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Houthis: National Salvation Alliance serves foreign agendas

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, March 15—Houthi representatives have condemned the newly-formed National Salvation Alliance as an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, created to serve the interests of the Islah Party and foreign governments.

The formation of the National Salvation Alliance was announced on Saturday. It is composed of 44 political parties, tribal coalitions, youth activist groups and other civil society organizations.

The Islah, Nasserist, and Justice and Building parties, in addition to the southern-based faction of the General People's Congress (GPC), are among the eight political parties that have joined the opposition alliance. The Bakil, Al-Jawf and Marib tribal coalitions, the Al-Baida Sons coalition, and the National Coalition for the Sons of Taiz are some of the ten tribal groups to have joined as well.

Abdulaziz Al-Jubari, a member of Parliament and general secretary of the Justice and Building Party, has been appointed to head the new coalition.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, told the Yemen Times on Sunday that the alliance represents an attempt to implement the Muslim Brotherhood's agenda and "undermine the people's revolution."

By calling upon its members to adhere to the Gulf Initiative and the GCC trusteeship over Yemen, the alliance is trying to override the Peace and National Partnership Agreement that was signed between Ansar Allah [the Houthis] and other political parties on Sept. 21," he said.

He called the alliance an "obstruction of the political process" and warned its members could "ignite war" if they follow through with their objectives.

According to its own agenda, which was outlined during an official launch on Saturday at the Taj Sheba Hotel in Sana'a, the alliance aims at "enhancing social peace and building a democratic federal civil country."

In a brochure published by the group, the alliance maintains it is a pacifist organization formed to "prevent state collapse and disintegration" and which "aims to face any group [that assumes] power by force or uses violence to achieve political gains."

Members of the alliance have committed themselves to the GCC initiative and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes as "the basic principles towards achieving a peaceful transition of power."



The National Salvation Alliance is composed of 44 political parties, tribal coalitions and civil society organizations which seek to unite against the Houthis and achieve a peaceful transition of power.

Dr. Muhammad Al-Saady, a member of the group's Executive Authority, said actions taken by the Houthis since their rise to power have necessitated drastic action to bring about change.

"Killings, breaking into military camps, ransacking state institutions

and besieging ministers requires us to set ambitious goals, which we will achieve by cooperating with a broad range of opposition groups," he told the Yemen Times.

Al-Saady says he is hopeful that the coalition's goals can be achieved peacefully through dialogue, civil disobedience campaigns and the garnering of international support for Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi.

Ali Al-Jaradi, head of the Islah Party's Media Department, said his party is fully devoted to the new coalition.

Preparations for the alliance have been underway for three months, according to Al-Jaradi, who said his party will be playing a "major role" in the new coalition. "Islah enjoys the support of thousands of youth who are eager to support our cause in whatever way they can," he said.

The Yemen Times was unable to contact members of the GPC's southern faction, who are loyal to Hadi, but northern party members—many of whom remain loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh—have dismissed any prospect of joining the opposition group.

Abdulmalik Al-Fuhaidi, editor-in-chief of the party's mouthpiece Al-Motamar Net, said the participation of southern GPC members "does not mean the rest of the party will be involved, we don't acknowledge the alliance and will not be taking part in it."

Bahah released after two months of house arrest

Story by Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki
Photo by Brett Scott

SANA'A, March 16—Former Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and fellow members of Cabinet were released from house arrest on Monday morning, almost two months after they were detained by the Houthis.

According to Mohammad Bafadhel, Bahah's press secretary, their release came following weeks of negotiations involving Houthis, tribal leaders and UN Special Envoy Jamal Benomar, who returned to Sana'a from Riyadh on Saturday.

Members of the former Cabinet not under house arrest had been prevented from leaving the capital, but Bafadhel confirmed that Bahah and his former ministers were now free to move within and outside Yemen as they pleased.

Bahah announced his release on his official Facebook page once the deal was finalized. Thanking all of those involved in the negotiations, he said members of the former government "are free to move inside and outside of the country as a human and constitutional right" and that their release had been granted "as a gesture of goodwill and a show of accountability."

Bafadhel said Bahah would soon be flying to Canada, where he had previously served as Yemen's ambassador, to join his family.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, confirmed the release but refused



Former Prime Minister Khaled Bahah at his residence on Feb. 5. A source close to Bahah says he was subject to regular violations of his privacy by armed Houthis.

to elaborate on how the deal was struck. He said the terms of the agreement would be made public "in the coming days," and that Bahah's release "might be conditional on his leaving the country."

A source close to Bahah, speaking to the Yemen Times on condition of anonymity, said the former prime minister had endured repeated violations of his privacy during the two-month ordeal.

"Armed men would enter Bahah's house twice a day to check on him, and demanded he appear at the front gate each night to make sure he was still there. They threat-

ened to enter his bedroom if he did not appear," the source said, adding that searches of the back garden for hidden exits were routine.

Additional security was evident any time visitors arrived at the house, said the source, with over 20 armed men positioned around the compound. Bahah received visits from state officials, journalists and others on a regular basis throughout his detention. The Yemen Times visited the former prime minister at his residence on Feb. 5.

Bahah's residence was besieged by Houthi militants on Jan. 22 following the resignations of the Cabinet

and President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi. Hadi escaped house arrest on Feb. 21 and relocated to the southern governorate of Aden, where he has since withdrawn his resignation.

The ending of Bahah's house arrest on Monday came one day after a coalition of Hadramout and Shabwa tribes issued a statement threatening attacks on oil facilities in the two governorates unless the former prime minister was released.

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Islah appoints arrested members as dialogue representatives



Anwar Al-Himyari

Habib Al-Ariqi

Ali Al-Hadma

Mohammad Al-Saadi

The decision to appoint party members accused by the Houthis of having links with AQAP, a charge strenuously denied by Islah, has been characterized as a provocation by the rebel group.

■ Khalid Al-Karimi

SANA'A, March 16—The Islah Party announced on Sunday that four of its members, three held captive and one under house arrest at the time of the announcement, will serve as representatives for the group in the ongoing national dialogue.

In a letter given Sunday to UN Special Envoy to Yemen Jamal Benomar, the Islah Party announced four representatives: Mohammad Al-Saadi, Ali Al-Hadma, Anwar Al-Himyari, and Habib Al-Ariqi.

Al-Saadi served as the minister of trade and industry before resigning on Jan. 22. At the time of the announcement, he had been held by the Houthis under house arrest for three weeks. He was released on March 16. The other three appointees were kidnapped on March 1 by the Houthis. Al-Hadma and Al-Himyari are two members of the Islah Party's Student Department, and Al-Ariqi was a leading Islah figure in the 2011 uprising.

Adnan Al-Udaini, the deputy head of the Islah Party's Information Committee, told the Yemen

Times the party has the right to appoint whomever it wants. "These members will replace other Islah members in the dialogue," he said. "The purpose of these appointments is to reveal the violations committed by the Houthis against the Yemeni people in general and the Islah Party in particular."

However, Houthi Political Office member Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti sees the appointments as a provocation. "The Islah Party is trying to mislead people and trying to depict these individuals as innocent. This is a ridiculous decision, and tells of Islah's frivolous handling of the dialogue," he told the Yemen Times Monday.

The Houthis kidnapped four prominent Islah members on March 1 in the capital city. Aside from the three appointed to represent the party in national dialogues, one is a youth activist named Mohammad Al-Sabri. Following the arrest, Saba News Agency, now under Houthi control, reported the men were part of an armed cell with ties to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and accused Al-Ariqi of being the leader.

Al-Bukhaiti said he has no information regarding the condition of the four detained Islah members. Asked why they have not received a fair trial, he said that this is the business of the popular committees and legal authorities in Sana'a.

Repeated calls from the Yemen Times to Abdulrazaq Al-Moayad, the chief of security in the capital city, went unreturned.

On Feb. 23, the Houthis arrested former Minister Al-Saadi in Dhamar governorate. The group prevented him from travelling to Aden to meet Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi, instead forcing him to return to his home in Sana'a, where he was placed under house arrest until March 16.

Ali Al-Jaradi, head of the party's Information and Culture Department, adamantly denied the alleged connections to AQAP, describing the four as political activists. "Anyone opposing the Houthi group is accused by them of being affiliated with Al-Qaeda. For us, these four will represent the Islah Party in talks, and every party can change its representatives," he said.

Hadi calls for 20,000 southerners to join southern military



Hadi met with tribesmen from Shabwa Sunday morning at the Republican Palace in Aden. The delegation's spokesman, Ahmad Al-Haqi, said the tribes will back Hadi against any Houthi aggression.

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

SANA'A, March 16—In response to a call from Hadi on Saturday for the recruitment of 20,000 soldiers in the south, local authorities in Aden governorate have so far recruited hundreds of young men into the military.

Haithem Mohammad Al-Hasani, an officer in Salah Al-Din camp in Aden city who is loyal to Hadi, said that "President Hadi took the right step, there is mutiny inside the Special Security Forces (SSF)."

A special recruitment process started on Sunday and will last one week, Al-Hasani said. Registration is only open to southerners, he added.

Nashwan Abdu Farea, a resident of Aden city, said he saw dozens of young men lined up at the military's administrative base in the

city to enlist.

Hadi's decision came during a meeting with security forces in Aden governorate on Saturday. Hadi ordered the restoration of military service for the men who were laid off following the 1994 civil war, which Hadi led against the south.

The decision comes amid a standoff between the commander of the SSF in Aden, Abdulhazef Al-Saqaf, and Adlan Al-Hattas, who Hadi appointed last week to replace him.

Given Hadi's past aggression towards the south, his move has not been welcomed there by all. Ahmad Lamlass, an officer based in Aden governorate, said Hadi's escape to Aden and subsequent call for a southern army is an effort to "drag Yemen into endless conflict and war."

"The Ministry of Defense is lo-

cated in Sana'a, not Aden. Therefore, enlistment should take place there, but Hadi wants to drag the south into a war which he will lose."

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, said southerners who were laid off following the civil war had a right to be re-enlisted in the military, but said he hoped that Hadi was not cynically using the grievance to prepare for a war against the north.

On Sunday morning, Hadi met with a delegation of tribes from Bani Helal of Shabwa governorate in the Republican Palace in Aden. During the meeting, the tribes confirmed their support of Hadi.

The spokesman of the delegation, Ahmad Al-Haqi, said the tribes were committed to protect Aden against any potential Houthi invasion.

Invitation for Prequalification

Republic of Yemen

Sana'a Water Supply Enhancement Project
IDB Loan Financing No.: 2-YAR-0094
Brief Description of Works

The Republic of Yemen has received a loan from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) toward the cost of Sana'a Water Supply Enhancement Project. And it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payments for the two areas, No. SANCW-8N and SANCW-11, under this project.

The Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corp. intend to prequalify contractors and/or firms for the said project. The description of the two areas and the scope of works are as follows:

SANCW-8N Project Area

The area is located in Sad Shuoub zone, east of al-Jiraf zone and it lies between the Airport Road and Sa'ela Shuoub zone. It is considered a residential area with few commercial activities and governmental offices. The area is about 100 ha.

SANCW-11 Project Area

The area covers Haddah and Faj Ottan with significant commercial, medical, institutional and governmental activities. The area of the project is about 620 ha.

The project scope includes installation of approximately 460 Km of pipes work of various diameters ranging from 25 mm up to 400 mm in the areas 11 and 8N, with approximately 100,000 house connections. In addition, the project includes drilling of two wells with necessary testing in the east part of Al Jeraf (in area 8).

Prequalification will be conducted through prequalification procedures specified in the *Guidelines for Procurement of Goods and Works under Islamic Development Bank Financing*, May 2009, and is open to all bidders from eligible source member countries, as defined in the guidelines.

Eligible Contractors from IDB member countries may also express interest in the form of association (e.g. a joint-venture) to be validated by either an agreement or a letter of intent for agreement among members of the association with lead contractor from IDB member countries to enhance their qualification.

Interested eligible applicants may obtain further information and collect the document (in English) from the Sana'a Water and Sanitation Local Corp. from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. upon the submission of written application to the address below.

Applications for prequalification should be submitted in sealed envelopes, delivered to the address below by [Date: 14-5-2015 Time: 11:30 a.m.], and be clearly marked "Application to Prequalify for Sana'a Water Supply Enhancement Project, areas No. SANCW-8N and SANCW-11."

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Houthi military exercises continue near Saudi border

■ Bassam Al-Khameri

SANA'A, March 15—Military exercises organized by the Houthis have continued in Sa'ada governorate since March 12, near the border with Saudi Arabia, amid talk of moving the national dialogue to Riyadh.

The maneuvers involve both Houthi forces and military personnel and are being carried out in the Al-Buqa area of Kitaf district, in northern Sa'ada.

Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office, told the Yemen Times Sunday that the exercise involves "thousands" of popular committee members and forces from all of the governorate's Houthi-controlled military units.

"The maneuvers aim to increase Yemen's preparedness for any attacks, both domestically and internationally, and to send a message to regional powers that the Houthi popular committees will not allow any plots against Yemen to succeed," he said.

It is the first time military exercises have been organized on such a large scale, according to Al-Bukhaiti, who was unable to say how long they would continue for.

Jamal Al-Qaiz, head of the Security Department at the Ministry of Defense, confirmed that military units in the governorate are participating in the exercise. He said it was being organized to underscore cooperation between Houthi and military forces, and to show supporters that "they need not worry about Saudi Arabia."

Nabil Al-Shajabi, a professor of international relations and conflict resolution at Sana'a University, believes the primary purpose of the exercise is to send a message to domestic and international actors, particularly Saudi Arabia.



Military exercises have been going on in the Al-Buqa area of northern Sa'ada since March 12, involving large numbers of popular committee members and military forces based in the governorate.

"The Houthis may be willing to participate in the negotiations in Riyadh, but prior to that they want to send a message to Saudi Arabia that they are a powerful group that owns advanced weapons and has a say in the decision-making process," he said.

Al-Sharjabi also views the military display as "an attempt to gloss over [the Houthis'] evident failures, particularly after Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi's escape to Aden."

Saudi Arabia declared the Houthis a terrorist group on March 7, 2014, but have recently invited all parties to resume the national

dialogue in Riyadh.

The military exercise comes at a critical time, as foreign ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) discuss hosting the UN-brokered national dialogue.

The Houthis have yet to decide whether or not they will take part in any talks outside of the capital Sana'a, but have said any movement will require the agreement of all stakeholders. On Saturday, March 15, opponents of the Houthis announced the formation of a National Salvation Alliance to strengthen their position in national dialogues.

فاتورتك بمزاجك



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Yemenis in Saudi Arabia fear deportation

■ Ali Ibrahim Al-Moshki

With a history of animosity between the Saudi government and the Houthis, and the latter's backing from Iran, the group's rise has been the cause of much alarm in Riyadh. As the situation continues to deteriorate, Yemenis working in the kingdom are concerned about how their host government might respond should the Houthis remain in power.

Many of the hundreds of thousands of Yemeni expats living in Saudi Arabia fear a repeat of the kingdom's mass deportations in 1990, when an estimated 850,000 Yemenis were forced out of the country.

Hostility between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis—a Zaydi Shia movement from Yemen's Sa'ada governorate, on the border with Saudi Arabia, has long been evident. In 2004, a protracted war between the Houthis and the Yemeni government began. In 2009, Saudi Arabia bombed the Houthis in their home governorate of Sa'ada.

The group's current leader, Abdulmalik Al-Houthi, has repeatedly criticized Saudi Arabia and accused it of meddling in Yemen's affairs. Most recently, in a speech aired on Feb. 26, he said financial aid from the kingdom was not meant to benefit average citizens but, "goes to specific powers in exchange for destabilizing the country."

"Saudi Arabia wants to turn Yemen into another Libya, it always looks for ways to weaken Yemen, to spread sedition, and to complicate things by supporting particular groups," he said.

Ali Abdullah Saleh's support for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was met with a harsh response in Saudi Arabia, which cut aid to the newly unified state and deported hundreds of thousands of Yemenis, depriving Yemen of crucial funding in the form of workers' remittances.

Official statistics are not available, but Yemeni analysts estimate the number of expats working in Saudi Arabia today to be upwards of two million. In 2013, government data valued remittances from Saudi Arabia alone at \$1.4 billion, or 4.2 percent of GDP.

According to a Yemen Central Bank (CBY) report released at the beginning of March, money transferred from Saudi Arabia totaled \$3.3 billion in 2014, 90 percent of which was estimated to be coming directly from Yemeni expats living in the kingdom. Ahmed Saeed Shammakh, an economic analyst working at the CBY, believes unregulated transfers bring the total to approximately \$4 billion.

Ongoing conflict in Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, has raised fears of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The potential mass exodus of Yemenis from Saudi Arabia, and the accompanying drop in remittances, could push the country's already faltering economy over the edge.

The Yemen Times asked a number of Yemenis who are currently working in Saudi Arabia, or were deported earlier, for their views on the issue.



Asem Al-Amawi sells mobile phones in Riyadh, where he has lived for seven years.

"Expelling Yemeni expats will mean acknowledging Al-Houthi as the legitimate leader. When it happened in 1990 it was in retaliation for the government's support for Iraq. It is Houthi militias that are against the Saudi government, not ordinary Yemenis, and they can't be treated as a government. The Saudi government can't punish Yemeni expats for the actions of an armed militia, and I'm sure it will not do so."



Ali Hussein, a laborer deported from Saudi Arabia in 1990

"I'm a victim of the former president's policies, and we are still suffering the consequences today. I'm a soldier with the Giants Brigade now, but I had a decent income when I lived in Saudi Arabia and I struggled for five years when I came back. No one understands the difficulties faced as an expat sent home with nothing, except for those that have lived through it."



Najib Hassan Al-Rifi, an aluminum factory worker who has lived in Saudi Arabia for ten years

"We're worried that an escalation of tension between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia will result in us being evacuated. We came here because of the deteriorating economy and a lack of job opportunities, we are trying to support our families back home."

[My employer] is personally offended by Al-Houthi's speeches. He says Yemenis can't appreciate good deeds and that Al-Houthi forgets about the millions of us in Saudi Arabia, and that he will kick me out even if the government does not ask him to."



Maher Dhabaan, employee at an English language institute in Najran city, near the border with Yemen, where he has lived for three years.

"We're worried about the ramifications of a possible attack on Saudi Arabia by the Houthis, we don't want to be the victims of any dispute. The [Saudi] government is in a position to hold Yemen at ransom. Ordinary Yemenis will be the victims of any action taken by the Houthis, and returning two million expats will cause a catastrophe."

There are Yemenis here that have not been here long and make very little money, who may not fear deportation, but others own businesses and stand to lose everything if they are sent back."



Abdulrahman Al-Jarmouzi, supermarket employee in Jeddah, where he has lived since 2008

"We're going through some economic difficulties and any differences between Yemen and the Saudi government are likely to harm those of us living in Saudi Arabia, but I agree with what Al-Houthi says, he speaks the truth—the Saudi government is trying to Sabotage Yemen and prevent it from thriving. They want us to remain subservient to them. I'm not bothered about leaving this country, even if I have to starve to death, our dignity is what matters most."

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Anti-human trafficking activist to the Yemen Times:

“If politics divide us, let humanity bring us together”



The National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking in Yemen, established in 2009, addresses the issue of human trafficking through awareness-raising campaigns, workshops, and advocacy in government.

Ali Al-Jalei, the foundation's president, recently discussed with the Yemen Times the successes—and setbacks—his organization has had in dealing with the issue of human trafficking. During its start in 2009, according to him, the government failed to even recognize the existence of the problem, and as a result gave space to criminal gangs to operate.

Until now, Yemen still has no law in effect to tackle human trafficking specifically, and one of the foundation's main goals is to see such a law passed and implemented. For now, Al-Jalei said, the proposed human trafficking bill “has been stuck in Parliament for about two years.”

Originally from Dhamar governorate, Al-Jalei was born in 1975 and holds a bachelors degree in accounting. His activism first began in 2006, and he is a member of Amnesty International in addition to many other human rights organizations.

Interview and photo by **Khalid Al-Karimi**

What is the strategy of the National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking?

The foundation is non-governmental and was established in 2009 in accordance with the Law of Private Associations and Foundations. The foundation's strategy centers on advising and working with the government to combat the phenomenon of human trafficking. When we set up this foundation, we hoped that the government would recognize the presence of the human trafficking phenomenon and we wanted to see a law enacted pertaining to this issue.

What makes it difficult for the government to pass a law regarding human trafficking?

The human trafficking bill has been stuck in Parliament for about two years. The bill was prepared by the [state-run] Coordinating Committee for Combating Human Trafficking about three years ago. When the National Committee for Combating Human Trafficking was formed in 2013, we met with Parliament and prepared a joint bill that we eventually agreed upon, but Parliament has still not passed it.

Is there a correlation between the economic, security and political unrest and the severity of human trafficking in Yemen?

Indeed, this phenomenon is wors-

“When the political situation began to worsen, this issue began to emerge. When there is no law and order, this problem spreads easily because criminals capitalize on the lax security situation.”

ened in line with the security, political and economic stability. This phenomenon always grows during conflicts, wars and the absence of law. It started to deteriorate in 2006 during the war in Sa'ada and after the formation of the Southern Movement. That is, when the political situation began to worsen, this issue began to emerge. When there is no law and order, this problem spreads easily because criminals capitalize on the lax security situation.

What is the most vulnerable group who falls prey to human trafficking?

Children and women as well as laborers are the most vulnerable.

What are the other crimes that accompany human trafficking?

Many crimes fall under this phenomenon. These crimes could be sexual manipulation, organ selling, and slavery. However, selling organs has become the main issue in the country because of the political and economic deterioration. The criminal gangs exploit the needs of [poor] people.

Is there any coordination between the foundation and government authorities to combat human trafficking?

Though the government is undergoing a difficult situation, it puts in a good effort. But we still hope the government will double its efforts in combating the phenomenon of human trafficking through establishing executive units which deal directly with the issue.

Do you have any statistics regarding human trafficking in Yemen?

According to information we got from the Criminal Investigation Department [in Sana'a], the number of cases of human trafficking reached 87 between September 2009 and late 2013. [Since the beginning of 2015], security authorities have announced the arrest of two suspects two weeks ago in the capital city. Also, a week ago, the security apparatus caught a gang in Amran accused of being involved in human trafficking. We need to unite our efforts to combat this phenomenon and prepare one accurate database, and we also need to pass a human trafficking bill quickly.

Are there foreign organizations working to tackle this phenomenon?

Yes, we are cooperating with foreign organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which has done a lot in this field. It has established a special unit called the Legislation Team, and among its tasks was the preparation of a human trafficking law. It also launched workshops and other praiseworthy activities. We are still

“All the nation's issues, including human rights issues, can not be solved without genuine political will. Even if there is a law, this law will not be enforced without political will.”

cooperating, but this cooperation is limited to information exchanges, workshops and meetings. We do not receive financial support. We depend on our own support.

Do you consider the use of children in conflicts to be a form of human trafficking?

There are international protocols that criminalize the inclusion of children in military conflicts. I think exploiting children and making them part of the fighting is a form of human trafficking.

How does the influx of refugees to Yemen complicate the human trafficking problem?

The influx of refugees is a very big problem. We have our own [internal] problems, and the influx of refugees adds insult to injury. It doubles the phenomenon. There are gangs that detain African and use them for human trafficking. These abuses include not only the selling of human organs, it also includes sexual abuse and servitude.

Do you think society is ignorant to this phenomenon, and does this matter require raising further awareness?

Society used to not be fully aware of this phenomenon, but it has lately become aware of it. Organizations have begun to focus on human trafficking, and their emergence means that awareness about this issue has become stronger. I think we will see more organizations working to tackle this phenomenon.

You have been working since

2009 to combat human trafficking. Do you think the National Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking has achieved its goals?

The foundation has certainly achieved a lot. At first, the government did not admit to the existence of human trafficking in Yemen. However, it came to recognize such a problem in 2013 and gave us a license. After establishing the foundation [in 2009], the government did not give us a license under the pretext that this issue was non-existent. We also called for the establishment of a government committee devoted to the issue of human trafficking, and it was formed. We also called for the creation of a law to combat human trafficking,

and this bill is stuck in Parliament. These things are part of the foundation's achievements. In spite of these accomplishments, we still feel we have not done everything regarding this issue. The journey ahead is still long.

In your opinion, what should be done to mitigate or eliminate this phenomenon?

For our part, we have done our best. We have organized workshops and different activities regarding the matter. However, I would like to emphasize one thing: All the nation's issues, including human rights issues, can not be solved without genuine political will. Even if there is a law, this law will not be enforced without political will.

Criminals are organized and they are well aware of the nation's laws. They know the country does not have a law regarding human trafficking, and such an environment provides a suitable environment for criminals.

To whom would you like to address your final message?

I would like to send a message to the private sector and businessmen. The private sector has to take action to combat human trafficking. It should launch campaigns to raise awareness about this issue in cooperation with the concerned organizations. The private sector will benefit itself and benefit society. My last word is, if politics divide us, let humanity bring us together.

LMMPO with support from Yamaan launching a Theater Show Campaign

Funded by Yamaan Foundation for Health & Social Development (the German Government Support through the German Development Bank -KfW), Life Makers Meeting Place (LMMPO) launched a theater show campaign on family planning awareness with a show titled “Mawaal” which means a man with lot of children.

The main objectives of this campaign are to raise awareness on family planning and its effect on the life of people and community, as well as introducing methods of family planning and clearing rumors around them. Additionally, it aims to bring attention to some maternal mortality causes. A total of 18 shows will be conducted on a period of three months targeting eight different governorates including Sana'a Capital, Sana'a, Hajjah, Dhamar, Ibb, Mahweet, Hodeidah, and Amran.

The first phase of the campaign started on March and took place in Amran, Mahweet, Hajjah, and Hodeidah. Around **10 shows** were conducted targeting men, women, and youth. A large audience attended the shows, including number of community leaders, and reproductive health specialists. The audience was impressed by the performance and the show. The show left a positive influence on the audience making them think seriously about family planning and maternal health. The second phase includes 8 shows and **will start in second middle of March targeting** the other governorates.

During each show, a religious leader delivered a speech to clarify Islam's view on family planning indicating that it is not forbidden giving evidence from Quran and Sunah.

Mr. Abdul-Jabbar Sehili, LMMPO Coordinator, highlighted the importance of theater shows in raising awareness of reproductive health issues. He also mentioned LMMPO role in increasing youth participation in health, economic, and educational awareness raising activities. He also emphasized on the importance of addressing maternal mortality issue as Yemen has high maternal mortality rate of 148 per 100,000 live births.

Dr. Jamal Badr, BCC Manager at Yamaan Foundation, confirmed the importance of raising awareness of family planning among the community in order to build a strong and better community aware of the positive effect of family planning. He also pointed out to the role Yamaan plays, in cooperation with local partners, in improving reproductive health and preventing maternal mortality through its vast interventions.

Contemporary Islamic views support reform in favor of women



A Muslim woman reads the Quran before iftar, when Muslims break their fast, during the holy month of Ramadan at the historic Umayyad Mosque in Old Damascus, Aug. 26, 2009.

Ali Mamouri
al-monitor.com

First published March 15

In the 20th century and until its peak in the 1970s, religious feminist movements based on non-patriarchal interpretations of holy texts started appearing in the world. These movements were different from the prevalent secular female currents in the West in that they opted for a religious discourse founded on the texts of clerics, using religious reasoning within the framework of theological and jurisprudential discourse.

This phenomenon, which was not limited to Muslims but included Christian and Jewish communities, among others, came to be known as feminist theology.

In the Muslim world particularly, although feminist theology remained controversial and dubious to secularists, it has left a positive impact on society in the past decades. The religious feminist movement's internal convictions and changes come from within Islamic thought and are not influenced by the West, which would stir sensitivities in non-Western societies. Some religious governments, like Iran's, adopted many reforms that

stemmed from the religious vision of feminist movements for women's rights; while other religious governments, like that of Saudi Arabia, showed strict resistance to any sort of reform to improve women's position in society.

Islamic feminism aims to fulfill three objectives. First, it seeks to criticize the masculine discourse that dominates Islamic theology and literature in general. Second, it aims to present a suitable interpretation and explanation of the equal rights of women from the Quran and Islamic traditions. Third, it works to criticize and rectify Sharia interpretations that persecute

women and undermine their rights.

The history of Islamic feminism was detailed by Amina Wadud, the Muslim researcher of American origin who published "Quran and Women" in 1992. In 2005, she famously led Friday prayers in the Anglican Church building in New York after mosques refused to host the event, sparking controversy among some Muslims. Although Wadud is the best-known figure in this current, she was preceded by a number of feminist researchers and activists with Islamist inclinations in the Muslim world.

Dozens of prominent female Muslim figures are currently promoting Islamic feminism, including Iranian researcher Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Iranian activist Zhila Shariat Panahi and American Aysa Hidayatullah, among others.

Qurratu Al-Ayn Tahirih (1817-52) is one of the oldest figures in contemporary Islamic history in the field of religious reforms in favor of women. Tahirih studied at Shia seminaries in Iran and Iraq, and she memorized the Quran. She was also highly knowledgeable in Shia theology and jurisprudence, but she believed that the road to reform was a complete departure from Islamic Sharia. She adopted Babism instead, a religious movement founded by Siyyid Ali Muhammad Shirazi in 1844 in Iran. She took off her veil publicly in 1848 and declared her rejection of the old rules and teachings. She later became a source of inspiration for several Western feminist movements.

Long before the Bahai faith made its way to the West, Europeans were inspired and fascinated by Tahirih.

Lord George Curzon described her life as "one of the most affecting episodes in modern history." The gifted Austrian poet Marie Von Na-

jmajer heard of Tahirih in 1870 and was inspired to write her greatest poem on Tahirih's life.

Continued on the back page



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US policy in Yemen: Creating leverage

Nabeel Khoury
Atlantic Council
First published March 13

In case there were still any doubts about Iran's growing influence in Yemen, Tehran put that issue to rest with a hostage rescue operation last week, a pledge to provide the Houthis with a year's worth of oil and electricity, and newly established daily commercial flights between Tehran and Sana'a. The twin initiatives demonstrate that Iran now has the political, security, and commercial infrastructure in Yemen made possible by the Houthi takeover of the capital. By contrast, the US and European capitals have now moved their embassies out of Sana'a, with some re-establishing a presence in the southern capital of Aden and others (the United States) in nearby Jeddah, to continue a dialogue with President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi. Since his escape from house arrest under the Houthis, Hadi has reasserted his role as president from the new location in the south. The climb back up from Aden to Sana'a to reunify the country will be difficult, but not impossible, for all concerned. The question is: What leverage should the United States use to get the Houthis to cooperate?

Mediation without leverage
For the United States, clinging to

the cliché of "we still believe in the efficacy of the national dialogue and the legitimacy of the presidency of Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi" will no longer suffice. UN Envoy Jamal Benomar's mission in Yemen has effectively ended, even though he clings to his role as mediator, valiantly shuttling between the various warring and bickering parties. The reason for the futility of this mediation at this point is as old as international diplomacy: It is called leverage. Sadly, he, along with the Western powers that continue verbally to support his mission, currently have none.

The Houthi vulnerability
The Houthis have taken over the northern half of the country, minus the eastern governorate of Al-Jawf, and the Hadramout region, which runs along parts of the Saudi and Omani borders. South of Sana'a, the Houthis struggle to subdue the tribes of Marib, the people of Taiz, and the greater Aden area along the Indian Ocean. In geopolitical terms, this incomplete takeover of Yemen should put the Houthis at a serious disadvantage. As things stand, it does not, primarily because the Houthis' Yemeni opponents have not united behind a single leadership, nor have their regional and international opponents put together a strategy to take advantage of this vulnerability.

Hadi's strategic options
President Hadi should be encouraged to set up a core group of leaders and activists to facilitate building a strong coalition to unite the regions where the Houthis remain weak. The ancient city of Taiz, Yemen's third most populated urban center and strategically poised between north and south Yemen, has been rife with anger, resentment, and defiance to the Houthi takeover. Their almost daily demonstrations, however, do not amount to much unless that anger is channeled under new leadership. Rashad Al-Alimi and General Mahmoud Subaihi are two such leaders capable of unifying and organizing the population of Taiz. Dr. Alimi, with a PhD in sociology and longtime minister of interior under ex-President Saleh, was most recently security advisor for the transitional government. He is from Taiz, but is widely respected for his honesty and integrity across the country. For the US Embassy, at least when Ambassador Thomas Krajcski and I were stationed there (2004-2007), Dr. Alimi was always a friend and a trustworthy interlocutor. On security and military matters, he is a professional who understands the Yemeni terrain better than most anyone in the country. General Mahmoud Subaihi was until last week the minister of defense. Trusted by southerners for his forthrightness, military skills, and leadership, he defected from

Sana'a last week to the south. He and Rashad Al-Alimi could together organize the city of Taiz and ensure a solid front for the opposition along the western coast of Yemen.

The Southern Movement (Hirak), based in Aden, has also been seething with rebellion against the north prior to the 2011 uprising. Courtied by the Houthis since their takeover of Sana'a, they have responded only with distrust, derision, and refusal to play along with what they have termed a military coup against the legitimate authority of a southerner, President Hadi. Hirak, however, has been plagued with division and lack of solid leadership. At its core, Hirak has remained largely a populist movement, led by minor populist figures who have struggled with one another more than they have with Sana'a.

Mohammad Ali Ahmed, Abdurahman Al-Jifri and Ali Salem Al-Beidh, all leaders of note in the south, have led separate factions of the popular movement and have insisted for the past three years on separation from the north, rather than on an agenda for reform that would keep the country together while giving more autonomy to the south. Of the three, Al-Beidh, formerly president of South Yemen and a vice president under the first unity government in Yemen in 1990, is the least trustworthy and has received funds from Iran since 2011, if not longer. The Hirak faction that

supports him recently retook his old residence from the Al-Ahmar family in a move that appears to preclude an attempted return to Aden, perhaps supported by the Houthis, who hope to use him for their own leverage in the south.

In terms of old leadership, a better bet for Hadi and the West would be Ali Nasser Muhammad, another former president and prime minister of South Yemen, living in exile since 1990, but still active in Yemeni politics out of Cairo and the United Arab Emirates. To his credit, Ali Nasser still believes in a unified Yemen and enjoys broader respectability among southerners as a more independent leader, capable of talking to Yemeni communities across the board—including possibly negotiating with the Houthis.

In Marib, head sheikhs of the Obaida and Murad tribes have thus far proven themselves worthy defenders of their governorate against both the Houthis and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The confrontation between them and the Houthis was the immediate cause for the Houthi move against Hadi last month, as the president refused to mobilize his military to facilitate the Houthi takeover of Marib. A union now between Marib tribes and Hadi would make pragmatic political sense.

A coalition among the regions, possibly under the leadership of individuals mentioned above, could

re-assert the Yemeni government's legitimacy before the Houthis make their own deals to secure alliances in the south. Such a coalition would at least help level the field in negotiations with the Houthis and—with regional and international backing—form a unified front with actual military options should negotiations hit a brick wall. The Houthis have thus far had little reason to compromise with their opponents. A unified coalition in the areas mentioned would seriously limit their access to the southern and western coasts, leaving them feeling hemmed in and vulnerable. Iran, whose appetite has been whetted by the Houthi takeover, must also be made to feel that a strong coalition with regional and international support would make it costly to support the Houthis through a potentially prolonged violent conflict.

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Syria revolution four years on:

Don't bet against President Assad—a ruler willing to see his country destroyed so long as he can cling to power

Robert Fisk
independent.co.uk
First published March 12

How has Bashar Hafez Al-Assad survived these past four years? Ever since the Syrian revolution of 2011, his overthrow has been predicted by the greatest statesmen of our day, by the finest journalists, by the most anonymous of "senior diplomats." What is the man's secret? It's difficult to remember how swiftly he became the West's latest Arab Hitler, his repressive government a regime of war crimes, his beautiful wife transformed overnight by the world's press from the "Rose of the Desert" to Lady Macbeth of Damascus. Laurent Fabius, France's least eloquent foreign minister, even told us that Bashar does not deserve to live "on this planet." But Bashar has survived in another universe. It's called the Baath party, and its satellite is the army.

The government's Syrian Arab Army is a machine which in four years has lost 46,000 of its soldiers to a revolution that was supposed to have replaced the Assad dictatorship with one of those democratic, secular, pro-Western, human-rights-obsessed states of which we all dream but which, alas, does not exist in the Middle East. Instead, Syria's heroic freedom fighters—extolled by a media which had already

feted the romantic liberators of Libya—transmogrified into a black-cowled Salafist cult which chopped up their own Muslim people, decapitated Western hostages and burned men alive, roasting Syrian corpses on spits long before it broadcast the immolation of a captured Jordanian pilot.

But first, the Baath party. Officially, it's the child of the Syrian-Iraqi Baath ("Renaissance") movement whose Christian-Sunni Alawite founders intended to create a secular, socialist, revolutionary organization which would both guarantee the rights of a post-colonial Arab population and secure regimes which would be united in opposing "Zionism" and the West while maintaining close relations with the Soviet Union. It proved as much a fantasy—and as infantile—as the West's own aspirations for the region. In reality, the party became a massive security apparatus whose raison d'être—in both Syria and Iraq—was the preservation of the regime. Inevitably, the party split and the pseudo-socialist autocracies of Iraq and Syria sought to destroy each other. But while Saddam's Baath party was eventually crushed by the United States—no Arab country could ever have achieved this—Hafez Al-Assad and, after his death in 2000, his son Bashar remained in total control of a movement which combined nepotism, socialism, corruption, brutality and courage in about equal mea-

sure. The very military-political matrix of the party in Syria, which controlled at least four levels of intelligence officials, ensured that internal opposition to the regime—even from within the Assad family—was impossible. While Assad father-and-son remained steadfast (one of their favorite words) in demanding land for peace with Israel—a policy which could only display the hopeless nature of Yasser Arafat's peace-before-land negotiations—Syria's moral integrity could survive. But once the Arab Awakening moved like an earthquake across the Middle East, political opposition to the Assad family manifested itself in hundreds of protest demonstrations.

Whether the ruthlessness of the government's suppression led to the civil war—or whether, as Bashar's supporters claimed, foreign and Islamist groups were armed and killing Baathists—has still to be fully investigated. Certainly, Syrians fought back with weapons once violence was used against them. But Jabhat Al-Nusra and other Islamist groups emerged from the slums of Damascus and Aleppo and Raqqa long before foreign fighters arrived in Syria from Iraq. Even in 2011, NGOs were reporting that armed Islamists could be found in the suburbs of Homs.

But the West sought to promote an alternative government, refused to countenance the continuation

of Assad's rule and even urged the opposition to cut any remaining relations with the regime. Weapons poured across the border for the large number of Syrian military deserters in the so-called "Free Syrian Army," which formed yet another of those supposedly pro-Western guerrilla armies that have littered the Arab world in modern history only to be defeated, suppressed or betrayed at a later date.

The Baath party fought back with its own militias, and the Syrian army, corrupted by 29 years of occupation in Lebanon, was turned into a formidable fighting force not just by the government but by an officer corps of largely Sunni Muslim officers loyal to—but not part of—the largely Alawite (Shia) Assad regime. And it is the Syrian army—ruthless, increasingly better-trained and now allowed almost unheard-of freedom in its tactics and command decisions—which now allows Assad to rule. Repeatedly, Bashar Al-Assad has praised his army, honored its "martyrs," even appeared on stage before hundreds of photographs of his dead soldiers, well aware that if the Baath party is the foundation of his regime, the army is its only viable defense. Its soldiers have acquired that frightful quality which every rebel must have: They like fighting—and, therefore, they want to win.

And Russia helped. Vladimir Putin loathes Islamists as much as the

Americans and Europeans—some of his remarks suggest an almost racial hatred of Muslims—but he admires anyone who stands and fights. While the elected dictator of Ukraine fled for his life during the Kiev revolution, it was not lost on Putin that Assad stood his ground in Damascus and kept his head when all around him were losing theirs. The Russians know the strength of the Syrian army—just as they appreciate the gravity of its huge casualty lists—for many of the officer corps were trained at Soviet academies in Moscow; and, ironically, in Simferopol.

Civil wars engender crimes against humanity. Blood sticks to everyone's hands. War crimes adhere to government and anti-government forces, however much we would like to tell the good guys from the bad guys. There was a time, just three years ago, when European newspapers carried stories of Syrian anti-Assad fighters marrying female comrades, of opposition snipers marrying the nurses who healed their wounds, while government snipers killed children. The stories were both true and false. Syrian soldiers also married into military families and opposition bombers slaughtered schoolchildren.

The West still maintains that Assad's forces use chemical weapons—even after the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) confirmed that

all Assad's declared chemicals had been destroyed, with the help of the Americans. But the deal to emasculate Syria's strategic deterrent—its chemical capacity—was struck to allow Washington and London off the hook. Their threat to bomb Assad out of Damascus was hollow—and Assad's self-confidence blossomed. Those who hero-worshipped the original Syrian opponents of Assad (brave men indeed) are now creating a new and dark scenario for us, in which Assad has all along encouraged the Islamists—indeed allied himself to ISIL—via a series of secret but mythical negotiators, and in which Assad's army fights only its internal opponents and lets NATO bomb ISIL to its heart's content. But Assad's army is fighting ISIL—south of Qamishleh, for example, and north-east of Latakia—and its soldiers have been shot into mass graves by the black-hooded men of the "Islamic Caliphate."

So who will win? At first, we supported the opposition and hated Assad. But now that ISIL is ruling much of Syria (though few of its cities) and killing Christians and Westerners, we hate ISIL even more than we hate Assad. That's why we bomb ISIL but didn't bomb Assad. And as long as both "sides" think they can still win, the war will go on for another year or two. Or three. Which means that Assad survives. But after perhaps 300,000 dead, would that be a victory?

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التأسيس

"راديو يمن تايمز" هو أول إذاعة مجتمعية في صنعاء، حيث بدأ العمل في هذا المشروع في بداية 2012، والذي كان تأسيسه من أهم رؤى مؤسس يمن تايمز الراحل، البروفيسور عبد العزيز السقاف. ولذلك سعت الأستاذة / نادية السقاف رئيس تحرير صحيفة يمن تايمز إلى تحقيق فكرة المؤسس الراحل، من خلال تأسيس راديو يمن تايمز بمشاركة الكثير من المتطوعين والداعمين ومن آمن بأهمية الإعلام المستقل ودور الإذاعات المجتمعية. وتعد إذاعة يمن تايمز جزء من مشروع أصواتنا، وهو 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 أجندات على المؤسسات الإعلامية مما يخلق أثراً سلبياً واضحا 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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What does the Boko Haram/IS alliance mean?

Obinna Anyadike
IRIN
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Nigeria's insurgent group Jamaatu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), better known as Boko Haram, has declared allegiance to Islamic State (IS), the group formerly known as ISIL. While commentators—perhaps some with the benefit of hindsight—say this had been on the cards, what does it actually mean?

IRIN takes a closer look at the implications of the announcement, made in an audio recording by Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau over the weekend.

What happens now?

Nobody quite knows. Shekau introduced himself as the Imam of Boko Haram, and swore bayah (allegiance) "to the Caliph of the Muslims" IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, saying he would "hear and obey in times of difficulty and prosperity."

In a formal sense it means that Shekau accepts the authority of Baghdadi as caliph—the transnational leader of all Muslims. But Human Rights Watch researcher Mausi Segun says she is "not sure Shekau is ready to yield any part of his authority to IS." Fatima Akilu, director of behavioral analysis in Nigeria's Office of the National Security Adviser, doesn't see Shekau's personality allowing him to be "under another person's authority." And according to Ryan Cummings, chief security analyst for Africa at the crisis management firm red24, "declaring allegiance doesn't necessarily mean taking direction." He believes Boko Haram's narrow focus on Nigeria and the Lake Chad region may well continue, rather than the group turning to wage a broader jihadist war.

Cummings points out that ISIL has not yet formally accepted Shekau's bayah—but this is presumably only a formality. The ISIL-linked Amaq news agency reported that fighters in Syria's Al-Raqqa governorate "celebrated through the city streets" following news of the pledge, according to the jihadist monitoring service, SITE. ISIL's Twitter accounts also published "welcome" messages to Boko Haram.

Is this out of the blue?

Commentators have noted that links between the two organizations have long-been flagged through video and social media "shout-outs." When Shekau announced the creation of a caliphate in the captured Nigerian town of Gwoza in August 2014, his video made reference to Al-Baghdadi, who had proclaimed an ISIL caliphate in June. ISIL had earlier approvingly cited Boko Haram's abduction of the Chibok school girls in April 2014 to justify its enslavement of Yazidi women.

In November, issue five of ISIL's glossy English-language Dabiq magazine said that bayah had been received from "Nigeria," among other territories, but recognition was being delayed. "This delay should end with... the appointment or recognition of leadership" by the caliph for "those lands where multiple groups have given [allegiance] and merged," the magazine said. It was possibly a reference to the re-unification of elements of Boko Haram's breakaway Ansaru faction, according to Jacob Zenn of the extremist monitoring group Jamestown Foundation, quoted by CNN. Most commentators have pointed to Boko Haram's improved communication and technical skills as further indication that links pre-dated last weekend's announcement.

Does it have operational significance?

The Nigerian government has framed the alliance as proof of



Analysts are divided on what the extent of cooperation is between Boko Haram militants (pictured) and the Islamic State.

Boko Haram's incapacity. It is evidence, they say, that regional military pressure involving neighbors Cameroon, Chad and Niger is working. "For Boko Haram it's a big propaganda coup, even for ISIL. We've been talking about them for the last few days now, and one of their objectives is to have that global spotlight," said Akilu. "But operationally, I can't see how it can have a significant benefit."

Boko Haram is known to have long-standing connections to Al-Qaeda-aligned Al-Shabab in Somalia and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). But IS has made significant inroads into North Africa, with allegiance sworn by Egypt's most active jihadist group Ansar Bait Al-Maqdis, Algeria's Jund Al-Khilifa—which broke away from AQIM—and perhaps more significantly, the rise of Ansar Al-Sharia in Libya. "It is easy to understand the attraction to IS and the growing disenchantment of younger militants with Al-Qaeda with its ageing leadership and its inability to carry out a major attack against the West. By contrast, IS with its slick recruitment videos, is carving out a large swathe of territory in Iraq and Syria and its military successes in spite of Western airstrikes is especially appealing to the youth," wrote Hussein Solomon, for the think tank Research on Islam and Muslims in Africa.

While the jury is out on what level of operational and resource assistance could be shared between IS and Boko Haram, security analyst Muktar Usman-Janguza points out that on the map, Libya is just one country (Chad or Niger, both with porous borders) away from Nigeria. "Boko Haram could draw on the technical expertise of the IS network in Libya. There could be help with bomb-making and IEDs [improvised explosive devices], or command and control to help them weather the pounding they are getting from the regional military forces currently operating against them," he said. Segun of Human Rights Watch agreed that IS making inroads into Libya "is worrying for the Sahel region. In all likelihood, the two groups will have a far easier connection."

Is Boko Haram now in the jihadist mainstream?

Yes, and its new-found credibility is a significant plus for the organization. Shekau's past media performances have been "erratic" and unlikely to appeal to a sophisticated audience abroad, said Usman-Janguza. His at times deranged diatribes, worthy of a Nollywood-style villain, are either the result of atrocious acting by a body double hired to impersonate the actually deceased leader—as researcher Andrea Brigalia insists—or, by Akilu's reckoning, the result of the strain of being a hunted man.

Boko Haram always was to a great extent a local Nigerian phenomenon. It has its roots in the Wahabist Jamat Izalat Al-Bida Wa Iqamat Al-Sunna (Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-establishment of the Sunna), also known as Izala, that was founded in 1978 with Saudi backing. Izala was in direct opposition to Nigeria's ancient Sufi traditions and far more liberal interpretation of Islam. Under Mohamed Yusuf, the

founder of Boko Haram who regarded himself a scholar, the group was almost mainstream (although it still killed Muslims that opposed it, allegedly including Yusuf's mentor, Jafar Mahmud Adam). Shekau took over in 2009 with the death of Yusuf in Boko Haram's aborted uprising, and is far more the soldier than the sage, according to Akilu.

Boko Haram's limited ideological horizons, fixated on battling Nigeria's secular state, was one reason for the breakaway of Jamaatu Anaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Lands), better known as Ansaru—with its far more pan-Africanist outlook. According to Nigeria's Office of the National Security Adviser, Boko Haram further localizes its appeal by drawing 85 percent of its recruits from its Borno State stronghold, thereby narrowing membership to largely a Kanuri ethnic pool. Its extreme violence, and failure to distinguish Muslims from non-Muslims in its attacks, was further cause for the rupture with Ansaru, which now seems at least partially repaired.

Boko Haram has potentially widened its appeal with the IS endorsement. "It has enhanced its jihadist credentials in the wider West African region," wrote Cummings. Boko Haram's videos are now subtitled in French, a clear nod to a neighboring francophone audience. Validation by IS also provides the opportunity for "people who want to fight for IS, but can't get to the Levant" to join Boko Haram instead. Nigerians that have the wherewithal have made their way to Syria to join Baghdadi. The latest publicized case was last week, with the son of a former chief justice, who crossed to Syria from Turkey. For others, a homegrown Boko Haram, authenticated by jihadi "central command," may be an alternative.

Where next for Nigeria?

Boko Haram is "being pummeled, de-territorialized, but I would hesitate to say these guys are on their last legs," said Usman-Janguza, a UK-based member of a Nigeria-focused security forum. "They will definitely go back to their old guerrilla tactics" employed before they started seizing towns and territory last year. Cummings believes a bombing campaign aimed at Nigeria's presidential elections due on March 28 is a distinct possibility, with possibly attacks beyond Boko Haram's traditional northern zone of operations.

The potential for human rights violations against the local population by Nigeria's regional military allies mounting cross-border raids would work to Boko Haram's advantage, said Usman-Janguza. "Inevitably the security dynamics can have an impact on the [insurgency's] local dynamics," he noted. He pointed out that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Nigeria and its partners Chad, Cameroon and Niger is shrouded in mystery. "We don't know how long they will stay or where they will be operating in Nigeria," he said. "There has been no parliamentary debate, even of the broad outlines of the MoU."

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Duration : Eleven months & half
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Reporting To : Communication Specialist

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To provide high quality and on time multimedia production services to UNICEF Yemen, such as updating the UNICEF Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and youtube page, uploading photos on the UNICEF online photo depository using photo mechanic software and translating key messages into Arabic and vice versa.

Specific Tasks, Deliverables and Timeframe:

The consultant will work under the supervision of the Communication Specialist, to perform the following tasks:

Activities / Tasks	Deliverables	Time frame
Updating and managing the UNICEF social media pages including translation of key messages from English into Arabic and vice versa	60 thematic updates of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram page per month. Moderating FB and twitter accounts 01 to 02 uploads (s) of youtube page per month	Daily Increased number of likes, outreach and interaction with audience... Once a month
Periodic uploading and proper filing of photos using photo mechanic and also offline archiving systems	04 updates on photo library including writing of captions per month	Once a week
Transcription of video interviews from local language into English and vice versa...	60 theme based transcriptions and detailed translation of interviews from Arabic into English and vice versa.	Daily- occurrence based
Preparation of monthly social media package that includes own-artwork and designs of infogrphs and factographs and other support visibility.	12 social media packages... that includes: Key messages Art work of (infographs..etc) Maps and videos Human interest stories produced by consultant or other officers/reporters.	

Target group:

- UNICEF global, regional and local web portals and social media platforms and publications
- Internal UNICEF sections and field offices
- Partners and stakeholders including government, donors, NatComs and mainstream media
- General Public

Required skills & competencies

- First degree in Communication, journalism or social science; or equivalent professional work experience in the field of communication, social media and offline media.
- At least two years demonstrated engagement on and experience in creative media, communication and advocacy field
- Good Knowledge of social media landscape (global, regional and national level), content management and online campaigning.
- Ability to clearly and concisely express ideas and concepts in written and oral form in English and Arabic
- Knowledge of graphics design, layout, internet navigation and relevant computer systems including office applications.
- Professional in text and photo editing including creation of infographs; and videography is of an added value.
- Knowledge of UN, non-profit and other international organizations would be an added advantage

Competencies Required:

i) Core Values (Required)

Commitment - Diversity and Inclusion - Integrity

ii) Core Competencies (Required)

Communication - Working with People - Drive for Results

iii) Functional Competencies (Required)

- Analysing - Relating and Networking - Deciding and Initiating Action
- Applying Technical Expertise

Results

- UNICEF Yemen is well-positioned in social media: facebook, youtube, flicker and any other platform
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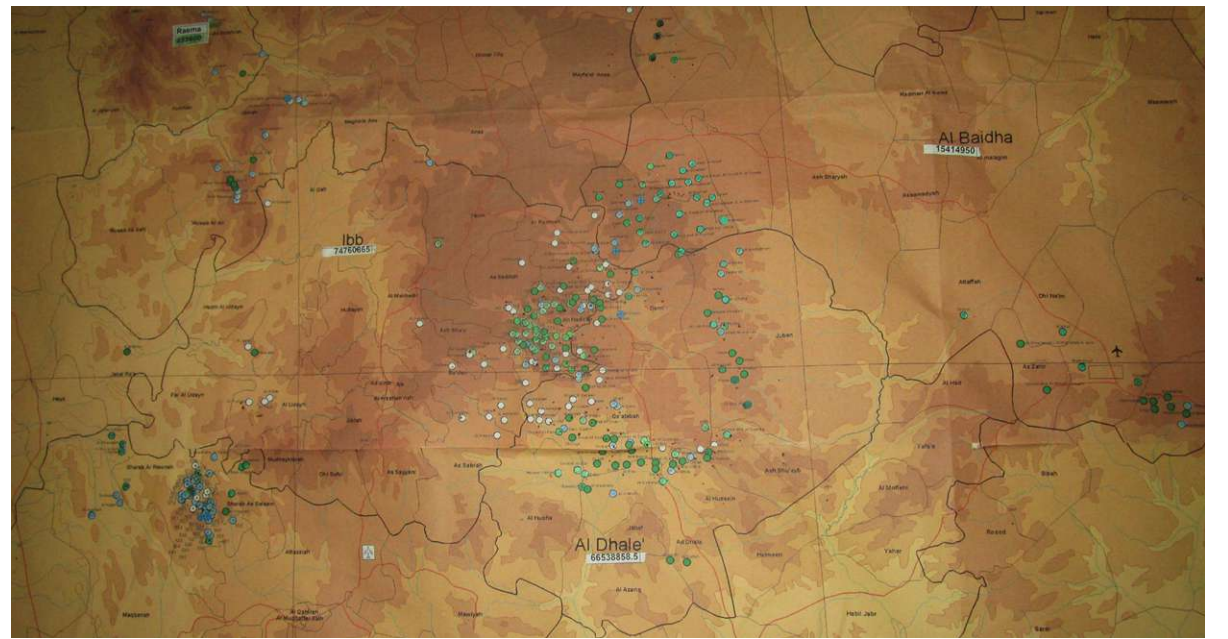
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Different types of landmines and explosive devices, referred to as explosive remnants of war (ERW)



Green dots refer to areas where landmines have been removed, while white dots refer to areas which remain infected by landmines.

Landmine clearance remains difficult amid ongoing tension

Story and photos by
Ali Aboluhom

Osama Mohammad, six, was playing with other children in front of his home in Sana'a's Hasaba neighborhood in late 2011, when he stepped on a land mine that detonated, causing permanent damage to his left leg which later had to be amputated.

Osama is a victim of the six month conflict that erupted between fighters loyal to the powerful Al-Ahmar tribal family and the Republican Guards run by Ahmed Saleh, son of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, following the outbreak of the country's 2011 uprising. The conflict ended in November 2011 following the GCC initiative that forced Saleh from the presidency.

Many locals caught up in the conflict, including Osama's family, fled their homes for other areas throughout the country. They returned following Saleh's resignation and the cessation of hostilities in the area.

Now many locals complain that land mines, allegedly planted in Hasaba by the Al-Ahmar family to prevent Saleh's guards from sweeping into the area, continue to pose a threat to those living in the neighborhood.

According to Osama's uncle Mansour, four years on and Osama is still suffering from psychological trauma as a result of his disability. However, as yet his family has been unable to receive assistance from the government or any other groups to help treat his condition. The constant state of strife the country has been undergoing since the uprising has made it difficult for such residents to even have their case heard.

"Osama is a victim of conflict that took place between warring political factions," Mansour told the Yemen Times. "However, we've been unable to sue or seek any reparations, as we don't know which government body to hold responsible."

One of the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference's (NDC) Transitional Justice Working Group, concluded in January 2014, is to provide reparations to victims of the 2011 uprising. Due to a lack of resources and capacity, the government has been unable to provide for all of those who have suffered in one way or another.

Shatha Harazi, rapporteur of the Transitional Justice Working Group, admitted to the Yemen Times that not much discussion surrounding the issue of land mines had taken place during NDC meetings. "There were suggestions that parties to various conflicts cooperate with the state and provide maps detailing places where they were aware that mines had been placed," she said. "However, few of these

groups were willing to admit that they had taken part in such activities."

The government is no more equipped now than it was then to hold any groups accountable, according to Basem Al-Hakimi, a representative of independent youth groups at the NDC. "The recent takeover of Sana'a by the Houthi movement, and the subsequent resignation of the Hadi government, has further prevented any of the parties to the NDC from living up to their obligations," Al-Hakimi said. "They've all been too concerned with mere survival."

The Yemen Times spoke with Mohammad Al-Bukhaiti, a member of the Houthi Political Office in Sana'a, regarding the group's potential to help fill the gap since its rise to power in Sana'a and other parts of the country. However, the likelihood that the Houthis, also known as Ansar Allah, would be able or willing to plug such gaps is unlikely, he said.

"Deactivating mines and other ERWs [explosive remnants of war] requires technical expertise that the Houthis simply do not possess," he said. "This is the responsibility of state bodies; we [Ansar Allah] have nothing to do with this process. However we haven't prevented these bodies from working effectively to perform their duties. According to the Yemen Executive Mine Action Center (YEMAC), a local NGO established in 1998 that seeks to locate, identify and deactivate mines still active throughout the country, 4,000 victims of mine attacks were recorded in Yemen in the period from 1962 to 2000, the year the group conducted its most recent survey.

"Between 2000 and 2011, 243,000 mines or explosive remnants of war have been destroyed," according to Ali Abdul Raqeeb, YEMAC's deputy manager. "Since 2011, we've recorded 63 victims, most of whom are adults," while YEMAC has identified and destroyed an additional 13,670 ERWs, he said.

In June 2014, YEMAC began its second survey, which remains underway. The current survey seeks to register cases in areas affected by more recent conflicts, such as those that have taken place in governorates affected by war between the government and groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the Houthis, in governorates such as Sa'ada, Amran, Sana'a and Abyan.

However, Raqeeb admitted, "The true scope of the problem is likely much larger than we've been able to measure, perhaps fourfold," he said. "The total figure now is hard to know."

The use of mines by combatants was first introduced to Yemen in 1962, during the revolution against the country's Imamate in the north

that lasted until 1967, according to Raqeeb. "Tensions between the north and south in the 1970's and 80's exacerbated the problem," he said. "Particularly in the governorates of Al-Baida, Ibb, and Al-Dhale, located along the border of the former republics of North and South Yemen."

According to Ahmed Alawi, YEMAC's chief information officer, the Al-Sadda and Al-Nadera districts of Ibb governorate were the most affected by mines during the protracted conflict. However, despite the many conflicts between different warring groups throughout the country since then, civilians remain the largest victims, he added.

Since the group's first survey was conducted in 2000, YEMAC has been working on deactivating mines in all affected governorates, however this has been hampered by the constant conflict the country has witnessed.

The first phase of the deactivation process is the conducting of "non-technical surveys," according to Alawi. This consists of questionnaires being handed out to people in affected areas asking whether or not they are aware of the specific locations of any mines.

This is followed by a "technical survey" or "purging process,"

in which modern mine detecting technology is used to determine the specific locations of ERWs and then deactivate them.

"The second process is lengthy, and can often take months," explained Alawi. "It's a dangerous process which requires that our officers are careful and accurate in order to avoid becoming casualties themselves, which has happened in the past."

Areas affected by the most recent conflict are the last to be targeted, according to Alawi. The Arhab and Bani Hushaish districts are some of the most affected in Sana'a governorate, for example, due to ongoing clashes between Houthi and Islah supporters in the area. However, YEMAC has been unable as yet to conduct surveys and sweeps in these areas. "Most of our current work remains in relatively stable governorates, such as Ibb and Al-Dhale," Alawi said.

YEMAC has also developed a rehabilitation department, dedicated to providing assistance in the form of crutches and prosthetic limbs to those who have been affected. "We've done our best to encourage those affected to register their names with our center so they can be provided with such aid," Alawi said.



A device used by YEMAC's technical team to detect mine-infected areas.

Osama and others in the capital's Hasaba neighborhood are among those who have been provided for, he said. He admits that YEMAC has been unable to reach many of those in the most affected governorates.

Mansour Hussein, 42, a local from Abyan governorate's Jar district, fled the area in late 2011 following fighting between the government and AQAP. "We returned a year later when the fighting had subsided," and it was then that he

stepped on a mine located next to his home that had been planted when he and others in the area fled.

Hussein's injuries have prevented him from working and being able to provide for his family, he said, and government aid has not been forthcoming. "We're totally reliant on aid from local NGOs, individual donors and tribal figures," he added. "The area is still almost as dangerous as before, only now there's much more uncertainty."

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Contemporary Islamic views support reform in favor of women

Marianna Hainisch, the mother of an Austrian president and founder of the New Woman Movement for Austria, claimed to have been inspired that same year. She stated in 1925, "The greatest ideal of womanhood all my life has been Tahiri... I was only 17 when I heard of her life and her martyrdom, but I said, 'I shall try to do for the women of Austria what Tahiri gave her life to do for the women of Persia.'"

Remarkably, there were several clerics in the traditional religious scene whose opinions about feminism formed the core of movements demanding women's rights. In 1995, traditional cleric Mohammad Baqer Mojtahed Kamarei wrote

several articles in favor of women's participation in parliamentary elections in Iran since 1953, at a time when most political elites, even in secular circles, were opposed to this idea and considered it against social norms and virtues.

Several prominent clerics are currently demanding the amendment of religious laws that persecute women. Those include Ayatollah Ibrahim Jannaati, a prominent religious scholar in the Qom seminary who believes that there is nothing in religion that forbids giving women social and political positions. They can, he believes, even occupy leading judicial, religious and political positions in the country.

As for Najaf seminaries, Sheikh Ishac Al-Fayad, one of the four prominent religious authorities in Najaf, published a book two years ago about women's rights in Islamic law, titled "The position of women in the Islamic system." He recently defended women's right to handle diverse political and leadership tasks in different fields and to drive vehicles. He noted that women's testimonies are equal to men's before the judiciary and strongly criticized religious stories according to which women lack men's various humanitarian virtues, dismissing them as inaccurate historical assumptions.

These opinions left a gradual



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positive impact on Iranian society. The marriage of girls under the age of 13 was banned, and women were granted the right to divorce in some cases, like when the husband goes missing for four years, and a lot of Iranian woman currently take advantage of that right. Women are also able to demand half of the money they helped their husbands earn during their marital life.

Nevertheless, women's rights activists from all secular and religious currents are working hard to make progress in various other fields to end all discrimination and persecution against women. According to several reports and studies, the situation of women in Iran is considered better than that in some Middle Eastern societies and even in some societies that are not governed by a religious system, like Pakistan. One of the main reasons explaining the lack of reforms in some Middle Eastern countries like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is that reform and change never appeared in the first place or never had a remarkable presence in the religious system of these societies. Since Middle Eastern societies are still greatly affected by religion, any positive or negative change within the religious institution leaves a trail on their social, political and legal systems.

When comparing Iran to Saudi



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Arabia—since both follow Sharia—a pronounced difference appears. Women in Saudi Arabia are still fighting for their basic rights, such as the right to drive. It wasn't until 2001 that they obtained the right to vote and run for the municipal council elections in a limited way.

The Saudi regime often tries to justify this situation by claiming

that Saudi society is conservative and resistant to reform. However, Saudi activist Mai Yamani expressed an opposing opinion in her book "Feminism and Islam," as she believes that persecution of women and discrimination against them comes from the Saudi religious and political institutions rather than society itself.



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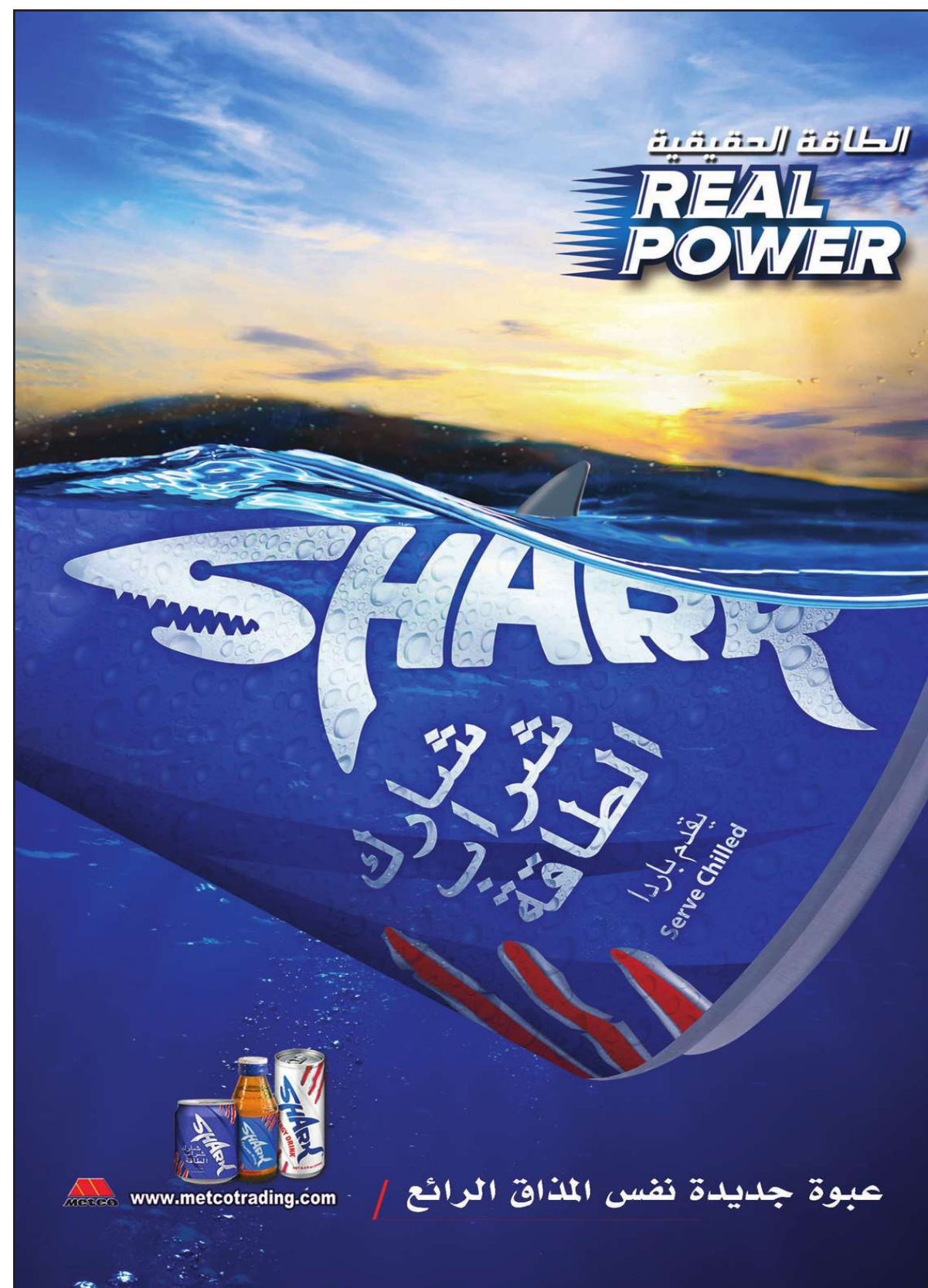
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