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Staff working in Yemen's embassy in Paris, including acting embassy representative Esmahan Abd Al-Hamid Al-Towqi, took part in a "Unity march" held in the city on Monday, along with hundreds of thousands of French citizens and several dozens of world leaders, in condemnation over the attacks that took place at the offices of French magazine Charlie Hebdo Jan. 7.

## Southerners commemorate Reconciliation and Tolerance Day

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

**SANA'A, Jan. 12**— Southerners have been converging on Aden governorate since Sunday to mark the eighth anniversary of Reconciliation and Tolerance Day on Tuesday.

Radfan Al-Dubais, a spokesperson for Southern Movement protestors at Al-Arood Square in Aden, said preparations were "in full swing for the anniversary" and that the square was already teeming with people.

The event is being organized by the Supreme Supervisory Committee, a body formed by the Southern Movement during its October protests at Al-Arood Square in 2014.

One of the committee members involved in preparations, Abd Al-Raouf Al-Sakkaf, said a strong showing at each anniversary "signals [southerners'] unwavering desire to forget the past and build their future. It also demonstrates that southern people are one hand

and share the same fate."

"On Tuesday, we will organize a march calling on the international community to listen to our demands. The National Dialogue Conference has failed and the Gulf Initiative is no longer guiding the political transition in Yemen," Al-Sakkaf told the Yemen Times on Monday.

The Reconciliation and Tolerance Day was launched in 2006 by the Radfan Charitable Society, a philanthropic organization based in the Radfan area of Lahj governorate and founded by Mohammad Hassan. It is funded by southern expats and works to improve basic services and infrastructure throughout the southern governorates. The society began celebrating the day of tolerance with the intention of bringing southern people together and helping them overcome past disputes—in particular the civil war that ravaged South Yemen in 1986.

Conflict broke out on Jan. 13 of

that year following tensions between former Southern President Ali Nasser Mohammad and others within his Socialist Party, which had ruled South Yemen since the British withdrawal in 1967.

"Subsequent struggles have pushed southerners to unite and put aside their past rifts," explained Al-Sakkaf. "This occasion reminds us of our past mistakes and motivates us to unite for the sake of southern independence."

Ali Al-Sarari, a member of the Socialist Party's political office in Sana'a, does not support the idea of southern independence, but welcomed Tuesday's festivities. "The southerners have shown that they remain united in the struggle. The Socialist Party gives its full support to the celebration. We cannot afford to have division in the south," he said. "Those were dark days, we should overcome the past and be open to the future."

Organized groups from Shabwa left for Aden on Monday. Mahdi

Al-Khulaifi, a member of the organizing committee in Shabwa, told the Yemen Times that participants will begin congregating in Ataq, the capital of Shabwa, before joining with others from the governorates of Lahj, Abyan, and Al-Dhale for celebrations in Aden.

"The first gathering point will be in Al-Arm district in Shabwa. The second gathering point will be in Shuqra of Abyan governorate, and the third gathering point will be on the outskirts of Aden. We'll reach Aden before sunset," said Al-Khulaifi.

Previous anniversaries have been marred by violence, as in 2012 when three were killed and at least 13 injured as government forces dispersed crowds. Abdul Rahim Al-Awlaqi, a member of the Supreme Supervisory Committee, told the Yemen Times the celebrations are intended as a peaceful event focused on enhancing southern cohesion, and are not being directed against the government.

## High ranking officer assassinated in Ibb

■ **Ali Aboluhom**

**SANA'A, Jan 11**— Two gunmen riding a motorbike assassinated Abbas Al-Maghrabi, head of the Information Department at Ibb governorate's Security Department Monday morning.

Al-Maghrabi was travelling to work in Ibb's Al-Dhahar district when he was attacked by unknown assailants at 9:00 am, according to eye witnesses.

Saeed Mahmoud, 24, a local shop owner from Al-Dhahar, told the Yemen Times he stepped out of his shop after hearing gunfire. "I saw an officer lying on the road with two bullet wounds in his neck," he said, adding that the gunmen fled the scene immediately.

Mohammad Enan, an officer from the Investigations Department at Ibb's Security Department, said Al-Maghrabi was believed to be affiliated with the Houthis. He claims that after the gunmen fled, Houthis took over the crime scene and "even prevented security forces from entering."

Armed Houthis were deployed in neighboring areas following the attack in an attempt to find the culprits, he added.

"Houthis in Ibb think they can replace the security apparatus and protect the people, while undermining the efforts of security officials and meddling in their affairs," Enan said. "They are still an illegal group. Maintaining security in the governorate is our job, not theirs."

Shawqi Al-Tawiti, the head of the

media department for Houthis in Ibb, said his group contacted the Security Department following the incident, but that it was slow to respond. They decided therefore to take matters into their own hands.

"Instead we enforced our own security measures, deploying our men to avoid further assassination attempts and to look for the assassins," he said, adding that Houthi popular committees were "working in cooperation with the security office."

Al-Tawiti said that in order to avoid such incidents, his department would "soon" introduce new security measures in the governorate that would include a ban on weapons and unlicensed motorbikes. He believes the attack was likely orchestrated by members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), who he says "always use motorbikes when committing assassinations."

No one, including AQAP, has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

Houthis took control of Ibb city in October of last year, following clashes with Islah-affiliated militias that left dozens killed and injured.

Al-Maghrabi is the fifth high-ranking government official to be assassinated in Ibb governorate in less than a year. Most have died at the hands of armed motorcyclists. Colonel Ali Hamoud Al-Hakami, head of the Investigations Department for Ibb, was killed as recently as Dec. 20.

In response to the spate of killings, the Ministry of Interior issued a directive on Monday for all gunmen on motorbikes to be apprehended as a precautionary measure.



Southerners converged on Aden on Sunday in the lead up to the celebration of Reconciliation and Tolerance Day on Jan. 13.

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# 359 violations in 2014 against journalists and media outlets

■ **Bassam Al-Khameri**

**SANA'A, Jan. 12**—The number of violations against journalists and media outlets have increased in 2014, according to the Freedom Foundation for Media Freedom, Rights and Development in Yemen.

The foundation released a report on Sunday, saying that 359 violations have been recorded against journalists and media outlets operating in the country, compared with 282 the previous year. Violations included killings, attempted killings, kidnappings, false imprisonment and threats, according to the report.

The Freedom Foundation is a non-governmental organization founded in 2012 by Yemeni journalist Khaled Al-Hammadi.

Al-Hammadi told the Yemen Times that violations targeted journalists, government and private media outlets, and foreign media working in Yemen. He said growing political conflict lay behind an increase in violations.

Mohammad Al-Hassani, a journalist and editor-in-chief for the Al-Tagheer website, said reporters could be targeted by any group simply because of the stories they cover.

"It's very difficult for journalists to work in this environment because they are afraid of being targeted," he said. "The state should perform its duties and provide protection for journalists and media

outlets."

According to Al-Hammadi, the government has not taken any steps to guarantee the safety of journalists and media outlets operating in the country. "Just as we were waiting for the government to expand media freedoms, we find that they have abandoned those rights," he said.

Al-Hammadi has made repeated appeals to the authorities through his organization to ensure journalists and their employers are protected from censorship and attack, and has called on the government to include articles in the new constitution ensuring the rights and freedoms of those working in media.

Mohammad Hizam, deputy head of the Public Relations Department for the Interior Ministry, said, "We received several complaints from journalists and media outlets and the majority of these complaints were against the Houthis."

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, told the Yemen Times that human rights organizations like the Freedom Foundation are prone to being biased against Houthis.

"Over 90 people from Ansar Allah [the Houthis] were killed in assassinations and explosions in 2014, but none of the organizations covered this issue. We don't deny some wrongdoing on our part, but both sides should be covered," he said.

Al-Hammadi concedes the number of violations has increased since Houthis took over the capital on Sept. 21, but did not draw a direct link between the two.

His organization identified eight parties responsible for violations against journalists and media outlets.

The military and security apparatus were responsible for 19.4 percent of violations, government authorities 4.7 percent, political parties 0.3 percent, armed groups 30.6 percent, influential figures 8.1 percent, judicial bodies 1.2 percent, employers 10.9, and anonymous or unknown actors for 24.8 percent.

The documented violations included two murder cases, 13 attempted murders, 29 arrest and detention cases, 58 physical attacks, 12 kidnappings or disappearances, four unfair trials, 25 cases of arbitrary dismissal, 42 cases of looting or sabotage, 44 cases of incitement, 50 cases of prevention or confiscation of journalistic equipment, and 80 threats.

On Aug. 15 of last year, Abdulrahman Hameed Al-Deen, radio director at the state-run Sana'a Radio, was assassinated by unknown gunmen. On Dec. 6, the American photojournalist Luke Somers was killed in Shabwa governorate by members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Yemen Today TV was stormed and looted on June 11 by mem-



Noting an increase in violations against journalists and media outlets, groups like the Freedom Foundation have renewed calls for the government to ensure the safety of journalists working in Yemen.

bers of the Presidential Protection Guard. Suhail TV was stormed on Sep. 22 by gunmen affiliated with the Houthis, who also stormed the state-run Al-Thawra newspaper on

Dec. 16.

Regarding plans to prevent such violations in the future, Hizam said the interior minister, Jalal Al-Rwaishan, has given orders to

study these cases and find solutions for these violations.

"But the problem is will the ministry be able to perform within this complicated situation?" he asked.

## Raid frees tribesmen in Rada'a city

Story and photo

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

**SANA'A, Jan. 11**—At least five men were killed and an unknown number injured in a raid launched Sunday night by armed tribesmen on Houthi headquarters in downtown Rada'a, Al-Baida governorate. The raid was launched to free five tribesmen who had been apprehended and detained by the Houthis on Saturday, according to tribal sources.

Hassan Al-Qaifi, a resident of Rada'a who lives near the headquarters, told the Yemen Times that clashes outside the building lasted for nearly an hour Sunday night, and that heavy weaponry, including rocket launchers, had been used. Al-Qaifi claimed the

building also served as the home for a number of Houthi popular committee leaders. "Five Houthis and two tribesmen were killed, and five tribesmen who had been held in the facility were released," he said.

Walid Al-Dailami, a Houthi leader in Rada'a city, refused to comment on the number of casualties sustained by the Houthis during the raid, and denied that captives had been held in the building, which he also described as the group's headquarters in the city.

Al-Dailami told the Yemen Times that the Houthis had undertaken an arrest campaign on Saturday against tribesmen in the city suspected of being affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). All those who

had been detained had since been handed over to security forces, he said. He specifically mentioned that homes belonging to the Ghalis and Al-Qali families had been targeted, and that its members were known AQAP sympathizers.

Saleh Ahmed Al-Qali, one of the tribesmen who took part in the raid, and whose family's home was allegedly targeted during the arrest campaign, claimed that five Houthis and three tribesmen had been killed in the fighting on Sunday. Another tribesman, who sustained injuries, died of his wounds Monday morning. Al-Qali denied that those arrested were AQAP sympathizers, and confirmed that five tribesmen had been detained at the headquarters. All of them, he said, had been freed during the raid.

Rada'a district security chief, Ali Maqsham, denied that Houthis had transferred any prisoners or detainees into the custody of security forces on Saturday or in the days following. He could not confirm the number of casualties sustained on either side during the raid.

The clashes took place two days after nine Houthis riding in two military vehicles were killed by armed tribesmen at the northern entrance to Rada'a city, according to both Al-Qali and Al-Dailami.

Houthis took control of Rada'a city and surrounding areas on Oct. 17, following several weeks of clashes with armed tribesmen in the area that claimed dozens of lives. Rada'a city and the surrounding areas have witnessed continued clashes since then.

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

**SANA'A, Jan. 12**—Sana'a city continues to experience severe gas shortages since Jan. 5, with residents desperate to purchase fuel forced to wait in long queues at gas stations.

Abd Al-Qadr Al-Adini, Media Spokesman for the Ministry of Petroleum and Minerals, confirmed to the Yemen Times on Sunday that Sana'a has been witnessing a fuel shortage, claiming that gas shipments from reserves in neighboring Marib governorate were not being delivered to the capital. Al-Adini would not comment on the reason for the shortage or why gas shipments had not been transported.

Mohammad Al-Qudaymi, director of the supply administration of the Yemen Liquefied Natural Gas Company (Y LNG), confirmed that Sana'a had been suffering from fuel crises for reasons beyond the company's control. "The problems leading to the crisis have been addressed, and beginning Monday, fuel shipments will resume," he said. "However I cannot comment regarding the reasons behind the shortage."

Local media sources have published reports accusing various actors of being responsible for the shortages. On Sunday morning, the Yemen Press and Al-Sahwa newspaper published reports indicating that Houthis had ordered Y LNG management to withhold fuel in an attempt to justify a Houthi attack on Marib governorate, where the gas shipments come from.

Muhammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, rejected claims that Houthis were attempting to create a crisis to justify

military intervention in Marib. "Forces within Yemen that are hostile to Ansar Allah [the Houthis] are seeking to discredit the movement," he said.

Al-Bukhaiti blamed Marib tribesmen, accusing them of colluding with unspecified government bodies to withhold gas shipments as a means of discrediting the Houthis. "We've contacted the Prime Minister's office alert-



Local media sources have published reports accusing various actors of being responsible for the gas shortages in the capital, which began on Jan. 5.

ing them of the crisis," he said. "They haven't moved an inch."

The Yemen Times spoke with Badi Rajeh, press secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, regarding the reasons for the crisis. "The government has so far not reviewed or discussed the causes for the gas shortage," he said. "The Ministry of Oil and Minerals bears responsibility for what has transpired."

Most governorates in Yemen are suffering from gas shortages but have enough reserves to last them through the next several weeks, according to Jamal Al-Sabri, director of imports within the Ministry of Oil and Minerals.

Yemen previously witnessed widespread gas shortages in the months leading up to June 30 when President Hadi announced that the government would lift fuel subsidies.



Houthis took control of Rada'a city on Oct. 17. Clashes with armed tribesmen have continued ever since, leading to dozens of deaths on both sides.



# Thousands of armed tribesmen mobilize in Marib



Marib produces the majority of Yemen's oil for export and domestic use. Attacks on oil pipelines and infrastructure in the governorate between 2012 and 2014 have already cost the state upwards of \$6.9 billion in losses.

Story by **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**  
Photo by **Amal Al-Yarisi**

**SANAA, Jan. 11**—Marib governorate has witnessed a large influx of armed tribesmen entering the governorate since Saturday. Reinforcements from Al-Jawf, Al-Baida and Sa'ada governorates have begun joining local tribes to help defend the governorate against any possible assaults by the Houthis, otherwise known as Ansar Allah.

"We've received reinforcements

from Al-Baida, and Al-Jawf, and even tribesmen from the Al-Ketaf and Al-Baqa districts in Sa'ada governorate," said Saleh Lanjaf, a sheikh from the Sahil tribe located in Marib governorate's Sahil area.

Lanjaf, who is stationed on the front lines along the governorate's entrances, told the Yemen Times on Monday that upwards of 30,000 armed tribesmen were stationed in the area. "They help us defend Marib from the Houthis," he said. Lanjaf claimed tribesmen in the area were in possession of six tanks,

450 various military vehicles, and a large stockpile of heavy weaponry.

"I arrived with 500 of my brothers on Sunday to fight the Houthis and help protect government facilities," said Abdullah Al-Waili, an armed member of the Waila tribe, which is located in the Al-Ketaf and Al-Baqa districts in the eastern region of Sa'ada governorate. "We've suffered at the hands of the Houthis and know how dangerous they truly are," he said. "We don't want the same for the rest of Yemen." Al-Waili tribesmen

clashed with Houthis in Sa'ada governorate in 2010 when the latter allegedly attempted to take over land belonging to the Al-Waili tribesmen. Sporadic clashes have continued since.

According to Lanjaf, 13,000 fighters were strategically placed along the governorate's borders with Sana'a and Al-Jawf governorates. "An additional 17,000 are located 3 kilometers inland," he said. "If Houthis attempt to enter and takeover Marib, our plan is to attack oil pipelines

and the government's electricity infrastructure, including power plants and transmission towers," he added.

Ahmed Al-Asbahi, deputy security chief of Marib governorate within the Ministry of Interior, told the Yemen Times that security forces in the area were awaiting orders from superiors as to how to proceed. "As of now, we've received no orders from superiors in the Capital Secretariat or anywhere else, and our plan is to remain neutral," he said. "If we receive other orders, we'll implement them, however as of now no plan of action has been drawn up, and if clashes take place, which is likely, we will not intervene." Al-Asbahi could not comment on the number of tribesmen who had entered Marib and mobilized in recent days.

On Jan. 2, armed tribesmen seized a convoy of weapons and military equipment from the 62nd Mechanized Brigade, as it was passing through Marib on its way to Sana'a governorate. Tribal and government sources since reported that talks between the two sides were taking place to negotiate a return of the weapons, but did not produce any results. Tribesmen claimed they seized the weapons to arm themselves against Houthis who they suspected were planning on taking over the governorate.

Mohammad Buhaibeh, a prominent sheikh within Marib's Murad tribe, who has taken part in negotiations with the government over the seized weapons cache, claimed the weapons and equipment had already been distributed amongst the tribesmen. "Collecting and returning the weapons at this point would be too difficult," he told the Yemen Times on Sunday. "Trying to do so isn't realistic." Buhaibeh, who does not consider himself to be "anti-government, or even anti-Houthi," declared that tribesmen, "Will fight to the death against anyone who tries to take over the governorate." He added that the seized weapons from the 62nd Mechanized Brigade included several tanks, military vehicles, rocket launchers, ammunition, and artillery.

Salah Al-Ezzi, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, told the Yemen Times on Sunday that according to deals reached between the Houthis and local tribesmen, Houthis were not allowed to enter Marib without permission from local sheikhs. Al-Ezzi is unsure, however, whether Houthis will continue upholding their end of the bargain. "Members

of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) are operating in the area," he said. "Local residents must work with us [the Houthis] to expel them from the governorate. If not, we're entitled to do so ourselves."

Muhammad Al-Bukhaiti, also a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, played down the possibility of the Houthis entering Marib, claiming that locals were to heavily armed. "Neither we [the Houthis] nor the state can penetrate Marib," he said. "Locals are too well armed with weapons they seized from the 62nd brigade. Furthermore, if war was to break out in the area, tribesmen would ally themselves with AQAP members in the area and destroy government facilities, including oil pipelines and electricity stations, something we'd like to avoid."

On Nov. 9, Houthis had taken over the Al-Mas military base in Marib's Jedaan district, a site that they currently remain in control of. Two weeks later, on Nov. 25, Houthis and leaders from the Obaidah, Jedaan, and Murad tribes in Marib signed a ceasefire agreement. The deal contains 13 articles spelling out a series of conditions that, if adhered to, would prohibit Houthis from entering the governorate. Among them were provisions stating that tribesmen were obligated to protect governorate infrastructure, facilities, and roads. Article 5 of the agreement obligates local tribesmen to prevent the spread of AQAP throughout Marib.

Marib governorate is an oil rich region that produces a majority of Yemen's petroleum derivatives, and possesses a number of pipelines used to transport oil to the country's various seaports for export abroad. Revenue from oil exports are reported to make up between 70 and 80 percent of state revenue and 25 percent of Yemen's GDP. Repeated attacks on oil pipelines and infrastructure in Marib and other governorates between 2012 and 2014 have cost the state upwards of \$6.9 billion in losses, according to statistics released by Yemen's Cabinet last December. Marib's Sarwah district is also home to a large power plant that provides electricity to six of Yemen's 22 governorates, including the Capital Secretariat of Sana'a. Attacks on the plant and other facilities could potentially leave much of the country without electricity and fuel and lead to a wider crisis throughout the country.

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# Charlie Hebdo: The danger of polarized debate

**Gary Younge**  
theguardian.com  
First published Jan. 11

In times of crisis, those who would like us to keep just one idea in our heads at any one time are quick to the megaphones. By framing events in Manichean terms—dark versus light; good versus evil—an imposed binary morality seeks to coral us into crude camps. There are no dilemmas, only declarations. What some lack in complexity they make up for in polemical clarity and the provision of a clear enemy.

A black man kills two policemen in their car in New York, and suddenly those who protested against the police killing unarmed black people across the country and going unpunished have blood on their hands. Sony pulls a film about the fictional assassination of a real foreign leader after threats of violent reprisals, and suddenly anyone who challenged the wisdom of making such a film is channelling their inner Neville Chamberlain. Straw men are stopped and searched in case they are carrying nuance and then locked up until the crisis is over. No charges are ever brought because a trial would require questions and evidence. You're either with us or against us.

The horrific events of the past week have provided one such crisis. From both the left and right, efforts to explain the assassinations at

**“It’s about Islam; it has nothing to do with Islam; it’s about foreign policy; it has nothing to do with foreign policy; it’s war; it’s criminality; it’s about freedom of speech, integration, racism, multiculturalism.”**

Charlie Hebdo magazine, a Kosher supermarket and elsewhere inevitably become reductive. Most seek, with a singular linear thesis, to explain what happened and what we should do about it: It's about Islam; it has nothing to do with Islam; it's about foreign policy; it has nothing to do with foreign policy; it's war; it's criminality; it's about freedom of speech, integration, racism, multiculturalism.

There is something to most of

these. And yet not enough to any one of them to get anywhere close. Too few, it seems, are willing to concede that while the act of shooting civilians dead where they live and work is crude, the roots of such actions are deep and complex, and the motivations, to some extent, unknowable and incoherent. The bolder each claim, the more likely it is to contain a qualifying or even contradictory argument at least as plausible.

Clearly, this was an attack on free speech. Despite the bold statements of the past week any cartoonist will now think more than twice before drawing the kind of pictures for which Charlie Hebdo became notorious. This principle should be unequivocally defended. It should also be honestly defined.

Every country, including France, has limits on freedom of speech. In 2005 Le Monde was found guilty of “racist defamation” against Israel and the Jewish people. In 2008 a cartoonist at Charlie Hebdo was fired after refusing to apologize for making antisemitic remarks in a column. And two years before the Danish paper Jyllands-Posten published the cartoons of Muhammad in 2006, it rejected ones offering a light-hearted take on the resurrection of Christ for fear they would “provoke an outcry.”

Far from being “sacred,” as some have claimed, freedom of speech is always contingent. All societies draw lines, that are ill-defined,

**“In 2005 Le Monde was found guilty of ‘racist defamation’ of Israel and the Jewish people. In 2008 a cartoonist at Charlie Hebdo was fired after refusing to apologizing for making anti-semitic remarks in a column.”**

constantly shifting and continually debated, about what constitutes acceptable standards of public discourse when it comes to cultural, racial and religious sensitivities. The question is whether those lines count for Muslims too.

The demand that Muslims should have to answer for these killings is repugnant. Muslims can no more be held responsible for these atrocities than Jews can for the bombings in Gaza. Muslims do not form a mono-

lithic community; nor does their religion define their politics—indeed they are the people most likely to be killed by Islamic extremists. The Paris killers shot a Muslim policeman; the next day a Muslim shop assistant hid 15 people in the freezer of a kosher deli while the shooter held hostages upstairs. Nobody elected these gunmen; they don't represent anyone.

That said, it is simply untenable to claim that these attackers had nothing to do with Islam, anymore than it would be to say the Ku Klux Klan had nothing to do with Christianity, or that India's BJP has nothing to Hinduism. It is within the ranks of that religion that this particular strain of violence has found inspiration and justification. That doesn't make the justifications valid or the inspirations less perverted. But it doesn't render them irrelevant either.

Those who claim that Islam is “inherently” violent are more hateful, but no less nonsensical, than those who claim it is “inherently” peaceful. The insistence that these hateful acts are refuted by ancient texts makes as much sense as insisting they are supported by them. Islam, like any religion, isn't “inherently” anything but what people make of it. A small but significant minority have decided to make it violent.

There is no need to be in denial about this. Given world events over the past decade or so, the most obvious explanation is also the most

**“Those who claim that Islam is ‘inherently’ violent are more hateful, but no less nonsensical, than those who claim it is ‘inherently’ peaceful.”**

plausible: The fate of Muslims in foreign conflicts played a role in radicalizing these young men. Working-class Parisians don't go to Yemen for military training on a whim. Since their teens these young men have been raised on a nightly diet of illegal wars, torture and civilian massacres in the Gulf and the Middle East in which the victims have usually been Muslim.

*Continued on the back page*

# Guantanamo's shameful 13th year

Recent inmate transfers offer a glimmer of hope but there is still much work to be done.

**Viviana Krsticevic**  
aljazeera.com  
First published Jan. 11

A traditional Uruguayan slow-cooked steak; a pair of orange prison uniform pants that will never be worn again waving like a victory flag out of a balcony window; the words “Long Live Freedom” scrawled in Spanish on black sands gleaming in the afternoon sun.

Days after the US military sent six cleared Guantanamo Bay detainees to Uruguay, these were some of the images published as part of a photo essay on Dec. 14 in the Miami Herald. The piece illustrated a vivid picture of human resilience after over a decade of extreme privation and suffering.

As inspirational as they were, the photographs also served as a stark contrast to the daily realities experienced by the former inmates during the course of their detention—realities still experienced by the 127 men still held there.

On Guantanamo's 13th anniversary, the US government must continue to work diligently without any more excuses to ensure due process for the remaining detainees and shut down one of the darkest holdovers from the “war on terror.”

## Glimmer of hope

In a joint declaration issued last year by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, several other UN agencies and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), the US was urged to “adopt all legislative, administrative, judicial, and any other types of measures necessary to prosecute, with full respect for the right to due process, the individuals being held at Guantanamo Naval Base or, where applicable, to provide for their immediate release or transfer to a third country.”

Yet, of the total of 779 men and boys that have been detained at Guantanamo Bay since 2002, only nine have been convicted of any crime. Of the 127 remaining detainees, 59 have been unanimously cleared by US intelligence and security agencies, of any involvement in terrorism but continue to await their release. The remaining 68 inmates are classified as “indefinite detainees,” a Kafka-esque category used for detainees ineligible for either trial or release.

These men will face Periodic Review Board hearings, an incipient interagency process that will assess whether an inmate poses a threat to the US or is eligible for transfer. However, this procedure lacks

**“Yet, of the total of 779 men and boys that have been detained at Guantanamo Bay since 2002, only nine have been convicted of any crime.”**

guarantees to due process and will likely prolong situations of arbitrary detention.

Moreover, as inmate transfers continue, the US must abide by the principle of “non-refoulement”, ensuring detainees' right to not be returned to a place where they will face persecution, torture or death.

This guarantee was not upheld with cleared inmate and Centre for Justice and International Law and Centre for Constitutional Rights' client Djamel Ameziane, who was forcibly repatriated back to his birth

country of Algeria despite stated fears of persecution and standing precautionary measures ordered in his favor.

Upon his return, Ameziane was detained by Algerian government agents as part of an “evaluation process” and subjected to abuses that left him in poor health.

Ameziane's forcible repatriation is only one of several other cases. In 2014, two other men were involuntarily repatriated to Libya and, in 2007, two others were sent back to Tunisia.

Resettling detainees back to countries that will expose them and their families to threats, persecution, and - in the case of detainees who are not cleared—to ongoing detention and torture, will only deepen years of suffering and injustice.

## The Power of the Executive

The US Senate committee's grisly report on the CIA's interrogation methods and the trickling repatriation of cleared inmates represent important steps towards making the truth of the “war on terror” available to the public. However, the question over how material and intellectual authors of torture will be held accountable in accordance with international law remains.

As party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel,

Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the US is not only forbidden from practicing torture but required to prevent and hold accountable any individuals who are involved in these particular kinds of human rights violations. Under this convention, US federal authorities are required to conduct “prompt and impartial investigations” of these crimes.

Additionally, under the Common Article Three of the Geneva Convention - the article which bars torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment against prisoners of war - the US could be held accountable for war crimes.

Finally, under international law, amnesty laws are not permitted and the authors of torture must be prosecuted - at home or abroad.

The public availability of documentation to establish the truth behind Guantanamo Bay will no doubt play a pivotal role in dismantling the architecture of state-sanctioned human rights abuses.

While the US Senate's scathing report revealed some of the most shocking instances of torture, its 6,700 pages are the tip of the iceberg.

In early December, a US judge ordered the disclosure of over 30 tapes depicting the controversial nasogastric force-feedings of hun-

ger strikers in Guantanamo, including Abu Wael Dhiab—one of the six men released to Uruguay. While attempts are being made by the Obama administration to overturn the ruling, human rights groups continue to demand for release of the tapes.

Almost six years after US President Barack Obama signed an executive order to shut down Guantanamo Bay, it is unfathomable that this international symbol for US human rights abuses remains open. The ongoing reluctance to punish those responsible for authorizing and using torture is even more unfortunate.

Yet, now more than ever, the US government can send a powerful message stating that no one is exempt from international accountability and prosecution. What is done now will start to ensure that torture—or “Enhanced Interrogation Techniques”—are never used by the US or other military and intelligence personnel in situations of conflict.

By promoting the pursuit of truth and justice, the US will finally be able to close one of the grimmest chapters in its history.

*Viviana Krsticevic is the executive director for the Centre for Justice and International Law.*

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**Taiz Bureau:**  
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# The unregulated boom of private universities



The media and marketing officer at the private University of Modern Sciences (photo) says that criticism against private education facilities do not apply to his institution, where scoring high marks requires substantial effort.

## ■ Mohammad Al-Khayat

Privatized education has been increasingly popular throughout the world, and Yemen is no exception. An increase in the number of private institutes in the last 20 years means more young Yemenis will have access to education, a crucial fact in a country where over 40 percent of the population is under 15 years of age. However it is possible to have too much of a good thing, however, and many in government and education

sectors have grown concerned by a lack of regulation.

Higher education in Yemen began with the founding of Sana'a University in 1970, in what was still the Yemen Arab Republic, and the University of Aden in 1975, the first in South Yemen.

The opening of Sana'a's University of Science and Technology (UST) in 1994, the country's first and one of its most reputable private universities, signaled the beginning of a new era for higher education in the newly unified Republic of Yemen.

Since then private colleges and universities continued opening throughout the country, particularly from 2000 onwards. According to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, there are now 58 registered private institutions in the country, compared with just 10 public universities. Government regulation has struggled to keep pace with these changes, and opinions are divided on the quality of education provided by private universities.

"An increase in the number of universities might be a sign of so-

ciety's progress, but in Yemen it's evidence of the opposite," says Dr. Rasin Al-Rasin, Assistant Professor of Arabic Language at Sana'a University.

"Private universities exploit students. They pay enormous amounts of money and don't receive a quality education," says Al-Rasin. "Private universities don't adhere to a specific curriculum, and in many cases, lectures are so simple that any student could pass their tests blind-folded."

If Al-Rasin's allegations are correct, in the end it is students who lose out. "Students enjoy easy lessons and are given high marks and don't realize that what's being done to them is a crime," says Al-Rasin. "It's only upon graduating and entering the job market that students find out he or she has no employable skills."

Hamed Al-Bashiri, the media and marketing officer at the University of Modern Sciences (UMS), a private university in Sana'a established in 2002, says Al-Rasin's criticism does not apply to his institution. Whatever the case may be at other private universities, he says that scoring high marks requires substantial effort and that those who do not put in work fail.

## Regulating private education

It comes as little surprise that opinions will differ between staff at public and private institutions. The higher education sector in Yemen is more competitive today than it has ever been, and innovation breeds contempt when pitted against established tradition. Nonetheless, there are concerns in government that private universities operate primarily as businesses and their students receive the grades they

pay for regardless of how they perform.

Regulating private education has become difficult given the pace of change, but Ali Qasim, undersecretary of the Students' Department in the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, says the government is keen to avoid what he sees as an "educational farce."

Qasim told the Yemen Times a special committee was formed in May 2014 to address the situation.

Composed of professors and other specialists working in the field, and headed by Qasim and the education minister, Mohammad Mutahar, the committee was created to carry out a thorough investigation into educational standards at private universities.

An initiative proposed by Mutahar, who was a professor of educational management at Sana'a University before joining the ministry in 2001, the committee is due to begin its work in February, although it has yet to receive a budget.

Qasim says the committee will publish reports based on its own investigations, and is empowered to revoke a university's accreditation if it is not meeting standards specified in the national law of higher education.

Standards are measured according to teaching practices and educational facilities. The latter may vary according to the size and type of institution, as is the case with science laboratories and equipment, but all colleges must meet minimum requirements in more general areas. Every university library, for example, must have a minimum of ten thousand books.

Any institution found lacking will be given a six-month grace pe-

riod to bring itself up to standard, after which its accreditation will be revoked if the necessary improvements have not been made in accordance with the committee's findings.

## An issue of rights

Not everyone in Yemen has a choice of what kind of education they receive. As a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, Yemen's accommodation for refugees includes access to education in urban areas. For the many who enter the country and are not granted refugee status, however, private education may be their only opportunity.

Mohammad Oraby, a media student at UST, is a Syrian national and as such is not eligible to study at a public university. In spite of the university's reputation, he has been disappointed with his studies.

"It was not at all what I expected," says Oraby. "The curriculum is a joke and the university's studios are just bait to attract students to register. Practical skills are not emphasized at all."

Oraby is convinced that private universities in Yemen, even reputable ones like UST, "are merely profit generating projects that don't care about providing quality educational services as much as they do about the financial return coming from it."

Opinions will clearly vary from one individual to the next, underscoring the need for unbiased assessments and standardized regulations. Oraby's case highlights the fact that education is a fundamental human right, and ensuring every institution is up to standards is critical in a market that not everyone has equal access to.

# YEMEN TIMES Radio

## التأسيس

"راديو يمن تايمز" هو أول إذاعة مجتمعية في صنعاء، حيث بدأ العمل في هذا المشروع في بداية 2012، والذي كان تأسيسه من أهم رؤى مؤسس يمن تايمز الراحل، البروفيسور عبد العزيز السقاف. ولذلك سعت الأستاذة / نادية السقاف رئيس تحرير صحيفة يمن تايمز إلى تحقيق فكرة المؤسس الراحل، من خلال تأسيس راديو يمن تايمز بمشاركة الكثير من المتطوعين والداعمين ومن أمن بأهمية الإعلام المستقل ودور الإذاعات المجتمعية.

وتعد إذاعة يمن تايمز جزء من مشروع أصواتنا، و هو برنامج دولي يدعم تأسيس الإذاعات المجتمعية في دول الربيع العربي. حيث يتمحور هذا البرنامج حول العرب الذين سعوا لأن تكون أصواتهم المستقلة مسموعة، بعيداً عن الاحتكارات الحكومية، أو التجارية، بحيث تكون نقطة انطلاق جديدة لكل من يريد الخوض في تجربة الإذاعات المجتمعية المستقلة.

## أهدافنا

يعمل "راديو يمن تايمز" على طرح وجهات نظر جديدة وموضوعات هامة للجمهور اليمني ويعايش قضايا المواطنين الذين يجيدون اللغة الانجليزية والعربية والأميين بشكل مباشر.

ويسعى أيضاً لإيجاد فضاءات جديدة لحرية الرأي والتعبير في اليمن عامة وفي العاصمة صنعاء خاصة ليكون راديو يمن تايمز «صوت من لا صوت لهم» وليعزز مفاهيم الديمقراطية وحرية الرأي والتعبير من خلال دوراته البرمجية المتنوعة التي تعالج قضايا المرأة والطفل وحقوق الإنسان وتدافع عن الحريات بواسطة إعلامها الهادف وبرامجها المتعددة والتي تخاطب بشفافية وموضوعية كل مستمعيها وتتسم بروح شبابية وإيجابية واضحة لكل من يتابعها سواء سكان صنعاء أو اليمن.

## رؤيتنا

للإعلام دور كبير ومهم في الدعوة للتغيير السلمي فهو ركيزة من ركائز التغيير نحو الأفضل، ولكن الصراعات السياسية اعتادت أن تفرض أجنداتاً على المؤسسات الإعلامية مما يخلق أثراً سلبياً واضحاً على طابع استقلال الإعلام و أثر بشكل مباشر على معايير أساسية مثل الحيادية والموضوعية.

وهنا تسعى " إذاعة يمن تايمز" لتعزز من دور مؤسساتها الإعلامية المستقلة لتصل إلى كل من لا تصل إليه عبر صحيفتها لتكون من الإذاعات الرائدة في اليمن التي جعلت من الحياء والإستقلال سياسة خاصة لها مواصلة بذلك سمعتها الحسنة التي استطاعت أن تفرضها من خلال سياسة الصحيفة على الرغم من عدم وجود قوانين منظمة لعمل الإذاعات الخاصة في اليمن.

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# 2015 Education Year: Challenges ahead

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

On Nov. 24, the prime minister declared 2015 “Education Year,” highlighting the need to improve the country’s educational system and its importance for Yemen’s future prosperity. It is no small task, for a range of economic and security concerns will need to be addressed before any substantial improvements can be made to schools throughout the country, particularly in rural areas affected by ongoing conflict.

An ominous reminder came just 20 days after the prime minister’s announcement, when an explosive-laden car detonated at a checkpoint in Rada’a, killing 16 girls who were passing on their way home from school. The tragedy provides some indication of the immense challenges facing government and Yemeni society if 2015 is really to be a year for education.

## Matching rhetoric with action

Speaking at a ceremony honoring the nation’s highest-achieving students for the 2013/14 school year, Prime Minister Bahah explained what Education Year meant to the government. Schooling, he said, needs to be made “accessible to children in a way that fulfills our goals of social and economic development,” enabling Yemeni citizens to “take part in fields of knowledge production and creativity.”

Meeting these lofty goals will require a range of initiatives—repairing infrastructure and building new facilities, providing sufficient learning materials, narrowing teacher-student ratios, and addressing gender disparities—especially in rural areas, where underfunding and conflict have compounded the problems facing schools there.

Addressing these issues will be difficult under current political and economic circumstances. Some feel that any real progress would require resources the government, and the Ministry of Education in particular, simply do not have.

“There are so many schools that need restructuring, particularly in rural areas. We need to build entirely new schools in many cities and villages,” said Isamel Zaydan, director of the Media Department at the Ministry of Education. “Then the schools need labs, chairs, and other equipment—making 2015 a

successful education year will be a big burden on the government and the Ministry of Education.”

Abdullah Al-Hamidi, deputy minister of education, acknowledged the magnitude of the task but is hopeful goals can be met if extra-governmental resources are pooled in the effort.

“There are 16,912 primary and secondary schools nationwide, and about 6 million students. Making 2015 a successful education year will be a big collective responsibility,” he said. “With desire and sound management we will be able to solve our problems. Thinking only about troubles is disheartening—difficult circumstances should motivate us to change them, not to give up.”

Those working in primary and secondary education have mixed feelings about the initiative. Abdurraqib Al-Katib, the principal of Al-Zubairi School in the Al-Wihda district of Sana’a, is weary about

**“Students get frustrated with the situation and drop out. They care more about carrying weapons than sitting in class.”**

any efforts that do not address more fundamental issues first. “There must be stability and security to guarantee good education. When the girls were killed in a terrorist attack in Rada’a, everyone was terrified, not only school children.”

Those working in education will remain skeptical of any far-reaching reforms until the security concerns are addressed, but will no doubt welcome any improvement to the situation.

Mohammad bin Mohammad, a school teacher in Erman Primary School in the Ans area of Dhamar governorate, which accommodates 110 children from first to sixth grade, says many of his students

are forced to take their lessons sitting on the ground. “Students don’t study in proper classrooms. Let alone having enough labs, chairs or tables,” he said.

Mohammad’s predicament is representative of the problems facing a majority of schools in rural areas, particularly those affected by conflict. According to a report released by the Ministry of Health in 2013, 71 percent of the population can be found in rural areas. In its most recent analysis, covering the period between 2008 and 2012, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported school attendance in urban areas at 83.3 percent, compared with 64.3 percent in rural areas. The disparity has no doubt grown larger with as conflict has increased since 2012.

It is in rural Yemen that reforms are most needed. Without the alternatives that schooling can provide young Yemenis with, a lack of educational resources can feed into a cycle of violence.

Abdulkarim Al-Khayat is a teacher at Sept. 26 School in Taiz city, but has been involved in training teachers in the governorate’s rural areas. Speaking of his experience at Gafar Al-Tayar School in the Mawia area, he says students were taught under trees because there were no classrooms.

“As far as I can tell, students get frustrated given this situation and drop out. They care more about carrying weapons than sitting in class,” he said.

## Lack of teachers in rural areas

Addressing security concerns and providing necessary infrastructure are fundamental prerequisites, but staffing and improving access to education for girls remain high on the agenda.

Al-Khayat also spoke of a chronic shortage of teachers, particularly in the sciences and in English classes. “Teachers simply do not want to teach in rough rural areas,” he said.

Before new teachers are brought in, those currently employed need to be retained. On Dec. 20, Minister of Education Abdulatif Haidar said the government would prioritize paying out teachers’ bonuses accumulated over 2013, which are due to be paid out throughout 2015. “Teachers are the cornerstone of the educational process and receiving their bonuses at this particular time will be a big motivation to help make 2015 a successful education year,” he said.

Al-Khayat says he is set to receive only YR2,100 (\$20) in bonuses, which will be added to his monthly salaries throughout the year. It is a small amount, admits Al-Khayat, who nevertheless understands the difficult economic situation the Yemeni government is in.

Government expenditure on bonuses amounts to YR60 million (\$279,000) for the current fiscal year, and is expected to reach 271,696 employees nationwide working in the education sector, according to the Ministry of Education.

More teachers are also necessary for addressing gender disparities. The government began working with the World Bank in 2007 to improve access to education for girls, which is sorely lacking in rural areas. By 2013 the Yemeni government had trained and recruited 1000 female teachers. A follow-up project was approved in Feb. 2013, which will run until 2018 and hopes to add 700 more female teachers.

While the World Bank has reported a substantial increase in the number of girls being enrolled at primary schools over the last decade, the gender disparity remains wide. Girls’ primary completion rate rose from 33 percent in 2000 to 53 percent in 2011, according to government statistics. The corresponding rate for boys has remained at least 20 percent higher. The gap is significantly wider in



On Nov. 24, Prime Minister Bahah declared 2015 ‘education year.’ The Ministry of Education seeks to improve indicators in Yemen’s education sector.

rural areas, and worsens for girls in secondary education.

In areas where female enrolment and retention in school is significantly lower than the national average, the government also offers conditional cash transfers to families to encourage them to allow their girls to attend school. The World Bank reported that 39,000 students had been reached by the initiative in the first project, and intends to continue it for the 2014-2018 period. International donors have already committed \$66 million to the Second Basic Education Development Project for Yemen.

It is clear that improving these

shortcomings and addressing the security situation will require a collaborative effort. “We need the cooperation of the private sector, civil society organization, and regional and international partners to make the sought-after educational change,” says deputy minister Al-Hamidi. “Depending on the government is not enough.”

To that end the government is seeking cooperation from a range of partners, such as the Tamkeen Development Organization, a local civil society organization founded in 2009 that is dedicated to furthering democracy and human rights in Yemen. Its director, Murad Al-Karati,

says civil society organizations are eager to work with the government to help make 2015 a successful year for education.

Mohammad Al-Asaadi, a communications officer with UNICEF, told the Yemen Times his team hopes to work closely with the government on the project. “We hope the education cluster, government, and private sector will come together this year to achieve remarkable progress in terms of decreasing dropouts, increasing enrollment, bridging the disparity gap between boys and girls and getting those displaced and marginalized back into classrooms,” he said.



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Girls primary completion rate in Yemen rose from 33 percent in 2000 to 53 percent in 2011. The gap is significantly wider in rural areas, and worsens for girls in secondary education.



# Millions of Iraqis displaced by ISIL

Throughout 2014, more than two million Iraqis were forced to seek refuge in other areas of the country.

**Suadad al-Salhy**  
aljazeera.com  
First published Jan. 12

**R**esallah Khalil, a 29-year-old mother of seven, has been living in an old warehouse hall in southern Baghdad along with her sister-in-law's eight-member family. The dark, stuffy, overcrowded hall is divided into dozens of 24-square-metre rooms by torn, unwashed clothes, and shelters around 1,000 people—most of whom are women and children.

Displaced from the northern Iraqi province of Salahudeen, most of them have witnessed fierce fighting between Iraqi troops backed by Shia militias and the fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"They [ISIL fighters] blew up our houses, burned our stuff and took everything and now we have nothing, live on crumbs and the gifts of others, and even we accepted to wear the old clothes that are full of lice," Khalil told Al Jazeera.

Three months ago, Khalil and many of her relatives were forced to flee from their villages in the town of Yathrib, about 170km north of Baghdad, in order to seek refuge in southern Baghdad. They were forced to relocate for safety reasons, after ISIL fighters attacked them and bombed their houses.

"We are trapped here at the mercy of others. The place is crowded, cramped and because of the high numbers [of displaced people], the children are always sick," Khalil said.

During 2014, more than two million Iraqis were internally displaced by conflict in northern and western Iraq. According to UN and Iraqi officials, most took refuge in the



According to UN and Iraqi officials, most Iraqi IDPs took refuge in the Kurdish regions, Baghdad, and the southern provinces.

Kurdish regions, Baghdad and the southern provinces.

The majority of displaced Iraqis are living in either temporary camps, which were settled by the UN mission in Iraq in cooperation with the Iraqi government, or are taking refuge in mosques and schools. The rest are hosted by relatives or volunteer families outside of the conflict zones.

Despite the fact that the Iraqi government had formed a special body known as the Supreme Committee

for Relief that provides shelter for IDPs with an open budget, some are living in miserable conditions that do not measure up to the acceptable conditions of normal life.

"Our biggest problem is the bathrooms. There are just a few bathrooms to be used by all of us [1,200 displaced people] so we have to stand in line to get in, and you can imagine the situation at night with this cold weather," said Um Mohammed, who lives in the sanctuary with a family of 14.

"They [the administration of the camp] give us three meals per day, milk and diapers for the children and we have a small clinic here but still, we are too many in a small space with no privacy, no schools and no money."

The Supreme Committee for Relief, headed by Salih Al-Mutlaq, the deputy prime minister, was set up in July to offer urgent aid to IDPs across the country. However, thousands of IDPs have been complaining of a lack of basic materials.

"The catastrophe is big and the displacement operations are uncontrolled. Thousands of families are randomly and suddenly moving from one area to another based on their sense of safety," Hussain Dawood, the secretary of the Supreme Committee for Relief, told Al Jazeera.

"The number of the displaced has exceeded 2,450,000 people. We are facing serious problems relating to supplying them with basic needs because of the contentious

displacement and the new military operations in the hot zones," Dawood said.

Shia Muslims and followers of Sufism and Christianity, along with moderate Sunnis and Yazidis—who accepted becoming a part of the new political system in Iraq—are viewed by ISIL as apostates who should be killed.

Thousands of civilians and troops have been killed in direct clashes or mass executions carried out by ISIL fighters since June, when the group overran the second largest Iraqi city, Mosul, without facing any real resistance from regular troops.

In the following weeks, ISIL fighters seized swaths of the neighboring provinces of Salahudeen and Kirkuk and are now controlling most of the cities and towns of the Sunni-dominated province of western Anbar.

Iraqi troops—backed by Shia militias, Kurdish forces and anti-ISIL Sunni tribesmen—have recently driven ISIL fighters out of strategic towns and villages in the provinces of Salahudeen, Diyala, Anbar and Nineveh.

Although ISIL fighters have been driven out of Jurf Al-Sakhar, a key supply route in southern Baghdad, Iraqi officials have not yet allowed people to return to their homes in these areas.

Many IDPs, particularly from Sunni-dominated areas, have complained that they were purposely not allowed to go back to their homes—specifically those living in the towns of Jalawlaa and Saadiya in Diyala and Jurf Al-Sakhar in southern Baghdad. But Iraqi officials said the return of IDPs to the liberated towns and villages largely depended on the evaluation of the troops on the ground.

*Continued on the back page*

# The Afghan cops who never were

**Siobhán O'Grady**  
foreignpolicy.com  
First published Jan. 12

**T**he United States spends more than \$300 million on Afghan National Police salaries each year. But the latest audit from the American watchdog for Afghan reconstruction found that lack of oversight may have allowed ANP personnel to inflate staff numbers and pocket a large chunk of that budget for themselves.

And although audit agencies at the multinational military force in Afghanistan identified weaknesses in the payroll system as early as 2006, the Pentagon and its international partners still don't seem to have taken appropriate measures to stop the fraud from occurring.

In other words, for almost the last decade, the United States may be paying for Afghan cops who aren't.

John Sopko, the special inspector general for Afghan reconstruction, or SIGAR, found there are almost twice as many ANP identification cards circulating as there are active police personnel. That means there could be just about as many "ghost police officers" — or invalid or uncontrolled identification cards — as there are actual active duty police. As of February 2014, over 300,000 identification cards had been distributed by Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior when there were fewer than 157,000 assigned personnel. In some cases, former police officers who are no longer active duty may still be on the payroll, and could be receiving monthly payments they haven't earned.

These extra cards don't only open the door to fraud, but also pose a threat to the security of police bases nationwide.

ANP officials in two provinces told Sopko's team they do not regularly use identification cards for any purpose at all, and in one instance, the inspectors found that 11 out of 35 Afghan police personnel on duty did not have their identification cards on them; two of them had at that point waited over a year to receive replacement cards. That's no small problem in country plagued by security breaches, including deadly terror attacks by police collaborating with the Taliban.

Sopko said the two electronic systems used to keep track of payroll data are not fully functional, and that because daily attendance is not electronically recorded, police could get paid whether they were showing up to work or not.

And while some ANP personnel might be getting paid more than they deserve, lack of oversight means other personnel might be cheated out of their salaries by corrupt officials. Nearly 20 percent of ANP staff is paid in cash, but there is no electronic payroll monitoring system in place. In some cases, the audit said, a police officer might receive as little as half his monthly salary, while the agent trusted to disperse the cash pockets the rest.

The US faced similar oversight challenges in its reconstruction projects in Iraq. In November, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi said that after the US spent more than \$20 billion training and equipping the Iraqi army, there were at least 50,000 soldiers on the payroll who



did not exist. Those that did proved their lack of mettle when the Islamic State went on a rampage this summer and Iraqi soldiers ditched their equipment and fled for their lives.

And, just as seems to be the case in Afghanistan, officers in Iraq pretend to have more soldiers on their books than they really do, only to pocket the extra salaries—some \$600 a month—for themselves.

ANP salaries and other payroll costs are covered by the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, a joint program established by the US and other international donors

and overseen by the United Nations Development Programme. As of last July, \$3.6 billion had been contributed to the fund and \$1.3 billion of that came directly from the United States.

But while billions of dollars have been pumped into the ANP since 2002, corruption and rule of law still top Sopko's list of the seven most high-risk threats to reconstruction in post-2014 Afghanistan. Speaking at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace last month, Sopko said that poor record-keeping and oversight was only perpetuating the

problem.

"The problem is that American taxpayer dollars and our strategic and humanitarian interests in Afghanistan are being placed at unnecessarily high levels of risk by widespread failure to track results, anticipate problems, and implement prudent countermeasures," he said.

The Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan, the Pentagon branch that oversees US government assistance to Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior, had the opportunity to respond to Sopko's audit before it was released to the public

on Monday. They welcomed all five of his recommendations, including a coordination effort between various ANP donors to implement a payroll and personnel tracking system. And the CSTC-A even said they will require the Afghan government to comply with strict regulations on record-keeping or face funding penalties.

US and NATO troops have ended their Afghanistan mission this year. But the risk of such financial mismanagement there—and all the attendant security lapses—is only going to get bigger.



# Was the 2011 uprising worth it?

■ **Mohammed Al-Qalisi**

**I**t is nearly four years to the day that over 16,000 Yemenis took to the streets of Sana'a demanding change, sparking a nationwide uprising that eventually led to

President Saleh's resignation. Protestors' immediate demands for a new government were largely met, but more fundamental issues that lay at the heart of the uprising, like government corruption and unemployment, have shown no signs of improvement, while the country's secu-

rity situation has deteriorated drastically.

With the benefit of hindsight, the Yemen Times took to the streets to get an idea of how young Sana'anis feel about the 2011 uprising today and if they think it's been worth all the trouble that has followed.

The uprising was technically successful because we removed Saleh, and people became more politically conscious. However, as a result we've seen the streets become filled with armed militias, a deterioration in the quality of state institutions, in particular education, and the loss of the army's power and control throughout the country.



**Naif Mohammad Ali**  
27-years-old, University Student majored in Information Technology

The uprising was necessary, however the involvement of political parties ruined the process. In the end it was all for nothing.



**Mohammad Muqbel Mahdi**  
21-years-old, Student in the University of Science and Technology

The goal of the uprising was to stamp out corruption, however what ended up happening was a settling of political scores. In the end, it was us the people who suffered the most.



**Mohammad Hussein Al-Saqqaf**  
35-years-old, Assistant oil-driller, Z.B. corporation

Very few people benefited from the uprising. Now, things became worse than before. Compared to how things are now, the state of the country before the uprising was like paradise. For me, the changing point came after the assassination attempt on former President Saleh. One of the things that has changed since 2011 is that we can't leave the house after sunset for fear of attacks and bombings.



**Mohammad Abdulsamad**  
26-years-old, Perfume street vendor

Change is necessary, but in order for an uprising to succeed it must have clear cut goals. Here, political parties hijacked the movement and got us to where we are today.



**Jihad Al-Salehi**  
23-years-old, Soldier

At the end of the day, the uprising was about settling political scores. The whole thing was uncalled for, things were much better before than they are now.



**Iman Abdullah**  
25-years-old, University Graduate



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## Millions of Iraqis displaced by ISIL

“Saadiya, for example, is a military zone until this moment, but we are doing our best to have people return to their homes,” Ahmed Al-Zarqooshi, the mayor of Saadiya, told Al Jazeera. “The problem is the area was destroyed either because of the booby traps set up by Daesh [ISIL] militants or by the military operations. The town is uninhabitable now. We need the evaluation of the security forces to be sure that people will be safe if they return.”

ISIL fighters have routinely booby-trapped areas they were forced to flee, targeting electricity poles, doors, sidewalks and water pipes, according to military officers.

Saadiya, whose population exceeded 50,000, is one of the disputed areas between the Kurdish semi-autonomous region and Baghdad.

It sheds light on the growing divisions between the Iraqi factions (Shia, Sunnis and Kurds) over land,

wealth and power. The majority of central Saadiya residents are Kurds, while the surrounding villages are made up of Sunni and Shia populations constituting more than 20 percent of the total population.

Iraqi Sunnis believe that Shia Muslims and Kurds may take advantage of the current situation to make demographic changes on the ground in areas liberated from ISIL by preventing Iraqi Sunnis in the mixed areas from going back to their homes.

Iraqi military officials dismiss these claims, saying they have different plans to deal with the situation in the liberated areas.

“As Shia, we do not need to make any demographic changes in these areas because the majority of them are already either Kurds or Sunnis, except two or three small towns—but we will take all the required measures to prevent ISIL sleeper

cells from going back to these areas,” a senior Badr Organisation leader told Al Jazeera on condition of anonymity. Badr is a key Shia militia fighting ISIL in Diyala.

“We will isolate the Shia-dominated areas and secure them by sound berms or ditches, disarm people in these areas, search for weapons and ammunition and appoint new administrations that have nothing to do with the militants. The wanted people will not come back, so we do not need to do any demographic changes.”

The UN mission in Iraq has called on the international community to allocate more funds to cover the additional urgent relief needed for the IDPs as winter sets in. They identified an urgent need for \$152m in order to cover the basic needs of close to a million displaced Iraqis across the Kurdish region. This comes as part of their revised Immediate Re-

sponse Plan II.

“The number of IDPs in Iraq has been increasing because of the military operations, so the UN renewed its calls to the donor countries to deliver more funds to cover the increased demand,” Elliana Nabaa, spokesperson for the UN mission in Iraq, told Al Jazeera. “Because of the cold weather, the demands increase.”

With sad eyes scanning the room divided by ragged cloth, Khalil said: “As long as my kids are unharmed, are not hungry, and have a roof above their heads, the rest does not matter.”

Continued from page 4

## Charlie Hebdo: The danger of polarized debate

In a court deposition in 2007, Chérif Kouachi, the younger of the brothers affiliated with al-Qaida who shot the journalists at Charlie Hebdo, was explicit about this. “I got this idea when I saw the injustices shown by television on what was going on over there. I am speaking about the torture that the Americans have inflicted on the Iraqis.”

In a video from beyond the grave

the other shooter, Amedy Coulibaly, claims he joined Islamic State to avenge attacks on Muslims. These grievances are real even if attempts to square them with the killers’ actions make your head hurt. France opposed the Iraq war; Isis and al-Qaida have been sworn enemies and both have massacred substantial numbers of Muslims. Not only is the morality bankrupt, but the

logic is warped.

But Islamists are not alone in their contradictions. Jan. 11 is the anniversary of the opening of Guantánamo Bay. Given the recent release of the US torture report or France’s role in resisting democratic change during the Arab spring, many of those who claim that this is a battle between liberty and barbarism have a foot in both camps.

This is why describing these attacks as criminal is both axiomatic and inadequate. They were not robbing a bank or avenging a turf war. Anti-terrorism police described the assault on the magazine as “calm and determined.” They walked in, asked for people by name, and executed them. Coulibaly killed a policewoman and shot a jogger before holding up a kosher supermarket

and killing four Jews. These were, for the most part, not accidental targets. Nor were they acts of insanity. They were calculated acts of political violence driven by the incoherent allegiances of damaged and dangerous young men.

They are personally responsible

for what they did. But we, as a society, are collectively responsible for the conditions that produced them. And if we want others to turn out differently—less hateful, more hopeful—we will have to keep more than one idea in our heads at the same time.



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