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Explosion targets Houthi gathering in Ibb

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, Dec. 31—Up to 33 people were killed on Wednesday in a suspected suicide bombing that targeted a Houthi gathering in Ibb city.

Ibrahim Al-Badani, an Ibb-based journalist, said the attack took place close to noon at Ibb's Cultural Center, located on Taiz Street, near the Al-Saeed Educational Compound.

"The Houthis were organizing an event to celebrate the birthday of Prophet Mohammad when a suicide bomber entered the hall and blew himself up," said Al-Badani, who visited the scene of the explosion. He said no journalists were allowed to enter the hall or take photos after the attack.

Mohammad Ahmad Ali, an eyewitness and resident in Ibb city who lost one of his relatives in the explosion, says the attack caught everyone off guard. "We don't know how the suicide bomber entered the hall in spite of the Ansar Allah [Houthi] guards positioned at its entrance gate," he said.

Brigadier Mohammed Abduljalil Al-Shami, the police chief of Ibb city, told the state-run Saba news agency that the explosion left three people dead and 30



An Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) source told the Yemen Times that AQAP did carry out the attack.

others wounded. However, Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, told the Yemen Times on Wednesday afternoon that there were 33 confirmed deaths.

The governor of Ibb province, controlled by the Shia Muslim Houthi group that dominates large parts of Yemen, was reported to be among a number of people wounded in the attack, local residents said.

A prominent security source in Ibb, who wished to remain anonymous, said police are still investigating the circumstances surrounding the explosion.

"The popular committees of the Houthis were organizing this event in coordination with the local council to celebrate Prophet Mohammed's birthday. Preparations for the event were planned to include speeches from prominent Houthi officials and the governor," the security source added.

Salah Al-Ezi, a prominent Houthi figure, wrote on his Facebook page on Wednesday that the suicide bomber was disguised in women's clothing when he entered the hall. He said the victims included a number of children who had come to prepare the prophet's birthday.

The security source and Al-

Qahoom both accused Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) for carrying out the attack. Their allegations were confirmed by an AQAP member in Ibb who spoke to the Yemen Times anonymously.

"A courageous member of Al-Qaeda was able to enter the hall where the Shia Houthis were gathering and detonated himself among them, killing many," said the source.



Public Funds Court employees on strike

■ Ali Aboluhom

SANA'A, Dec. 31—Over 40 judges and employees of the Public Funds Court in the capital Sana'a went on strike Wednesday over an armed attack on Judge Belal Al-Ruaini.

"We decided to stage this strike in a bid to recover respect for judges and the rulings reached in their courts," said court manager, Mohammad Al-Kiribi, on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Al-Ruaini was heading a team sent to the Faj Attan neighborhood, in the southeast of Sana'a city. The group was in the area to delineate a border between two litigants who had been to the Public Funds Court in a dispute over land ownership.

Al-Ruaini told the Yemen Times

he was sent with a team of legal experts to enforce the court's verdict in the case. They arrived to find a group of armed men claiming to belong to the Houthis and refusing to acknowledge the court ruling.

"While we were arguing, about six pick-up trucks arrived carrying more armed men, who opened fire over our heads and threatened to kill us if we remained," Al-Ruaini told the Yemen Times.

When the attackers pointed their guns directly at the judge and his team, they agreed to leave.

Following the incident the court issued a statement that was distributed to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), the public prosecutor, the minister of justice, the head of the judiciary club,

and the minister of interior. The statement announces a strike and the suspension of all its sessions "until the attackers are arrested and the judges' esteem restored."

Al-Kiribi said the ruling reached by the court was supposed to be binding, but, "it has become evident that judges and the judiciary have been losing their respect since the country was plunged into chaos over three years ago."

"We will not go back to work until we see a positive response by the SJC, the highest judicial institution in the country," he said.

Al-Kiribi sent a letter to the SJC on Tuesday stating that the strike will continue until the attackers are apprehended and made to apologize to judge Al-Ruaini and his team.

"We will continue suspending our work until we receive a satisfactory response from the SJC, otherwise we will be on strike until further notice," he added.

Mohammed Saleh Al-Meklati, the deputy of legal affairs at the SJC, confirmed that a letter of complaint had been received from the court and that "an appropriate response will be made as soon as possible".

Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, told the Yemen Times that the armed group claiming a connection to the Houthis were "liars."

"Ansar Allah [Houthi] popular committees do not violate laws and rulings. They must have been an armed group who tried to defame Ansar Allah by such wrongdoings," he added.

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Houthis take over Raima governorate

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 31—Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, took over Raima governorate Monday night after violent clashes with armed tribesmen in the provincial capital of Al-Jabin.

According to Abdullah Al-Nimrani, an armed tribesman who took part in the fighting, the clashes on Monday left two dead. "Houthis took over all government buildings and facilities in the capital," he said. "This includes the federal building, and the headquarters of the ministries of water, electricity and education." Qaid Al-Saeed, a freelance journalist based in Al-Jabin, claimed that he witnessed Houthis erecting checkpoints both inside and at the entrances of the city. "Sources have told me that Houthis have done the same in other cities and districts throughout the governorate," he said.

The Yemen Times spoke with Hassan Al-Amari, deputy governor of Raima governorate, who claimed that Raima's governor, Ali Salam Al-Khadami, held a meeting with Houthi leaders last week, in which it was agreed that security forces would not confront the Houthis if they were to enter the governorate. "We had information that Ansar Allah was planning to establish popular committees in Raima," he said. "It was better that we avoid

a confrontation." He added that despite the clashes, government offices were still open and operating, however that armed Houthi popular committee members had stationed themselves outside the federal building in the city's center. Al-Nimrani holds a different view, saying that tribes in the area refused to be ruled directly by the Houthis. Although they have enjoyed a warm relationship with the Houthis for many decades, "We don't want anyone, whether Houthis or anyone else, from outside of Raima ruling over us," he said. "It's better that we control the governorate and maintain security. The locals know us and we know them." He claimed roughly 250 armed Houthis, coming from the governorates of Dhamar and Sa'ada, took part in the fighting on Monday, which lasted for nearly 5 hours. According to Al-Nimrani, tribesmen were left to fight the Houthis on their own and did not receive any help from local security forces. "We informed our contacts in the Governor's Office that the Houthis were coming, but they did nothing," he said.

Abdullah Al-Hajabi, a soldier with the Raima Security Department within the Ministry of Interior, witnessed the fighting in the city himself, however claims that neither he nor any of his colleagues took part or attempted to prevent the Houthis from entering the city. "The Houthis

have set up checkpoints around the city and we're coordinating with them," he said.

Abu Yahya Al-Dailami, the 'general supervisor' and Houthi representative in Raima governorate, told the Yemen Times that although Ansar Allah has traditionally had a positive relationship with the tribes in the region, the Houthis had not yet officially appointed a popular committee representative in the governorate.

When asked why Houthis chose to enter the governorate at this particular time, he responded that rampant corruption in the governorate had gotten out of control. As a result, Al-Dailami said, a major gas distribution station, located in the Kefa region on the outskirts of Al-Jabin, had recently ceased to operate on a regular basis. "We came to monitor government facilities and stamp out corruption," he said.

Qaid Al-Saeed agreed that the station had ceased to operate for a period of two months following the Houthi takeover of Sana'a on Sept. 21 and an attack by Al-Hamdani tribesmen, then allied with the Houthis. "The station is owned by Mohsen Ali Mohsen, the son of Ali Mohsen Ahmar," he said. Ali Mohsen Ahmar is the former major general of the now dissolved First Armored Division that fought

six separate wars against the Houthis between 2004 and 2010. "Now they're saying the plant's administration is corrupt."

According to Al-Nimrani, "The Houthis are using corruption as a pretext to take over all of northern Yemen. The truth is they're just greedy."

Abdu Muhammad Al-Wasahali, a Houthi fighter from Dhamar who arrived in Raima on Monday to take part in the fighting, said that they had received orders from Ansar Allah's high leadership, ordering them to seize all government facilities in Raima and maintain security in the streets. Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi member, confirmed Al-Wasahali's statement.

Muhammad Al-Qadi, director of Public Relations at the Ministry of Interior, confirmed to the Yemen Times that Raima governorate fell to the Houthis on Monday, as have other governorates before it. He added that government and security forces in the governorate had been cooperating with Ansar Allah in the weeks leading up to their arrival on Monday. "It was an example of the strong cooperating with the weak," he said. "We had no choice."

Al-Qadi claimed that despite the Houthi presence in the city, security forces would continue to man checkpoints and perform their normal job functions.

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Government shuts down five bakeries in Aden



Since Dec. 8, 2014, the Ministry of Industry and Trade has placed a cap on the price of a kilo of bread at YR210 (\$0.97).

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, Dec. 30—The Industry and Trade Office in Aden shut down five bakeries in the governorate's Sheikh Othman and Al-Muala districts on Tuesday for violating pricing regulations.

"These bakeries were caught in violation of the weight standards. They make thin loaves and sell them to customers without adhering to regulations," explained Abdullaof Mohammed, a member of Sheikh Othman's local council. "We've issued directives to all the bakeries, specifying the price and weight of all bread they sell," he added.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade placed a nationwide price limit of YR240 (\$1.10) per kilo of bread, in response to rising domestic fuel prices that began in August 2014. This was reduced to YR210 (\$0.97) on Dec. 8, 2014 after a drop in international fuel prices. However due to the transport costs of flour, price limits vary regionally. Yet, none exceed YR210 per kilo.

In Aden, the price limit for a kilo of bread was set at YR190 (\$0.88) by former governor Abdulkarim Shaef in October.

In response to these restrictions, some bakeries have lowered the weight of the loaves they sell, said Fadhl Swaileh, manager of the Supplies Monitoring Department at the governorate's Trade and Industry Office. "For example, instead of baking 19 loaves from one kilo of dough, they make 26 loaves."

Jamal Al-Jadani, a baker in Al-Rafaiin Bakery in Had-da Street in the capital, says there is no excuse to cheat customers, regardless of what the regulations might be. "In the end, the bakeries lose when they cheat their customers. They lose their reputation and their clients," he said.

Tahir Naji, the manager of the Trade and Industry Office in Al-Muala, told the Yemen Times that the bakeries had to be closed because of their "dishonest practices."

"One sack of flour weighing 50 kilos makes 1300 loaves of bread. These bakeries are making 1700 or 1800 loaves. They're cheating, while hon-

est citizens become the victims," said Naji.

According to Swaileh, members of the trade and industry office carry out surprise inspections at bakeries to determine whether or not they are adhering to regulations. "One kilo of dough makes 19 loaves, and 19 loaves are sold for YR190," explained Swaileh. "We simply take 19 loaves and weigh them—if they weigh one kilo, regulations are being met."

After carrying out inspections, members of the Trade and Industry Office in Aden referred the five bakeries to the prosecutor's office in Aden. "The prosecutor's office closed the bakeries on Tuesday after being notified," said Naji.

"Some bakery owners have no conscience. Their only concern is making a profit, even if it's at the expense of ordinary citizens. I'm really pleased with the response from the authorities," said Saleh Taher, a local resident and a government employee in the electricity sector in Al-Muala.

It is not just a matter of principle, says Taher, as unscrupulous bakeries create a financial burden for families during difficult economic times. "Instead of eating four loaves, I eat two, and instead of buying loaves at YR100, I pay YR200," said Taher.

According to a law passed in 2000, bakeries are liable to be fined YR10,000 (\$46) for underselling customers.

"If they want to reopen their bakeries, they have to pay a fine, and sign a written commitment that they won't repeat the offence," says Naji. "If they do it again, the bakery will lose its license."

Outside of monitoring bread-prices at bakeries, the Trade and Industry Office is tasked with monitoring a wide-range of violations related to price-controlled goods and quality of products. In January and October, the Trade and Industry Office cited 162 violations in Aden governorate, according to Swaileh. Violations included altering the weight of bread loaves, raising the price of gas cylinders, and selling expired goods.

Fighting renews in Khubza village

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 30—Nearly 50 people were killed and an unknown number injured on Tuesday and Wednesday in clashes between Houthis and armed tribesmen in the village of Khubza in Yemen's Al-Baida governorate. The fighting followed a failed reconciliation attempt agreed upon on Dec. 27.

Abdullah Al-Khubzi, a tribal leader in Khubza who took part in the clashes, told the Yemen Times that those who fought the Houthis were members of the Al-Khubzi tribe and former residents of the village who fled after violence broke out in Rada'a district in November.

"The tribesmen launched an attack on the Houthis located inside the village at 10p.m. on Tuesday," he said.

"House to house fighting continued until 6a.m. the next day. The Houthis called in reinforcements from Rada'a city, at which point we withdrew."

He claimed that more than 40 Houthis had been killed, while the number of tribesmen killed was no more than ten.

Al-Khubzi claimed the clashes came as a result of a failed attempt at reconciliation between the Houthis and former village residents.

"On Saturday, 30 sheikhs representing various tribes in Rada'a, including Al-Khubzi, along with Houthi emissaries, met in the home

of Sheikh Ahmad Abdul Wali Al-Dhabab, commander of the 139th Infantry Brigade in Rada'a city," he said. "It was agreed that the Houthis would handover Khubza to Khubzi tribesmen on Tuesday and allow the 139th brigade to protect the village."

The handover ceremony was supposed to have taken place in the presence of the Houthis and tribal leaders at Al-Dhabab's home Tuesday afternoon. However, according to Al-Khubzi, the Houthis never showed up.

Khubza village fell to the Houthis in mid November after a week of fighting with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and allied tribes, in which dozens were killed and hundreds internally displaced.

Walid Al-Dailami, a Houthi leader based in Rada'a city confirmed that armed tribesmen attacked the Houthis in Khubza village on Tuesday night, and that dozens had been killed on both sides, although he would not give specific numbers.

He claimed the Houthis did not attend the meeting at Al-Dhabab's home on Tuesday because they were busy preparing for celebrations to be held for the Prophet Mohammad's birthday on Jan. 3. According to Al-Dailami, the Houthis would hand over Khubza to the 139th Infantry Brigade after "purging" the village of AQAP supporters.

Ali Maqsha, director of the Rada'a



Fighting broke out in Al-Baida's Khubza village following a failed reconciliation agreement on Dec. 27.

Security Department within the Ministry of Interior, claimed that the number put forth by Al-Khubzi was "closer to reality" than the Houthis' claims. "The Houthis control Rada'a district, when we [security forces] hear of clashes taking place, we rarely intervene," he said. "That being said, they often lie about the number of casualties they've suffered."

Abdullah Al-Khubzi, a resident still living in Khubza, claimed that no more than ten families were left in the village. Even in the event that the town was handed over to the 139th brigade, he was pessimistic that this

would lead to the calming of tensions.

"Al-Dhabab is a Houthi sympathizer and everyone knows it," he said. "Houthis will be back pressuring us again."

Maqsha also claimed in an interview with the Yemen Times that Al-Dhabab holds pro-Houthi sympathies.

Al-Dhabab was appointed head of the 139th Infantry Brigade based in Rada'a on Dec. 8, as part of a series of military appointments made by President Hadi via Presidential Decree 56.

Prominent Salafi cleric released in Sana'a

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Dec. 31—Prominent Salafi cleric Mohammad Al-Wadei was reportedly released on Tuesday after having been kidnapped on Saturday evening in Sana'a.

Al-Wadei is the chairman of the Al-Sadeeq Charitable Foundation and an Imam at the Omar Ibn Al-Khabat Mosque, both located in Al-Hasabah.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a source from the Al-Sadeeq Foundation told the Yemen Times that, "Houthis released Al-Wadei on Tuesday after meeting with a leading

Salafi figure who has good relation with them." The source refused to reveal the name of the Salafi figure in question.

No details of the agreement are known, but the source was confident Al-Wadei would resume his work with the Al-Sadeeq Foundation within a matter of days.

Al-Wadei was kidnapped on Saturday on Mazda Street near Sana'a's Al-Hasabah neighborhood while driving home from the Al-Sadeeq Foundation's headquarters with his brother. As of Wednesday afternoon, no group has claimed responsibility

for the kidnapping and it remains unknown where Al-Wadei was being held. While a number of Salafi figures accused the Houthis of having orchestrated the kidnapping, leading Houthi members have refuted the allegations.

Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office, said on Wednesday that he had not heard about the release of Al-Wadei. His colleague, Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, said he had only heard about the kidnapping through media outlets, but was also unaware of his release.

Al-Wadei is also a member of the Yemeni Ulama Association, a promi-

nent organization of Salafi and Islahi scholars chaired by well-known cleric Abdulmajeed Al-Zindani. The association was vocal in its opposition to the Houthis' takeover of Sana'a on Sept. 21, and has since remained critical of the movement.

Murad Al-Qadasi, chairman of the Salafi Peace and Development Party, and a fellow member of the Yemeni Ulama Association, stated the Houthis had released Al-Wadei. He refused to reveal further details, saying, "There is an agreement between Houthis and leading Salafi figures not to talk about this issue."

One killed and millions stolen in double bank robbery in Hadramout

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 30—One security guard was killed and another injured in two bank robberies launched simultaneously in the city of Al-Shehr in Hadramout governorate at 10a.m. on Tuesday. According to security sources, the assailants stole a total of YR52m (\$241,500) from the Cooperative and Agriculture Credit Bank (CAC) and Al-Tadamon Islamic Bank (TIB) branches, both located in the city center.

A statement published on the Ministry of Defense's website claimed that YR32mn (\$148,000) had been stolen from CAC, while YR20m (\$93,000) was stolen from TIB. According to Mohammad Gharma, director of the Public Relations and Guidance Department at the Ministry of Interior, three vehicles each carrying around eight assailants armed with AK-47s, RPGs and Dushkas attacked both banks simultaneously.

Two cars arrived at the CAC bank, with the assailants killing one of the bank's guards, he said, while the second attacked TIB, shooting and injuring one of its guards. Although the identity of the attackers was yet to be determined on Wednesday afternoon, Gharma said the attack bore the markings of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). "Investigations into the identity and location

of the attackers are ongoing and security personnel are on high alert," he added.

M o h a m m a d Ahmad Bahadad, a resident of Al-Shehr city, claimed that in recent weeks locals have repeatedly seen and witnessed AQAP patrols driving through the city, shouting jihadist slogans. "They've been mobilizing for quite some time," he said. "It was most likely AQAP."

As of Wednesday afternoon, AQAP has not claimed responsibility for the two bank robberies.

Hadramout governorate has long been known for having a strong AQAP presence. In August 2014, videos surfaced online of AQAP fighters taking over the town of Al-Qatan in the eastern portion of the governorate. Videos also showed AQAP members raiding and stealing money from a local bank in Al-Qatan, which the group claimed would be redistribut-



AQAP members are suspected of having carried out the robberies, amid conflicting reports about how much money was taken in the raids.

ed amongst the local population.

The Yemen Times made repeated calls to representatives from both banks, but received no response. According to Mohammad Al-Qahoom, Editor in Chief of the Saddah news agency, which operates out of and focuses almost exclusively on news from Al-Shehr district, both banks

remain closed and have not been re-opened. Al-Qahoom claimed the amount of money reported stolen by the Ministry of Defense was an understatement. "I arrived at the scene just after the attacks took place, and was told by employees that the true amount stolen was much higher," he said.

Sana'a University says: Enough!

Student protests against armed security forces date back to 2009

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

Sana'a University students hoping that the withdrawal of armed Houthis from campus spelled the end of arms on campus have been sorely disappointed and have resumed protests—this time against state security forces.

Students have been protesting the presence of armed men on campus since March 2009, when a dispute between a student and a guard left Saleh Hatim, the student, dead. The quarrel started when the guard would not let the student drive his vehicle into campus, and escalated. Students renewed their protests in 2011, when soldiers of the now-dissolved First Armored Division took control of the university during Yemen's Arab Spring uprising and turned it into military barracks.

A week following the Sept. 21 takeover of the capital by Houthis, an armed Shia-Zaydi group traditionally based in Yemen's northern governorate of Sa'ada, the campus of Sana'a University was yet again patrolled by armed men. And again students took to the streets on and around campus to protest the armed Houthi presence there.

Grievances against the Houthis

ranged from their mere presence—on principle, students don't want any arms on campus—to accusations against the movement of harassment.

"Houthis at the campus told me to put on an abaya [a long, black gown worn over clothing] like my female colleagues. I told them it was none of their business, and they then threatened to strip me naked if I did not comply," said Rasha Abdulkafi, a university student who wears a long coat that reaches the top of her knees.

These days, students arriving at campus are met with armed security personnel from the Public Security Forces, which fall under the orders of the Ministry of Interior.

The Houthis agreed to withdraw from campus on Dec. 10, following weekly protests by students. In a theatric move, they laid all their guns on the ground that day, signaling their compliance with the students' demands.

"We were at the university to protect students against any attacks and also to make sure the educational process runs smoothly," Ali Abdulrahman, a member of the Houthi popular committee that was tasked to guard the gates of the university, told the Yemen Times in December. "However, we decided

to leave after several protests by the students. The university's presidency should take responsibility [for security]."

The students demanded that the university hire private, unarmed security to protect the campus.

On Dec. 10, the same day the Houthis agreed to withdraw, Sana'a University signed a contract with Stallion Security and Safety Services Ltd, a private security firm, according to Khaled Obadi, the operations officer at Stallion. Guards from the private company were present on campus the following day.

Students rejoiced at the victory, but it was short-lived.

"We thought our demands for non-government affiliated security was finally met and that we could move on to press for other demands, including urgent elections for the Sana'a University Students Union," said Mohammed Abdulmoghni, a member of the coordinating committee of the Student Movement to Reject the Presence of Armed Men.

Three days after private, unarmed guards were placed at the five entrances to Sana'a University, they were removed from their posts and placed inside the campus. Armed security forces from the Public Security Force now guard



Students say they pass through so many official and unofficial checkpoints throughout the city, they do not want to see any inside the university campus.

the gates to the campus.

"We want neither armed militias nor soldiers at campus. We have been saying this since 2009, but nothing has happened," Abdulmoghni added.

The decision to relocate private guards from the gates to inside campus came after Sana'a University President Abdulhakeem Al-Sharjabi met with Sana'a Security Chief Abdulrazaq Al-Ashwal on Dec. 11, a day after the university signed a contract with Stallion. According to the state-run Saba News Agency, the outcome of the meeting was that security personnel would now guard the entrances to the university.

"The security apparatus has a responsibility to protect students, and this action falls under that mandate," Saba reported Al-Ashwal as saying.

The Yemen Times asked the Stallion representative, Obadi, why the university initially agreed to place private guards at the entrances, only to withdraw them and place them inside.

Obadi said that main entrances of government institutions should be guarded by soldiers or police,

not private security. He declined to answer further questions about the initial agreement.

The Yemen Times made repeated attempts to contact the office of the university's president. Phone calls were not returned. A Yemen Times reporter went to the office, but the clerical staff were on strike demanding higher salaries.

The sheikh and local community leader of the neighborhood, Lutf Abdulaziz Awad, speculated that the guards were removed because students are more likely to respect soldiers and listen to their instructions, and that managing that many students was too difficult of a task for the private guards.

"Yemenis show more respect for people in military uniform and also feel safe when they see them managing the security situation," Awad said.

They're back

There's another twist to the story of who is guarding Sana'a University—students and staff allege that the Houthis are back on campus.

Two Stallion guards stationed near the College of Economics at the university said they and their

colleagues work daily—except Fridays—from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

"All students leave by 5 p.m. and so do we," said one of the guards, who declined to be named. "The university has its own internal security and security force and this force replaces us when we leave at 5 p.m."

Students say that this "internal security force" is actually the Houthis. The guards declined to provide any more details.

"It's the same Houthi gunmen who used to guard the university's gates. They haven't withdrawn, they return after 5 p.m.," said Abdulmoghni. Adel Haza, a professor in the Engineering College of the university, confirmed that many of the men guarding the campus after 5 p.m. are the same Houthis who guarded the campus before the Houthis announced their withdrawal.

"We pass so many official and unofficial checkpoints throughout the city, but we don't want to see them inside the campus. We want to see private security guards and we want to feel that the university isn't involved in the political conflict," said Haza.



Security on campus has changed hands between government forces, armed Houthis, and private security firms.

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Houthis paint the town green



■ Yasser Rayes

The political and security breakdown following the 2011 uprising left a vacuum of power in the country. Since the uprising, the Houthis have been consolidating power, starting with the seizure of more and more land in the north of Yemen. Their expansion reached Yemen's capital, Sana'a, on Sept. 21, and they have effectively been in charge ever since—setting up checkpoints, taking over public institutions and signing an agreement with the government, pledging to withdraw their armed militias once a new government was formed. In the photo on the left, the dome of a mosque in Sana'a's historic Old City is painted green, in preparation for the prophet's birthday. The move is considered provocative by many, and has even been denounced by some Houthis who fear the painting of the dome will stock sectarian conflict.



The Houthis have yet to make good on their agreement to withdraw militias, despite the formation of a new government. The celebrations of the prophet's birthday, which is considered blasphemous by many Sunnis, have become bolder over the past three years. This year, the Houthis are displaying their power by their very public celebration. Streamers in the photo above line the street by the Big Mosque in the Old City. The mosque is one of the oldest standing mosques in Islam.



A vehicle in the neighborhood surrounding Sana'a University is painted green, in preparation for celebrations.

A roundabout in front of Sana'a university. Inscribed on the monument—now covered in green ribbon—is a saying of the Prophet Mohammed: "Faith is Yemeni, wisdom is Yemeni."



Commercializing the prophet: A man sells signs, banners, stickers and other memorabilia for upcoming commemorations. Ali Shake, a motor-taxi driver: "[Yemenis now] celebrate valentine's day and Christmas. There is no better celebration than the prophet's birthday."



"I think calls for such celebrations carry a political significance, rather than a religious one," said an English professor who asked to have his name withheld.



Vehicle on Al-Dairy Street painted green with the Houthi slogan plastered on the door.



Outside of Bab Al-Yemen. Rumors that the Houthis had painted the gates green are untrue. In the photo, above, a man sells decorations for the upcoming event.



The banner above, hung in the Old City, says: "Mohammed is God's messenger and those who believe in him are strict when dealing with the disbelievers, but are merciful when dealing with one another."



This vehicle on Al-Dairy Street had government plates, indicating it is a government vehicle. Painted on the vehicle: "Mohammed is God's messenger."



According to a Sana'a University media student, Al-Karar Al-Marani, "[The] prophet taught us the true value of a human being, we all must be proud of our prophet. His birth changed our lives for ever."

Defying the expected:

Yemeni women in the formal economy

Story and photos by
Khalid Al-Karimi

Walking into Queens Shop, Lena Ahmed, 34, can be found sitting at the storefront awaiting customers. Not wearing the face-covering niqab, it becomes clear she is a Yemeni woman. There are passersby who might object to it, but Lena, who is originally from Taiz, says she is proud to be managing a business on her own. When she accepted the position four months ago, her family was hesitant. "I don't feel like I am doing anything wrong, though. I am convinced that not every tradition or custom is right," she said.

Lena is not the only one at Queens Shop defying expectations, for the business is owned and financed by a Yemeni woman as well. Bushra Al-Kibsi, 40, opened her shop in June 2013. Located on Al-Dairy Street in the capital Sana'a, Queens Shop deals in women's clothing, accessories, perfumes, and cosmetics.

Bushra holds a degree in commerce from the University of Sana'a and has wanted to open her own shop ever since graduating in 1992. "I wanted to increase my income and be self-dependent, and I thought starting my own business was the best way to do it," she said.

Bushra began working in the capital's Education Office after university, and with the help of her family she was eventually able to save enough money to start her business without taking a loan. She has no intention of leaving her current position, which is why she hired Lena to manage the business for her, al-

though she regularly checks in on the shop.

Lena received a diploma in business administration in 2006, and hopes to follow in Bushra's steps and one day open a business of her own. "I feel I am on the right path towards realizing bigger goals. With my determination and the support of my husband, who is a biology teacher, my ambition will not stop. I don't just want to change myself, I want to help improve my entire society."

Radfan Abdulhabib, Lena's husband, says he encourages his wife to be successful in her business. "I don't think work is only for men. I support her working and I want her to realize her dreams. Our life is interdependent, and cooperation between us is indispensable," he said.

Looking around the shop, Lena estimates that the products on offer could be worth over two million Yemeni Ryals (\$9300). "Our takings are not always the same, it varies from one day to another. Sales could reach YR100,000 (\$500) in one day, but sometimes the whole day passes and I've sold nothing."

Divided reactions

Accustomed to dealing only with men in shops, Sana'is have different reactions to finding a woman like Lena serving them. "Different kinds of customers come to our store. Some express their surprise or congratulate me. Others say I am not a Yemeni. I don't care about the negative criticism because not everyone holds the same opinion," says Lena.

Surprised to find an unveiled woman running a business and negotiating with customers, some

assume Lena is not from Yemen because it is generally foreign women—particularly Filipino and African women—who feel at liberty to take on the role.

Fatima Mohammed is an Ethiopian woman who owns a shoe store in the capital, which she has been running for three years. "It is not shameful for me to work. In my country, many women work and they are not criticized by their families for it," she said. "Just as men have to work, so do women, they are no different. It is not the same in Yemen, not everyone thinks a woman should be working."

Another shop owner from Ethiopia, who declined to give her name, explained that she is working because she finds being jobless more shameful. "It is not bad to work—it is bad to beg. In our culture, women should work and help the man. Making a living is not only a man's job," she said.

Fatima says she and others like her are spared the criticism that working Yemeni women receive because they are not held to the same standards.

Lena admits that some of her customers can be "disrespectful" and think they can take advantage of her because she is a woman. She says men will enter the shop and try to deceive her because they think she can't haggle over prices like a man.

Nonetheless, Lena says most of her customers are respectful, and that she has never been harassed. There are also men who are openly supportive of her.

Sultan Abdulhamid, who works in a laundry shop next door to Lena, thinks she does a great job and is not against the idea of women en-



Managing a shop makes Lena Ahmed feel financially independent and helps her support her family, but she also thinks there is more at stake. "I don't just want to change myself, I want to help improve my entire society," she says.



Owned and managed by women, the Queen Shop on Al-Dairy street defies the expectations of many in Sana'a.

tering the formal economy. "We live in different times, and women need to work beside their men. Cooperation helps stabilize family life," he said.

Jamal Shahir, a resident of Sana'a who was passing by Queens Shop, said he would prefer his wife shopping at a business like Bushra's. "Women feel more comfortable when dealing with a saleswoman, and I would feel more secure when my wife goes shopping, too," he said. "These initiatives also give women the opportunity to work. I don't think it's shameful if a woman works and depends on herself."

Nadia Ahmed, a recent graduate and regular customer at Queens Shop, says she was drawn to the shop because she saw a woman in charge of it. "I prefer to come to a shop like this, I feel more comfortable negotiating prices with her," she said.

Um Ali, a school teacher in Sana'a, says it is particularly gratifying to deal with a saleswoman when buying clothes. "Having my dress measured is comfortable in Lena's presence. It could never be the same with a salesman."

According to Um Ali, some husbands prefer not to send their wives to public markets, and she says the Queens shop is, "a destination for those highly conservative spouses."

Tradition and circumstance

While more conservative elements of society might be opposed to the idea of women entering the labor market or running their own businesses, Um Ali's observation raises an interesting paradox. Attempts to categorize public opinion into two camps—one informed by religion and adverse to female emancipa-

tion, the other secular and progressive—may be misguided. Indeed, Bushra describes her father as a deeply pious man, and he has been very supportive of her business venture.

Recent decades have seen a large increase in the number of women entering the formal economy on a global scale, but countries in the Middle East and North Africa are lagging far behind. According to a 2013 World Bank report on gender inequality and development, over 50 percent of the female population aged 15 and above are participating in labor markets in every other region of the world, but the corresponding figure in the Middle East and North Africa is 25.2 percent. In Yemen, it is estimated that just five percent of women are involved in the country's formal economy.

It is easy to assume that tradition or social customs explain this lag, but there is often more involved. "Not surprisingly," the World Bank report reads, "the lowest participation rates are in fragile or conflict-affected states such as Iraq, Palestinian Territories, and the Republic of Yemen."

If we consider female-owned businesses specifically, Bushra is not quite the anomaly she might seem in Sana'a. Only about ten percent of firms in Yemen are female-owned, but World Bank data (Enterprise Surveys 2003-2006) suggests that the number of businesses owned by individual males and individual females is almost equal, and that most women in Yemen own their firms individually.

It is also worth noting that less than half of firms, both male- and female-owned, are found in capital cities, and that in Yemen female-

owned firms are significantly less likely to be located in the capital.

The data does not reveal how many female owners manage their own businesses, but it does show that female-owned firms are more likely to employ women at professional and managerial levels.

While Bushra and Lena say they are managing to keep the business afloat, they admit it can be difficult at times. It is not for a lack of family support or because of society's expectations, however. It is rather to do with the shop's location and the current security situation.

"We are located on Al-Dairy Street, a place notorious for sporadic marches and protests. The shop is not in a busy area like Jamal Street or Hael Street," explained Lena. "The general security situation has also made people economical and more focused on meeting their basic needs," she added.

The fact that Bushra imports her garments from Turkey and America, where she has relatives, also makes business difficult because the prices are higher than usual. "Some customers want more affordable things, or they are unable to spend on dresses of finer quality. I think we should provide dresses that suit everyone's budget," said Lena.

Bushra and Lena run a business that is tied into a global economy and is effected by events near and far. A minority of women in Yemen are involved in the formal economy, and businesses like the Queen Shop help address the imbalance. Whether the biggest obstacles lie in tradition or circumstance, however, remains an open question, but it is clear that economic and political instability will need to subside before a real change can be effected.



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Interested candidates should apply via the World Bank site www.worldbank.org/jobs section: "employment opportunities" job number **141584**, where you can find full particulars on the vacancy. Closing date for this job is **January 10, 2014**. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.



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OUR OPINION

The risk of sectarianism

The Houthis have ordered the doors of shops painted green in Ibb for the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, and have painted parts of Sana'a's Old City green, too—including a number of historic mosques. The move may be seen as a show of power by the Houthis, who only a few years ago had to settle for more restrained and private commemorations. By ordering all shop owners regardless of religious sect to paint their doors, the Houthis are asking for sectarian tensions in a country that has historically had very few.

Should sectarianism increase, it would in part be a reaction to this flexing of Houthi muscle. But history did not start on Sept. 21, and to understand the Houthis' behavior, it is necessary to go back to their days of political, economic and religious marginalization.

The Houthis had legitimate grievances against the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh, who fought six wars against the armed rebel group between 2004 and 2010. Ongoing fighting not only bled the country of its treasury, but left a significant humanitarian crisis in its wake. The area was off-limits to journalists, so the actual toll of the fighting in Sa'ada is still unclear. The government is still scrambling for funds to help civilians rebuild houses and agricultural infrastructure that was destroyed years ago, so that displaced families can finally return home.

The Houthis are part of a Zaydi branch of Shia Islam, and, whatever popular support their movement may have garnered, they remain a religious minority in Yemen. Their stated goal of the past decade—more autonomy for Yemen's northern region, was partly the result of the marginalization they suffered under the Saleh government. It was this marginalization and the killing of the group's leader, a dissident cleric, in 2004 that strengthened the movement's resolve.

After years of oppression, the Houthis are on a power trip and appear to be insensitive to the threat of sectarianism—something Al-Qaeda has already begun using to good effect. And despite their best efforts, Islah has not yet been politically neutralized. The Houthi risk pushing some Islahis into Al-Qaeda's arms.

Ahlam Mohsen
Deputy editor-in-chief

Saving Libya's Constitution-Making Body

Douglas Garrison
Muftah.org
First published Dec.30

In the following article Omar Ould Dedde O. Hammady and Michael Meyer-Rensende, both constitutional lawyers and, respectively, the Libya country director and the executive director at Democracy Reporting International (DRI), shed crucial light on Libya's continuing political turmoil. The authors highlight the critical need for reinvented "institution-building" in Libyan politics in order for some semblance of stability to return to the fractured state. This opinion piece originally appeared in Sada, the online journal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Middle East Program, on Dec. 18. An excellent companion article, "The Struggle to Define Normal in Post-Gaddafi Libya" by Elizabeth Allan, appeared in Muftah the same day.

Libya's civil war has destroyed most of the nascent state institutions that emerged after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi. As such, the Constitution Drafting Assembly (CDA) is the remaining institution whose democratic legitimacy faces least dispute. However, internal tensions and external pressures could destroy this institution too, lowering the possibility of negotiating a new political order in Libya.

The Supreme Court's dissolution of the House of Representatives on Nov. 6, 2014 sent shockwaves through the national and international community. Even though its legitimacy was disputed, there was hope that a deal could be forged to restore its credibility and make it a key actor in peace-making. In a very practical way, the dissolution of the House of Representatives has put the CDA more into the limelight, particularly in the eyes of the international community. The increasing focus on the CDA has created tensions within the body, which until now tried to maintain cohesion by keeping its distance from political polarization that is now taking the form of competing claims for legitimacy between two governments.

On a legal level, the Supreme Court's reasoning could be seen to undermine the CDA and open the door to judicial challenges against it. Originally, the CDA was tasked to complete its work within

120 days. Since the CDA started its work on April 21, 2014, that deadline would have expired in August 2014. However, in March this year Libya's parliament amended the constitutional declaration, which set the framework for the post-Qaddafi period, indicating that the forthcoming House of Representatives would provide democratic representation during an eighteen-month transitional period until the new constitution was adopted. This amendment was seen to implicitly extend the CDA's deadline from 120 days to eighteen months. The recent Supreme Court decision declared the amendment to be unconstitutional, meaning that the legal basis for the House of Representatives disappeared, as well as the extended timeframe.

Technically the CDA could be seen as operating after the original deadline, but it is up for debate whether missing the old deadline invalidates the CDA's legal basis or not. The best argument the assembly can now make against possible challenges to its legality and legitimacy is that, in a context of growing anarchy, the assembly has a strong democratic mandate, and that from now on it will determine its own timelines and adopt all acts that are necessary for the fulfillment of its tasks.

Yet the perception of its legitimacy will also be affected by the CDA's performance. It will be more accepted if it can show its ability to find common ground between rival groups and present tangible progress in its original task of negotiating a new constitution. However, the CDA faces external pressures from Libya's competing parliaments in Tripoli and Tobruk, their political stakeholders, and from the public. For example, in the past few weeks, both the General National Congress (GNC) in Tripoli and the House of Representatives in Tobruk requested an update on the progress of the CDA's work—but any reports the CDA makes to either the GNC or the House of Representatives risk being interpreted as recognizing one parliament over the other.

In addition, the CDA is threatened by growing rifts within, with some members leaning more toward one camp or the other in Libya's conflict. The members and the presidency are debating their respective competencies and the degree to which the CDA's presidency can speak for the assembly as a whole. The presidency was eager to publish some concrete results, such as



Demonstrators march in Tripoli in March 2012 to protest the potential partition of Libya into autonomous regions.

a first draft of the constitution by the end of December, as previously promised. It is now more likely that, in light of the pace of the assembly's progress, it will only be in a position to release first conclusions on the main constitutional questions.

The pressure is understandable: the CDA has to justify its usefulness and existence to avoid appearing as a mere relic of a failed transition. Yet many CDA members feel that they are still far from being able to present first conclusions. In more stable countries, constitution making often takes one or two years. Given the security situation in Libya and that the CDA is a collective, deliberative body, these members do not want to be steamrolled by their presidency or by the public into publishing something that they consider premature.

Both perspectives are reasonable: although the CDA has to give people confidence that it will deliver—and will communicate more effectively with the public—at the same time, a rushed process of publishing something without sufficient consensus in the CDA would be a pyrrhic victory. The most important priority for Libyans and the international community alike is to give CDA members the space to discuss their differences so they can come to a common understanding, based on sufficient discussion and debate, as soon as possible. They will need this space in the

short term to present concrete results by the end of December, as well as in the long term toward completion of a draft. Such a scenario would also show that the CDA can overcome differences through negotiations, setting an important precedent in a polarized Libya.

The CDA has the potential to play a role in returning peace to Libya. After all, it is the democratically elected body tasked to find constitutional solutions to Libya's major problems, including the management of oil resources, decentralization, minority rights, the role of religion, and the system of government. As a sovereign body, it can address the long-term questions that are central to negotiating peace between the many groups involved in Libya's fighting. The challenge now is to keep the CDA insulated from the deepening divisions, while leveraging the outcome of these constitutional negotiations for establishing a lasting order. Libya still has the advantage of a rule-based process based on a democratic mandate. If it fails, it will pile more unresolved issues onto future peace negotiations.

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Yemen: Al-Qaeda 'in a war of attrition'

Conflict in Yemen might turn into an all-out sectarian war, analysts warn

Saeed Al Batati
aljazeera.com
First published Dec. 28

As fighting between Yemen's warring groups intensified, the recent clashes between Houthi fighters and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) could turn into a wider sectarian conflict, according to analysts.

On Saturday night clashes erupted between Houthi fighters and tribesmen in Arhab, a tribal area located 35km northeast of Sanaa and a bastion of Islah party supporters. Tribal sources said many Houthi fighters were killed in this confrontation, but there was no confirmation of the exact number of the dead.

Earlier this month, AQAP and tribal fighters attacked positions held by the Houthi rebels in the Yakla mountains in Rada'a district of Al-Baida which left 14 Houthi fighters dead.

On Thursday, hundreds of mourners buried the civilian victims of the latest round of violence in Al-Baida province, when, on Dec. 16, a car bomb exploded

near a checkpoint in Rada'a manned by Houthi rebels, killing 16 girls, nine of whom were from Al-Baida. Another car bomb exploded on the same day, near the house of Abdallah Idriss, a senior Houthi leader, killing 10 people.

A local government official told Al-Jazeera that relatives of victims seek justice and compensation.

"Some of the critically injured civilians are in need of urgent medical treatment abroad, but people cannot afford to pay for this," Tareq Abu Sorema, the director of Rada'a's Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, told Al-Jazeera at the funeral site.

Shortly after Houthi rebels took over Sanaa, and several neighboring provinces, they quickly advanced into Al-Qaeda-controlled regions in Al-Baida, including Rada'a city, where they engaged in fierce fighting with forces backed by local Sunni tribes.

Last November, AQAP's military chief, Qassem Al-Rimi, warned the Houthis to brace "for horrors that will make the hair of children turn white", after the Houthi fighters expanded their presence into AQAP's stronghold of Rada'a.

On Thursday, al-Baida residents told Al-Jazeera that Al-Qaeda fighters and tribesmen launched an attack that claimed the lives of scores of Houthi fighters.

"Al-Qaeda killed at least 20 people and injured many others. This is what tribesmen who fight Houthis told us," a resident said.

Houthis, on their part, declined to comment on the death toll while Al-Qaeda posted details of the attacks on affiliated Twitter accounts.

AQAP sources also said that it gunned down Faisal Al-Sharif, a pro-Houthi tribal leader in the Yemeni capital three days ago.

Houthi leaders have been keen to portray their war against AQAP as part of the larger "war on terrorism" scheme. "Since arriving in Arhab over a week ago, Ansar Allah has been purging the district and surrounding villages of terrorists," said Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthis' policy-making committee.

But it is precisely the Houthis' involvement in the "war on terror" which, analysts say, helps AQAP in getting more recruits. "The Houthis' sectarian nature has

enabled Al-Qaeda to portray its conflict against them as Shia targeting Sunnis," Saeed Obeid, a Yemeni analyst told Al-Jazeera.

Obeid added that if the government remained weak, the current clashes between Al-Qaeda and Houthis could develop into all out sectarian warfare. "The clashes are a recipe for wider war so long as the government is unable to execute its duties."

In October, Houthi announced that they were driving Al-Qaeda fighters out of their strongholds in Manaseh, Qaifah and Khubza regions in Baida governorate. The Houthis demanded hundreds of displaced families who fled their homes during the clashes to return home.

However, despite the Houthis' quick and visible victories, Obeid thinks that they do not maintain an upper hand in the battles against Al-Qaeda.

"Al-Qaeda's strategy is to engage in a war of attrition with its opponents. Al-Qaeda is striking all over Houthi-controlled areas. They detonated bombs and gunned down Houthi-linked figures in Sana'a. They also mounted deadly attacks on the Houthis in Baida."

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ISIS's Governance Crisis: Social Services

Mona Alami

Atlantic Council
First published Dec. 24

In its fourth issue of its English-language newsletter Dabig, the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) boasted that a "state cannot be established" unless it looked after both the "worldly and the religious needs" of Muslims. With that specific goal in mind, IS has entrenched itself in the daily life of residents of the region straddling Syria and Iraq, partly replacing the presence of the state, namely in the fields of justice, education and healthcare, with mixed results.

ISIS has successfully consolidated its hold on the judiciary. It has established Islamic courts in the areas under its rule and acquired some credibility among local residents. The group reorganized the courts, splitting the judiciary into two streams: One providing general judgments based on sharia; the second receiving complaints about ISIS soldiers. "Sharia court sentences have been relatively fair so far," says a Raqqa resident speaking on condition of anonymity. ISIS courts appear less corrupt than their Syrian

or Iraqi counterparts. A report by the Syria Observatory refers to the beheading of some ISIS fighters for theft, suggesting equal treatment before the law. They have also conducted speedier trials than courts under the Assad regime—something in which ISIS officials have taken pride. In a YouTube interview in November 2013, an ISIS judge boasted that the courts could deliver verdicts within a month.

Despite the improvements to the system, ISIS has taken some measures that have bred resentment. To strengthen its hold over the judiciary, ISIS has forced lawyers to take courses in sharia law in the Deir Ezzor region. ISIS has also enforced a radical interpretation of the sharia law, killing men accused of blasphemy or homosexuality in northern Syria. The group has also carried out amputations and lashings for reasons as trivial as smoking or improper dressing with corporal punishments often enforced publicly.

The group has also applied a similarly systematic approach the education system. ISIS has established Islamic schools in the region of Aleppo, where twenty sharia institutes teach some 2,500 children

to memorize the Quran. In Al-Mayadeen, Deir Ezzor, ISIS has also imposed on philosophy teachers, to take sharia classes. The terror organization has ushered in numerous changes to the curriculum in territories under its control. Science, history, civic, physical education and geography classes have been canceled, basic mathematics courses kept, and intensive religious material added. These changes have been far reaching in Mosul where Iraqi officials estimate that 95 percent of schools are under ISIS control. Content in certain classes has been modified, with new additions including a focus on the emergence of ISIS's caliphate, its borders, and on Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. In segregated classrooms, the group allows only women to teach girls. "Most children are only being sent to school until the age of twelve or thirteen," admits the Raqqa resident, a report that was also confirmed by Al-Monitor. Similar changes have been applied to the field of higher education in Mosul, where the schools of fine arts, political science, and law were deemed un-Islamic and closed down.

ISIS has also imposed military

training on children in the Raqqa province, namely combat lessons and teachings on the use of weapons. Opposition groups have reported the presence of at least five youth training camps, one specifically for children under sixteen in the town of Tabqa. The Sharea youth camp near Tabqa in Raqqa trains more than 350 boys between the ages of five and sixteen for combat roles, according to a United Nations report. The Bouhtri School in Al-Bab, Aleppo, has been used as an ISIS military training facility for boys under the age of eighteen, according to the same report.

One of the organization's major policy failures lies in the health sector. "Only the very poor go for treatment to the mashfa watany [the public clinic], which is managed by ISIS," says the Raqqa resident. The group's management of hospitals—already in a crisis due to power outages and lack of resources—has been marred by inconsistent practices. According to one report, female staff members cannot work nightshifts at Mosul hospitals and must wear full-face veils. Fighters have also prevented male anesthesiologists from treating women in

labor. In September and October, ISIS militants killed at least five doctors in Mosul and beheaded a female dentist in August who had continued to treat both male and female patients in Al-Mayadin, in Deir Ezzor.

These measures have created a backlash. The dress code imposed on female personnel at Mosul hospitals triggered a strike in August. Preferential treatment afforded to ISIS fighters has also tarnished the organization's credibility. ISIS-only hospitals commandeer the best doctors and the latest equipment. Requisitioning by militants of Mosul's blood bank and of some of its clinics to treat its wounded fighters have also come at the expense of civilian patients.

For over a year, ISIS has operated as a semi-state, imposing its vision of governance on territories under its control. In some ways it has been successful in others it has not. Despite the successful consolidation of the judiciary in areas under its control, harsh ISIS policies may eventually backfire and provoke a local response. Its rigid rules have paralyzed a healthcare system already in tatters and dependent on govern-

ment funding. ISIS has shown resilience through winning some hearts and minds and exploiting Sunni resentment against central governments whether in Syria or Iraq. Disenfranchised Sunnis may have welcomed ISIS, but it remains alien to those societies that do not necessarily espouse the organization's radical views—especially to Mosul, which unlike Raqqa has a large population, is culturally more open and thus more difficult to govern. Despite growing resentment, ISIS will rely on its revamped education program to develop loyalty and build the next generation of caliphate citizens. By entrenching itself within these societies, influencing the younger generation, and promoting adherence to its ideology, ISIS will play the long game that will make it harder to uproot over time.

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NGOs and anti-terror laws – how to keep your bank manager happy

IRIN

First published Dec. 31

The British government must do more to prevent charities working in high-risk countries from having their finances cut off, leading charities and bankers have warned.

In recent months a growing number of British NGOs working in the Middle East and other dangerous regions have faced account closures, crippling their much-needed humanitarian work. Others have had payments delayed for many months. In most cases no specific allegations of wrongdoing were put forward by the banks.

A report published today calls for better coordination between the banks, NGOs and the British government to reduce such cases. It also urges the government to take the lead in designing a clearer framework for what banks and NGOs are allowed to do legally.

Report author Tom Keatinge, Director of the Centre for Financial Crime & Security Studies at the RUSI think tank and a former banker, said at times there had not been enough guidance from the government on how to avoid being tripped up by anti-terrorism legislation.

"Too often the government has claimed to be powerless in the face of US sanctions, or it has hidden behind the banks' commercial decisions," he said. "They need to provide greater clarity to both banks and NGOs to allow this important work to continue."

Justine Walker, Director of the Financial Crime department at the British Bankers' Association (BBA), echoed his call. She said the banking community and large NGOs had improved coordination in the past year, but they needed greater clarity from the government on what was permitted.

"The banks and charities have come to the table and we are trying to find solutions, but in essence we are responding to the concerns raised by government and regulators so they also need to be at the table to agree this," she said.

Keatinge said, however, that there was a "growing understanding" from the government of the scale of the problem.

De-risking

Since the 11/9 attacks a vast range of anti-terrorism legislation has been introduced across the globe, often having hugely different impacts in different countries.

Meanwhile, banks have faced a squeeze on their profits since the financial crash. This, combined with a huge increase in fines for those found guilty of being complicit in money-laundering, has made many risk averse.

Risk and compliance departments have grown exponentially - with the research arm of KPMG estimating that global annual expenditure on risk and compliance is likely to exceed US\$10 billion within the next two years.

This has led to so-called "de-risking" - where banks have sought to close down high-risk accounts, especially those with low profit margins. Following the controversial decision to close the bank account of a Somali remittance company, an internal Barclays review found that "it would not be commercially viable for Barclays to continue to provide services to any customer representing less than £100,000 in annual revenue."

Keatinge said that in many cases banks were looking at NGOs working in the Middle East and concluding that both the costs of compliance and the risks of money being diverted were too high, while the profits are too low.

Among those who have fallen victim is the Ummah Welfare Trust (UWT). In July the charity, which has an annual turnover of around £25 million (\$39 million) and works in a variety of Middle East and Asian countries including Syria and Gaza, received a letter from their bank (HSBC) announcing their account would be closed. HSBC itself had been fined nearly \$2 billion in late 2012 in a money-laundering case.

Muhammad Ahmed, a trustee at UWT, said no specific reason was

given for HSBC's decision. "It just said you fall out of our risk category and they didn't want to elaborate on that." There was no appeals process - the decision was final.

While most of those organizations that have received similar letters have sought to deal with the issue behind closed doors, UWT went on the attack, organizing a boycott campaign. "We had a huge response from our supporters and donors who in their thousands said they would close their bank accounts if [HSBC] continued," Ahmed said.

They are still, Ahmed said, pursuing both legal options and carrying their boycott campaign to the Middle East and Asia. "The lesson needs to be that any financial institution which decides to take a charity's account so lightly - affecting hundreds of thousands of suffering people - will not go unpunished." An HSBC spokesman said they did not comment on individual cases.

Abdulrahman Sharif, executive director at the Muslim Charities Forum, said such bank closures are still relatively rare, but cases are increasing. He said the effect has been that many organizations have stopped working in parts of the Middle East, where some of the world's largest humanitarian crises are.

"If you are a person with good will and you decide you want to set up a charity in Somalia or Yemen or Syria, opening a bank account for that is really near to impossible," he said.

"Banks are more and more seeing non-profit [organizations] as non-profitable and as a risky client to maintain. So they prefer just to close the account and not maintain that client."

Two tiers

Keatinge said combative strategies, such as that taken by UWT, could lead to charities ostracizing themselves - making it harder for them to find alternative banking services. Instead, he said, they should seek to engage directly with the banks earlier.

"NGOs need to inflict an out of body experience on themselves..."

Look at your trustees - is there any sense that they could be linked to Hamas or another banned group?" he said. "Just be completely honest about the way you would appear to an outsider. When banks do due diligence they will unearth this information, so don't put your head in the sand."

He added that NGOs should be in constant contact with their bank managers to explain their actions.

Yet for those smaller organizations such costly and time-consuming mechanisms are logistically difficult. This has raised fears of almost a two-tiered system, where larger charities will negotiate specific exemptions for humanitarian work with the government and banks but smaller ones will struggle.

"[With] the bigger charities over the next year or two we are likely to move a long way on agreed shared principles but for the smaller charities it is still going to remain really quite challenging," the BBA's Walker said. "The challenge we then face is how we deal with some of the smaller charities which don't have the same infrastructure and the same compliance controls in place. How do banks get the comfort they need from those charities?"

Government's role

To assuage these doubts, the British government could help provide more clarity on what is or is not allowed. Currently the different and overlapping counterterrorism legislation makes it hard for banks to know exactly if and when a charity's activities step outside the line.

A recent US policy paper provides an exemption to counter-terrorism laws for humanitarian actors working in war zones. While the policy is not without its detractors, no such equivalent exists in the UK.

Walker said the BBA had produced a recent paper for the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global standard setter for anti-money-laundering and counter terrorism finance. In it they recommended the government, charities and banks together draw up an agreement on processing humanitarian



payments to fragile conflict areas.

"This would enable banks to remain at the table in supporting these payments," she said. "At the moment there isn't a lot out there. You see a lot of statements about charities being higher risk but you see very little around 'this is what we expect banks to do.' They are told to be vigilant, to treat these payments as high risk, but there is very little around 'if you do x, y and z that will keep the regulators happy.'"

A Treasury spokesperson said they were aware of the issue around de-risking and were seeking to support any NGO having difficulties finding banking services. He added that they, too, wanted to improve dialogue between NGOs, banks and government and were pushing their partners to review their own markets and feedback on regulation.

The Treasury, which has previously been primarily responsible for tackling terrorism financing, is handing over some of its authority to the Home Office. Part of the Home Office's remit is the Charity Commission (CC), but the organization has found its neutrality the subject of scrutiny from some charities.

A report released by the Claystone think tank last month found Muslim charities were disproportionately the subject of investigations by CC, while it also highlighted the perceived bias of CC chairman Sir William Shawcross. In 2012, be-

fore taking over at the CC, Shawcross claimed: "Europe and Islam is one of the greatest, most terrifying problems of our future."

Sharif from the Muslim Charities Forum said the CC had continually stressed in meetings that their decisions were not based upon any prejudice, but he admitted that within parts of the Muslim charitable sector there was a "perception of bias".

A CC spokesperson said: "The Commission is in no way biased or prejudiced against any type of charity, religious or otherwise."

Beyond the UK

While new government leadership on this matter would be welcome, ultimately, Walker said, a better global framework was also needed. "We need to see something at an international level. Sometimes we see payments leaving the UK but then being held up elsewhere in the payment chain as that dialogue isn't necessarily international."

She said the BBA has proposed an international project to agree risk management principles for higher-risk humanitarian payments. "It is never going to be perfect. Some of these monies will ultimately end up where they shouldn't be but that is sadly the reality of conflict and violence... What we are pushing for is a shared understanding of the risk."

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Water Desalination in Taiz

In 2010, the Yemeni government began plans to construct a water desalination plant in the coastal city of Mokha in Taiz governorate, hiring JFA Consulting, a British consulting firm, to assess the feasibility of the project. The plant would be connected via a pipeline to Taiz city, often referred to as Yemen's driest, located 94 kilometers east of Mokha and the proposed site. Hypothetically, within several years, the plant would be able to meet the entirety of Taiz's water consumption needs, at 55,000 cubic meters (m³) per day. The project was suggested due to the persistent water shortages that have been seen throughout the country as a result of the drying up of the country's ground water reserves, which have increased in recent years. According to government estimates, at least 19 of Yemen's 21 ground aquifers are over exploited.

In Taiz, increased urbanization and a massive youth bulge has caused the city's population to more than double since 1996. These factors have squeezed public utility networks and prevented many citizens from obtaining regular access to water. Despite this, some within government have opposed the construction of the desalination plant, claiming that the desalination process itself is too expensive when compared to ground water extraction, particularly as Yemen suffers from a protracted economic and financial crisis that has lasted since 2011. Others, such as Deputy Minister of Water and Environment Towfiq Al-Sharjabi, admit that although water desalination is usually a 'last resort', that the situation in Taiz is too desperate, and that few other options exist. Part one of this report, published on Tuesday, analyzed the social and economic impact of Taiz's water crisis on its residents, and the extent to which water desalination could help address the crisis. Part two of this report, found below, looks into the reasons as to why the Yemeni government has failed to secure funding for the plant's construction, after years of negotiation and study.

■ Jeremy Hodge

According to Towfiq Al-Sharjabi, Yemen's deputy minister of Water and Environment, the Yemeni government has been in ongoing negotiations with the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) since late 2011 in an attempt to secure upwards of \$280m worth of funding for construction of the water desalination plant in Mokha. The SFD is the official development wing of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Finance and was established by royal decree in 1974.

Previous attempts to secure private funding for the project back in 2012 had been skirted, including an offer put forth by the Hayel Saeed Group, a multi-national multibillion dollar conglomerate owned by the powerful Hayel Saeed family that in 2007 controlled roughly 35% of Yemen's economy.

Mohammad Masrawi, is the deputy chairman of the Projects Division within Yemen's Ministry of Planning, and has been responsible for negotiating with the Saudi Fund for Development and other potential financiers since 2011—when the project was first introduced.

Masrawi said that the government rejected the Hayel Saeed Group's proposal in 2012, because the company was charging exorbitant rates that the government could not afford, although he would not mention specific amounts. "They're a private corporation, their goal is to reap profits," he said. "In order to be able to afford the offer put forth by Hayel Saeed Group, we would have to increase the price of water sold from the plant for consumers. This would undermine the reason for launching the project in the first place, which is to provide citizens with affordable water."

The Yemen Times spoke with Ahmed Showqi Hayel, one of the company's largest shareholders and current governor of Taiz, who would not comment as to why the company was not commissioned to finance the project. Repeated calls were not returned.

According to Masrawi, in 2012 Yemen did not possess any law or legal framework regulating joint government and private sector development projects that could allow the ministry to effectively bid for private sector funding at affordable rates. However according to some, this may have changed recently.

On Nov. 18, 2014, Yemen's Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation and Federal Chamber of Commerce, under the auspices of the United Nations Development Authority (UNDP), signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding', which, by the end of the first quarter of

2015, obligates the government to form a joint economic-social committee made up of business and government officials, and create 'mechanisms' both at the federal and local level to facilitate, "public-private sector dialogue," (PPD).

According to Abdo Seif, head of UNDP's Advisory and Oversight Team in Yemen who oversaw the drafting of the memorandum, such bodies should be prepared with suggestions to be submitted to the government for public-private sector projects to be undertaken in the future. "Such bodies will finish their work to be submitted by March," he said. Such a framework could create the type of institutions needed by the Yemeni government to more effectively launch bids and compete for private sector funding.

However as of now, none of the provisions within the memorandum, which the Yemen Times has reviewed, could regulate private investment, either foreign or domestic, into Yemen's public utilities networks. Like most development projects implemented throughout the country Yemen, the construction of a desalination plant in Mokha would need to be implemented with the help of a foreign government or organization, in this case the SFD.

Seeing as negotiations with the SFD have been underway, this then begs the question: Why has no financing agreement yet been signed, and why, three years later, has the project still not gotten underway?

In an interview published on June 26, 2014 on alshorfa.com, Yemen's former minister of water and environment, Abd Al-Salam Razzaz, claimed that the government was one week away from signing a final financing agreement with the SFD to pay for the construction of the desalination plant and its pipeline leading to Taiz. In the interview, Razzaz estimated the project would cost upwards of \$300 million.

Alshorfa is a news outlet operated by USCENCOM, the Unified Combatant Command Department within the United States Defense Department responsible for overseeing US military operations in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

In the interview, Razzaz claimed that the pipeline would stretch from Mokha to Taiz to Ibb, and then onto Lahj, Aden and Sana'a governorates, though he did not provide a time line for the construction of the latter three governorates.

Razzaz made the claim to Alshorfa one month before President Hadi's decision to lift fuel subsidies was enacted, and the subsequent turmoil that overtook the country in its wake.

Shortly after the lifting of the subsidies on July 31, the Houthis—an



Former Minister of Water and Environment Abd Al-Salam Al-Razzaz (right) and Governor of Taiz Ahmed Showqi Hayel (left) surveying sites for development projects in Taiz.

armed rebel group based in Yemen's northern governorate of Sa'ada, accused by some of having links with Iran—spearheaded protests against the move that began in August, and lasted throughout September. On Sept. 21, the Houthis took control of Sana'a after several days of fighting that left at least 300 people dead. The Houthis soon entered several other governorates in Yemen.

Two months later, on Nov. 9, a new cabinet was formed in accordance with the Peace and Partnership Agreement signed on Sept. 21, and Razzaz was let go, and replaced by Al-Azi Hebat Allah Ali Sharim. Since then little news has been made regarding any potential progress in the securing of a financier for the project.

Despite the recent shakeup in Yemen's cabinet, Al-Sharjabi maintains that the agreement referred to by Razzaz was in fact signed before the recent turmoil that engulfed the country in August, and that it is still valid. According to Al-Sharjabi, the ministry agreed to accept a \$100m loan from the Saudi Exports' Support Line, a fund within the SFD, to pay for the construction of the desalination station and the power plant used to power it. "We're still negotiating on a \$180 million grant that will pay for the pipeline from Mokha to Taiz." He claimed ministry representatives would be traveling to Saudi Arabia in the coming weeks to discuss the final \$180m grant.

However interviews the Yemen Times conducted with SFD representatives paint a different picture. Mohammad Al-Arifi is the lead engineer within the SFD responsible for overseeing the organization's operations in Yemen, who claimed that no such agreement was signed, and gave different figures for the amounts that had been discussed during negotiations.

"The SFD has been prepared to pay out \$200 million for the construction of the pipeline leading from Mokhta to Taiz and then Ibb," Al-Arifi said. "The Saudi Treasury also pledged to put forth \$50 million during negotiations for construction of the plant itself, which we'll be administering."

The Yemen Times asked Al-Arifi about a financing agreement already having been signed by the ministry of water and environment and SFD.

Al-Arifi claimed that no such agreement was signed, and went further to claim that Yemen's Ministry of Planning had not yet put forth the bids and tenders necessary for the SFD to make an official offer.

"Let me remind you, these figures are mere estimates determined after several years of negotiations, but are by no means official," Al-Arifi added.

Masrawi says that these claims are inaccurate, claiming that the bids and tenders process had already begun, and that the Ministry of Planning had received several financing offers, including from the SFD, however, unlike Al-Sharjabi, denied that any final agreement had been reached with any party.

Conflicting accusations and the pointing of fingers means at the end

of the day the site upon which the desalination plant was supposed to be constructed remains empty. However the stalling of the project, according Al-Arifi, can be attributed to one primary factor, the country's political climate.

"In the last several months, Yemen has been rocked by instability, and this has caused the current government to refocus its priorities," he said. "For many of the country's new ministers, construction of the plant has taken a back seat to other issues."

In part one of this story, the Yemen Times interviewed Abdullah Saleh, the former head of the National Water Resource Authority (NWRA) within the ministry of water and environment, who worked

with JFA Consulting in both 2010 and 2013 when the latter conducted field studies in Mokha and Taiz regarding the feasibility of the construction of the proposed desalination plant.

For him, the cause for all the stalling and intransigence is clear. "The Saudis were ready to go ahead with funding this project six months ago before the latest round of turmoil began," he said. "Now the Houthis control the capital, and are the real power behind the throne. The Saudis see them as agents of Iran, and don't want to give Yemen any money at a time like this."

Additional Reporting by Madiha Junaid

Alternative sources of non-conventional water

■ Jeremy Hodge

In a world constantly teeming with new alternative sources of energy and increasing innovation in the development of non-conventional water resources, it makes sense that Yemen, known as one of the most water scarce nations on earth, would be used as a testing ground for new technologies.

In 2004 Stephen Augustin, an industrial engineer and 17 year veteran working with the automobile company BMW, brought such a new technology to Yemen. Termed 'Watercone' it is a small plastic and pyramid shaped cylinder that enables individuals living near bodies of salt water to utilize evaporation and solar irradiation to desalinate upwards of 1.6 liters of water. Watercones are made out of polycarbonate sheets, a highly durable transparent engineering plastic with a shelf life of anywhere between 5-8 years.

"Users pour water, from any source, be it a body of salt water, a well with brackish [slightly salty] water into the device, and the sun's natural evaporation process drains it of salt and chemicals," claims Augustin. It's a product that in Augustin's mind has revolutionized the desalination sector. "Those who pursue water desalination strategies do so via the construction of large scale plants," he said. "This is particularly the case in rich countries that have enough disposable income to do so. Watercone enables individuals living near bodies of salt water harvest fresh water on their own."

With funding from the Hans Sauer Foundation, an organization dedicated to funding innovation in science, and logistical coordination with CARE, an international disaster relief and development organization, Augustin, whose company was in its launching stages at the time, was able to manufacture and produce 100 watercone products. They were distributed to families living in Sheikh Salem and Al-Mutala, two villages located 13 kilometers from the main town of Zinjibar, 80km east of Aden.

Both villages were located several hundred meters from Yemen's coastline and relied primarily on



Villagers in Sheikh Salem harvest water from watercones. The product allows individuals to desalinate water on entirely on their own, utilizing condensation and solar irradiation.

fishing as a means of subsistence. They possessed little in the way of basic services, including electricity, and running water. Until the arrival of the watercones, residents were forced to make the 13km trek to Zinjibar just to fetch drinking water, as water coming from the local well was unfit for consumption.

Augustin believes that watercones offer a more sustainable desalination process than constructing large desalination plants. "If a large plant malfunctions or shuts down, all those who are dependent on it become without water. However with this product, individuals are independent and don't rely on networks or national grids, which, in many developing countries, shut down frequently."

A final report put together by CARE, described the final results of the watercone project in Yemen as such: "The watercone has been quickly accepted by the users, is robust and easy to understand and to handle, and the quality of the harvested water is very good... CARE recommends further long

term testing, involving a larger number of watercones per person, a testing period that covers all seasons of the year and a larger variety of different locations."

Beginning in 2008, Augustin was able to license further manufacturing and world wide distribution of the product to MAGE Water Management GMBH, a commercial water desalination company based in Munich. Recently, however, his plans to increase production of the watercone have been skirted. In March 2012, the German government issued a new law on renewable energies that contained, amongst other provisions, a drastic cut in government subsidies headed for the solar sector. As a consequence, MAGE closed up shop in summer 2013.

Augustin remains optimistic, however, and is on the look out for new financiers. "The product has won a number of awards from organizations sponsoring innovation, and is fully certified by the German government and the EU," he says. "It's potential is too great to be ignored."

OPINION

When police rape, who can people turn to?



The Egyptian legal system can heavily punish rapists when it wants to—provided they do not belong to state organizations.

Nadine Marroushi
middleeasteye.net
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In the late hours of a Cairo evening two weeks ago, a woman was sitting in a car with a man by the side of the road. Two passing police officers stopped and ordered the two out of the car then insisted they would drive the woman home. Instead, they raped her.

Known cases of sexual violence crimes by state and non-state actors have been on the rise in Egypt over the past four years. At the same time, police officers have not been held accountable for the crimes they have committed, a point that is particularly significant in an uprising that was largely motivated by impunity for crimes committed by a brutal police force.

So who do people turn to, if they can't rely on the police to protect them?

Earlier this year, in June, newly elected President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi ordered the interior ministry, responsible for Egypt's police force, to take all necessary measures to combat the "sexual harassment" of women after a series of attacks—which would have been more appropriately described as sexual assaults—took place around his swearing-in in Cairo's Tahrir Square.

At least nine women, who were there to celebrate Sisi's victory, were sexually assaulted and violently beaten by mobs of men between June 3 and 6. The attacks drew widespread criticism from human rights groups for the state's failure to curb a growing problem.

One 42-year-old woman in Tahrir Square with her daughter was stripped naked and violently attacked, leaving her backside bloodied and bruised. The attack was recorded and the video, uploaded onto YouTube, sent shockwaves through society. She also sustained injuries to her genitalia and hot water burns on 40 percent of her body.

This was just the latest in a series of documented incidents of mob and other sexual assaults in Tah-

rir Square. More than 90 attacks were reported in the week of June 30, 2013, alone, when thousands of protesters were in the public square calling for then president Mohamed Morsi to resign.

On Jan. 25, 2013, at least 25 women were sexually assaulted by mobs in the square. One woman was raped with a knife. And there are numerous other, similar incidents that have been documented in 2012, 2011 and further back.

So what does the recent incident of police officers raping a woman have to do with the mob sexual assaults in Tahrir? Two things: State impunity and denial. Let's start with the latter.

Mervat Tallawy, head of the National Council for Women, a state body formed to propose women-empowering policies, denied that rape or any form of violence against women took place in Egypt's prisons, saying that these were rumors made to ruin Egypt's image abroad and to make the June 30 "revolution" that ousted Morsi a failure.

"It's not possible for a para-military organization to do such things inside prison," Tallawy said.

Documentation by human rights groups and journalists contradicts this. The El-Nadeem Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, a Cairo-based non-governmental organization, has long been documenting incidents of rape inside and out of Egypt's prisons, particularly those committed by state actors, that go back to at least the 1990s.

In 2012, El Nadeem documented the case of a 30-year-old housewife who was raped inside Matareya police station. Between 2012 and 2013, they continued to document incidents of rape and threats of rape committed against detained men and women by uniformed police officers and their plain-clothed aides.

On July 1, Amnesty International published a report saying that there had been a surge in arbitrary arrests and torture in the past year. It included testimonies from male detainees who allege that they were raped in police detention.

Earlier this year, two male po-

litical dissidents claimed they were raped by plain-clothed officers inside police stations, according to the Guardian newspaper. Threats of rape have also been documented inside Egypt's military jails.

A report produced by the International Coalition for Egyptians Abroad, a group affiliated with Morsi's supporters, estimates there have been 1,585 female detainees between July 3, 2013, and June 2014 and highlights allegations of rape and threats of rape.

In September, a policeman was referred to criminal trial on charges of raping a mentally ill woman at a Cairo police station. The interior ministry issued a statement at the time saying it "does not cover-up any incident attributed to policemen. It takes the necessary actions to investigate them strictly ... and that deterrent measures are taken against all those involved in its commission."

It was a welcome admission by the interior ministry, and yet we still have Tallawy's contradictory statement. Denying that a problem exists, and blaming rape allegations on a political battle over narratives, undermines people's testimonies and serves only to offer further impunity for the perpetrators of such crimes.

And there have been numerous testimonies of women being raped by police officers outside of prison.

In a harrowing account, a female political activist recounted to British-Egyptian journalist Sarah Carr how in December last year, after being regularly followed and harassed by state security agents and plain-clothed officers, she was raped in a non-residential neighborhood in central Cairo.

Al-Azhar university student Nada Ashraf recalled to a news website that in the same month, after trying to help a female student who was being harassed by a police officer, she was caught instead, and he took her to his police vehicle and raped her.

In early 2011, a 35-year-old British female humanitarian worker was raped by an Egyptian army officer at a security checkpoint in

North Sinai. This summer, a British businesswoman in her 40s claimed she was raped by a security guard in a five-star hotel in the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh.

Also this summer, a German tourist alleged that an Egyptian police officer had raped her and her mother in the Red Sea resort of Hurghada. The officer was arrested but released when the tourist dropped her complaint, according to the state-run Ahram Online news site.

Those are the stories we hear about. There are likely many more in a country where human rights groups say sexual violence crimes are under-reported due to social conservatism about the issue and fears of further harassment by the police.

According to a 2013 study partly funded by UN women, 93.4 percent of women who were subjected to sexual harassment in the streets did not report the crime to the police. Among the six reasons given for not doing so were fears about their reputation, a lack of knowledge about their rights, and fears of further harassment by policemen.

If the police are perpetrators of sexual violence crimes, the state has little moral authority to uphold the law and punish crimes of sexual violence that take place by ordinary citizens. These crimes will also continue being under-reported.

The police-as-perpetrators is also nothing new. In 2005, in an incident known as Black Wednesday, women protesters and journalists were sexually assaulted by mobs of pro-regime men as the police stood by and watched. The following year, women were chased and sexually harassed by mobs of youth in downtown Cairo, again, as policemen reportedly stood-by and did nothing.

Yet the law comes down with a heavy hand when it comes to non-state actors. Ten defendants, who are accused of kidnapping and raping a woman from the governorate of Kafr el-Sheikh in 2006, are being considered for the death penalty, the maximum penalty for rape in Egypt.

The defendants in the case for the June 2014 mob sexual assaults received between 20 years to life in prison for their crimes.

And yet when it comes to allegations of police officers raping and sexually assaulting women we hear of little follow-through with regards to their punishment.

If Egypt is to deal with its problem of sexual violence, and President Sisi is serious about his commitment to eradicating such crimes as sexual harassment, the first example he needs to make is of the police. For them, there should be a zero-tolerance policy for crimes of sexual violence in order for ordinary people, women and men, to feel safe in their midst.

Nadine Marroushi is a British-Palestinian journalist who has worked for Bloomberg and the English edition of Al-Masry Al-Youm (also known as Egypt Independent), and as a freelance journalist has written for The National newspaper in the UAE, and the London Review of Books blog. She has also been published by the Financial Times, and other international publications.

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ADVERTORIAL

Universal Touring Company opens new branch

The Universal Touring Company opened its new branch on Al-Zubrai Street on December 25. Omar Mohamed Omar, the deputy head of the boards of director, and Mahmoud Al-Shaibani, the general manager of the company besides other managers were in attendance.

The new branch will be offering excellent services in preparing tourist programs to Turkey, Malaysia, Egypt, Singapore and other destinations. This branch will also issue travel tickets, make hotel bookings, and issue International Driving Permit.

During the opening ceremony, Fikri Al-



Shaibani and Aref Al-Masoodi were honored in tribute to their excellent performance over 2014. On the opening of this new branch, the universal touring company offers its warmest congratulations to its clients on the occasion of the new year.

ADVERTORIAL

New Horizons Awarded Top Training Company

New Horizons Learning Centers has again earned a spot among the Top 20 Information Technology (IT) educational companies in the world for the seventh straight year since the award was first established in 2008 by the leading website TrainingIndustry.com.

This prestigious award recognizes New Horizons' excellence in leadership and innovation in IT training, breadth of IT training, delivery methods offered, geographic reach, and other qualifying criteria.

Selection to this year's Top 20 IT Training Companies List was based on the following criteria:

- Leadership and innovation in IT training
- Breadth of IT training and delivery methods offered
- Company size and growth potential
- Quality and number of clients/users
- Geographic reach
- Awards, recognition, and competitive differentiation

"The Top 20 IT Training Companies list continues to get stronger and more global in nature every year," said Ken Taylor, Training Industry Inc.'s Chief Operating Officer. "We have added several new companies to the list this year, as we strive to showcase companies that can truly deliver the full portfolio of IT training



that every corporation needs to provide their employees."

"The organizations selected for the 2014 list showcase the best this segment of the industry has to offer," said Doug Harward, Training Industry Inc.'s Chief Executive Officer. "This segment of the training industry continues to experience a shift in customer demand, from topics they want, to the modalities they want delivered."

About New Horizons Computer Learning Centers

With over 300 centers in 70 countries, U.S.-based New Horizons Worldwide Inc. (Pink Sheets: NWRZ.PK) is the world's largest I.T. training company. Through an integrated learning approach that ensures that new knowledge can be applied to real-life situations, New Horizons delivers a full range of technology and business skills training from basic application and desktop productivity tools to complex and integrated business systems. New Horizons continues to expand its offerings, locations, and solutions to meet the growing demands placed on organizations and their employees. For more information, visit our global website at www.newhorizons.com.

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New Horizons Awarded Top IT Training Company

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