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Houthis takeover Al-Thawra newspaper

Minister of Info: Government will not become a puppet

■ Ali Aboluhom

SANA'A, Dec. 17—The Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, stormed the state-run Yemeni daily Al-Thawra newspaper on Tuesday evening, violating an agreement they reached with the Ministry of Information hours beforehand, according to the ministry.

Minister of Information Nadia Al-Sakkaf told the Yemen Times that she met with Ansar Allah representatives Tuesday morning. The meeting took place following three days of protests held by about 50 Al-Thawra staff members outside the newspaper building from Dec. 14-16. The protesters were demanding higher salaries, full coverage of transportation costs, and other work-related expenses.

"We agreed that we would work together in order to fight corruption and meet the protesters' demands, including raising their salaries and wages," Al-Sakkaf said.

The meeting between the minister and Houthi representatives Tuesday morning was also attended by Osama Sari, editor-in-chief of almasirah.net, the mouthpiece of Ansar Allah.

Sari told the Yemen Times that the Houthis stormed the Al-Thawra building as part of a "monitoring committee" set up by the Houthi Political Office. He said that according to the Houthis, the task of the committee was to review the newspaper's financial records and monitor corruption.

Marwan Damaj, the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper, was present when the Houthis stormed



First issue of Al-Thawra newspaper published after Houthis stormed its headquarters on Tuesday.

the newspaper Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. Damaj told the Yemen Times that he received instructions directly from the Ministry of Information not to publish the next day's issue.

Al-Sakkaf confirmed that the ministry ordered the editorial staff not to publish the next day's issue, and accused the Houthis of trying to impose their authority over the paper.

"They wanted to publish news and articles that would conflict with the policies of the newspaper. [They wanted to] publish news about Houthi 'revolutionary' committees in order to improve their image, which has suffered because of their behavior in Sana'a and other governorates."

Al-Sakkaf said future editions, including Wednesday's edition, are being published without permis-

sion from the official editorial staff and that the content of the newspaper is not representative of the government.

She added that those who work with Ansar Allah are not representative of the newspaper or the government.

Despite orders from the ministry, some Al-Thawra staff cooperated with the Houthis.

"I personally gave orders to journalists not to cooperate with the Houthis who stormed the building and to not publish Wednesday's issue, but it was done anyway," Damaj said.

Mohammed Al-Khamisi, the editor of the newspaper's sports section, said he was involved in the demonstrations that took place outside the newspaper's building, adding that the Houthis stepped in af-

ter he and others involved elicited their help.

He said he would work in collaboration with the Houthis to publish the newspaper in the future.

Rumors claiming that Sari would be named the new editor-in-chief were denied by Sari himself. Wednesday's issue continued to list Faisal Markel as the paper's editor-in-chief.

Al-Sakkaf said that Yemen's Cabinet would meet soon to address the incident, saying that no future issues of Al-Thawra could be considered representative of the views of the government.

"Next week, the Cabinet will hold a special meeting to address the issue and come up with a solution to put an end to this standoff," she said.

Hasan Sharraf Al-Deen, a journalist at Al-Thawra, said that while he does not support publishing the newspaper without permission from the editorial staff, he is also opposed to its suspension.

"There must be a way to solve this crisis," he said. "Journalists want to work and shouldn't be prevented from doing so because of disputes between rival political factions."

Damaj said he would no longer be involved with the publishing of the newspaper until he received directions from the Ministry of Information to resume his work.

"This government will not become a puppet," Al-Sakkaf said. "Houthis should either take responsibility for running the government, or let us do our work."

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GPC withholds vote of confidence

■ Nasser Al-Sakkaf

SANA'A, Dec. 17—The parliamentary bloc of the General People's Congress (GPC) refused in Tuesday's parliamentary session to give the new cabinet a vote of confidence, accusing it of ignoring the reform recommendations put forth by the Parliament.

"The head of the GPC parliamentary bloc, Sultan Al-Barakani, said [in Parliament on Tuesday] that his party will not give its backing to the Cabinet because it failed to take parliamentary recommendations into consideration," said Anwar Al-Taj, who was present at the session.

Al-Taj works with the Parliament Observatory, a parliamentary oversight committee that was set up in 2009 with support from the European Union.

The Yemeni government requires an absolute majority of 151 votes to pass the vote of confidence, according to Akram Noman, an attorney and legal expert.

As a result of Yemen's last parliamentary elections, which took place in April 2003, GPC members hold 238 out of 301 seats in Parliament.

A government is not considered legal, said Noman, if it fails to obtain the Parliament's vote of confidence. Article 132 of Yemen's



constitution stipulates that upon appointing the Cabinet, the prime minister needs to obtain the parliament's vote of confidence.

Following two days of discussion in Parliament over the cabinet's program, Al-Taj reports that discussions collapsed within ten minutes on Tuesday. Tensions flared following the GPC announcement that it would withhold its vote of confidence.

These events represent a turnaround on previous statements from GPC members. A spokesperson for the party, Abdu Al-Jandi, had told Khabar News Agency on Nov. 10 that GPC members would support the Cabinet and give it full confidence, even if the GPC was not to participate in the Cabinet.

Abdulmalik Al-Fuhaidi, the editor-in-chief of almotamar.net, stated that the Cabinet did not give consideration to some of the Parliament's recommendations, including the need to protect Yemeni citizens from external sanctions. The storming of the GPC headquarters in Aden on Monday added fuel to these disagreements.

Members also raised concerns about the storming on Monday of the GPC headquarters in Aden, Al-Taj added. According to Mohammad Mosaed, the managing security assistant of Aden governorate, instructions for the raid came from "the government." Security forces entered the headquarters, evacuated its employees and re-

mained present as of Wednesday afternoon, Mosaed said. They only began to withdraw on Wednesday evening, he added.

Ali Al-Ansi, an Islah Party representative in Parliament, said that the refusal of GPC members to give the Cabinet a vote of confidence will have a negative impact on relations between parliamentary members and the Cabinet, undermining mutual trust and allowing GPC members to force their party's agenda.

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16 female students killed in double car bomb

Story by
Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, Dec. 16—On Tuesday evening, 28 people were killed and 34 injured after two car bombs exploded at a checkpoint manned by the Houthis in downtown Rada'a city in Yemen's Al-Baida governorate. Among those dead were 16 school girls riding a bus that was passing through the checkpoint at the time of the explosion.

A statement issued by the Supreme Security Committee, headed by President Hadi, published a statement condemning the attack on Tuesday:

"A criminal operation was undertaken on Tuesday at noon, in which two car bombs—one targeting a bus transporting students of the Al-Khansa Elementary School for girls, and another targeting civilians in the area—were detonated. The operation claimed the lives of

16 female students and 10 other civilians, in addition to leaving a number of people injured."

According to Ali Al-Qaifi, an eyewitness to the attack, the first car bomb detonated at a Houthi checkpoint located in downtown Rada'a, just next to the home of Sheikh Abdullah Hussein Idris, chairman of the GPC branch in Rada'a city. "The first explosion killed the 16 girls," he said. "Houthi security guards stationed outside of Idris' house then began firing, just before the second car exploded. A number of civilians and Houthis were killed in the second attack, although I'm not sure how many."

Walid Al-Dailami, a Houthi leader whose office is located several hundred meters from the location of the explosion, claimed that two Houthis, eight citizens, and two members of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) were killed in the attack, in addition to a large

number of injured. "There were five other girls riding the bus who were not killed in the attack, but were among the injured," he said. He would not comment on the number of Houthi casualties, but claimed that Idris' guards began firing at the second car after the first explosion to prevent the drivers from detonating the second vehicle.

Ali Qarmoush, security chief or Rada'a district within the Ministry of Interior, claimed the number of injured was 34, but could not confirm the number of Houthis killed. "Immediately following the attack they took off with their dead and injured, and took control of the area," he said.

He claimed that investigations were ongoing as to whether the schoolgirls were killed as a result of the car bomb, or from shooting by Houthi guards stationed at Idris' house, who Qarmoush claimed used RPGs.

AQAP had previously detonated a car bomb in front of Idris' house on Oct. 20, the day Houthis took over Rada'a city. Idris survived the attack, however 12 civilians were killed and a large portion of his house destroyed as a result.

AQAP has not officially claimed responsibility for the attack. Abu Muqbil Al-Qaifi, a self-identified AQAP member based in Rada'a, admitted that the organization set off two car bombs at the checkpoint, however claimed that only Houthis were killed. "We killed dozens of Houthis at the checkpoint," he said. "The girls and civilians were killed as a result of gunfire and RPGs fired by Idris' guards stationed outside his home." He went on to say that if any AQAP members were responsible for the death of civilians, they would be tried in the organization's Sharia Law courts.

The United Nations issued a



Two car bombs detonated at a checkpoint manned by the Houthis in Rada'a city on Tuesday evening.

statement on Dec. 16 condemning the attack. It reads:

"The UN condemns the level of violence affecting children that has today led to the reported deaths of

at least 15 schoolgirls in Al-Bayda." UNICEF has confirmed that prior to this tragedy, at least 138 children were killed or maimed by the conflict in Yemen during 2014.

Al-Houthi refers to Hadi as "an umbrella for corruption"

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANA'A, Dec. 16—Al-Masira channel aired a speech of Houthi leader Abdulmalik Al-Houthi on Monday morning, in which he accused President Hadi of being, "an umbrella for corruption."

The speech came several hours after an announcement was made by Minister of Defense Mahmoud Al-Subaihi, which ordered Houthi popular committees stationed outside the ministry be removed.

Jamal Al-Geiz, chairman of the Security Department within the Ministry of Defense, said that President Hadi ordered military reinforcements from the Strategic Reserve Forces to station themselves outside the ministry shortly after Al-Subaihi's announcement. Orders were given to the soldiers to be on high alert in the event that any clashes take place, he added.

Since the military restructuring by presidential decree in 2012, five military branches now exist under the Ministry of Defense: The Army; the Air Force and Air Defense; the Navy and Coastal Defense Forces; the Border Guard; and the Strategic Reserve Forces.

In his speech, Al-Houthi accused Hadi and other members of the current government of using public funds to finance media outlets that attack the Houthis, hindering compromise, and a host of other accusations. The move comes just over one month after Yemen appointed its newest Cabinet, the composition of which has been characterized by confusion.

Following the Peace and National Partnership Agreement, Houthis were slated to be given control of six ministries. However, in the days before the Cabinet was formed, the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a relinquished its request for cabinet seats. Instead, they appointed Salah Al-Samad, a former Houthi preacher and religious leader in Sa'ada, to serve as a "consultant" to President Hadi, to help appoint a new government. On Nov. 7, the new Cabinet was announced, and was largely considered to be technocratic. Despite



Sources say the Houthis were angered by the recent appointment of an Ali Mohsen ally as the new Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff.

this, a number of news outlets reported that the Houthis had been given control of the ministries of oil, education, culture, electricity, civil service and higher education.

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi activist, said that following the announcement of the Cabinet the Houthis initially sought to work with the new government in the hopes of achieving progress. He claimed that Al-Houthi's speech on Monday came in response to a series of recent developments in which members of the government have targeted the Houthis, including the recent appointment of Hussein Naji Hadi Khairan on Dec. 7 as chairman of the Armed Forces Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Khairan was a strong ally of Ali Mohsen, and affiliated with the Islah Party," he said.

Ali Mohsen is a prominent Islah Party member and former major general in Yemen's former 1st Armored Division that fought six wars against the Houthis between 2004 and 2010.

Ali Al-Qahoom, another member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, claims that the Houthis currently have no representation in the current government, and control no ministries. "Some claim that various ministers in the current cabinet are members of Ansar Allah [the Houthis], however this is not the case," he said. "Some may have

connections to Ansar Allah on a personal level, but they do not represent us politically."

He complained that many of those appointed to the Cabinet, including Education Minister Abd Al-Razaq Al-Ashwal and Minister of Industry and Commerce Mohammad Al-Asadi—both members of Islah—were members of the previous government.

Ali Al-Ansi, an Islah MP, claims that Al-Houthi's speech was made in order to further destabilize Yemen, and warned of a coming confrontation between the Houthis and President Hadi.

On Nov. 24, Defense Minister Mahmoud Al-Subaihi announced that members of Houthi popular committees would be integrated into the country's armed forces, without specifying a timeline for the integration, how many popular committee members would be incorporated, or which units they would be brought into. Al-Geiz told the Yemen Times that despite recent developments regarding popular committees stationed outside the Ministry of Defense, plans to integrate Houthi popular committees into the security forces were still underway and would be carried out soon. "Removal of the popular committees from the Ministry of Defense will not effect the plan to integrate them into the armed forces," he said.

Houthis condemn G10 Statement

■ **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

SANA'A, Dec. 17—Houthi, also known as Ansar Allah, have condemned a Group of Ten Ambassadors (G10) statement released on Monday that calls for the full implementation of the GCC Initiative and Peace and National Partnership Agreement signed on Sept. 21.

The official Arabic translation of the statement put out by the G10 specifically opposes any integration of Houthi popular committees into the armed forces that have not undergone an "agreed upon" disarmament process. The English version does not make any mention of Houthi or Ansar Allah.

"The Group of Ten Ambassadors calls for the Government of Yemen to reform and strengthen the Yemeni Security Forces in accordance with the NDC outcomes and Peace and National Partnership Agreement. We believe that it is only through the efforts of all parties to build appropriately sized and structured Yemeni security forces drawn from all regions of the country that the security of Yemen will be put on a sustainable footing. In this context we encourage integration of forces through an agreed disarmament process," read the English language statement posted on the US Embassy in Yemen's website.

A second, Arabic version published on the state-run Saba News Agency website, and the US Embassy's official Facebook page, provides the same text, with an addition to the final clause, which translates to, "We condemn any attempts to integrate Ansar Allah forces outside this framework [of an agreed upon disarmament process]." The Yemen Times contacted the British and American embassies in Sana'a to inquire

about the reason behind the two different versions. Repeated phone calls to the British embassy went unanswered. An official at the American embassy seemed confused about the discrepancy, but did not get back to the Yemen Times, as he said he would.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, condemned the statement, referring to it as an attempt by the United States and GCC countries to intervene in domestic Yemeni politics. "We maintain our legal right to shoulder the burden to protect the country," he said. "We will only hand over our arms when there exists a Yemeni government and army capable of protecting Yemen from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula [AQAP] and other armed factions."

The announcement comes just over three weeks after Minister of Defense Mahmoud Al-Subaihi announced on Nov. 24 at Yemen's military police headquarters in Sana'a that the Ministry of Defense would begin integrating Houthi popular committee members into the country's armed forces. He did not specify a timeline for the integration, how many popular committee members would be incorporated, or which units they would be brought into.

The G10 statement expressed "concern" over the "lack of progress" achieved by the current government in implementing articles 7,8,15,14, and 5 of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement signed on Sept. 21, the day the Houthis entered and took over Sana'a.

Article seven calls for the government to begin a voter registration campaign, prepare a referendum on a new constitution and to schedule elections, while article eight calls on the coun-

try's various political factions to reach a consensus on the new constitution. Article 14 calls for an end to all inflammatory political media campaigns, while article 15 calls for the removal of all unofficial checkpoints in and around Sana'a. Article 5 calls for a cessation of hostilities in the governorates of Al-Jawf and Marib, the withdrawal of all armed groups from these governorates, and a restructuring of government authorities in the region.

On Nov. 25, Houthis signed a ceasefire agreement with local tribes in the Marib area, however still maintain control over the Al-Mas military base in Al-Marib's Al-Jedaan region. Armed tribes continue to mobilize in the governorate, while AQAP has continued to claim responsibility for a number of attacks in the area, including most recently the assassination of GPC leader Salim Ghufaini in Marib city on Dec. 14.

Intense fighting took place in Al-Jawf governorate during August and September between Houthis and fighters affiliated with the Islah political party. Unlike Marib, which does not host many Houthi residents, Al-Jawf has long had a Houthi presence. Both groups have claimed to withdraw their fighters since the signing of the Peace and National Partnership Agreement Sept. 21, however armed fighters continue to patrol the area.

Jamal Al-Geiz, chairman of the Security Department within the Ministry of Defense, claimed that the integration of popular committee members was still underway. He stressed that such a process requires study and review and that for this reason no popular committee members had yet been integrated into the armed forces.

Fact-finding committee to investigate Al-Junaid's death

■ **Khalid Al-Karimi**

SANA'A, Dec. 16—The Security Department in Aden established a fact-finding committee on Tuesday to investigate the death of Khalid Al-Junaid, a southern political activist who was shot dead on Monday.

The committee was established one day after he was killed by security forces. Najeeb Al-Mughalis, the deputy head of Aden's Security Department and a member of the committee, refused to reveal the total number and names of the committee's members. He only stated that the committee includes representatives of the Southern Movement and the Criminal Investigation Bureau.

President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi made a public statement on Tuesday evening, calling for the Security Department in Aden to address the killing of Al-Junaid in cooperation with political and social figures within the governorate.

"We are in the middle of the in-

vestigation process, and we will release results once the investigation is over," said Al-Mughalis.

Both Fuad Rashid, the general secretary of the Southern Movement in Aden city, and Khalid Bamadhaf, another Southern Movement leader, claim to have no knowledge about any Southern Movement representatives in the committee. Both expressed doubts regarding the committee's impartiality and ability to yield results.

"I have no trust in this committee. What we want is for the perpetrators to be held accountable. We want to see tangible results and punitive measures taken against the killers," said Rashid.

Bamadhaf said that the committee will not be able to create change or bring those responsible to justice.

Saleh Deiban, a member of the local council in Aden, accused the authorities of being slow in taking action to investigate Al-Junaid's death.

Rashid told the Yemen Times on



Southerners attend funeral procession for Khalid Al-Junaid.

Monday day that he held the state's Special Security Forces in Aden responsible for detaining and later killing Al-Junaid.

Abdulhafit Al-Sakkaf, commander of the Special Security Forces in Aden said, "Such accusations are unfounded and investigations will

clarify this issue."

Mohammad Mosaed, an officer in the Ministry of Interior's Security Department in Aden claimed that Al-Junaid was shot in a fire exchange between armed Southern Movement members and security forces.

Deiban, the Southern Movement, and Amnesty International all denied the credibility of the security forces' accounts. "Al-Junaid was unarmed when he was arrested in Crater neighborhood on Monday," Deiban said. "Soldiers dragged him into their vehicle, beating him, severely." Later, Al-Junaid was taken to Al-Jamhuriya hospital with a gunshot wound and left at the entrance.

Radfan Al-Dubais, journalist and prominent Southern Movement member, claims to have been present at the scene when Al-Junaid, who was unarmed, was abducted, beaten, and shot by security forces.

A similar version of events was put forth by Amnesty International, which released a press release on Dec. 15, saying that Al-Junaid "was ordered out of his car [in Crater neighborhood] by five masked security officers and shot in the chest."

"This shocking, deliberate killing appears to be an extrajudicial execution prompted by Khaled Al-Junaid's peaceful activism promoting

independence for southern Yemen," Said Boumedouha, deputy director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme, said in the release.

"The Yemeni authorities have an obligation under international law to ensure that an independent, impartial and prompt investigation into this killing is conducted, and that all those responsible are brought to justice, including anyone who ordered the killing," the statement went on to say.

On Tuesday, Al-Junaid's body was laid to rest in the Crater neighborhood of Aden.

Rashid, who attended the funeral, said that a large number of people joined the funeral procession, which began in Al-Arood square, where a large crowd of mourners had gathered to pray for Al-Junaid.

"The huge attendance of the southern people shows that the southern nation does not fear torture, killing, or any other type of violence," Rashid said.

To build an entrepreneurship ecosystem in Yemen

■ Adeb Qasem

Ever since the 2011 uprising, Yemen's political process has taken priority over all other aspects of development. This seems unreasonable, given that Yemen's shattered economy constitutes a key challenge to citizens and policy-makers alike. Frustration runs particularly high among Yemen's youth. Having taken to the streets in 2011, calling for political freedoms and improved economic conditions, they continue to face a high rate of unemployment. In fact, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has announced that since the 2011 uprising over 50 percent of young Yemenis remain unemployed. Creating job opportunities is imperative to the development of Yemen. One way of improving the country's dire job market is the creation of business startups—a step that is complicated by Yemen's unfavorable entrepreneurship environment.

In an interview with the Yemen Times Radio in late 2013, Jamal Al-Mutareb—a businessman and investor who has backed a number of Yemeni startups in the past—explained that many local initiatives are not taken seriously by investors because their potential is exaggerated. While there is a general interest among Yemeni businessmen to invest in local startups, he said, frustration prevails as information provided by Yemeni entrepreneurs is often unreliable.

If past business proposals had been well-presented and well-structured, companies could have been created that would hire unemployed youth, provide needed products and services to local and international markets, and generate profits. With the absence of these success stories, however, few young Yemenis are inspired to establish their own startup business and a spiral of success has yet to be initiated in Yemen.

Innovation is the key driver of economic and social development, and it is critical to realize that local entrepreneurs are the main innovators in communities. To create sustainable economic growth, local entrepreneurs need to be supported and encouraged. To that end, it is necessary to build a vibrant "entrepreneurship ecosystem."

An entrepreneurship ecosystem describes the existence of government entities, a legal framework, necessary infrastructure and private investors that enable an entrepreneur to turn business ideas into viable companies. A model of an entrepreneurship ecosystem by Booz & Company, a global management consulting firm, pictures the entrepreneurship ecosystem as concentric circles of personal enablers (education, advisors), financial enablers (investors, banks, government programs), business enablers (networks, incubators, services), and environmental enablers (regulations, culture, infrastructure). These supportive structures surround the entrepreneur, who constitutes the center of the model. The building of a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem in Yemen will require the involvement of all these stakeholders.

The importance of building such an ecosystem is recognized by more and more governments and international organizations around the world. In a 2010 World Bank report on "Innovation Policy," the importance of the "local" for economic development was emphasized: "Local communities, even the poorest, have unique knowledge and entrepreneurial potential that can be ex-



Discussion session held by ROWAD with young entrepreneurs.

ploited with sufficient support."

Entrepreneurs in Yemen

To generate greater attention to entrepreneurship in Yemen, a country facing a myriad of problems, is a challenge in and of itself. Entrepreneurship is not seen as a priority by the government. Rather than being proactive, Yemeni politicians appear to follow a "wait and see" approach. They continue waiting for major issues to resolve themselves before tackling the promotion of entrepreneurship. Political crises, armed clashes, electricity outages, legal system reforms, corruption—these and other problems take priority. Had politicians realized the dire need for economic development and the intertwined nature of Yemen's many challenges, they would know the importance of a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem. Improved economic prospects for Yemen's youth constitute a crucial part in tackling a number of problems, especially those related to security, education, and poverty.

The challenges faced by entrepreneurs in Yemen, as Jamal Al-Mutareb pointed out in his interview, mainly result from an underdeveloped entrepreneurship ecosystem. There is a lack of well-rounded entrepreneurs in Yemen who understand the market and are able to identify and include local demands in formulating business initiatives. Entrepreneurs who can accurately assess the potential of their startups and understand investors' interests and expectations are equally rare. There is a lack of supportive governmental policies and regulations that recognize the fragility of startups and their need for special care to grow into fully productive companies. The legal system is not transparent and fails to ensure the rights and duties of all contracting parties, including the protection of copy rights. Importantly, moreover, there is a lack of capital and willing investors in Yemen, which effectively blocks the creation of startups.

Initiatives by potential ecosystem builders are essential for starting more businesses and supporting an increasing number of entrepreneurs. A "multiplier effect" could be created if already successful entrepreneurs chose to support and help other aspiring entrepreneurs. In Dec. 2012 a report was released by the Endeavor Foundation, an international organization focused on high-impact entrepreneurship en-

thusiasts who work as engineers and programmers, launching training initiatives on the side. These startup weekends attract many young programmers, developers, designers, business students and graduates via social media campaigns and university workshops. Another initiative is the co-work space Maktabi, a business center directed and co-founded by Mustafa Al-Aqel, a leading Yemeni entrepreneur. It accommodates entrepreneurs, freelancers, start-ups, and small companies, offering them free office space, meeting, and training rooms. The Maktabi management also organizes events and seminars

as a means to catalyze long-term economic growth, about one of its initiatives in Chile. It revealed that over a period of ten years, between 1998 and 2008, 66 entrepreneurs who had been mentored and supported by Endeavor became the corner stone of an entrepreneurship ecosystem in Chile. In 2011, these 66 entrepreneurs had created over 5,800 jobs at their companies and generated close to \$400 million in revenues. In addition to creating jobs, they in turn shared their expertise and knowledge by mentoring others and investing in their startups. Endeavor found that compared to other Chilean businessmen, these 66 entrepreneurs were "30 percent more likely to mentor, 50 percent more likely to inspire, and 200 percent more likely to invest in other [startup] companies." As the example of Chile indicates, ecosystem builders are critical to the creation of job opportunities and general economic improvement. They are crucial in the build-up of a supportive and enabling business environment.

In Yemen, the process of building an entrepreneurship ecosystem could start similarly with a core community of highly motivated entrepreneurs, investors, and government officials who share the vision of a vibrant business environment. One such community is currently emerging through a project initiated by ROWAD, a Yemen Entrepreneurs Foundation. Its "BlockOne" project provides would-be entrepreneurs with an "incubator space," through which they gain access to business coaching and guidance, office space, networking opportunities, and potential funding opportunities. The BlockOne incubator could create the momentum needed to initiate the building of a business ecosystem in Yemen.

There are a number of additional initiatives focused on promoting and supporting entrepreneurs, an example of which are startup weekend events that are taking place in cities throughout Yemen. Aspiring entrepreneurs with tech-based ideas work for 54 hours to create teams, turn their ideas into beta products, and compete before a panel of judges. Each startup event is organized by different groups, hosting a different set of entrepreneurs. The latest of these events took place on Nov. 20 and was organized by Ahmed Al-Fusail, Rabe Al-Aghbari, and Mohammed Abdulmajeed—entrepreneurship en-

thusiasts who work as engineers and programmers, launching training initiatives on the side. These startup weekends attract many young programmers, developers, designers, business students and graduates via social media campaigns and university workshops. Another initiative is the co-work space Maktabi, a business center directed and co-founded by Mustafa Al-Aqel, a leading Yemeni entrepreneur. It accommodates entrepreneurs, freelancers, start-ups, and small companies, offering them free office space, meeting, and training rooms. The Maktabi management also organizes events and seminars

related to technology and entrepreneurship. Like Maktabi, the Injaz Foundation, an international NGO focused on finance and entrepreneurial skill-development, aims to contribute to the development of an entrepreneurship ecosystem in Yemen. Its Yemen branch is chaired by Yemeni businesswoman Huda Alsharafi and organizes yearly teaching programs and competitions in a select number of Yemeni schools. The winning schools go on to compete regionally with students from across the Middle East. Last year, students at five schools throughout Yemen were tasked by Injaz business mentors with inventing environmentally-friendly products and creating a company to market it. These initiatives raise hopes that the emergence of a community of entrepreneurs and those interested in supporting them has already begun in Yemen.

To further advance existing initiatives and build a vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystem in Yemen, the country's youth need to be engaged. Young Yemeni men and women must take part in creating job opportunities for themselves and others.

Adeb Qasem is co-founder and director of ROWAD (Yemen Entrepreneurs Foundation) and has been involved in the startup of multiple local businesses in Yemen, including Diphrent Training and YemenHR. He is currently working as director of Diphrent Training.

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OUR OPINION

Government fans flame of secession by killing Al-Junaidi

As the government vows to address the grievances of the southern people, it seems determined to create new problems as well. If the north wants to prove to southerners that it is capable of addressing these issues, it needs to end government policies of impunity for those that kill—and those that order the killing—of activists.

The killing of political activists isn't just a relic of the Saleh administration, as evidenced by the killing on Monday of Southern Movement leader, Khaled Al-Junaidi. What could distinguish this administration from Saleh's would be a serious, independent investigation into the killing, and consequences for those responsible.

Amnesty International says Al-Junaidi was ordered out of his vehicle by five masked security officers and shot in the chest.

"This shocking, deliberate killing appears to be an extrajudicial execution prompted by Khaled Al-Junaidi's peaceful activism promoting independence for southern Yemen," said Said Boumedouha, the deputy director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme. Al-Junaidi was arrested four times for his involvement in the movement and claimed he was tortured.

The killing comes at the worst possible time, as unification is at its most fragile since the 1994 civil war. Al-Junaidi's death is not just a loss for the south, but for the entire country, and calls into question the sincerity of the government as it attempts to address the grievances of southerners. It's as if the government is trying to write the handbook on how to inflame already volatile situations.

Building trust with southerners requires a number of actions from the government, but just as important as what the government does, is what the government does not do.

Do not arrest activists for peaceful protest and organizing. Do not torture said activists (do not torture anyone! What a novel idea). Do not kill activists. If security forces are acting on their own, that is a reflection of the culture of impunity, and it requires an investigation and more action. This is about more than justice for Al-Junaidi, his family, friends and members of the Southern Movement. This is about the government proving to southerners that they have a future in this country.

Ahlam Mohsen
Deputy editor-in-chief

CIA torture? For the Arab world, that's no surprise

Torture report confirms what most already knew, that the US is in denial over its hypocritical 'war on terror'

Rachel Shabi
aljazeera.com
First published Dec. 11

The headlines scream of shock and revulsion. Described in UK newspapers as a "stain on America" and "the shaming of the West," and in the US as a "grim portrait" and "litany of brutality," the damning Senate report on CIA torture has, not surprisingly, evoked horror across the world's media.

Few cannot be shocked by the nightmarishly grotesque details of how the CIA tortured, and how often it lied about it. And who knows how much more is contained in the bulk of the just-released, 6,000-page document of savage abuse, only some 500 pages of which were declassified.

But woven into some of the media reaction is another theme, too. It's in the Washington Post's editorial, which states: "This is not how Americans should behave. Ever."

It's in the many references, within the US, to the CIA torture as the antithesis of "national" and "American" values. And it is in Vox editor-in-chief Ezra Klein's observation: "We betrayed our values. We betrayed who we are."

Across the Arab and Mus-

lim world this kind of response from the West might come over as somewhat belated and, well, maybe a little bit delusional, too. After all, "who we are" has been going on since 2001, at the very least (let's not get into the torture that was such an integral part of colonialism, or the torture training that the CIA gifted a variety of brutal regimes during the 1970s). And "who we are" has for some time been painfully clear to those at the receiving end of it.

"Torture can't be justified, ever, despite the best—and now renewed—efforts of 'ticking time bomb' theorists."

In the Middle East, there won't be many people who bought the much-repeated US line that only three terror suspects were ever waterboarded by the CIA.

The abuse of terror suspect detainees at the hands of the US is by now well documented;

both the news and the harrowing legacy of such violations is widespread.

"Terror in the name of fighting terror"

Travel the Middle East and the torture—by the CIA, or the military, or facilitated by Arab regimes on behalf of western governments—always comes up as an example of the sheer hypocrisy of the "war on terror." Somewhere along the miserable line stretching from Guantanamo to Abu Ghraib, from black sites to rendition programs, from the sweep of innocent people to the sheer scope of arbitrary detentions, the meaning of the "war on terror" has become manifestly clear.

"The use of torture is an exercise in terror," says Rizwaan Sabir, a counter-terrorism specialist at the UK's Edge Hill University. "So it's terror in the name of fighting terror—and you can't defeat something by becoming the very thing you are trying to defeat."

Arabs were angry about US torture in Iraq 10 years ago, so if anything, this seems rather quaint that the Americans are having a real public debate about this 10 years after the fact.

In this context, it is telling that the US braced for attacks at its embassies in the Arab and

Muslim world in response to this damning CIA report. Tightening security at such sites may be protocol, but it is also a misreading of a region that has already reacted to this aspect of US policy—some time ago. As Brookings Institution fellow Shadi Hamid told the Associated Press: "Arabs were angry about US torture in Iraq 10 years ago, so if anything, this seems rather quaint that the Americans are having a real public debate about this 10 years after the fact."

So many years on, what matters more than the knowledge is a sense of accountability. "Torture is a crime," the British, former Guantanamo detainee Moazzam Begg told the BBC. "Rendition ... false imprisonment, they're crimes. If you or I were to do those to anybody we'd be prosecuted by the full weight of the law. Why is it that the Americans who did this have been granted immunity?"

It should be obvious that torture can't be justified, ever, despite the best—and now renewed—efforts of "ticking time bomb" theorists, whose argument that such practices are necessary in the face of imminent terror attacks have been robustly disproved by the Senate's report.

The West's use of torture as a valuable recruitment tool for extremist groups has been warned

"Arabs were angry about US torture in Iraq 10 years ago, so if anything, this seems rather quaint that the Americans are having a real public debate about this 10 years after the fact."

about for years and has clearly already been occurring. But now that the US is staring its own terrible abuses in the face, there can be no more spouting of the "us and them," post-9/11 narrative. Now it has been made blatantly clear that "our values" in the Western world include torture. There is no point in persisting with the ludicrous hypocrisy of a higher moral ground.

Rachel Shabi is a journalist and author of Not the Enemy: Israel's Jews from Arab Lands.

Pakistan's sickening massacre isn't about religion - it's about intimidation

To survive as a country Pakistan needs to map out a road to peace, with the army, politicians and the people rallying under a unifying cause

Bina Shah
theguardian.com
First published on Dec. 16

Last week I wept with pride as Malala Yousafzai collected her Nobel Peace prize in Oslo, next to Kailash Satyarthi. The world stopped to listen as she gave her acceptance speech, in which she said, "It is time to take action so it becomes the last time, the last time, so it becomes the last time that we see a child deprived of education ... Let us become the first generation to decide to be

"The children who were killed are of the same religion as the attackers claim to follow. This is not about religion: This is about power, intimidation and revenge."

the last, let us become the first generation that decides to be the last that sees empty classrooms, lost childhoods, and wasted potentials."

We watched as Malala received the award and raised it high, able to smile with only half her face but all of her heart. She announced later that she intended to return to Pakistan in 2015, yet another marker of her triumph over the terrorists that tried to deprive her not just of education, but of her life.

We then saw a photograph of Malala as she toured the Nobel museum: When she saw her blood-spattered uniform, the one she was wearing when she was shot by the Taliban, she burst into tears. Kailash, who she calls a second father, had to comfort her as she buried her head in his shoulder.

And now, barely a week later, we are weeping as we see the images on our televisions of schoolchildren being carried out an army school in Peshawar in their blood-spattered uniforms, victims of a Taliban attack which has so far killed 126 people. Most of the children killed were between 10 and 16 years old, children of army officers who were listening to a speech being given by a senior military officer when

the gunmen struck.

The Pakistani army has been conducting a "clearance operation" at the school, and says that it is determined to stop the terrorists from killing the rest of their hostages in the siege. The leader of the Taliban group claiming responsibility for the attack says it is in retaliation for the strikes against militants in North Waziristan. "They are killing our innocent families so we want them to feel the same pain," he has reportedly said.

If anyone still thinks this is about religion, and not a political struggle with the barest patina of religion as justification for this war, they need only come to Peshawar to attend the funerals of the children, who will be buried before the sun goes down, in the Islamic tradition. They have only to hear what their parents will say, the customary response to the news of a Muslim's death: To Him we belong and to Him we will return. The children who were killed are of the same religion as the attackers claim to follow. This is not about religion: This is about power, intimidation and revenge.

Every time there is an attack in Pakistan it prompts soul-searching, despair, revulsion and depression in the people. From

politicians we only get the word "condemnation." We have come to realize how impotent a word that really is over the past few years. It implies disapproval, not resolution to truly put an end to the situation. It calls for disavowal, instead of owning the conflict fully. It is a weasel word that, the more it is used, angers ordinary Pakistanis who have paid the price for this war with their blood and the blood of their loved ones.

"Pakistan has, in fact, been accused of not wanting peace, but nothing is further from the truth."

The Pakistan army has shown the most steel in its attempts to batter the militants in their camps—some would say a response long overdue, while others would grimly point out that its strategic depth policy has now grown into a dangerously uncontrollable entity, and the entire na-

tion is suffering as a result. There is so much to say about strategy and policy, about terrorism and counter-terrorism, that people have made their careers writing and lecturing on the subject. Yet no amount of expertise is able to come up with the solution to the crisis. Books, I am afraid, are not tourniquets.

There are urgent calls going out for people to come to hospitals in Peshawar and donate blood, especially O-negative type. Blood is being airlifted from Rawalpindi to Peshawar because supplies have already run out. What it will take, though, to stem the bleeding is a precise roadmap towards peace, one that combines the power of the army with the political backing of our politicians and leaders, that rallies the people and unites them under this cause. It sounds simple, and yet we still haven't been able to agree on what that roadmap should look like, or even in which direction it should go.

Pakistan has, in fact, been accused of not wanting peace, but nothing is further from the truth. You don't lose 40,000 people—plus 126 more, today—and want to continue to bleed out. After today we know that if we keep bleeding like this, we will not survive.

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Plight of Sa'ada IDPs continues four years after conflict ends

■ **Bassam Al-Khameri**

It has been four years since clashes between the military and Houthis in Sa'ada governorate came to an end. Residents of Sa'ada displaced by the fighting are yet to return home, however, as they continue to wait for properties damaged in the conflict to be reconstructed.

Sa'ada governorate has been affected by six rounds of war between 2004 and 2010, resulting in large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The conflict first began on June 18, 2004, following the arrest of Hussein Al-Houthi, the late leader of the Houthis.

Thousands of people in Sa'ada governorate have been displaced through years of intermittent conflict, many of whom have taken refuge at Al-Mazraq camp, located in the neighboring Hajja governorate in northern Yemen.

Others are currently living in Al-Azraqin, in Amran governorate, and in Sana'a, Saddam Al-Kamali, the media officer of the Executive Unit for IDPs, informed the Yemen Times in July. According to Zaid Alalaya, senior public information officer at the UN Refugees Agency (UNHCR), 130,000 people from Sa'ada remain displaced today.

Abdullah Mohammad, who has taken refuge in Al-Mazraq camp, left his farm in Sahar district and

went to the camp with his wife and five children in 2008. He says the Sa'ada Reconstruction Fund (SRF) promised to reconstruct his damaged property, but that nothing has happened so far.

"I thought that I would return shortly after the conflict ended, but it was impossible because my house and farm were totally destroyed. The clashes continued during the following two years and I eventually lost hope of returning to Sa'ada," he said.

The government of Yemen established the SRF on July 28, 2007 to aid in the reconstruction of damaged property in Sa'ada. In early 2008, the SRF began counting homes and other buildings damaged in the fighting, but was forced to stop its work in March of that year when a fifth round of conflict began.

Sporadic clashes continued to hamper the initiative in its early years. "It's true that we started working in Sa'ada in 2008," explained Mohammed Abdulla Thabit, executive director of the SRF, "but we had to stop for long periods when the clashes erupted in 2008, 2009 and 2010."

It has been difficult meeting targets, but some of those displaced have been aided by the fund. Ahmed Abdullah, a resident of Haidan district, told the Yemen Times that almost half of his house was de-

stroyed during 2006, but that he finished repairs to it about three months ago with the help of SRF.

"I received about YR5 million (\$23,000) in installments from the fund and began reconstruction with my three sons," he said.

Conflict in the region has since subsided, but Thabit told the Yemen Times that delays in the fund's work continue, mainly due to a lack of funding from the government.

"The government announced in August 2010 that YR20 billion (\$93 million) was being allocated, but so far we have received only YR9 billion (\$42 million)," he said. "As far as external funding is concerned, we have only received YR260 million (\$1,200,000) from the Islamic Development Bank," he added. UN confirmation that they have nothing to do with the reconstruction in Sa'ada?

Government response?

According to SRF figures, the six rounds of war in Sa'ada left 26,920 buildings, including houses, schools, mosques and farms, partially or totally destroyed.

"We have finished work on 6671 houses, 705 farms and 110 public institutions, and are currently working on 2220 houses and 393 farms, to be finished soon," explained Thabit. "The reconstruction of houses are estimated to cost YR8.207.311.000 (\$38 million),

the work on farms YR493.418.000 (\$2.3 million), and the reconstruction of public institutions YR1.300.091.000 (\$6 million)."

There are a total of 744 public institutions according to SRF figures. These include 238 public schools, 32 health centers, 18 police stations, six courts, six government compounds, five agricultural research centres, 371 mosques and 68 electricity and water plants.

Thabit is hopeful that if the allocated funds are made available, targets will be met within a reasonable timeframe. "All reconstruction work will be done within three years if the government provides the promised funding, and then all IDPs can return to their homes," he said.

According to Ahmed Sagheer, an engineer with the SRF based in Sa'ada, the allocation of funds is decided according to the level of damage and the type of property in question.

"The houses are of three categories: completely destroyed, partially damaged, and houses in need of renovation. The cash payment for each category is YR9 million (\$42000), YR5 million (\$23000) and one million riyals (\$4600), respectively," he explained.

Engineers assigned by the SRF evaluate the level of damage to houses and farms and submit their evaluations to SRF for approval. Payments are made in installments to the landlord, and include funding for both materials and labor.

"Doing this, the fund creates job opportunities for the local residents," explained Sager. "The local council of each district guarantees that the landlord will use the money to reconstruct the property destroyed," he added.

SRF allows contractors to bid on public reconstruction projects and



Thousands of Yemenis who fled fighting in Sa'ada continue to wait for their homes to be reconstructed.

selects the most competitive offer. Such projects often breed corruption, but Thabit says the process is transparent and that local engineers working directly under the SRF oversee all contracted projects. "Those representatives monitor the work of the contractors and report to the fund," he said.

"Comprehensive development" in Sa'ada was a central pillar of reconciliation talks at the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which concluded on Jan. 24, 2014. It was agreed that the government would allocate the funds needed from the state treasury to reconstruction efforts in Sa'ada, which was to be overseen by the SRF.

Having taken control of Sa'ada governorate in 2010, Houthis moved to dismiss the government appointed governor in 2011 and replaced him with Fares Mana, a businessman allied with the Houthi movement. Nonetheless, Houthi officials want the government to

adhere to its pledges rather than supporting reconstruction efforts themselves.

The Yemen Times spoke with Ali Al-Qahoom and Mohammed Al-Bukhaiti, both members of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, about any role that Houthi government bodies might play in reconstruction efforts. Both officials feel that it is up to the central government to take responsibility.

"The government is to be blamed for the delay in the reconstruction of houses because billions of riyals are allocated each year for the reconstruction work but only one third of the houses are done so far," said Al-Bukhaiti.

Al-Qahoom echoed these sentiments, stating that Houthi bodies have no intention of participating financially. "Ansar Allah [the Houthis] only facilitated the reconstruction works and helped the engineers of the SRF to have access to the areas of Sa'ada," he said.

ANALYSIS

Reading Saudi Tea Leaves in Yemen

Danya Greenfield and Owen Daniels
atlanticcouncil.org
First published Dec. 10

The international press reported on Dec. 4 that Saudi Arabia had suspended most financial aid to Yemen as a result of the Houthi movement's ongoing occupation of Sana'a. As the most overt Saudi policy move in Yemen since the northern Houthis captured the capital in mid-September, it set off a chain of worrying political and security developments with implications that extend beyond the country's borders. Saudi Arabia, which has long played a heavy-handed role in Yemen's affairs, has followed developments with a mix of concern and uncertainty. The Saudis have reason to be concerned about recent events: Most acutely, they fear the weakening of their traditional allies in Sana'a, diminished political influence, and Iranian encirclement with the ascendancy of the Shia-Zaydi movement. With no clearly stated Saudi policy in Yemen, observers are left to read the tea leaves of Saudi officials' words and deeds to provide insight on how the kingdom will respond to the shifting power balance in Yemen and how it will ensure its interests are protected. Beyond ideological warfare with Iran, Saudi Arabia struggles to retain or expand its influence in Yemen and its leaders are taking concrete steps to bolster border security and ensure safe access to trade routes.

While Saudi Arabia cannot afford to ignore on-the-ground developments in Yemen, internal and regional challenges perhaps diverted its attention over the past year. But the recent Houthi successes have prompted a lot of Saudi official chatter, which sees the Houthi flexing as foreign encroachment along the kingdom's southern border. Royal family members and government officials have cast the group's rise in terms of Iranian interference that resonate at home and with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, most of whom also have sizeable Shia populations. Foreign Minis-

ter Saud Al-Faisal warned Houthi violence could "threaten stability and security on the regional and international arena" at the UN General Assembly in September. Putting Yemen in an international context, he told the Saudi Press Agency that if "Iran would like to contribute in solving the [region's] problems, it should withdraw its forces fighting in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and other places." An emergency meeting on Yemen held by the GCC interior ministers in Jeddah yielded a statement that "the GCC states will not stand idly by in the face of factional foreign intervention."


Saudi newspapers have amplified this hand-wringing about the Iranian presence and have been even more outspoken in questioning the kingdom's role. Asharq Al-Awsat published an editorial in mid-October wondering whether responsibility fell to the Saudis to "save" Yemen from the future dangers caused by the Houthi coup. An editorial in Al-Arabiya alleged that the Houthis conspired with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh "to deceive the Saudi leadership." In Okaz, Rania Al-Baz wrote that the Houthis have Tehran's blessing, but "Iran is not seeking to win, but to prolong the days of conflict and instability in Yemen." The general message of the press has echoed many Saudi officials, albeit in explicit terms: The Houthi ascendancy, enabled by Saleh, is the product of Iranian meddling and will lead to long-term instability in Yemen that threatens the Kingdom.

The situation on the ground is more complicated than this rhetoric would suggest for several reasons. For one, the simplified Sunni-Shia narrative of Iranian influence is complicated by differences between the Houthis' Zaydism, which has traditionally shared an amicable relationship with the country's majority Shafi population, and Persian Twelver Shiism. Secondly, a lack of concrete evidence makes the real extent of Iranian influence unclear. There is broad consensus among Yemen's political class—and a great deal of anecdotal evidence—that Iran supports the Houthi

movement, but how extensively remains unclear. Is it just ideological support and nominal funding or is it more operational, including training, provision of weapons, political strategy, technical assistance, and strategic communications support? Tehran was indeed quick to applaud the Houthi capture of Sana'a and trumpet its own influence over another Arab capital. But while the Houthis have welcomed moral and material support, they strongly deny that they are Iranian agents or that they aspire to run the government. They seem largely content to bolster the country's weak security apparatus with their own fighters while challenging Al-Qaeda and tribal enemies in the center provinces.

Saudi actions have shown an understanding of this reality, demonstrating seemingly greater concern over threats to border security, trade route access, and limited political influence resulting from the Houthi movement's rise. The Saudis worry about Houthi armed forces along their porous shared border, and have responded by boosting security. The governor of the Saudi Jazan province said in October that "all security agencies are ready to intervene in case of emergency." Saudi wariness is born of experience. In 2010, the kingdom carried out air and ground campaigns against Houthi fighters on both sides of the border during their war with Saleh's government. The Saudis also fear instability caused by violent responses to Houthi military movements could both open the door for Al-Qaeda's expansion in Yemen and threaten the Bab Al-Mandab trade. Yemen has provided a base for not only Yemeni but also Saudi extremists and the kingdom is the preeminent target on the Arabian Peninsula for many militants. Additionally, eight to ten percent of global trade and four percent of the world's oil flows through the Bab Al-Mandab. The Saudis and their neighbors greatly fear trade disruption, and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi noted that in October Egypt and Saudi Arabia had discussed a potential joint response to threats.

Continued on the back page



JOB VACANCIES

Almaz Spie is a Yemeni incorporated company with two industrial shareholders: a reputable Yemeni contractor having offices, workshop and heavy equipment in-country and the UAE registered subsidiary of French Corporation, European leader in services to the industry, looking for qualified persons to fill the position below for her client

1- Electrical Instructor :

JOB PURPOSE:
Part of a pool of instructors under the authority of Head of Training, the Electrical Instructor ensures that YLNG Electrical maintenance training courses are delivered, and well understood by all concerned staff.

HSE RESPONSIBILITES
- Adhere to HSE and other policies, Confidentiality, Compliance needs and Procedures.
- Work safely without any LTI with contribution towards continual improvement.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Be fully conversant of all Electrical related technical courses listed on the Balhaf training catalogue and available on the LNG School library, as well as of all support materials associated to these courses. The delivery of such courses being under the management of the Head of Training.
- Be deeply aware of all Technical courses related to Electrical equipment on the training projects to come training curriculum as well as all support material associated to these courses, delivery of such courses being under the management of Head of Training.
- Issue a report of training activities and in particular on courses delivery.
- Ensure that the courses are delivered to concerned persons in due time, assessment made, results properly recorded, and status permanently updated.
- Keep track of all his daily activities, in term of courses preparation, courses delivery and other activities.
- Report any backlog on the training courses and proposes adequate solution to clear that backlog.
- Play a key role in motivating the staff to adopt a proper HSE related behavior and attitude. Detects anomalies and promotes efficient solutions.
- Design any additional courses with associated training materials, using predefined standard, as and when necessary, ensures that existing training material are regularly reviewed, and updated up to the highest industry standards.

Qualification:
- B.Sc. In Electrical Engineering Discipline from an accredited University..

Job Experience:
- Have a minimum of eight (8) years' experience in Oil & Gas Electrical maintenance department (hands on) and min three - (3) years as Training Instructor in the relevant discipline developing and delivering the training required, preferably in LNG Industry.

Location: Balhaf (4x4)
Duration/contact: To End of Nov, 2015
Proposed Starting Date: As soon as possible
The deadline for receiving the CVs is 14th Jan. 2015

Application Process:
Interested candidates should send their **CV and the cover letter** in English (indicating clearly the position applied for on the subject line) via email to hr-yemen.sogs@spie.com only the short listed candidates will be contacted



Preserving the bloodline:

Hashemites in Yemen

■ **Mohammad Al-Khayat**

“I loved her so much,” said Marwan Al-Marwani, remembering the woman he never got to marry. The 30-year-old accounting graduate met the love of his life, Maryam, at Sana’a University two years ago. Like Al-Marwani, Maryam studied accounting, and the young couple got to know each other on campus. “We liked each other, started talking, and ultimately decided to marry,” Al-Marwani said. However, like so many other love stories, Marwan’s ended in tragedy, with Maryam’s father ultimately preventing the wedding from taking place.

In marriage negotiations throughout Yemen, emotions all too often take a backseat to economic and social status, with parents oftentimes deciding the identity of their children’s spouses. While Al-Marwani was eager to meet economic expectations, he could not skirt his family background, or the fact that he was not a Hashemite—a term used for those considered to be direct descendants of the prophet Muhammad.

“You don’t have the same status,” Maryam’s father told the young man. “Hashemites are supposed to marry other Hashemites. Anything else would be unacceptable.”

Unwilling to let go of his marriage plans so easily, Al-Marwani turned to a local sheikh in his neighborhood of Al-Dharba, who tried to mediate and convince Maryam’s father to agree to the marriage, but to no avail. Maryam’s father insisted that if he allowed his daughter to marry a non-Hashemite, he would be shamed and disowned by the rest of his family.

“We were in love for two years, planning our rosy future that we

were sure we could attain,” remembers a disillusioned Al-Marwani. “I never imagined I would come to face an obstacle that I couldn’t overcome.”

Hashemites make up roughly twelve percent of Yemen’s population, and have traditionally enjoyed high social status and respect within society. For nearly one thousand years, much of what is now northern Yemen was ruled by a Hashemite dynasty that adhered to the Zaydi sect of Shia Islam. It was only in 1962 that the country’s republican revolution put a sudden end to Yemen’s Hashemite Imamate.

According to Najeeb Al-Seraji, a 37-year-old Hashemite arts teacher at the private Durub al-Marifa high school in Sana’a, the period before 1962 was the Hashemite’s golden age. “Hashemites were favored to be governors, judges and Imams,” he said. “But all this changed after the Sept. 26 revolution.” Today, there is no good reason, in the eyes of Al-Hashemi, for Hashemites to remain isolated or to consider themselves a privileged class. “The prophet knew discrimination could tear societies apart and so warned against it.”

Though their political power and elite status have long come to an end, many Hashemites in Yemen continue to take pride in their family ancestry. They remain known as a closed social group, with marriage between them and non-Hashemites going only one way: While Hashemite men have traditionally been allowed to marry non-Hashemite women, Hashemite women can not marry non-Hashemite men.

While these traditional attitudes and claims to social exclusivity continue to be found in Yemen, they are interspersed with new and varied opinions on the group’s social status, ongoing relevance, and en-

dogamy.

Nasser Al-Sakkaf, a 26-year-old journalist based in Sana’a, openly breaks with traditional Hashemite superiority, saying, “I am not proud of being a Hashemite. On the contrary, sometimes I get upset when someone comes and talks to me about the virtues of Hashemites, spreading ideas that might divide people.”

Mohammad Al-Ghurbani, 25, is a human rights lawyer in Sana’a, and says that despite stories, such as Marwan and Maryam’s, bans on intermarriage are slowly starting to become less common. “The practice has started to disappear as people become more educated,” he said. “However it’ll be a while before it’s gone. It’s sad that until now, despite all our progress, we’re still talking about such issues.”

Rooted in religion?

While many Hashemites justify their exclusivity based on a direct lineage to the prophet Muhammad, others argue that the teachings of Islam ban such discriminatory practices, and that the prophet himself would have disapproved of such customs. According to the “Sunan Al-Tirmidh,” one of the six major collections of hadiths, i.e. sayings of the prophet, Muhammad said: “If there comes to you one with whose character and religious commitment you are pleased, then marry [your daughter or female relative under your care] to him, for if you do not do that there will be Fitna in the land and widespread corruption.”

According to Mohammad Bin Yahya Al-Junaid, a Hashemite Zaydi religious scholar from the city of Taiz, this hadith is an example of “a direct ruling,” which shows that the criteria for choosing a husband should be based on the content of

his character and the extent of his piousness. “Hashemite intermarriage practices are not only discriminatory, and run contrary to logic, they also go against the teachings of the prophet,” he said. Al-Junaid claims, rather proudly, that he married his one daughter off to a non-Hashemite man.

Hussein Al-Bukhaiti, a prominent Houthi member and activist, agrees with Al-Junaid. “Based on religious principles, there’s no justification for the intermarriage among Hashemite families. This practice has no religious basis and we [the Houthis] do not encourage it,” he said.

Hashemite supporters of the marriage ban also come equipped with a set of scriptures to justify the practice. Hussein Al-Kaf, 23, a media student in Sana’a who is originally from Hadramout governorate, brings forth his own reference from Sunnah Ibn Majah. “All bloodlines will end on judgment day, except my [the prophet’s] own,” he recites. To him, it is clear that this Hadith calls for the preservation of the prophet’s bloodline, i.e., that of the Hashemites. “We don’t want their daughters marrying men from other families,” he said. “This is our custom, it should be left as it is.”

However debate still exists within Islamic jurisprudence regarding the accuracy of this hadith relayed through Abdullah bin Abbas, one of Muhammad’s youngest companions who was 13 when the prophet died. Following the power struggle that ensued within the Caliphate during the period of the four “righteous” caliphs, Abbas became a firm supporter of Muhammad’s nephew, Ali, whose followers later became known as Shia. For Sunni scholars, the legitimacy of hadiths attributed to Abbas are questionable, and are often referred to as “daif,” or, “weak” hadiths. However amongst



Yemeni Hashemites, heir to a powerful Imamate that once ruled over northern Yemen, make up roughly twelve percent of the population.

Shia, the sect which many Hashemites adhere to, Abbas is highly regarded and respected.

One well known reference to the prophet Muhammad’s opposition to various forms of discrimination can be found in what is popularly referred to as the “farewell sermon,” the last hadith given by the prophet on Mount Arafat, in 632 AD, parts of which are quoted in the three primary Hadith compilations: Sahih Muslim, Sahih Bukhairi, and Sunun Abu Dawood. In the sermon, the prophet commands Muslims to follow the teachings of Islam. Of these, he states that, “All mankind is descended from Adam and Eve, an Arab is not better than a non-A-

ab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab... except by piety and good actions. Learn that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim and that Muslims form one brotherhood.”

Still, decades after the collapse of the Hashemite Imamate that ruled over much of modern day Yemen, some within the Hashemite community cling to a status thought to have been afforded them through the word of God. “Allah has given us this privilege. We did not give it to ourselves,” says Radwan Al-Qurashi, a Hashemite and pharmacist from Taiz. “Most people don’t realize that honoring us is a duty, and praising us is Sunnah.”

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، البروفسور 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 أيضا 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 أجنداتها على المؤسسات الإعلامية مما يخلق أثراً سلبياً واضحاً على طابع استقلال الإعلام وأثر بشكل مباشر على معايير أساسية مثل الحيادية والموضوعية. وهنا تسعى “إذاعة يمن تايمز” لتعزز من دور مؤسستها الإعلامية المستقلة لتصل إلى كل من لا تصل إليه عبر صحيفتها لتكون من الإذاعات الرائدة في اليمن التي جعلت من الحياد والاستقلال 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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Afghanistan: Uphill struggle for female aid workers

IRIN
First published Dec. 15

When Shaharзад completed her law degree and announced she wanted to get a job, her younger brother did what he could to stop it. Coming from the culturally conservative Badakhshan region, the siblings had left their parents behind to move to the capital Kabul and her brother was technically the head of the household. Even still, she was determined to stand on her own feet.

Two years later, he is still trying to persuade her to quit. "Every two or three days he says the same thing—it is better to stay at home and I will provide the salary. He asks me to stay at home and cook for him and wash his clothes," she said, giggling as though amazed by her own rebellion. "But I am trying to go forwards, not backwards."

Shaharзад makes up one fifth of the Norwegian Refugee Council's first ever female-only intervention team, which the NGO believes is also the only such entity in the country.

Working around shelter issues, the women are tasked with aiding

female-headed households in one particular region of the capital Kabul.

Homaira, the team's leader, who like Shaharзад asked that just her first name be printed, has been with the organization since 2008, but until last year she was always a solitary woman in an all-male team.

This affected how much contact the NGO had with women in the communities.

"When we were going to the villages to identify the beneficiaries, since the head of the communities are usually male they were introducing only the vulnerable males to us. The number of female beneficiaries was very low," she explained.

"[The women] had to go through a middle man and sometimes we heard that they were charged [had to pay money]," Homaira added. "Now they contact us directly and can benefit without charges or bribery."

Among the many services NRC provides is helping women register for national identity cards. Up to 90 percent of women in the informal settlements of Kabul don't have ID cards—and that means they can't formally rent a house, open a bank account, inherit money or vote.

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Members of NRC's female shelter team in Afghanistan. The women are tasked with aiding female-headed households in one particular region of the capital Kabul.

Book Review:

"Arabs without God: Atheism and Freedom of Belief in the Middle East" by Brian Whitaker

The Yemen Times is republishing this piece with permission from Muftah.org in two parts. Part one was published last week, part two is below.

Since the start of the Arab Spring, atheism has become a growing social phenomenon in the region, with an increasing presence on social media outlets. In his timely book, *Arabs without God*, Brian Whitaker, British journalist and former Middle East editor at The Guardian, explores this rarely studied but recurrent phenomenon in the Arab world. Juxtaposing the new wave of atheism with existing social and political discourses in the region, Whitaker highlights the complexities of this intellectual revolution, while also presenting possible solutions for its accommodation in a part of the globe known for its religiosity.

Losing Religion and Choosing the Self

Social alienation also drives some Arabs, especially women and homosexuals, to reject religion. In his book, Whitaker navigates the ways in which patriarchy, familial discrimination, as well as social marginalization, push women and homosexuals away from their religion.

On their road to non-belief, women and homosexuals each develop a unique set of characteristics, expressing their private feelings within tightly guarded circles of trust while mirroring social expectations in public. For example, Whitaker's book contains examples from ex-Muslim women and homosexuals who felt comfortable sharing their non-belief with selected immediate family members, while continuing to superficially display their religious affiliations.

Whitaker attributes this unique identity formation to two things. The first has to do with the "comfort factor," which encourages those who are insecure to seek religion, or the pretense of religion, for protection from harassment or persecution. The second has to do with "faith plasticity," which involves

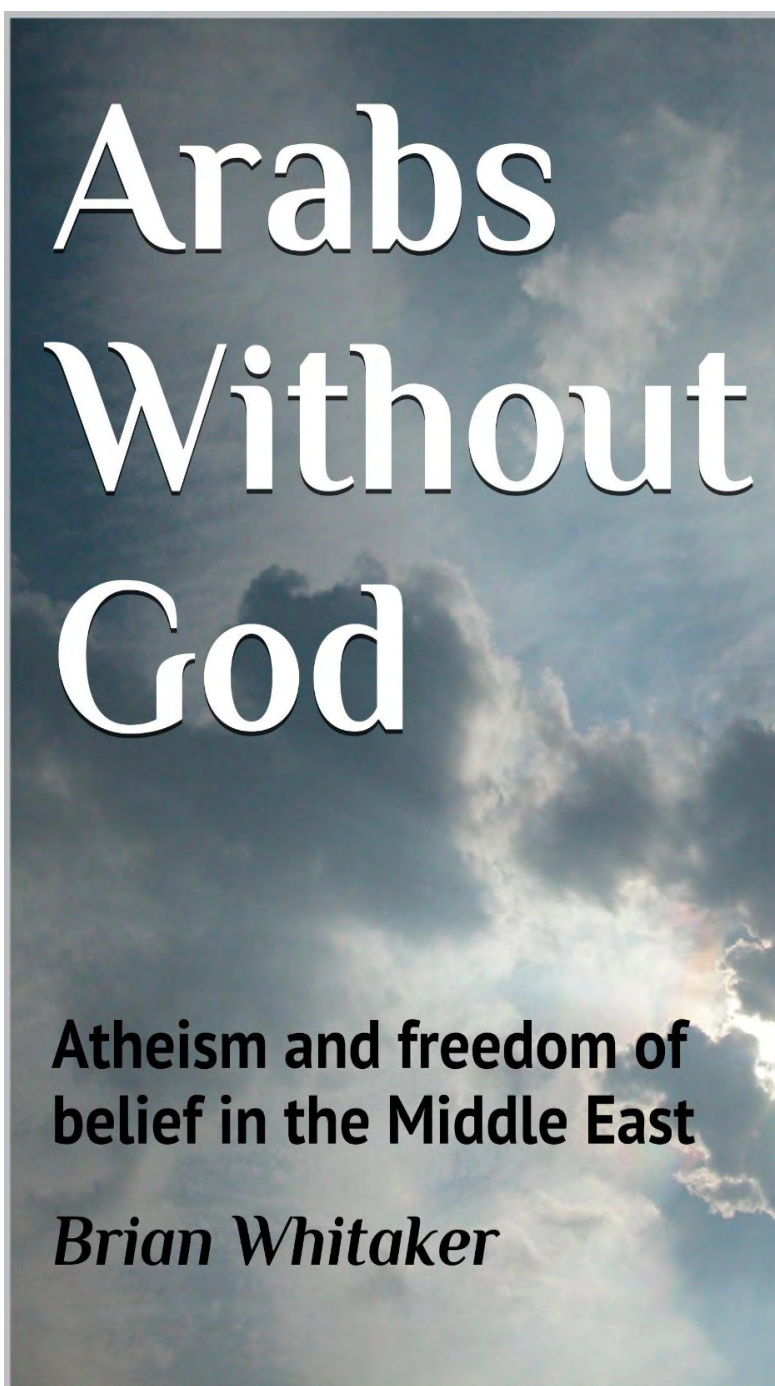
"reshaping orthodox concepts of God and faith to fit their needs."

Although Whitaker does not explicitly claim that women's subjugation is fueled by forces other than religion, he does not shy away from emphasizing the twisted effects patriarchy has on their daily lives. In male-dominated societies, like those in the Arab world, a woman's piety, virtue, and family honor is assessed through her outward demonstrations of religiosity. Nonconformity and deviation from strict religious practices are automatically linked to negative portrayals of female chastity and virtue, thus paving the way toward "popular association[s] of atheism with immorality." This social stigma serves to deter women from questioning religious codes of conduct, including the ultimate belief in God and religious forms of dress.

As Whitaker argues, patriarchy is a double-edged sword that both pushes women to abandon religion and also, ironically, creates indecisiveness about quitting their faith, thanks to an ingrained tendency to comply with social norms.

Unlike some Western churches that slowly accepted female ordination, theological arguments and social rejection have relegated Muslim women to the inferior position of silent worshippers. There have been campaigns to change the status quo, including allowing women to pray alongside men, rather than in separate rooms or on segregated floors of mosques, and permitting female imams to lead prayers. None of these attempts have, however, been successful in the Arab world.

For their part, Arab LGBTQ communities endure constant persecution and harassment by state agencies, as well as private citizens who adhere to mainstream Islam. For some LGBTQ Arabs, things are further complicated by doubts about prevailing religious belief systems. Some of these individuals choose to pursue this "double-coming-out." Other atheist homosexuals in the Arab world, however, continue to weigh their options as to which identity—atheist or homosexual—is less risky for them to publicly as-



sume.

Interestingly, Whitaker shows that some agnostic Arab homosexuals find solace within a middle ground of spirituality. This is not an outright rejection of faith, but rather a step toward distancing themselves from organized religion, which allows them to construct their distinctive personal identities while maintaining the minimum religiosity required by

society.

In tackling complex issues of gender and sexuality in relation to religion, Whitaker has undertaken the difficult task of mapping the region's multifaceted atheist subgroups based on gender and sexuality. Although he does not address the compounded problems faced by atheist LBT feminist groups, the author certainly challenges perspectives that dismiss the affects

individual experiences have on the journey toward disbelief.

Dialectics of Belief and Non-Belief

In reading *Arabs without God*, one notices the recurring theme of duality, in many forms. The book includes categories of believers and non-believers, activist non-believers and quietest non-believers, defensive ex-Muslims and offensive ex-Muslims. There are also contrasts made between reason and emotion, and confrontation and self-censorship, to mention a few examples. Whitaker does not, however, confine himself to describing these dichotomies in broad terms, but rather highlights the nuances that exist between and within them.

For instance, some Arab states base their constitutions both on Sharia law as well as international principles of human rights. In this context, Whitaker dedicates considerable space to questions about religious privileges and discrimination.

He demonstrates how both Arab and non-Arab countries use religion as a basis for selecting heads of state. While constitutions in some Arab states require presidents to be Muslim, Andorra and Lebanon specify Christian heads of states, while Bhutan and Thailand require their leaders be Buddhist.

What Whitaker fails to recognize, however, is that social, political, and legal manifestations of this practice are not entirely exclusive to the non-Western world. In the United States, separation of church and state is enshrined in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Despite these guarantees however, religious discrimination regularly occurs in America at workplaces, places of worship, and even during the naturalization process, which discriminates against atheists by requiring a "religious objection" for any refusal to take up arms to defend the country.

The Myth of Cultural Exceptionalism

In making the case for freedom from religion, Whitaker argues that in the contemporary Arab world

the "opening-up of public discourse during the last few years, the flow of ideas and the challenging of the status quo has some parallels with the European Enlightenment and may well have similar effects." To this extent, he argues that the region's purported social and political awakening may deprive Arab governments of the foundation for their legitimacy, since a "pious government" is no longer seen as necessarily a "competent" one.

While Whitaker's argument may be valid, it is not entirely realistic to dismiss religion's social role in the Arab world. Religiosity is intertwined with the worldview of many Arabs, even if its relationship with some of these individuals may be transient.

For Muslims, who represent the majority of Arabs, the religious concept of *fitrah*—according to which all humans are naturally born into Islam, as the one true religion—is fundamental and ingrained in their minds and hearts. Challenging this concept requires techniques and tactics that acknowledge the "religious relativism" of Islam, although this may be a hard sell given its power over the lives of Muslims.

Nevertheless, for non-believers to achieve recognition in the Arab world, they must adopt a bottom-up approach and harness voices of reason among those believers who acknowledge that atheism is a valid intellectual phenomenon, rather than a temporary behavioral choice. By engaging in open discussions, Arab atheists and believers from all Abrahamic religious backgrounds can hope to reach some sort of reconciliation.

A timely book, *Arabs without God* challenges the monolithic image of religion as permeating all aspects of life in the Middle East region, by uncovering the spiritual and humanistic perspectives held by some Arabs. Whitaker's balanced exploration of the Arab world's new wave of atheism is well-researched and supported by numerous first-hand interviews as well as a multitude of end-notes for those looking for further reading on the subject.

Schools in Sana'a change weekend schedule

Story and photos by **Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki**

The Houthis have provided a great service to us," claimed M o h a m m a d Al-Jabri, a local resident of Sana'a governorate's Sanhan district. "The prophet Mohammad commanded us to oppose the Jews in everything they do, now, we're doing just that," he added.

Many in Sana'a governorate feel happy about yet another new Houthi policy that has come to be applied in practice, despite contradicting Yemeni law. It applies to the holidays granted to students and teachers within the country's federal school system.

Al-Jabri, 48, has five children studying in Sana'a governorate's Jehana school district; three in elementary school, one in middle school, one in high school. All of them will be affected by a new decision recently put in place by the governorate's local school board. According to an agreement signed at a meeting on Dec. 13, and attended by the directors of all of Sana'a governorate's district educational offices, weekends for all elementary, middle and high schools will be changed from Fridays and Saturdays, to Thursdays and Fridays. Rather than a pro-active reform initiative, the meeting represented a collection of government officials coming to terms with, and codifying, what had already begun to take place on the ground. According to sources that attended the meeting, 83 elementary, middle and high schools in Sana'a governorate had already adopted the

new weekend schedule, two weeks prior on Saturday Nov. 27—apparently at the behest of the Houthis.

According to teachers, locals, and education officials in Sana'a governorate, Houthis imposed the new rule for religious reasons. An anonymous source within the Sanhan School District's Oversight Department told the Yemen Times that the reason behind the change was that Jews and Christians observed Saturday as a day off. "According to Islamic scripture, they [the Houthis] said, Muslims are supposed to oppose the Jews in everything they do." However the source was skeptical regarding the sincerity of these claims. "In reality, they're doing this just to spite the Islah Party and the previous government, and send them a message that they're willing to overturn everything they've done, no matter how petty it is."

What was being referred to specifically was an amendment implemented in June 2013 that amended a previous prime ministerial decree passed in 2006. Paragraph B of article 10 of the decree officially stipulates that weekends in all government offices and ministries in Yemen would be on Thursdays and Fridays, as had been the custom before. The amendment, passed in January 2013 and implemented six months later in June, changed this, officially stipulating that Fridays and Saturdays would be considered weekends for all government offices and bodies, as is the custom in most Muslim countries.

State-run Saba News Agency reported in January 2013 that the decision was taken to better facilitate communication between Yemen's government and foreign countries,



Mahdi Ali Al-Jedai with his son, performing guard duty, at the empty Imam Ali Bin Abi Taleb School, on Thursday, Dec. 11.

most of which take weekends off on Saturdays and Sundays. Having weekends on Thursdays and Fridays would leave them just three days to liaise with their foreign counterparts during the weeks, so the logic went.

Fahd Murshed, director of the Sanhan district education office, who attended the meeting and signed an agreement to implement the new policy shift, told the Yemen Times that all schools in Sana'a governorate had already been operating on this schedule for more than two weeks. "We held this meeting last Saturday, however this was already two weeks after Houthi officials commanded all school principals throughout the governorate to change the weekend schedule," he said. "We just made it official."

The extent to which the meeting's decision can indeed be called "official" may be up for debate. Amin Al-Ghuthaifi, chief director of Sana'a governorate's education office, who also attended the meeting, told the Yemen Times that he supports the idea of changing the weekend schedule. However, officially, he is not party to the changes made. "I didn't sign the agreement, even though all others in attendance did," he said. Fearful for his job, he is afraid of doing anything that could put him in a precarious position. "I can't make anything official until I receive verification from the Ministry of Education," he said. "However the policy has already been implemented on the ground, as it should be."

Conversations with various officials within the ministry paint a picture of confusion, of an organization struggling to catch up with developments on the ground that undermine its authority. Abdullah Al-Hamedi, deputy minister of education told the Yemen Times that he has no knowledge of any such changes. He went on threatening that anyone who abides by them would be suspended or fired. However, Abdullah Al-Zeyadi, media officer within the ministry of education, claimed that ministry officials had held a series of meetings over the previous weeks to debate how to respond to this issue.



Memorandum signed by directors of all of Sana'a governorate's district education offices, officially changing weekends from Friday and Saturday to Thursday and Friday.

Ali Al-Qahoom, a member of the Houthi Political Office, offered a cryptic commentary regarding the role of the Houthis in spurring this decision. "I can neither confirm, nor deny, that we had anything to do with this," he said. "But personally, I support the change. I think everyone does."

It has long been custom for Yemenis to take Thursdays off, and many people that the Yemen Times spoke with supported the decision, and had already worked to help put it into effect. The Yemen Times visited a number of schools in the Sanhan district on Thursday Dec. 11, to see firsthand the extent to which these changes had taken effect on the ground.

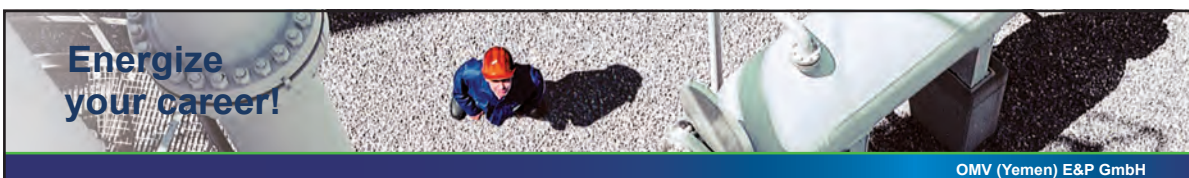
Abdullah Al-Bana'a, principal of the Jil Al-Mithaq school in the Qa Al-Qaidhi area of Sanhan district, said that he supported the decision. "In Yemen, special occasions and weddings are often held on Thursdays," he said. "Even if it's officially a work day, students, and even teachers, will often times not show up if they have other social obligations. This way is just more practical. We won't lose a day of school just to appease foreign governments."

The Yemen Times visited several other schools in the area, including the Hussein Bin Ali school, a large

facility that holds two separate institutes for boys and girls. There, even the guard station was empty. However, at the Imam Ali Bin Abi Taleb School, Mahdi Ali Al-Jedai, the school's security guard, was present. He told the Yemen Times that he had been asked by the school's administration to sit outside the school in the event that any students unfamiliar with the new schedule showed up. It was his job to send them home, he said. He also expressed support for the Saturday decision. "When we take Saturdays off we liken ourselves to the Jews," he said. "It's a religious duty to oppose them."

Not all within the school district share Al-Jedai's opinion, or the inflammatory rhetoric used to justify it. Tareq Al-Jamrah, a middle school Islamic studies teacher at the Jil Al-Methaq school, said that although he agrees that changing the weekend to Thursday is more in line with Yemeni culture, "it is a decision that should be implemented by the ministry [of education], not the Houthis."

Abdul Razaq Al-Jaidi, a teacher at the Al-Shaidi Al-Olufi school in the Qa Al-Qaidhi district, referred to all the talk surrounding Jews as "nonsense." "The rest of the world has Saturdays off," he said. "We should too."



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Afghanistan: Uphill struggle for female aid workers

The five women come from different parts of Afghanistan's tribal society, yet the experience has bonded them together.

"We have built confidence in women - even among ourselves," Shaharзад said. "In the beginning when I was going to the villages and selecting the female-headed households, I was not sure the women could build their shelters. But when we provided resources, cash, and they showed they could handle it, now they are confident in their ability, and I am too."

Poor statistics

Fourteen years after the US-led invasion, a woman's place in Afghanistan is still largely indoors and out of sight.

The Afghanistan National Nutrition Survey released in 2013 found that 95 percent of Afghan women aged 15-49 suffer from Vitamin D deficiency, due largely to their lack of exposure to the sun.

In the world of work, too, the gains made by women have been limited. Only 16 percent of Afghan women have formal jobs, according to the World Bank, and a survey last year noted a lack of job opportunities was the second highest issue behind education for women in the country.

Foreign NGOs and UN organiza-

tions, most of which have explicitly committed to the UN Women's gender mainstreaming policy as well as equal opportunity legislation in their countries of origin, are among some of the more open organizations in terms of employing women, but they still fall far short of equal representation.

IRIN asked a number of international organizations what percentage of their Afghan programming staff were female.

UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) said it was just under 20 percent, NRC was 29 percent and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was 36 percent.

Cathy Howard, acting head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), admitted that just 2 percent of their national staff were female, a figure she wants to change. In total OCHA has around 100 programming staff in Afghanistan, including international workers, she said.

"What we are trying to look at is how to improve that pretty abysmal percentage in the next year or two years—whether at Kabul level or sub-office level. [We have had] a very frank conversation about what we need to do to improve upon this," she said.

Among the measures being discussed by OCHA is the lowering of

entry requirements, so that candidates only need a bachelors, rather than a masters, for certain posts.

"We would much prefer to see relevant work experience than another degree," Howard said. "That might open the way for more women because what we have heard is that while it is hard enough for women to get a first degree, far fewer women are going [on] to do a second degree."

She also stressed that a cultural shift was needed in the organization to prioritize the issue. "I would expect that any shortlist of candidates must include at least one woman. If that shortlist does not include a woman I would need to see very strong justification for why that is not possible and I am quite prepared to re-advertise again and again until we do."

Rowing against the tide

Yet all sides admit that merely having equal opportunity policies will not be enough. Afghan cultural norms remain an issue preventing female employment, with women often leaned upon by family and friends to abandon their work plans, just like Shaharзад.

One non-Afghan female UN worker told IRIN about a particularly frustrating decision by a female candidate to withdraw under

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Howard accepts these issues but believes that progress can be made in the large, more liberal cities. "We need to focus on those areas where there is more acceptance of women working per se and capitalize on

that. Some other areas - more deeply conservative areas - are much more a work in progress," she said.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Reading Saudi Tea Leaves in Yemen

The Houthis' success comes at the low ebb of Saudi influence in Yemen. Beyond these security actions, the kingdom is also trying to reinvigorate direct ties with tribal and political actors to bolster its diminished role in Yemen. Saudi Arabia distanced itself from the Islamist Islah party in early 2014, as part of its regional campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood. As an umbrella Islamist political force, Islah represents a strong Muslim Brotherhood cohort, but it also includes the Al-Ahmar clan, traditional Saudi allies who head the powerful Hashid tribal confederation. The Saudis presented the Al-Ahmars with an ultimatum to either fight the Brotherhood or lose funding last winter. Subsequent cuts weakened the clan and Islah. In February, the Houthis overran the Ahmar tribal headquarters in the north. By September they had moved on to Sana'a and driven Brigadier General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, an Islah leader and powerful Saudi ally, from the country. Mohsen and key Al-Ahmar leaders allegedly fled across the border, dealing a deadly blow to Islah and their allies. The defeat of this cohort places the Kingdom in a much weakened position, without the traditional network of tribal allies it had cultivated over decades.

The September 21 Peace and Partnership Agreement, signed by the Houthis and all the major political parties, provides a framework to end the violence and move the country forward with a new government now in place. It has also solidified the new political order, underscoring the reality that the Saudis lack trusted allies. Recent reports suggest that the Saudi royal family is trying to rectify this situation. Official sources claimed that King Abdullah himself com-

missioned the head of the Royal Diwan to establish ties with Hashid sheikhs in September against the Houthis; it is unclear whether the Al-Ahmars are included. Yemeni newspapers also reported meetings between Southern Hiraq leaders and Saudi officials in Cairo in October. These reports suggest the Saudis have returned to familiar ways, cultivating relationships with southern separatists and northern tribes to weaken the central government and maximize their own influence as they have historically done. It is possible the kingdom may be temporarily putting Islamist concerns to the side to maintain its traditional pull in Yemen. At the same time, they must also be extremely concerned about how Houthi aggression may also be benefiting Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), whose members are forging alliances with local tribesmen angry with Houthi overreach into their areas.

So what can be divined from the kingdom's tea leaves? The Saudis say they are concerned with Iranian encirclement and instability caused by the Tehran-sponsored Houthis; their actions suggest they aim to reverse losses of influence and security brought on by the group's rise. The kingdom's policy going forward will reflect a mix of these concerns. The Saudis will likely seek to balance against Houthi expansion by sponsoring rival tribes, capitalizing on unpopular Houthi military occupation, maintaining ties with a range of actors, and trying to keep AQAP scattered. By reaching out to Hashid leadership, they may walk back their anti-Brotherhood stance or instead shift funds within the confederation away from the Ahmars toward more trustworthy sheikhs.

Despite the announced suspen-

sion in aid, it appears a Saudi commitment of \$54 million in food aid will still be transmitted, but this is a pittance compared to what Yemen needs to feed its citizens and prevent further humanitarian catastrophe. The budget support and fuel transfers from Saudi Arabia have been absolutely essential in keeping Yemen afloat over the past few years; without this, Yemen faces a very near-term financial crisis. The Saudi leadership will likely maintain the suspension to pressure a Houthi withdrawal from Sana'a, but there is little assurance this maneuver will work, and it will be average Yemenis who suffer in the interim. If the Saudi royal family is truly concerned about instability in Yemen and securing its interests in the country, perhaps it should take a deeper look at its own role in fostering political divisions and the kind of grievances that gave rise to the Houthi movement's popularity. Saudi leaders will likely raise Yemen's situation in any discussion of regional security at the GCC summit meeting in Doha; perhaps now there is enough concern about Iranian influence in their backyard to galvanize the kind of broad political support and economic assistance that Yemen desperately needs to dig itself out of this current morass.

Danya Greenfield is the deputy director of the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East at the Atlantic Council. Owen Daniels is an intern with the Rafik Hariri Center focusing on Yemen's transition.

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