speak whereas others were allowed to speak for 10 to 12 minutes. The moderator was biased. People who are generally critical of the government are discriminated against at such events when it comes to allowing them to express themselves Hassan Aljefairi said.

Al Jefairi, who is fighting the April 1 Central Municipal Council (CMC) election, told this newspaper yesterday that he is determined to attend the Cultural Cafe this time. "Our Constitution guarantees equality and equal opportunity for all citizens, so if I am not allowed to speak for as long as others are (at the Cultural Cafe), I will insist," he said.

Usually, moderators at such events give more time to speak to people they bring or they know closely. They ignore people they do not have close relations with. They petty, personal relations matter more than merit."

According to Al Jefairi, he was also not permitted to speak during the question and answer session at the event at the Doha Cultural Festival last year where the First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister. H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin labor Al Thani delivered a lecture.

"The chair of the programme did not allow me to speak because they feared that I may put some critical questions Speaking at a public event where people are allowed to put forth their viewpoint, is my right. I am going to attend this event (to be addressed by the First Deputy Premier) this year also and speak."

Al Jefairi said that it is a matter of great concern that a bold and critical Qatari woman writer, Mariam Al Saad, is facing a ban. "This is not a healthy thing. I am against the ban," he said.

"Al Saad is an analytical writer and highly critical of bureaucracy and government services and that explains why she faces the ban." said Al Jefairi



## 24 March 2007

Qatar Tribune

CMC candidate who refuses to keep quiet

This man's way of thinking changed entirely after his son died in a car accident in July last year. His voice found a renewed assertiveness. And he decided to devote his life for the "good of the society". And then people began to know him for his outspokenness.

That he will stand for the Central Municipal Council (CMC) elections next month is something that he declared two years ago. And he has been visiting meetings, conferences and public gatherings since then to propagate the message.

Hassan Ibrahim al Mulla al Jefairi is contesting the CMC election on April 1 from Al Markhiya constituency. He also plans to contest elections to the Shura (Advisory Council) scheduled for the latter part of this year.

Jefairi has earned a name for himself for asking the most difficult questions in gatherings which sees the attendance of "the ones with tremendous power and influence" And this has, at times, led to him "being asked to leave" certain social gatherings. In fact, he has, at times, not been allowed into halls as soon as he revealed his identity to the security personnel posted outside the venue. Ask him about his agenda and Jefairi will speak for hours.

His 14-point agenda includes the demand for the government to initiate steps to allocate new plots of land to Qataris and to establish new-offices. He also wants effective steps to be taken to allocate a new trading centre in the region. Setting up tourism establishments, proper maintenance of roads, a better public transport system are among the issues Jefairi takes up.

Certain issues that Jefairi raises ensure that he is distinct from all other candidates. And on which he has done a lot of research. "We need more gas and petrol stations. A promise was earlier made by Woqod authorities that we will have five new gas stations every year. The promise has not been kept," Jefairi said.



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Jefairi has been closely following the urban development scene in the country and is clearly not satisfied. "A year earlier, I was of the view that the entire Doha is to progress in accordance with a fixed master plan. There are plans to incorporate the best features from well planned cities in the world, but then, I would say that the progress in this regard is very slow," he said.

Jefairi holds a BS degree from the Arab University, Beirut. He worked for eight years with Gulf Air in Qatar and claims to have resigned in protest over disagreements with company bigwigs on some crucial issues.

Qatar Tribuhe

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**26 March 2007**

CMC poll campaign fails to evoke voter enthusiasm

Hassan Al Jefairi, who is contesting from Al Markhiya, blames a "powerless" CMC for the malaise. "It has no executive powers and that is one of the main reasons why people are not showing interest in the election," he said.

Meanwhile, among the major issues which are being taken up by the candidates in their campaigns are bad roads and increasing accidents. "Ours is a country with roads which have a million potholes," says Al Jefairi.

Building flyovers, zebra crossings, pedestrian walkways and installing signals can help check the accidents. "Or, I am afraid, we may end up entering the Guinness Book of World Records for the highest number of mishaps in the world," says Al Jefairi.

Candidate sidelined

DOHA – Hassan Al Jefairi, one of the most outspoken candidates in the fray for the April 1 CMC election, said yesterday that he was not permitted to put forth his viewpoint on two consecutive days at a tent being organised by a local Arabic newspaper on the poll process. Invitees to the tent are CMC candidates. Al Jefairi said that since he is outspoken and critical of public policies, he was not allowed to speak. He said the newspaper later also refused to carry his paid campaign since there was a poem in it even though it was apolitical and talked only of his love for the country and its people.

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**27 March 2007**

CMC candidates" lose interest"

Hassan al-Jifairi, a social activist contesting from the Al Markhiyyah constituency, said that some of his fellow candidates were in the fray just to gain some experience for Qatar's first parliamentary election which is expected to be held this year.

"Some candidates did not even have election boards. I have not launched any active campaign because I heard that CMC mem-bers would not be allowed to contest the proposed parliamentary election," he said,

Al-Jifairi also said that some other candidates were not keen on winning because of the low profile the CMC has maintained during its last two terms." Both candidates and voters get frustrated due to the unimpressive performance of the first and second houses of the CMC."

Some other candidates were not enthusiastic about winning because they believed that the CMC was just a lame duck with no power, he said, while observing that the media including Qatar TV was not very much involved in the campaigning.

"I have requested an interview on Qatar TV but it was turned down because I am very outspoken," he said.

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Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**30 March 2007**

Candidates sceptical about voter turnout

SOME HOPE LARGE NUMBER OF NEW VOTERS WILL USE  
FRANCHISE

DOHA

At the far end of their three-week long campaigning for the April 1 Central Municipal Council (CMC) election, the contestants are now worrying about how to ensure maximum voter turnout.

Most candidates privately admit that considering the response they have been getting from the electorate, a higher voter turnout is ruled out.

"It's going to be a low-key affair," says Hassan Al Jefairi of the impending polling on Sunday. He argues that since people have realised that the CMC-literally has no powers, they are not too keen to vote.

And if the government declares Sunday a holiday, most people are likely to go vacationing to neighbouring countries." There is no official declaration now but some people expect the announcement to be made on Sunday itself," said Al Jefairi.

Another problem is that several candidates made promises during the last CMC election which they have not been able to fulfill. So, naturally, the voters have become suspicious.



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**Aug. -2007**

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**Qatari students beaten up on European tour**

A group of young Qatari students who went to a European country to attend summer English language courses sponsored by a social organisation in Doha has returned behind schedule after some of them were beaten up by some local children while they were on an outing, a social activist Hassan Al Jefairi said yesterday.



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**Aug. 6 - 2007**

Secretary-general's selection high on CMC agenda

doha Selection of the secretary-general will top the agenda of Central Municipal Council (CMC) when it next meets in September. The next meeting of the council has been tentatively scheduled on September 11.

Jassim bin Abdullah al Malki, the CMC vice-chairman told the Qatar Tribune that an advertisement calling for applications for the post of secretary-general will soon be floated in the newspapers.

"Qataris are in fact waiting for a newspaper advertisement to apply for the post" I had even applied the last time. I will apply this time too. It's a strong office to hold and the secretary-general, if he wants can bring about a lot of changes in Qatar," says Hassan al Jeffairi, a Qatari writer and a businessman.



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**September 6, 2007**

Experts call for boosting psychiatric services

PARTICIPANTS at the "Right to Psychiatric Treatment" symposium called for drawing up a national strategy and issuing a range of legislations to enhance the levels of the psychiatric services provided in Qatar.

Earlier, Hassan al-Jifairi, a social activist, slammed the lack of media material addressing the problems of psychiatric patients both in the Qatari TV and Radio, "There is a glaring shortage of the material highlighting he said.

He also observed that mental diseases in Qatar are on the rise as the society undergoes what he described as "drastic changes in terms of lifestyles" which he said, could trigger more serious problems in the future if not well examined.

"Though many residents are suffering from psychiatric problems, they cannot seek treatment because of the social stigma usually attached to any psychiatric disorders," he said, while calling for encouraging the private sector to invest in psychiatric services.

"Some residents go abroad for treatment though it is very costly only to escape from the social stigma and shame they would experience if they sought treatment in the local psychiatric units," he said.



**14 Sept. 2007**

Green Tent debate to focus on living cost

CEF HOSTS PLATFORMS FOR DEBATE BY SOCIAL ACTIVISTS DURING RAMADAN

DOHA - The rising cost of living, fuelled mainly by soaring house rents, is one of the major issues which are likely to be hotly debated at the ' Ramadan tent to be hosted by the Friends of Environment Centre.

Called the Green Tent, it is the most prestigious of platforms for debate by social activists and experts on topical and sensitive political, economic and social issues during the fasting month.

The Tent made waves last year when prominent Qatari businessman and activist, Hassan Al Jefairi. publicly lambasted the various public services for poor quality.

This year, Al Jefairi said he was all set to raise the issue of skyrocketing house rents during the debate on inflation. Rents are the largest contributor to galloping inflation, he said.

People are suffering and they include both nationals and expatriates, said Al Jefairi. Among the other key public issues to be discussed by experts at the Green Tent this year include the new traffic law, the importance of greenery as highlighted by the Holy Quran, diabetes and the growing menace of obesity in the country.

The high rate of road accidents and unhealthy food habits which cause obesity, are some of the major issues facing our society, said the activist. The Green Tent starts on Sunday.

Giving an insight into the popular Ramadan tent culture, Al Jefairi said the concept took root in Qatar about 10 years ago. Before that people used to simply hold family get-togethers after the late night prayers (taraweeh) and play various types of games.



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"Our (Qatari) games are mainly Indian." he told this newspaper. Carrom was one of the most popular indoor games played by families during the fasting month.

With the onset of the Internet era a little over 10 years ago,, things changed and people began craving for more information. Thus began the culture of Ramadan tents.

According to Al Jefairi, broadly two kinds of tents are held during Ramadan. One is the religious tent where discourses on Islam take place, while the other seeks to provide Islamic entertainment: Islamic music, for instance.

The third and the last kind of Ramadan tent is now growing in popularity and this is the one being held by the CEF where debates on topical political, economic and social issues are held by experts and community workers, said Al Jefairi.



**Oct. 6 - 2007**

Activist decries "commercial' Iftars

THE COMMUNITY EVENT HAS BECOME MEANS OF BUSINESS NETWORKING AND WAY TO GARNER PUBLICITY, SAYS AL JEFAIRI

Iftars organised by companies here are nothing more than a means of business networking and a way to garner free publicity, a prominent social activist Hassan Al Jefairi has said. Usually done as a community event, people, regardless of religion, country of origin or economic status are always made to feel welcome at any iftar gathering. There are heavy turnouts at mosques during iftar as also those organised by the many charity organizations here, all of which do so with publicity the farthest thing from their minds. The lowly-paid workers also get to enjoy meals provided by the kind-hearted.

However, many companies here, both big and small, have hopped on to the Iftar bandwagon, with publicity being the main driving force. While a handful of companies honourably host iftars for their employees, others make a big song and dance out of what should be a time of devotion and introspection, when people break their fast together in an atmosphere of amity and community.

Al Jefairi, who is also a businessman, said: "The Iftars hosted by companies are nothing but an occasion for business networking. Only top-end customers are invited to these events. As for the demand for publicity, it is nothing but propaganda by these companies. Carrying the pictures in newspapers and magazines is simply free advertising. As a reader, I can tell you people do not bother looking at the pictures or reading the article." Many business deals are also struck at these gatherings.

The song and dance entails holding Iftars at top-end hotels or posh clubs with only the cream of society invited. Phone calls stream into media houses asking for a photographer to cover Company X's event.

No industry is immune to what amounts to a bit of free publicity. Photographs or CDs are dispatched to the media, highlighting the presence of company bigwigs and happy people enjoying a lavish meal.



يوميات حسن الجفيري  
Hassan Aljefairi's Diary



**Oct. 6 - 2007**

Al Jefairi said: "Invitations to these Iftars are offered as a bonus to customers of banks, for example. A wealthy person will be encouraged to open an exclusive account and as a reward, he will get gifts, invitations to seminars and forums and also for him and his family to Iftars." The corporate Iftars tend to be exclusive affairs and meals are served with any number of courses. The presence of senior government officials adds lustre to the event and better chances of publicity. As for those iftars offered by hotels here, Al Jefairi said: "These are meant only for the wealthy. A middle-class person cannot afford to pay QR200 per head for these Iftars. How can anyone afford to pay QR800 for an iftar meal if he has a family of four?"

يوميات حسن الجفيري  
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**Oct. 9 -2007**

"Prosperity fuels quest for branded items"

DOHA - Thanks to the immense wealth generation, nationals are going crazy over branded customer goods, says Hassan Al jefairi. A common Qatari now won't settle for anything less than a branded wallet costing about QR500 to QR600 or a pen priced between QR300 and QR1,000 even for daily use. "Everything a Qatari wants for day-to-day use has to be stylish and shiny," he said. It's a matter of prestige for him. People would laugh at him if his footwear is not all-leather and costs less than QR400. The price can go up to QR1,000 for a pair even in the case of a limited-income citizen. Cufflinks come next and they are quite expensive too, costing between QR300 and QR 1,000. Qataris, according to Al Jefairi, "hate" moving in ordinary cars. A shiny new all-option Toyota Land Cruiser costing something like QR240,000 is the all-time favourite of a Qatari man.

THE PENINSULA