

Report

Construction workers: Facing contractors, greed, and a lack of rights

Page 3



Vox Pop

Sana'a residents give their view on southern independence

Page 4



Opinion

Armed militias need to stay away from universities

Page 6

Interview

Katherine Abu Hadal to the Yemen Times: 'Yemeni-American families maintain a strong sense of food identity'

Page 8



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Early Wednesday morning fighting broke out near the house (pictured) of Sam Al-Ahmar, a member of the prominent Al-Ahmar family, in Al-Hasaba area, Sana'a. *Read more on page 2.*





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Ceasefire agreement signed in Marib

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Nov. 26—Members of the Obaidah, Jedaan, and Murad tribes signed a ceasefire agreement with the Houthis on Monday, agreeing not to engage in clashes with each other.

The agreement contains 13 clauses, and tasks tribesmen with protecting the governorate's roads, public facilities, and any Houthi tribesmen who live in the area. In exchange the Houthis agree not to advance into the governorate.

Clause 2 reads: "The second party [tribesmen] agrees to secure the roads for the first party [the Houthis]... failure to do so would grant the first party the right to take necessary measures to protect itself from any attack.

Clause 3 reads: "The second party agrees to exhaust all options to protect public facilities and the public good, the former including all oil, gas, electricity, service or production facilities... failure to do so will mean that the first party takes necessary measures to ensure the safety of these institutions."

Clause 5 forbids any tribesmen from aiding and abetting members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), while clause 4 states that, "The second party must guarantee the safety of the governorate's roads, along with all areas of the governorate, to ensure that no Muslims are robbed or have their possessions taken from them." The clause does not call for similar protections afforded to non-Muslims.

Aishal Al-Futaini, a prominent tribal leader with the Murad tribal

federation, stated that he and members of the Obaidah and Jedaan tribes, including Ahmad Bin Ali Al-Jalal, Hamid bin Mohammad Hai, and Mohammad Al-Ahmar, all signed the agreement with the Houthis in order to curb further bloodshed and war. "It is our duty to protect our lands," he said. "If the Houthis don't try to take over Marib we have no problem adhering to the agreement."

"We don't want Marib turning into another Al-Baida," he added, a reference to the Yemeni governorate where AQAP fighters and allied tribesmen have been engaging in bloody clashes with both Houthis and security forces for the last two months, causing hundreds of casualties on both sides.

The agreement also calls for all within Marib to live in a state of peace and co-existence, within the bounds of Islamic law, adding that no group or sect should instigate violence or attempt to impose their doctrine on others.

The agreement also binds Houthis to not attack any areas in Marib unless they clearly violate the terms of the agreement.

Clause 10 states that, "The two parties agree that the above stated clauses do not absolve the relevant that, "The second party must guarantee the safety of the governorate's roads, along with all areas of the governorate, to ensure that no Muslims are robbed or have their possessions taken from them." The clause does not call for similar protections afforded to non-Muslims.

Hussein Al-Khudhairi, a soldier serving in the 3rd Military Command in Marib governorate's Serwah district, told the Yemen Times this agreement will enhance the role of the tribes and security forces by



In exchange for the Houthis not advancing into the governorate, tribesmen agreed to protect infrastructure and any Houthis living in Marib.

creating an air of stability that will allow the command to better perform their job functions.

However, not all tribesmen were happy with the outcome of the agreement. Sheikh Mujahid Bin Aboud Al-Sharif, a prominent Sheikh within the Obaidah tribe, said that he and others in his tribe did not support signing the peace treaty. "If we were to reach such an agreement it should be with the government, not an armed militia, let alone Ansar Allah [the Houthis]," he said.

Al-Sharif added, "I and others such as myself, appreciate the efforts exerted by the sheikhs who signed the agreement, but reject it at the same time because in the end it benefits the Houthis."

Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office, supported the signing of the agreement. "The agreement was signed by the most senior sheikhs within Marib's tribes, and it will help to prevent future wars and conflicts," he said.

The Houthis have signed similar ceasefire agreements in the past: One with the tribes of Ibb governorate on Oct. 18, and another one on Nov. 14 with tribesmen in the Rada'a district of Al-Baida governorate.

The first agreement was violated two days after signing, while the second was violated the day after. In both cases, the Houthis ended up taking over the areas in question days after the agreements were first violated.

Southern Labor Union strikes

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, Nov. 26—The Southern Labor Union held a partial strike on Wednesday in Aden, in preparation for a full strike set to take place on Thursday. The union described the strikes as part of a series of escalations in the lead up to the country's Nov. 30 deadline.

Nov. 30 was set by the pro-independence Southern Movement for all civil and military government personnel from the north to leave the south.

"Holding a strike is part of our escalation as we approach the Nov. 30 deadline, when we will celebrate the independence of the south," said Ali Mohammad, chairman of the Southern Labor Union, in an interview

with the Yemen Times on Tuesday. "The decision to hold the strikes was decided upon last weekend during a meeting of nearly thirty representatives from various southern labor unions. It is part of the movement's latest round of escalations." Those working in the water, health, and electricity sectors were exempted from participating in the strikes.

Sami Khairan, chairman of the Ports Authority Workers Union at the state-run Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation, said on Wednesday that workers in a number of unions took part in the strike, such as the Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation, the refineries sector, the airport, and state-run oil companies. The navigation and maintenance departments at the Aden Port, also took part in the

strike, Khairan said.

"We hope to send a message to the government and the world. Our goal is not to hurt the people [in Aden] through this strike," said Khairan.

In addition to the strikes, the union also announced in a statement on Monday that the southern flag would be hoisted on government buildings throughout Aden.

The same day, the southern flag was hoisted atop the office of the state-run Gulf of Aden Ports Corporation headquarters and a number of other government buildings, including a number of state-run oil and water refineries operated by the ministries of petroleum, water, and environment, according to Arslan Al-Sakkaf, secretary general of the Southern Labor Union.

The Southern Labor Union and the Southern Movement are closely connected, and share the same goal, according to Mohammed.

"The Southern Movement had been informed that the labor union would continue its escalations and go on a partial strike on Wednesday, and full strike on Thursday," he said. Mohammad Musaed, a colonel within the Aden Security Department, believes that Wednesday and Thursdays escalations are part of an attempt by the Southern Movement to provoke security forces. "They want us to clash with them," he said.

"However we always exercise restraint and try not to use violence. They hoisted the southern flag on the Yemenia airline building. We simply removed it," he said. He added that

employees working in government institutions in Aden were divided regarding secession, and that not everyone supported the Southern Movement.

While there may be divisions amongst government employees, and within the Southern Movement itself, Khairan said that, "All the southern employees here [Aden Ports Corporation] support the escalations."

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi member and activist, told the Yemen Times that the southern people have the right to protest and express their demands. "As Ansar Allah [the Houthis] protested in the north. Our brothers in the south have the right to speak their minds and express their grievances," he said. "I hope they remain united," he added,

saying that no one could prevent the southerners from realizing their own self-determination.

A source working in the president's office in Sana'a, who requested to remain anonymous, told the Yemen Times he is confident that violence will not occur in the south on Nov. 30, stressing that the majority of southerners are pro-unity. "There's no reason to worry. Even if there are isolated acts of chaos, they will be limited to just a few locations," he said.

After Thursday, there will be no more strikes before the Nov. 30 deadline as Friday and Saturday are weekends. Sunday, Nov. 30, marks the independence of South Yemen in 1967, after the withdrawal of the last British troops from the region.

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400 foreign Salafi students leave Yemen

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA’A, Nov. 26— Four hundred foreign students studying in the Al-Fayoush Salafi Center located in the Tuban district of Lahj governorate are leaving and returning to their home countries on Thursday.

The Center was founded in 2007 by Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Adeni, a prominent Salafi scholar in Lahj district. It has been alleged that many of the students violated the rules of the center by attending sermons led by extremist Imams.

Abdullah Al-Majedi, governor of Lahj, was quoted on the Ministry of Defense’s website on Tuesday as saying that the students would be leaving at their own expense. “Those students had no connection to terrorism, but left at the request of the local authorities, for security purposes,” the Defense Ministry website quoted Al-Majedi as saying. He did not elaborate further on the meaning of “security purposes.”

A prominent Salafi working within the Al-Fayoush Center spoke with the Yemen Times on Wednesday on condition of anonymity due to the unstable security situation in the region. “Those students will be leaving on Thursday, in coordination with the embassies of their own countries and the local authorities of Lahj,” he said.

He added that most of the students are from France, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Indonesia, and that several are married to Yemeni women and have children. “We raised the issue of many of the students having Yemeni wives to the local authorities, who told us that they should either take their wives with them or seek a divorce,” he added.

Suspensions regarding the students began two weeks prior when they began attending radical sermons at mosques in the city of Aden, he alleged. “Two weeks ago, a radical sheikh from Saudi Arabia came and led Friday prayers in a mosque calling for Muslims to wage jihad against the Houthis,” he said. “Sheikh Adeni advised them not to attend, however many did anyway,” he said. Houthis are followers of the Zaydi sect of Shia Islam,

and are viewed as heretics by many radical Sunni clerics.

Basim Al-Zuriqi, Media Spokesman for the governor of Lahj governorate, agreed with the source and told the Yemen Times on Wednesday that the students had been forced to leave by security forces for fear that they were being radicalized in nearby mosques in Aden.

“Those students came to Yemen to study the Quran and live in the center with their families,” he said. “But recently, it was heard that they were violating the rules of the center and attending radical sermons led by extremist Imams.”

The decision to deport the students comes as security forces step up their attempts to combat the spread of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), particularly in the southern governorates, he said.

The Salafi source rejected allegations that students or the center had any connection to Sheikh Yahya Al-Hajuri, a controversial Salafi scholar from the northern city of Dammaj in Sa’ada governorate, who had been accused in 2011 by many of training foreign students in the use of weapons to be used to fight against Houthis who lived in the area. Al-Hajuri was expelled from Dammaj in January 2014 and took refuge in Sana’a after Houthis went to war with the Salafi community in the city towards the end of 2013.

Wahib Al-Nusairi, a resident of Tuban district who lived near the center, said the students were friendly and caused no problems with residents in the district. “Some had been living in the area a long time, and are married to Yemeni women and have families,” he said. “They spent most of their time inside however, and we never saw them that often.”

Foreign students often come to Yemen to study in Salafi centers in Sana’a, Lahj, Dammaj, and Hodeida.

The Al-Faiosh center was established in 2007 by Sheikh Al-Adeni in Lahj’s Tuban district, and includes two separate institutions, one each for men and women. The institutions provide instruction in the Quran and religious texts.

Violent clashes between Houthis and Al-Ahmar’s security

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA’A, Nov. 26—Violent clashes broke out Wednesday morning in Al-Hasaba area in Sana’a between Houthis and armed escorts of Sheikh Sam Yahya Hussein Al-Ahmar.

Two Houthis were killed in addition to six of Al-Ahmar’s escorts, according to the Houthi who acted as the field commander during the clashes and goes by the pseudonym Abu Hashem.

Abu Hashem told the Yemen Times that “one of Al-Ahmar’s escorts fired at one of our vehicles killing one of our men, causing clashes to break out and nearby streets to be closed.” According to Abu Hashem, the clashes lasted from 1 AM until early Wednesday morning.

The fighting began outside Al-Ahmar’s house, which the Houthis eventually took over.

Sultan Al-Hadrami, one of the armed Houthis who took control of Sam Al-Ahmar’s house, said that Sam Al-Ahmar was injured and that all his escorts were arrested.

“Right now the situation is under our control. We wanted to blow up Sheikh Sam Al-Ahmar’s house but Abdulmalik Al-Houthi stopped us. We might still do so later,” he said.

Al-Hadrami added that the armed Houthis who entered Al-Ahmar’s house belonged to a “raid squad” whose members are all from Sa’ada. “They will hand the house over to the popular committees once they finish securing it,” he explained.

Abd Al-Azaz Al-Qadasi, the deputy head of security in Sana’a, said he does not know about Sam Al-Ahmar’s current whereabouts. When asked why security forces did not intervene, Al-Qadasi responded, “This is between armed Houthis and armed guards of Al-Ahmar, and

the Houthis are in control of everything anyways.”

When a journalist from the Yemen Times visited Al-Ahmar’s house hours after the clashes, he was prevented from taking photos. However, the journalist saw the Houthis taking away three of Sam’s escorts and locking them in one of the guards’ buildings outside the main house. The journalist saw a fourth escort already locked in the room, and was prevented from talking to any of them.

Abdulsalam Al-Shami, one of Al-Ahmar’s neighbors, agreed that a number of Al-Ahmar’s escorts have been arrested and added that the clashes were very violent and that RPGs, Dushkas, and machine guns were used.

Sam Al-Ahmar is the previous undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and the cousin of business mogul Hamid Al-Ahmar, who fled Yemen last August and is living in exile.

Counter-terrorism forces rescue eight

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA’A, Nov. 26—Yemeni counter-terrorism forces freed eight captives held by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) on Tuesday, according to a statement made by the Yemen High Security Committee.

The committee falls under the authority of President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi and is composed of high-ranking representatives of Yemen’s security apparatus, including the ministers of defense and interior.

“Counter-terrorism forces freed eight kidnapped captives being held by AQAP, including six Yemenis, one Saudi citizen, and one Ethiopian,” read the statement published by the state-run Saba News Agency on Tuesday.

A source from within the president’s security office, who asked to remain anonymous, said that Yemeni counter-terrorism forces had been tracking the movement of the kidnappers for several weeks. He added that one soldier was injured during the operation, and that all the kidnappers had been killed.

The Yemen Times contacted multiple sources within the Ministry of Defense to find out the names of those who had been kidnapped, however was only provided with one, Khalid Al-Mekhlafi, a Yemeni national and profes-

sor at Al-Baida University. Al-Mekhlafi was kidnapped on June 13 in Rada’a district of Al-Baida governorate, along with two other professors from the same university.

The statement initially announcing the freeing of the captives did not specify the governorates or districts in which the operation took place, sparking rumors to circulate on various outlets and social media. Claims have been made that one of those who was released was an American national and US soldier, and that the operation had been carried out in Lahj governorate.

Five sources within the defense ministry told the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity that one of those released was an American citizen who had been rescued along with the other captives in Lahj governorate.

However Ahmed Al-Shum, an officer within the 35th Armored Brigade, whose forces took part in the raids along with counter-terrorism forces, claimed that they operated in Hadramout’s Hajjar Al-Saiar, Al-Qatan, Sayoun, and Shebam districts. He described the operation as a success, but would not comment any further.

“I am positive that one of the released captives was an American citizen. I don’t know why that’s being kept a secret,” said Jamal Al-

Geez, Chairman of the Security Bureau within the Defense Ministry.

The Yemen Times contacted officials at the Al-Anad airbase’s operations department in Lahj governorate, who said that the kidnapped American was a military drill sergeant who had been training Yemeni soldiers at the base. They could not confirm the date that the soldier was allegedly kidnapped.

Mohammad Mohsen, a journalist based in Lahj, said that local security sources told him the raid took place in an area near the Al-Anad military base and that the High Security Committee was trying to cover up the true location of the operation.

Taha Saif, an officer within Yemen’s Special Security Forces, which the country’s counter-terrorism units fall under, stated that the “supreme security committee does not release details about its operations, as doing so may sabotage future efforts to track down remaining members of the cell involved in other acts of kidnapping.”

The Yemen Times could not independently confirm that any Ethiopian or Saudi citizens were released during the operation. However it is known that Saudi national Abdullah Al-Khalidi, Deputy Saudi Counsel, was kidnapped by AQAP forces in Aden city in March 2012.

Retired officers to go ahead with Nov. 30 protest

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA’A, Nov. 26—The Retired Military and Security Officers Association announced on Wednesday they will push ahead with protests planned in the south on Nov. 30, despite a recent presidential decree to compensate retired officers.

The association consists of retired soldiers and officers from southern governorates who were laid off during the last three decades.

The Retired Military and Security Officers Association established the Southern Movement on July 7, 2007, with the initial demand to be returned back to the army and security forces. By the end of the year their demands had escalated to calls for secession.

According to the state-run Saba News Agency, the president launched a decree on Monday, promising to return and promote 8,009 soldiers, officers, and petty officers.

The spokesperson of the association, Abdullah Mothana, told the Yemen Times the decree is an attempt to calm the retired officers down in order to not participate in the protests planned for Nov. 30.

While the association did not make an official statement, prominent members and local media have said since early November that they will participate in protests in Aden, Mukalla city of Hadramout, and a number of other southern governorates.

Nov. 30 is the day the Southern Movement announced as the deadline for military and civil personnel hailing from the north to leave the south.

“The government’s solution is not fair towards the retired officers, as the solution is that the government pays [a lump sum of] YR100,000 [\$465] to each officer, and this is not enough,” Mothana said. The government recently provided payments to more than 9,000 officers, and had previously given YR554 million (\$2.6 million) to 5,547 others, Saba reported on Monday.

“The demands of the retired soldiers and officers are to receive the ranks that they deserve, and their salaries and financial dues which they did not get for the last years [since being laid off],” Mothana added.

Mohammed Al-Maslami, a retired colonel laid off 13 years ago—without any convincing reasons, in his view—said he worked within the army since 1984. In July 2013

Al-Maslami was given a one-time payment of YR100,000 (\$465), but he did not get the rank he thinks he deserves.

“I joined the army in 1984, and the rank that I deserve is brigadier. But the government did not give me this rank and I still get the retirement payment of a colonel, which is YR60,000 (\$280), while the brigadier gets YR140,000 (\$650),” Al-Maslami said.

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Construction workers: Facing contractors, greed, and a lack of rights

Having heard stories about construction workers who died in work-related accidents and uncompensated families, Sara Al-Zawqari, the Yemen Times Radio manager, and Sadeq Al-Wesabi, a freelance journalist based in Sana'a, decided to write a report about the work conditions of unregistered construction workers in Yemen. In collaboration with the Network of Arab Reporters for Investigative Journalism, a five-month investigation was launched that led to both a report and a documentary. The first part of Al-Zawqari's and Al-Wesabi's report is published below. The second part will be published in the Yemen Times on Tuesday, Dec. 2.

Sadeq Al-Wesabi and Sara Al-Zawqari

Hajj Ahmad, who has been a construction worker for most of his life, fell off a scaffold in Nuqum area in the capital Sana'a four years ago. Once known for his strong body and lengthy experience, Ahmad is no longer able to carry himself, let alone the heavy construction materials he used to work with.

Originally from Al-Hada village in Dhahar governorate, Ahmad had been employed by contractors for 30 years. In all this time, he said he never signed a contract. "I was never provided with any safety equipment or was informed about their importance. I was not even given a helmet to protect my head from the sun's heat," Ahmad complained. What is worse, Ahmad's last employer had him sign a document, promising to waive any benefits in case of getting injured. Ahmed said he only accepted these unfavorable work conditions due to the difficult financial situation he was in, and his dire need for employment.

According to statistics published by the Central Statistics Agency in 2013, about one million Yemenis are registered as construction workers and enjoy social security insurance. Unfortunately, Ahmad was not one of them. Since his contractor refused to reimburse him, Ahmad's family had to borrow money

to cover his medical expenses. Unregistered workers like Ahmad are often poorly trained and are not provided with standard safety equipment by their employers. This last point constitutes a violation of article 113 in the Yemeni labor law, which stipulates that, "An employer who commissions any new enterprise shall ensure that it meets occupational safety and health requirements. The responsible ministry shall ensure compliance with appropriate occupational safety and health requirements and conditions."

What works to Ahmad's disadvantage is that the article's conditions can only be enforced if a proper work contract was signed. His legal case is further complicated by article 4 of Yemen's Social Security Law, which stipulates that "temporary and seasonal" workers are to be excluded from social security regulations.

Ahmad's story is in no way unique. There are many unregistered workers in Yemen who have to work in hazardous work environments, operating machines they are not trained for, and being laid off as soon as they get injured. They lack any legal protection and social insurance. The families of those who died in work-related accidents are also being widely ignored by employers.

Majid Ahmed Zain, for example, died in his 30s in his home governorate of Hodeida, where he fell off



Photo Archive by Samir Qaid

Construction workers in Yemen often do not sign contracts with their employer, leaving them in a tricky legal situation if they get injured on the job

a scaffold. When the criminal investigation team arrived at the scene they referred to the event as nothing more than "an act of God," meaning an accident. Wael Ahmed Zain, the brother of the deceased, does not know what to do and where to complain. "The owner of the building gave us a sack of rice and a sack of flour as compensation," he said. "We need mediators and money in

order to follow up with the case, but we barely have enough money to live off."

So far, no accurate statistics have been released that would list the number of unregistered workers in Yemen and the number of their injuries and deaths. Ali Dahaq, the national program coordinator of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Yemen, said the orga-

nization gets most of its data from the Ministry of Labor, which he explained does not have any accurate statistics on unregistered workers.

According to researcher and deputy manager of the Social Studies and Labor Research Center, Fatima Mashour, "There are no national surveys specifying the number of those [unregistered] workers and there are no qualitative studies determining the nature of the problems these workers suffer from."

One of the few existing studies on unregistered workers is ten years old, published in 2004 by the General Federation of Yemeni Workers and the ILO. The field survey found that 89 percent of participants were working without a contract. The survey results also showed that 17 percent of participating unregistered workers sustained work-related injuries and that only three percent received compensation.

If anything, these numbers have gotten worse over time, Dahaq said. An increasing number of Yemenis, including highly qualified university graduates, are desperately looking for jobs—whether they come with a contract or not.

The government's lacking inspections and arbitration committees

Azzam Salah, head of the parliament's work force and social affairs committee, admits there is a lack in legislation regarding unregistered construction workers. He emphasized, however, that there is "real intention" inside parliament to include unregistered workers in the new labor law which is currently being discussed in cabinet.

While certainly looking good on paper, it is questionable to what extent new and better labor laws could actually be enforced. Already now, the government is lacking the resources required to properly im-

plement its legal obligations in the field of labor. According to article 1 of Yemen's labor law, "Inspections of workplaces shall be conducted by officials of the ministry and its offices. They shall be vested with judicial authority to apply the provisions of this law and the regulations and orders issued therein. They may, if necessary, call upon the services of experienced doctors, engineers, and technicians."

In spite of existing laws, Dr. Ali Al-Nusairy, the undersecretary of the ministry, who is responsible for the sector of public labor relations, explains that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor lacks the ability to inspect work sites. "The ministry barely inspects any of the registered construction sites. There are over 4,000 registered construction sites but only three inspection teams. One of them is based in Sana'a and includes 30 inspectors. The other two teams are allocated in other governorates."

Not only is the ministry lacking the manpower to conduct large-scale inspections, it is also struggling to deal with all the complaints coming from unregistered workers.

According to article 129 of the labor law, which applies to both registered and unregistered workers, "Both parties to a dispute or their representatives shall hold a meeting to settle the dispute amicably through negotiations within a maximum period of one month. A record of the meeting, to be kept secret, shall be drawn up and signed by both parties." The law further stipulates that, "Where no amicable settlement can be reached between the two parties to the dispute, the matter shall be referred to the ministry or a relevant ministry office which shall summon the parties with a view to settling the dispute within a period not exceeding two weeks."

Continued on the back page

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Sana'a residents give their view on southern independence

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

On Oct. 14, 1963, Yemenis in the south began a revolution against the British colonialists. After more than four years of struggle, on Nov. 30, 1967, the last British soldier left and South

Ziyad Amer, a traffic policeman from Dhamar governorate, northern Yemen

The southern people do not have the right to be independent, and this will never happen. The south and north became one country after the Yemeni people gave huge sacrifices to realize this national achievement. They have every right to express their grievances and they can refer to the government to address their issues. The government is the mother of all [Yemeni] people. Secession will destroy the economy,

Laina Ahmed Al-Qubati, a businesswoman from Taiz, northern Yemen

I do not uphold the secessionist demands because seceding means further divisions in the

Yemen became independent. This year, the pro-secessionist Southern Movement established a protest camp in Aden city on Oct. 14, and is calling for all civil and military personnel from the north to leave the south by Nov. 30.

Secessionist calls have been present since 1994, when a civil

war broke out between the former countries of North and South Yemen, which unified only four short years earlier. In 2007, the Southern Movement was established and has become a major force calling for secession in the south.

Whether or not the south will secede—or can, or should—is

a matter of great debate. With protesters camped in Al-Arood Square in Aden, and with the Nov. 30 deadline approaching, the Yemen Times asked residents in Sana'a if they think southerners have the right to secede and whether they support their demands.



divide the people, and undermine the state. It is not sane to allow this to take place.



Hanadi Al-Hadad and Zainab Sharf Al-Deen, Sana'a University students, Arts College

We think the Southern Movement does not have the right to call for secession. Unity is the right of all Yemenis, not only the south. At the same time, the government should listen to the southern demands and fairly take their voices into account. The Southern Movement should not adhere to their calls for separation because separation will return us to the dark past. If the south secedes, we will not be able to go to the south freely as we do today given the fact that Yemen will be two separate countries. This is not for the good of Yemen.

Tareq Ziyad, a member of a Houthi popular committee in the Sana'a

The southern people have the right to secede so long as the government does not fulfill their demands. We do not accept injustice. So, I hope the government will take heed of their demands and give them the rights they deserve. Those who say they will sacrifice themselves for the sake of unity are liars—they only want to provoke the southern people. We are with the southern people, and they will have their own rights and resources even if they secede. Injustice is always unacceptable.

Abdulrahman Al-Dhalei, a Sana'a University student from the south

I am from the south, and we, the southerners, have the right to self-determination. Nov. 30 is a memorable day in the history of the southern nation. We have the right to secede. We have the right to regain our southern state. We have the right to get all our rights. The southerners gave up their own entire country in May of 1990 for the sake of unity. They gave up their flag, identity, capital, and currency for the sake of unity. The southerners have been treated as though they are occupied. Therefore, they have the right to return to their state and decide on self-determination. The only thing that I am worried about is internal rifts among the



Also, lots of northerners are living in the south. How could they be evacuated? This is really difficult. Separation will also have negative consequences for the economy and tourism, among other things.



southerners themselves. Personally, this is the only concern.

ADVERTORIAL

GIZ and Al-Khair Foundation for Social Development sign agreement to train young orphans

The training and employment program sponsored by the GIZ (German Agency for International Cooperation) and the Al-Khair Foundation for Social Development, is one of several projects being launched by the Al-Alamia Group, and under the supervision of the Ministry of Technical Education and Vocational Training. The

program works to train youth, and expand their horizons and professional skill sets, in order for them to be more qualified to enter the job market. An agreement was signed on Monday, tasking the Al-Khair foundation with responsibility for implementing a program to train orphans on how to repair electric generators. The program will last three months. Trainees will study generator re-

pair theory for two months and practical application skills for one month. Students will

also be trained during this period in computer skills and private business administration. The two organizations have previously cooperated to host an accounting training program for 30 female students in Taiz. This last program is operating and ongoing.

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OUR OPINION

Armed militias need to stay away from universities

College campuses are political places, and they should be. But armed militias should stay out of students' spaces. For about a month now, the Houthis have had an armed presence at Sana'a University, mostly at the gates, but they have also been entering and leaving campus regularly.

Students there have held several protests, demanding that the armed men leave. Within the student body, there are students affiliated with the Socialist Party, Islah, the GPC, and other parties and groups. Houthi students are as entitled to their opinions as anyone else and are free to hold demonstrations, protests, and strikes. But armed militias are not entitled to any of the campus, for any purposes.

On Tuesday, armed men calling themselves Ansar Allah entered the Lebanese International University (LIU) in pickup trucks with mounted machine guns. It was the third time the Houthis entered LIU since their Sept. 21 takeover of Sana'a, according to students. Students who witnessed the event say the university's security guards tried to turn the men away, explaining that weapons were not allowed on campus.

One of the men struck a guard in the face with his Kalashnikov, and security guards started firing into the air as a warning. But the militia entered anyway.

"We put the women in the auditorium, which is below ground. The male students then confronted the armed men. We told them the only weapons we have are our studies and our knowledge and we asked them to leave," said a 21-year-old engineering student at LIU.

Houthis told the students they had no problems with them and wanted to speak with the university's management about the land the university was on. If the Houthis have a land dispute with LIU, call the administration, set-up an appointment, leave weapons at the door, and discuss the situation. The Houthis are a part of the government now and it's time to stop acting like rebels.

This isn't the first time universities have found themselves in the presence of armed men. Even after Saleh stepped down, General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar's 1st Armored Division maintained its occupation of Sana'a University. Students protested for months, fighting to demilitarize their campus.

These universities have banned weapons on their campuses and all armed groups need to stay out.

Ahlam Mohsen
Deputy editor-in-chief

Russia's Middle East policy after the G-20 summit

Vitaly Naumkin
al-monitor.com
First published Nov. 24

Relations between Russia and the United States, as well as between Russia and US-oriented European countries, further deteriorated following the G-20 summit in Brisbane due to the crisis in Ukraine. This poses the question for analysts as to how this situation might affect Moscow's Middle East policy and the existing forms of cooperation with the West on regional issues, namely: The Middle East quartet of international mediators; the negotiations of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) with Iran; the stabilization of the situation in Yemen; and the fight against terrorism.

Naturally, this kind of cooperation will be preserved, with Russia even bearing some of the political costs. For example, at the 2014 Conference on Non-Proliferation held in Moscow, one of the Iranian participants criticized Russia for its position in the P5+1 talks with Iran—clearly hinting at Russia's solidarity with the West, rather than with Iran—to which the Russian participant emphasized that in this Moscow was guided exclusively by its national interest.

At the same time, the director of the Center for Energy and Security Studies, Anton Khlopkov, deplored the tendency to politicize the problem: "It is very unfortunate that this is now noticeable in the relations between Russia and the United States. I have always thought that concerning non-proliferation our interests—of both Moscow and Washington—coincide. Recently, however, on the initiative of our American partners, cooperation on a number of projects has either been frozen or suspended." The position of the former UK representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Peter Jenkins, drew the attention of experts. He expressed regret that "the Obama administration makes unrealistic promises to congress," when it ensures that "it won't give Tehran the opportunity to create its own nuclear bomb."

The general atmosphere of mistrust between Russia and the West, especially the United States, also has an impact on Middle Eastern issues. Thus, in Conflicts Forum's Weekly Comment for Nov. 14-21, it was noted that Russia sees radical Wahhabism and the Islamic State (IS) "as simply another [Saudi-Western] tool that equally can be 'switched on' to undermine Russia's security." And for Russia and its allies, the next question is: "Does the United States truly want to 'degrade and destroy' [IS]?" In this regard, some Western analysts recall accounts that appeared in the Western media after Prince Bandar Bin Sultan's visit to Russian President Vladimir Putin in July 2013. On that occasion, the prince allegedly suggested that the Russian president "abandon Syria," and "Saudi Arabia would protect the Sochi Olympics from Islamic terrorists."

Citing the Lebanese paper Al-Safir, the British Daily Telegraph even reported that Bandar added, "The Chechen groups that threaten the security of the [Olympic] Games are controlled by us." He also reportedly promised to maintain Russia's base in Tartus, "if the Assad regime is toppled." It was reported that Putin indignantly rejected these and other proposals by Bandar. This is certainly not the language with which one can influence the Russian leader.

Russian suspicions were reflected in Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's speech at the 22nd annual assembly of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy in Moscow on Nov. 22, which contained several major points relating to the Middle East. An important topic in Lavrov's statement, it seems to me, was the notion of "Christianophobia" and the need to protect Christians. He stated that next week he intends to raise this issue at the meeting of OSCE foreign ministers and that, on this subject, most EU politicians "fade into the shadows." He reproached European leaders for being ashamed even to mention "the Christian roots" of European civilization during the discussion of the draft EU Constitution in the recent past. "If you do not respect your own roots, then you are not going to respect the values and traditions

of others." It is evident here that Russia is positioning itself as the protector of Christians in the world within the philosophical framework of "enlightened conservatism," which is based on traditional values. Thus, the principles emanating from the Islamic segment of Russian society are also included in the overall construction of this "field of traditional values."

Another item in the speech concerned cooperation with the Syrian regime in the fight against IS. In my opinion, it is significant in this part of the statement that the Russian foreign minister did not defend Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, but first and foremost stressed that Syria was a sovereign state and a member of the United Nations—from which it hasn't been expelled by anyone. He leveled harsh criticism at the United States' claim that it has the right to use force wherever it may be without the approval of the UN Security Council. In the case of Syria, Lavrov even asked US Secretary of State John Kerry why the United States did not seek authorization from the UN Security Council, to which—in Lavrov's words—Kerry replied, "If we do, we will somehow validate the status of the regime of Bashar Al-Assad."

Lavrov noted that, when it was needed, the United States cooperated perfectly well with the Syrian regime in destroying the stockpiles of chemical weapons, whereas now it does not want to treat the regime as a partner in the fight against terrorism. With regard to the well-known argument against cooperation with the regime, that it attracts terrorists to Syria "like a magnet," Lavrov said that it was a "totally perverse logic," because the Americans were talking to the Taliban, for example. In this regard, Lavrov even wondered whether in Syria the Americans "are actually conducting an operation against IS, or rather an operation to overthrow the regime."

Another significant feature in the minister's appearance was his reflections on the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which he emphasized in unusually strong terms. If one wants to highlight the main elements in this part of Lavrov's speech, it is possible to note, first of all, his call for a speedy resolution of the Palestinian issue through the

creation of a Palestinian state alongside the Jewish one. As he put it, "one cannot keep the Palestinian issue permanently frozen." The minister even chided US diplomacy, which first took nine months to promote a settlement, then extended this timeline, but then engaged with Iran, "leaving aside" Palestine. Second, the lack of resolution to the Palestinian problem was linked to the rise of extremism. Specifically, the minister said that a settlement not having been reached "for almost 70 years is one of the major arguments for those who recruit extremists into their ranks." In this context, one may recall how strongly Israeli politicians reacted when Kerry made a similar argument, despite the United States having for years considered Israel's security as a major foreign policy priority.

Is Lavrov running the risk of causing an equally negative reaction? Of course, Russia cannot be compared to the United States, for which everything that is connected to Israel is a matter of domestic—rather than foreign—policy. Moscow, however, maintains very good relations with Israel, which is home to over a million former Russian and CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States] citizens. Likewise, some foreign policy steps in Moscow are implemented by taking into account Israel's interests. Thus, Iranian and Syrian analysts often criticize Moscow for refusing—in spite of its promises—to supply Tehran and Damascus with S-300 missile systems due to the strong opposition of Israeli leaders.

Will Russia still be ready to cooperate with the United States and its allies in the fight against Islamist terrorism? I am confident it will. At the same time, however, the old Chinese saying springs to mind: "Who can remove the tiger from the room? Only the one who put it there."

Dr. Vitaly Naumkin is a columnist for Al-Monitor. He is the director of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. He is also professor and chair at the faculty of world politics, Moscow State University, and president of the Moscow-based Center for Strategic and Political Studies.

The truth about beheadings

Ibrahim Al-Marashi
aljazeera.com
First published Nov. 24

In the aftermath of the tragic beheading of US aid worker Peter Kassig, various media picked up on an aspect of his death that made his execution different from that of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff. Kassig, who adopted the name Abdul Rahman, had converted to Islam before his capture and execution by the Islamic State (IS).

Al-Jazeera journalist Imran Khan's article, "Not Muslim Enough for IS," highlights the ironic tragedy of Kassig's death: "He is a Muslim who died in the hands of Muslims." This statement alludes to a fact, not an anomaly, where IS's greatest number of victims have been Muslims. That IS killed a Muslim convert is not extraordinary, but rather part of a routine practice of beheading Muslims that has emerged over the last decade.

Second, Kassig's death fits into an ongoing media narrative which explains IS's televised beheadings, usually carried out by European Muslims, as a means to attract new recruits, particularly from the West. Televised beheadings, which have been explained away as a means of intimidation of enemies and a marketing tool to gather new recruits, has a much more

complex history and rationale.

Routinized campaign

Beheadings in the name of Islam conducted by non-state actors can be traced to the war in Chechnya, with the decapitations of captured Russian soldiers. The beheading of the kidnapped Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002, was ordered by Al-Qaeda. However, the first systematic, routinized campaign of beheadings of both Muslims and non-Muslims began after the 2003 Iraq war, by a group that was initially separate from Al-Qaeda.

The Jordanian, Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi was the founder of the group during the Iraqi insurgency that would evolve into IS, and their most notorious beheading was of the American Nick Berg in 2004, dressing him in an orange jump suit to mimic the prisoners of Guantanamo Bay. His death occurred however, within a broader campaign whose victims were primarily Muslims, whether it was captured Iraqi soldiers or Turkish truck drivers in Iraq, such as Ramadan Elbu.

Once Zarqawi's group decided to merge with Al-Qaeda, becoming Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Al-Qaeda's central leadership pressured Zarqawi to end the beheadings, which often targeted Muslims, and refocus their attention on attacking US forces, representing the first tension between the two groups before their formal break in 2013.

During these years, Zarqawi's group did not have the pretensions of statehood. It was a non-state actor that used beheadings as a way of forcing nations deploying troops to Iraq, such as the Philippines, to withdraw; prevent private companies from investing in Iraq's reconstruction; and intimidate Iraqis from joining the armed forces. To achieve the last two goals it primarily targeted Muslims participating in these endeavors.

Progenitor of IS beheadings

IS still uses beheadings, but for different aims. When the progenitor of IS conducted beheadings after the Iraq War, it was ostensibly to force foreign armies off Iraqi soil. By 2014, not only had all foreign armies left Iraq, but IS controlled a large swath of territory. Beheadings in 2014 of captured US and British hostages served as a means of a weak state, the "Islamic State," to retaliate against the US and UK air campaign against IS.

IS is aware that western media outlets will not show the actual video of the moment of beheading, nevertheless the act of beheading does generate a storm of debate in the media. The gruesome method of beheading, as opposed to the firing squads they used to kill a large number of captured Iraqi soldiers, allows IS to cause revulsion among political leaders.

With an act of a sword, they manage to

force both Obama and Cameron to react. The two men, who control the world's most advanced militaries, find themselves at the mercy of the sword. Both displayed physical pain and grief when they condemned the way their nationals died.

One media narrative examines beheadings and "terror marketing," suggesting that IS's rationale behind these videos is to attract new recruits. An example of the "terror marketing" rationale can be found in the following statement by Paul Cruickshank, a terrorism analyst for CNN: "Some of these men almost have a pornographic attraction to these violent scenes, these violent beheading videos. It really sort of energizes them."

Since the beheading campaign began in 2004 in Iraq, there have been a host of "snuff" websites, such as Ogrish.com and Liveleak, which upload beheading videos, demonstrating that "pornographic attraction" exists in the general public, though there has not been a wave of Ogrish or Liveleak viewers joining IS. One cannot possibly know if these videos "energize" an IS recruit as Cruickshank suggests. Most likely a beheading video will have little effect on the alienation a potential IS recruit perceives in his or her home society and is most likely energized by IS's actual success in establishing the "Islamic State," rather than these videos.

Continued on the back page

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Katherine Abu Hadal to the Yemen Times: 'Yemeni-American families maintain a strong sense of food identity'

In 2009 Katherine Abu Hadal had her first taste of Yemeni food at a nondescript restaurant in Sana'a. She doesn't remember much other than the malawah bread—a flat bread typically made with glee—and the dabeekh—a stewed vegetable dish—which she thought were delicious. She was hooked on the cuisine.

Now the 27-year-old American shows others from her home in the US how to make such delicacies via her website and YouTube channel—Sheba Yemeni Foods—dedicated to Yemeni cooking.

Abu Hadal originally came to Yemen to learn Arabic and ended up spending two and a half years in the country after meeting her husband here. It gave her time to practice her language skills and learn the secrets of the Yemeni kitchen from those around her before relocating back to the US.

Until today Abu Hadal says she is trying to perfect both—her spoken Arabic and her kitchen creations. Perhaps it's her passion that earned Abu Hadal a speaker spot at Yemen's third annual TEDxSanaa held earlier this month. She spoke to the audience about how she took her fascination with Yemen's culinary traditions and transformed them into an impressive online presence.

In the two years since she began the website and started posting her cooking videos, her YouTube channel has grown to include over 50,000 subscribers and her videos have received over 8,000,000 total views.

Abu Hadal spoke to the Yemen Times about finding a niche like Yemeni cooking and how she has generated a global audience for her cooking tutorials and in the process made a little money off of it.



Katherine Abu Hadal earned a part-time income by posting cooking videos of Yemeni dishes online.

Your Yemeni journey started in 2009 and you say it began with the language and the food. Is there a connection between the two?

I originally came to Yemen to study Arabic but at the time I didn't really know anything about Yemeni food. I didn't have a plan to learn Yemeni cooking or anything. But I suppose that in a small way, the two are related. Yes, because studying Arabic led me to meet my husband, a Yemeni, and he of course was the one who inspired or motivated me to learn about Yemeni food. I learned a lot of dishes from spending time with his mother, sisters, and aunts.

So the practice of passing down recipes and techniques in the kitchen through oral traditions is how you learned?

Yes, a lot of the dishes I learned from spending time with family and then just seeing how different dishes are made. I don't really consider myself an expert on Yemeni food. But the interesting thing about being a learner or a novice is that it almost makes it easier to teach other people how to do something, and I think this is because you have to go through the steps in your mind as you are doing something. But when you are an

dishes in particular do you find to be most unique?

I find Yemeni food to be very unique and special. Usually when I try to explain to people, non-Yemenis, about Yemeni food, they assume it will be like Arab food from Al-Sham—hummus, tabbouleh, shawarma, etc. I try to explain to them what Yemeni food is like—a syncretism between Arab, Indian and East African cuisines. But not quite, it's different. I end up just saying, 'Well you just need to try it and find out for yourself!' Some of the dishes which are especially unique are saltah, of course. Also, shafout, mandi, batat hamar, and raisin juice.

You have since moved back to the states since your time in Yemen. Is it a challenge to bring Yemeni cooking traditions with you to the US?

Yes, there are things which have been challenging. First of all it is not always easy to get the proper ingredients. There are many items which are not available in the local supermarket. So what I have done is research online to have them shipped to the house or come up with creative substitutions which will work in whatever dish I am making. That

goes for the ingredients as well as the tools. For example, in Yemen they use large round tannour bread ovens which are common in the home, but in the US we don't have that so the solution I came up with is to use a bread stone to cook the bread. It works okay, although no dish is ever quite the same as when it is prepared in its home country.

Have you met any Yemeni communities in your area in the states? Is there a strong sense of food identity within those communities?

We are in touch with the Yemeni

community in New York and they are a sizable immigrant community within the larger Arab community. There are Yemeni restaurants. For those Yemeni-American families I would say they do maintain a strong sense of food identity. I can't speak for anyone else, but I would imagine that they feel as I do, which is that when I was in Yemen I didn't really think too much of Yemeni food because it is very ubiquitous. But after coming back and living for a while abroad then I started to miss certain things and then you realize its importance.

Was your Tedx talk the first time you had been back to Ye-

men since 2011? What differences did you see?

Yes, that's right. There are a lot of differences and I wonder if it's Yemen that has changed or if it's me that has changed. I can't really figure it out. When I first traveled to Yemen, I didn't have any reservations at all about coming here and I didn't find any outward displays of hostilities to Americans or foreigners in general. Now, to be honest, I am not too willing to tell people that I am American, not with the drone strikes going on for several years now and the situation the way it is. But I am an optimist, and I would still invest in Yemen if I had the opportunity. One of the things I noticed is that Sana'a is sprawling, new buildings are popping up all over the place. And this of course is because the population is growing at an astounding rate. People should use that population growth to their advantage.

What do you mean by use population growth to their advantage?

One of the things which I had noticed when I came back was how the city had expanded in just a couple of years and that it seems like there is construction going on all over the place. Naturally, I think it is a sign of the rapidly expanding population, something which is well-documented and often discussed. If I were an enterprising person in Yemen, one thing I would think about is what kind of services, housing, and education this growing population will need in 10-15 years, and what kinds of projects can I start today that will benefit myself, as well as the larger community. And it's probably the last thing on most people's mind right now, but that quote by Warren Buffet saying, 'Be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful,' applies in Yemen right now, I believe.

You have both a website and YouTube channel dedicated to Yemeni cooking—what came first? And why?

Actually, I started them both at nearly the same time. However, the YouTube channel has become much more popular than the blog. It might be because I do the videos in Arabic as well as English or because the YouTube platform allows me to get more followers. I'm not sure.

How did posting the YouTube videos in Arabic in addition to English change things? What new audiences did you reach and what was their response?

I was getting a lot of requests to make the videos in Arabic and so that's what I did. Looking back, I remember feeling like it was incredibly difficult in the beginning. At that point I could speak Arabic fluently, but I was very self-conscious about making mistakes and recording them on video for other people. The response was overwhelmingly positive but there were some people in the beginning that thought I was an uneducated Yemeni that didn't know

how to speak Fusha. They were very insulted by my accent and dialect I guess. But I am glad that I started making videos in Arabic because today the majority of the followers are Arabic speakers!

You have 55,000 subscribers. How did that happen? Did it seem like this happened overnight?

It seemed like it took forever to get to 1,000. Like maybe a year. But once I hit a thousand, 10,000 was quicker, and then it just kept growing.

Since you are back in the states, how do you continue to come up with new Yemeni recipes?

Well, it is a challenge. But the thing about Yemeni cuisine is that there is a lot of regional variety. And every region has its own specific dishes. If anything, I am limited more by not knowing how to cook certain dishes than from not having dishes

to choose from. I have a long list of requests from subscribers of different dishes which they have requested so I usually take inspiration from them. It is actually a dream of mine to travel around to different parts of Yemen and learn all of the dishes of that particular region.

Have you turned this into a way to make money or is it just a hobby?

So I have been lucky in the sense that my videos have attracted a sizable following, enough of a following to make a part-time income.

How have online tools like YouTube helped generate global interest in things as niche as Yemeni cooking?

That is an interesting question. I have to admit that when I started the channel I did not think that there would ever be such a large audience for Yemeni food. I suspect that people might follow the channel for reasons in addition to the recipes themselves. For example, they might feel connected to my story and so they would like to see what happens to me, what my life is like, etc.



expert at something, it's just so automatic that you don't think about how to do it at all.

What do you find so unique about Yemeni food? Which

4U

To learn more about the Yemeni food Abu Hadal posts on her website, visit shebayemenifood.com and for videos check out her YouTube channel called Sheba Yemeni Food.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

The truth about beheadings

Furthermore, does IS's leadership even see these videos as a valuable recruiting tool? Mexican drug cartels also conduct beheadings in areas they control. For both organizations, beheadings serve as a means of maintaining domestic hegemony. It forces the population under their control to cower in fear and never challenge the power of the cartel, one of which happens to survive by charging for drugs, while the other charges for oil.

Vengeance justice

On another level, IS contends to have formed an "Islamic State," and beheadings serve the same purpose as capital punishment in any state. They communicate both vengeance justice to its citizens, and at the same time instill fear into those citizens, which even in-

clude the most diehard IS foot soldier.

Beheadings are IS's public executions, just as the guillotine, hanging, or lethal injection, either in the town square or on TV, demonstrate the price of violating what the state deems as law and order. They serve as an internal policing mechanism, communicating to every member of IS the punishment for any "acts of treason," or couched in IS's terms, "apostasy."

IS's execution of Kassig, a Muslim convert, was part of a decade-long process within a Muslim civil war, centered on an Islamic State, but with ramifications beyond its borders. Kassig's execution is indicative of a re-articulation of identity within the Western world.

Kassig was an American convert apparently killed by two French

converts. In a tragic irony, Kassig shared something in common with his kidnappers. All three probably left their homes in the US and France respectively to seek out a cause greater than their lives and identities in their Western settings. Seeking that cause brought them to the tragic episode that unfolded last week.

Finally, the focus on the religion of the victim, hides something more tragic about Kassig's death. He was simply a human being volunteering as an aid worker to help a lot of Muslims and Christians displaced by the conflict in Syria. The focus on Kassig's conversion was irrelevant.

Similar questions were raised about whether David Haines and Alan Henning might have converted to Islam before their deaths.

These two British aid workers in Syria, beheaded by IS, were simply humans who left their comfortable existence in the UK to help other humans dispossessed in Syria. Despite their deaths, the families of all three beheading victims publicly stated that people should not blame Islam for their loss. Both the victims and their families showed compassion and forgiveness in their lifetime. These three men and their families were more Muslim than many Muslims in this world today.

Ibrahim Al-Marashi is an assistant professor at the Department of History, California State University, San Marcos. He is the co-author of "Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Facing contractors, greed, and a lack of rights

If a labor dispute is complicated and cannot be solved amicably, it is forwarded to the ministry's arbitration committee which is specialized in labor disputes.

Just like other departments and sections of the ministry, its arbitration committee has limited resources at hand, with its offices lacking

the most basic stationery and furniture.

Judge Abdulsalam Al-Samawi, the head of the ministry's arbitration committee, explained, "In Sana'a there is only one arbitration committee to look into labor disputes. It is comprised of the mandated head of the committee and two members representing the worker and the employer respectively. This committee looks into dozens of labor cases daily." The committee's employees are being paid up to YR30,000 (less than \$150) a month.

Overall, there are only six arbitration committees in Yemen, located in Sana'a, Hodeida, Taiz, Aden, Hadramout, and Ibb governorates. Given the shortage of committees, the team in Sana'a is frequently forced to accept cases from other governorates such as Hajja, Amran, Sa'ada, Al-Jawf, Marib, Al-Mahweet, and Dhamar.

"We do not have enough manpower or financial resources," complained Al-Samawi. "We do not receive what a normal judge would get paid. Sometimes we hold

80 sessions in a single day. We have to work outside official work hours, sometimes we work at home. We do not even take our normal vacation days, because if we do, cases will pile up on us."

The committee receives an annual budget of YR2,000,000 (\$9,300) by the government. Al-Samawi, who has been working in labor arbitration committees since 1970, considers this amount to be far too small. In his view, labor cases are increasing in complexity each year due to the massive urbanization processes the country is undergoing.

A day spent with the arbitration committee, and interviews with several workers revealed that most are satisfied with the committee's ruling which they deem to be fair.

Al-Samawi confirmed, "It is rare that we receive complaints. We have never seen any complaints from unregistered workers. All the complaints we received came from construction workers who worked with companies and institutions, holding work contracts."

Some more well-off construction workers prefer a private lawyer

over the one paid and offered by the committee. Fuad Al-Dubai is one of these private lawyers, who has been working with the labor arbitration committee for the past 15 years.

"There are some shortcomings in this committee, such as looking into more than one case at the same time and a lack of punctuality on the part of the secretaries," he says. "Generally speaking, however, the committee does a good job considering they have inherited a heavy load of cases from the previous committees."

Although unregistered workers are bereft of many basic labor laws, they nevertheless stand good chances in the arbitration committees. Many make reference to article 30 of the Yemeni labor law, which stipulates, "In the absence of a written contract, it shall be up to the worker to establish his rights by any admissible evidence."

Lawyer Ameen Hajar explained, "If the injured worker did not have a contract he can use those who brought him to the hospital as witnesses. He could also use his medical records as evidence and file a complaint against his employer."

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