

## In search of lost photographs-Thana Farooq

To my sympathetic viewers,

A few months ago, I experienced something that you may call a major life crisis, a long-lasting catastrophe that left me emotionally paralyzed. I lost by accident three folders of photos from Yemen that each contained around 400 photos. At that moment I thought of my mother who used to keep all her family, travel and daily life photographs in a box and protected it with several layers of whatever piece of fabric she would find. Even a fire wouldn't easily make it to them! I wish I had my mother's box.

I truly felt that I needed a therapeutic treatment to get over the pain of losing a part of my life in Yemen. I wanted to be released from that state of denial. These photos were the windows for me to smell the fresh kabab in the crowded streets of the old city of Sana'a. They are the streets vendors who layout clothes in the sidewalk, women, and children who carry jerry cans, early mornings that shine a light on unfinished roads, schoolboys on their uniform walking in gangs and claiming their authority over the streets. These were my memory of the ugly and beautiful. These images shaped my sense of reality in Yemen and losing them made me feel unknown and abandoned.

My grief is heavily loaded not only with the loss of the photographs but it's more accurately because they come as reminder of a lost home. These were my witness of a nation that lived up for a hope aimed political negotiations that promised for a new Yemen. I was a witness to this. Now and since March 2015, thousands of families in Yemen fled their homes with their clothes only searching for a safe place, shelter, and a new home. Women and children are the most affected, especially the poor that do not have any fault in the war. Airstrikes still bombs my city unpredictably. So even if I go back and that's not an option now, I will fail to claim all these memories. Photos will only record the survivals, their traces and the clues of the aftermath.

In this series, I go back to my archive attempting to rescue lost memories and I selfishly search for me within these echoing spaces and nostalgic recollections. I capture images that can't be photographed I project back to the past and I end up falling into chaos. My feelings are isolated. Going back is exhausting, is a heart-wrenching yet it's revolutionary. There is an oppressive process of seeking to recognize the faces that appear to be resentful. In the act of remembrance, I'm unconsciously intrusive; I am attached to these discursive gazes. I am lost in the untold and I feel unfree and attached. In this series, I try to dust off of the familiar, sit a witness of the lost places, homes, streets and a nation that struggles to remain alive in spite of the odds.

### Bio

Thana Farooq (A Yemeni, b. 1990) documentary photographer and storyteller, currently lives in the Netherlands. In 2016 she was awarded Break the Silence scholarship to pursue M.A. in Documentary Photography and Photojournalism at the University of Westminster in London. Her work aims to achieve a personal reportage that negotiates themes of memory, boundaries, and violence. She focuses on collaborative storytelling projects to tell personal anecdotes of displacement and migration. Previously, Thana worked with various international NGOs in Yemen to tell stories of displacement women and children in Yemen, portraying the suffering and highlighting on the forgotten crisis there. Her work appeared in several publications among them, Aljazeera, World Press Photo, BBC, Huffington Post, CNN

and others. Recently, she was awarded open society foundations fellowship grant and exhibition on her ongoing project *The Passport*