

# Liberation

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Editor - George Anthony.

Other than the editorial, the opinions in the articles inside are not necessarily those of Liberation.

After 9/11, the US government systematically designed and implemented a programme of abducting and torturing terrorism suspects, before imprisoning them without due process in Guantánamo Bay. Clive Stafford Smith was one of the three lawyers who demanded and successfully sued for access to the prison.

Since 2002, 779 men and boys – all of them Muslim – have been imprisoned at Guantánamo, including at least 15 children. The vast majority of them were sold to the US when the military was offering large bounties for capture of terrorism suspects – typically, around \$5,000 for each man. 8 of the men held at the prison camp have been convicted by a Guantánamo military commission, and just 1 man has been prosecuted in a US federal court. No one has been held accountable for the illegal detention and abuse at the prison camp.

In 2013, the fate of men in Guantánamo re-entered public consciousness, offering the first glimmer of hope for them since President Obama's empty promise to close the prison in 2009. Detainees began a mass hunger strike, as their only means of peacefully protesting the harsh treatment they endured on a daily basis

by camp guards, and the fact that none of those cleared for release were being sent home. Thanks to their resilience and to Reprieve's press work, Guantánamo is once again a major political issue in the United States.

Many of the hunger-strikers are being violently force-fed against their will. Reprieve is bringing force-feeding litigation on behalf of several of our clients, and we recently filed a motion in federal court requesting that the Obama Administration be compelled to retain and release videotapes of force-feeding sessions. Judge Gladys Kessler ruled in our favour after 16 major US media organisations asked for the tapes to be released on public interest grounds. The Obama Administration has since appealed Judge Kessler's decision.

We're optimistic that once the public gets to see this disturbing abuse of men at Guantánamo, the outrage will be such that the Obama Administration will have no choice but to shut down the prison for good.

*Shaker Aamer was taken, hooded and shackled, to the prison camp at Guantánamo Bay on the same day his youngest child was born – a child he had never met, touched, or*

*even seen.*

Reprieve began representing him, and Shaker was cleared for release in 2007. This process required no fewer than six US government agencies to agree that he posed no threat to the US or its allies and could be released.

Shaker is a permanent UK resident, married to a British woman, with four British children living in London. He was volunteering for a charity in Afghanistan in 2001 when he was abducted and sold for a bounty to US forces. He was tortured, and eventually cracked, agreeing to whatever his captors accused him of doing. Satisfied with the confession of an abused and broken man, US forces took him to Guantánamo Bay on Valentine's Day 2002.

"I have just returned from a visit and the brutal nature of the Forcible Cell Extraction – to which Shaker is subjected probably more than any other prisoner – is only getting worse. [Foreign Secretary Philip] Hammond says that the UK is doing all it can to help Shaker but if it were his son or brother being beaten up every day, he would show a little more interest in evidence, and a little less in bland and false denials. It is far past time that Shaker was home with his wife and children."

**Clive Stafford Smith, Reprieve's Director and Shaker's lawyer**

*Shaker went on hunger strike*

many times in peaceful protest at his detention and the appalling conditions in which he and his fellow detainees were held. In retaliation, the guards beat him, confined him to a tiny cell, and forced him to spend long periods in solitary confinement. Shaker was examined by an independent doctor who listed a catalogue of debilitating conditions. Before his release, Reprieve lawyers said he was 'unrecognizable' from the man who was abducted 14 years ago.

**Shaker's first letter from Guantánamo, 2003**

*My dear wife and lovely kids, I don't know when I am coming out but pray for me that it will be soon. I cried a lot when you told me about how the kids talk to their cars and toys as if I am talking to them on the phone.*

*Please try to be easy on them. Don't send any pictures of the kids – it will make it hard on me here in jail. Whatever happens to me be with Allah. I love you all.*

Shaker's Reprieve lawyer Clive Stafford Smith maintained that Shaker was held for years after being cleared for release because he witnessed US and UK agents torturing men while he was in detention.

On 25 September 2015, it was announced that Shaker would be freed. On Friday 30th October 2015, he was finally returned home to the UK. He is now recovering from his ordeal, and rebuilding his life.



In Guantanamo prison

# Dear Mr Anthony, thank you very much for your e-mail

## Karen Buck MP, replies on Syria



Campaigning for peace

I wrote a blog on the Syria conflict at the weekend which I have copied below- I hope it sets out my thinking fairly fully.

After further briefings and reading, including reflecting on the range of views expressed by constituents, **I have decided to vote against the motion.** However, I still find the arguments finely balanced and respect those of my colleagues who have reached a different conclusion. Above all, I don't think this debate must be seen through the prism of internal party politics- matters of war and peace, life and death are far too serious for that.

Here's my statement:

I am extremely conflicted on this difficult issue- though having listened to the Prime Minister's statement, I have to say he has not yet convinced me of the effectiveness of a policy which seems to rest on a number of disputed assumptions about the ground capacity of anti-Assad moderate forces, such as the Free Syria Army (regarded as essential to defeat ISIL since airstrikes alone cannot) and the prospects for a wider settlement and end to the civil war. Without this, it is hard to see how we can achieve an outcome we can all agree is necessary.

I hope you do not mind if I set out my thoughts fully.

I would rejoice at the destruction of ISIL/Daesh. They are an exceptionally vicious and dangerous organisation, inflicting hideous barbarity on Christian and Muslim communities within the Middle East, and sponsoring terrorism abroad. As the massacre in

Paris demonstrated, they have the capacity and intent to do us terrible harm. At the same time it is also true that the Assad regime has been conducting a murderous civil war against the Syrian people, and it is largely, though not exclusively, the terror and the brutality the regime is inflicting which has contributed to a refugee crisis on a scale not seen since World War2.

Committing our country to military action is sometimes inevitable, in self-defence or in fulfilment of our 'duty to protect'- and the choice NOT to act can also lead to terrible suffering and death (Bosnia, Rwanda). Hence I have supported military action in the past, and voted in favour of backing the Iraqi government in strikes against ISIL inside Iraq when this came before Parliament last September. I acknowledge the real dangers of militant Islamism in the various forms this has manifested itself in recent decades, and do not believe that the horrors we are not witnessing are all a consequence of Western interventions in Afghanistan or Iraq. But I have opposed military action in the past too, including when the Prime Minister sought backing to take action against Assad in 2013 (with the very real risk that it would have given more scope for groups such as those which eventually become ISIL to gain ground), and voting for the rebel amendment against the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

When we voted to support the Iraqi government against ISIL last year, Labour said that

we would extend that support to Syria if ministers could present a coherent plan that met a number of tests about its aims and legality. So I have been open to the argument, and the situation is, of course, changing almost daily. For example, the unanimous vote at the UN last weekend means that there is now a legal basis for action. I also accept the argument that we have obligations to our allies and these must be properly weighed in the balance.

On the other hand, defeating ISIL and ensuring it, or another group in its image, does not re-emerge, means we have to learn from the mistakes of the past and not rely on vague and wishful thinking. Extending our role in the bombing campaign against ISIL in Syria is almost the simplest part (which is not to say it is simple or risk/cost free). Contributing to a lasting solution to the crisis is far more challenging.

So these are the key issues as I see them:

I agree with my colleague Dan Jarvis when he says one test is that "we need clarity about the difference that extending Britain's intervention will make to hastening ISIL's defeat. Our role should not solely be justified by solidarity, but on how we can make a practical difference".

Given that the coalition has already conducted an estimated 2,700 air attacks in Syria (and 4,900 in Iraq, where we are already involved) it cer-

tainly cannot be argued that we are starting from a position of inaction. As Ewan MacAskill writes:

"In private briefings and in public testimony to Congress, a long line of senior American officers have acknowledged frustration with the battle against Islamic State. General John Allen, who was in overall charge of the US campaign in Syria and Iraq, has quit after a year. A marine commander, Lieutenant General Robert Neller, offering his best assessment of how the war is going, described it as a "a stalemate". By the middle of last month the US-led coalition engaged in air attacks in Syria and Iraq had conducted 7,600 attacks (4,900 in Iraq and 2,700 in Syria). Their main problem is finding targets to hit"

David Cameron's statement, whilst making a case for extending British air strikes into Syria, recognised the need for ground troops, since airstrikes are not sufficient to ensure victory. The assumption is that there are potentially 70,000 "moderate" Syrian forces to undertake this task.- but is this figure reliable in operational terms and is it sufficient? (The US alone had 170,000 soldiers in Iraq in 2007, when the insurgency was at its height). There are real differences of view as to the location, capacity and operational cohesion of these 70,000- not least as for many, their over-riding objective is defeating Assad.



Isis assassin



**Mourning for the Paris Isis victims**

Meanwhile we are effectively backing these forces against ISIL despite the fact that one of our practical allies for this purpose- Russia- is also bombing some of them in de facto defence of Assad! So the assumption that airstrikes will easily support moderate Syrian forces to victory is an ambitious one, with huge potential to unravel.

Many of those concerned by an 'ISIS first' (Cameron's words) approach want to be convinced both that there is a realistic prospect of securing a victory on the ground - bearing in mind the previously unpredicted scale of Western involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan that proved necessary over many years- and that defeating ISIS contributes towards an end to the civil war.

There needs to be credible plan for a political agreement to end the conflict, beginning with a cease fire and with an emphasis on the establishment of safe havens for civilians, and this can only be secured by agreement with the other key partners now involved. It is surely impossible to see President Assad remaining in place as part of that process, given his regime's role in atrocities which has substantially driven the mass exodus from the country, and which is responsible for more than 90% of the 200,000 deaths since 2011. In turn that means clarity on a political agreement which has the commitment of the key powers involved in the conflict, including Russia and Iran. The

alternative- defeating ISIL whilst leaving Assad in a stronger position domestically, means no end to the suffering or to the outflow of refugees.

In the past, post-conflict reconstruction has proved far harder than anticipated following recent interventions, such as Iraq, whilst the experience of Libya shows that airstrikes may have an immediate impact but do not of themselves prevent the disintegration of the state. Lessons may have been learnt from Iraq regarding the risks of dismantling the apparatus of the state, but it is reasonable to want to know how Syria can be assisted given the very different interests within the anti-ISIS coalition.

In the short as well as the long term, we need to be looking at the economic, financial and ideological factors underpinning the conflict. How are ISIL being funded? Today's government statement revealed that ISIS are generating an astonishing \$1.5 million dollars daily from oil revenues- money which funds their terrorist as well as military capabilities. Where is the oil being pumped from within ISIS territory being sold to and why? How is money getting in and out of the territory it controls? How are funds from sympathisers being generated and transferred? And how do we bear down on the extremist theology being practiced and exported by countries in the region with which we are otherwise allied? As Paddy Ashdown said on the radio this week,

there also has to be pressure on the Gulf States to stop the flow of Sunni jihadism.

The Paris atrocities demonstrate ISIS's terror capacity- as was previously the case with Al-Qaeda, and as to varying degrees is the case with other groups, such as Jabbat Al-Busra; Boko Haram and Al-Shabbab. Of course it is right that we want to deal with the terror threat, yet the journalist (and David Cameron's former speechwriter) Ian Birrell, has written:

"blasting it to bits will not solve the issues that sparked its rise. We can destroy it, just as we defeated al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, but similar groups will flare up again in a different guise. The militants feed on poverty and poor education, the alienation of minority groups, sectarianism inflamed by repression, colonial borders that fail to match realities on the ground, and cack-handed foreign interventions. And generations are growing up for whom conflict is normal as ethnic, political and religious divisions worsen. More than ever we need focus in foreign policy, yet it seems sorely missing amid endless talk of fighting"

Finally, both at home and abroad we must continue with, and constantly refine, an effective intelligence, community policing and counter-terrorism capability, complemented by a comprehensive strategy for working with the majority of Muslim opinion which rejects extremism.

I still do not absolutely rule out the possibility of a package of measures which would, together, include and justify further military involvement, Yet neither the latest statement to Parliament- measured in tone though it was, nor the comments of the Defence Secretary earlier this week saying it would be for a "moderate Syrian government" to provide the necessary ground troops to support airstrikes, help defeat ISIL and maintain the peace, provided a sufficiently firm outline of to how to reach that desirable outcome to convince me. Our inability to find a coherent and internationally coordinated response to the refugee crisis doesn't bode well, either, despite Britain's undeniably important financial contribution.

So in conclusion: I believe taking part in an extension of military action without an robust, internationally agreed plan for Syria- including, but not restricted to- the defeat of ISIS, how we would deal with the aftermath, how we might build a lasting peace and what an exit strategy would be, risks repeating recent history. I may still be convinced by the precise proposal put before us, or by new information or circumstances, but as of now I think it unlikely.

Thank you again for contacting me on this most important of issues.

**Note-66 Labour MPs voted for the Tory motion to bomb Syria, along with 397 opposed by 223.**



**Campaigning for peace**

# Saudi Arabia in turmoil

## Irakli Tusiashvili examines the problems of this powerful monarchy



Mohammed bin Salman the heir apparent

Riyadh is juggling discontent, regional tension and a war in Yemen while low oil prices have forced huge spending cuts. Ensuring stability will be crucial for the kingdom's power brokers.

Inside the sprawling royal court in Riyadh, a team of technocrats is putting the final touches to plans for a drastic overhaul of the Saudi Arabian economy. Backed by an army of highly paid western consultants, the royal aides have identified billions of dollars of waste and government largesse that the desert kingdom can no longer afford.

Ten months after acceding to the throne, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, 79, faces the daunting challenge of managing a new era in Saudi Arabia. The world's largest oil producer and longstanding US ally has adopted a policy that protects its market share rather than the price, which has more than halved since June 2014. But while the effect has been cushioned by \$640bn in foreign-exchange reserves, the age of \$100-a-barrel oil has receded and budget surpluses have been replaced by yawning deficits.

"The collapse in oil prices is a wake-up call," says an official in Riyadh. "We've had a long history of bad practices be-

cause of our overreliance on oil."

The belt-tightening comes at one of the most testing times in the kingdom's history, with the Sunni Saudi monarchy locked in a regional power struggle with Shia Iran and sectarian tensions flaring across the region. Determined to reassert its leadership role in the Sunni Muslim world and confront Tehran, Riyadh in March launched a military campaign in neighbouring Yemen to push back Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

Amid the turmoil of the Arab uprisings that convulsed the region in 2011, Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as one of the last bastions of stability compared with Iraq, Syria and Yemen, the failing states from which the Sunni jihadis of Isis have projected terrorist power across the Middle East and beyond. A senior western diplomat in Riyadh says: "Whatever you think about the policies of the government, the stability of Saudi Arabia really matters."

Saudi authorities have cracked down on Isis cells in the country in recent months. But while Saudis see themselves as victims of Isis, many outsiders consider the kingdom's dependence on the clerical establishment, and its

determination to spread its Wahhabi brand of Islam worldwide, as part of the problem, contributing to the radicalisation of Sunni youth and breeding jihadis.

"The picture is bleak," says a Riyadh businessman. "The longer oil prices are depressed and turmoil in the region continues and the longer we have security issues in the country, the less options there are and the more dire the situation will be for Saudi Arabia."

### Next generation

The faces of the three leading men of Saudi Arabia stare down at visitors on the streets of Riyadh: King Salman is in the middle, flanked on one side by his nephew, crown prince and interior minister, the 56-year-old Prince Mohammed bin Naif; on the other is his favourite son and deputy crown prince, the 30-year-old Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Ask any Saudi where power is concentrated today, however, and they will point to the younger royal.

While the crown prince heads the security council and is credited with repelling the al-Qaeda threat over the past decade, Mohammed bin Salman leads the team working on restructuring the economy. As defence minister, he is the point man on the war in Yemen. Increasingly, he is also his father's representative on foreign policy, meeting Russia's Vladimir Putin twice this year

and Barack Obama, US president, once. He oversees the operations of the royal court, the most powerful body in the absolute monarchy. Saudi Aramco, the state oil company, as well as the Public Investment Fund, with \$5.3bn in assets, are also under his purview.

Known for his appetite for detail and data, the young prince has been preparing for his father's succession for several years. He asked aides to identify areas in need of reform and officials who could be promoted. His spadework led to what analysts describe as a tsunami reshuffle when the monarch assumed the throne in January, on the death of his half-brother King Abdullah. Never in the kingdom's history had so many royal decrees been issued at once, with dozens of new officials appointed to government.

King Salman also broke with tradition by shifting power to the second generation of princes. Officials speak of a different "tempo" and a willingness to challenge the way things have been done in the past. They argue that the collapse in oil prices should be seen as an opportunity to clean up Saudi finances and diversify the economy. The sidelining of other royals and the accumulation of power in the hands of Mohammed bin Salman have, however, sparked speculation of royal infighting.



Women emerge as a new force



Saudi shopping centre

Close watchers of the al-Sauds say dissent in the family is real, but that those who have lost out lack the momentum to present a threat to the king. Of greater concern to observers are perceptions of a power struggle between the crown prince and the deputy crown prince.

“Until recently we had several independent power centres in Saudi Arabia, with each senior prince taking decisions, and there was no long-term planning. Now you can have a united decision-making process — but the big concern is that a lot of power is with one prince,” says a Riyadh-based analyst.

#### Palace intrigue

As Mohammed bin Salman looks to consolidate his position, the success or failure of his economic plans — and the war in Yemen — will be the yardsticks against which he is measured.

Success could vindicate his ageing father’s bet on his inexperienced son, whose challenge now is to translate a grasp of detail into policy delivery. Failure could sour the national mood and embolden dissenters who say he is too young to take on the myriad challenges.

The government has slashed public spending by a quarter, raised \$27bn through local debt issuance this year and is considering an international bond programme in 2016. The swingeing \$80bn in cuts, bringing spending down to \$267bn,

will be followed by more austerity next year as the government looks at a budget of \$229bn-\$240bn.

“Spending was completely out of control and oil prices were going down so we looked at everything,” says one official. Among the priority targets are energy subsidies that cost the treasury 13.2 per cent of gross domestic product, less than half of which go to households. Officials are studying ways of raising non-oil revenues via government fees and a sales tax. But they will broaden existing welfare payments to redistribute money to poor and middle-class Saudis who will be hit hardest by higher electricity, water and petrol prices.

Sceptics say promises of reforms have been made in the past but not delivered. Arbitrary decision-making and the absence of checks and balances in the system also undermine fiscal discipline: when King Salman took over he announced a salary bonus for public sector employees and utilities investment totalling an estimated \$30bn.

An ingrained administration that is resistant to change is a further impediment. When the royal court this year asked for proposals for cuts to departmental spending, most responded by asking for a 25 per cent increase in allocations.

“This [situation] presents a unique opportunity to accelerate the diversification of the economy,” says Masood Ah-

med, director for the Middle East and Central Asia at the International Monetary Fund. “Achieving that goal will require both bold reform decisions and sustained and effective implementation,” he warns.

There are signs that government cuts are damaging business confidence. The private sector, dependent on government spending, is reeling from the sharp retrenchment. “The business community feels there are too many sudden changes in regulations and where we’re going. We need stability in the way we move forward,” says Lama al-Sulaiman, vice-president of the chamber of commerce in Jeddah.

Private sector growth, which has this year fallen to 2.9 per cent from 5 per cent last year, is crucial for creating employment for the hundreds of thousands of Saudis who enter the job market every year, especially given the limits on expansion in the public sector.

The ruling family, backed by the clerical establishment, have for decades provided jobs and a cheap cost of living for their subjects in return for loyalty to the tribally based, authoritarian system of governance. At the height of the unrest that swept the Arab world, the government showered the population with salary increases and new social spending while cracking down on dissent. Five years on, moves to change the social contract threaten to upend that delicate

balance of power as regional threats abound.

Human rights groups say the government continues to use the judicial system to stifle dissent by jailing Shia and pro-democracy activists for anti-government activity, as well as religious crimes such as apostasy or insulting Islam. The number of executions this year has risen to the highest level in two decades, prompting increasing scrutiny of the tough judicial system that mirrors some of the punishments meted out by Isis in the areas it controls in Syria.

#### Spectre of Iran

The new Saudi regime boosted its popularity in the first months in office with the launch of a bombing campaign in Yemen as Houthi rebels moved south after taking over the capital Sana’a. Mohammed bin Salman was cast as the warrior flexing his military muscle to counter Iran’s expansionist designs on the Arab world. Despite doubts in western capitals about the extent of Iranian support for the rebels, Riyadh was convinced that Tehran was using the Houthis to create a proxy force on Saudi Arabia’s borders.

Vacillations in US regional policy, coupled with messages from Washington that Saudi Arabia should match its high defence spending with more responsibility, also encouraged Riyadh.

The west’s rehabilitation of Iran through the nuclear agreement with world powers was the final straw.



Big Saudi debate



Weekly executions

“The Yemen war was about not being pushed around any more,” says one western official who closely watches the kingdom.

Thousands of civilian casual-

wraps up, the power struggle with Iran will persist, playing out in other arenas, primarily Syria, where Saudi Arabia is on the side of the rebels and Iran is supporting the regime. “We’re obsessed with Iran,”



War against Yemen

ties have raised western concerns about the military campaign, which appears to have settled into a war of attrition, even as public support in Saudi Arabia remains strong. While there is some cautious talk in Riyadh about a truce, the fact is that the Saudis will have to pick up the cost of rebuilding its impoverished neighbour, having spent billions of dollars on helping to demolish it.

“There’s a lot of frustration about how they’ve run the campaign,” says a senior western official amid concerns that jihadis have exploited the conflict to widen their presence in the country.

Observers say the Yemen campaign has also reinforced anti-Shia sentiment in Saudi Arabia, where a Shia minority in the eastern province already feels marginalised. “Support for the campaign has been partly built on sectarianism and hatred towards the Shia,” says one Riyadh-based observer.

Even if the military campaign

says one Saudi political observer. “For us Iran is an issue of security.”

Delivering a radically different Saudi economy and a more assertive foreign policy are in line with the aspirations of an overwhelmingly young Saudi population: 60 per cent are



Isis financed by Saudi Arabia

under the age of 30.

### Women Elected

Saudi Arabia has just elected at least four female politicians in municipal polls in a historic event in which women were allowed to vote and stand for office.

The state news agency reported Salma bint Hizab al-Oteibi as the first to win a seat, on the municipal council in the holy city of Mecca in Saturday’s elections. Others won in Jawf and Tabuk. As results came in on Sunday, some reports put the number of women elected as high as 17.

The polls mark a small step towards redressing gender imbalances in the Gulf monarchy, where the ruling house of Saud is seeking to balance calls for change from its large population of young people with the demands of conservative clerics opposed to reforms.

Only 1.3m men and 130,000 women registered to vote in the polls for seats on councils that have limited powers over local planning and spending. Officials said 4m to 5m of the country’s population of 20m were eligible to vote. An election spokesman described this as a “reasonable proportion”, noting that local elections worldwide rarely generated a large turnout.

Playing down complaints that some female activists had been barred, the spokesman said that of 6,914 prospective can-

didates, only 235 were rejected, nine of whom were women.

Activists say the elections are window dressing to disguise the government’s failure to tackle real issues of female empowerment, such as the strictures of male guardianship. The 979 female candidates had to address men from behind closed doors, and a video on social media showed men defacing a female candidate’s election billboard. Some voters said it was encouraging that King Salman, who succeeded the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz al-Saud in January, had kept his predecessor’s commitment to cautious reform. A kingdom that is friends with the US, but more self-reliant, one that benefits from oil wealth but does not rely solely on it, are popular aspirations.

But the first test facing the monarchy lies in implementation, whether on the economic front or on security. Saudi businessmen remember bitterly earlier periods of low oil prices and promises of diversification that were abandoned when the outlook for crude improved. The Yemen war, meanwhile, has not inspired greater confidence in Saudi military capabilities among its allies.

The monarchy must also manage the impact of change on the relationship between rulers and ruled. Saudis are subjected to restrictions on free speech but they are active users of social media and public opinion cannot be ignored. There is growing awareness of corruption and the excessive spending of the royal elite, which could derail attempts to impose more austerity. Saudi Arabia is in desperate need of reform but the sweeping changes envisaged take the kingdom into uncharted territory, creating demands for popular representation, which has no place in the monarchy’s vision of the future

**Irakli Tusiashvili is a post-graduate student at King’s college, London on Middle East studies.**

# Withdrawal of Turkish troops from Kurdistan Kurdish National Congress demand



Kurdish woman fighter

Turkey is committing another crime against Kurdish people and the people of the Middle East by entering Bashur/Iraqi Kurdistan and deploying unwanted troops in Mousel without any request or authorization from the Kurdistan parliament or Iraqi federal authority. The Turkish forces comprising around one armored regiment with many tanks and artilleries. Heavy weaponry and military logistics have been deployed to the Bashiqa area north-east of Mosul which is seen as Islamic State's main bastion.

Since the Syrian civil war started over four years ago, Turkey has been playing with double standards and hypocrisy. From being a best friend of the young Bashar Al Assad, the Turkish president Erdogan switched to insisting on Bashar Al Assad's removal from power almost overnight. The AKP all of a sudden saw an opportunity to reawaken the Ottoman Empire by toppling the Syrian regime, a dictatorship inherited through nepotism and a one-

party system. The Erdogan-project is far from wanting to rescue the Syrian people, rather it is designed to impose a Turkish Sunni-style hegemony not only on the Syrian people, but also on the whole Middle East. Turkey started, eager and ambitious and unfortunately with the West's blessing, to summon and organize the most reactionary and barbaric Islamist extremists and supply them with sophisticated weapons. ISIS was actually born under these political circumstances.

Turkey's goals may be many, but the most important one is to occupy even larger parts of Kurdistan, outside of Turkey, and suppress the Kurdish National Liberation Movement for many years to come. The second main goal is to revive the Ottoman Empire after it secures access to Kurdistan's wealth, especially oil, gas and drinkable water.

The world should remember how Erdogan, in a speech on 7 October 2014, declared that the city of Kobane would fall and he vowed to destroy the Kurdish spirit for freedom. The world should also remember the Turkish blockade of Rojawa. The Turkish all-sided support for ISIS has meant and still means committing crimes against humanity. These crimes consist of taking the lives of

Kurdish civilians, suppression, confiscating properties, enslaving people, displacements and changing demography of Kurdistan and also hundreds of thousands of Syrian civilian casualties.

Despite the Turkish military campaign launched on 24 July against Kurdish guerrilla forces (the only forces which are fighting and have fought successfully against ISIS) which has since been intensified rather than reduced, the Kurdish liberation resistance and its will for freedom and liberty gets stronger day by day. The will of Kurdish resistance has smashed the Turkish and ISIS dreams of totalitarian superiority. The cooperation and collaboration between the Coalition and the YPG, YPJ, SDF (Syrian Democratic Forces) and now even Russia gives a great opportunity to defeat ISIS and its sponsors, mainly Turkey.

The liberation of Kobane, followed by other areas and now even Shangal, Hole, Jarabulus and other strategic areas close to Aleppo and Raqqa has forced Turkey to look at other options to support ISIS. The Turkish incursion into Bashur/Iraqi Kurdistan is meant to open and secure another gate for helping ISIS and must be seen accordingly.

The Turkish incursion is a direct threat to the people of Kurdistan, to the Iraqi federal

territory and it fans the sectarian flames even more by spreading the culture of enmity, mistrust and hatred between the people of the area. It will also provide the most suitable environment for Islamic extremism, reactionary thinking and totalitarianism.

We, the Kurdistan National Congress, therefore call on Turkey to immediately withdraw from Bashur/Kurdistan and urge the International Community and the democratic forces to support our call. The deployment of Turkish troops in Kurdistan is not just a serious violation of the people's sovereignty, but also a threat to the stability and security that has been achieved. There are already Peshmerga forces deployed in the area with good coalition surveillance. There is no need at all for an unwelcomed Turkish presence.

We, the Kurdistan National Congress, urge the International Community and the democratic forces to support the people of Kurdistan's call for freedom, equality and the sister- and brotherhood of the people of the area. We need help and support to ensure peace and stability, progress and gender equality.

Kurdistan National Congress  
—KNK-Press Release  
PRESS RELEASE  
December 6, 2015



Kurdish women fighters in action

## Liberation

archives are now on the  
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Library website at-

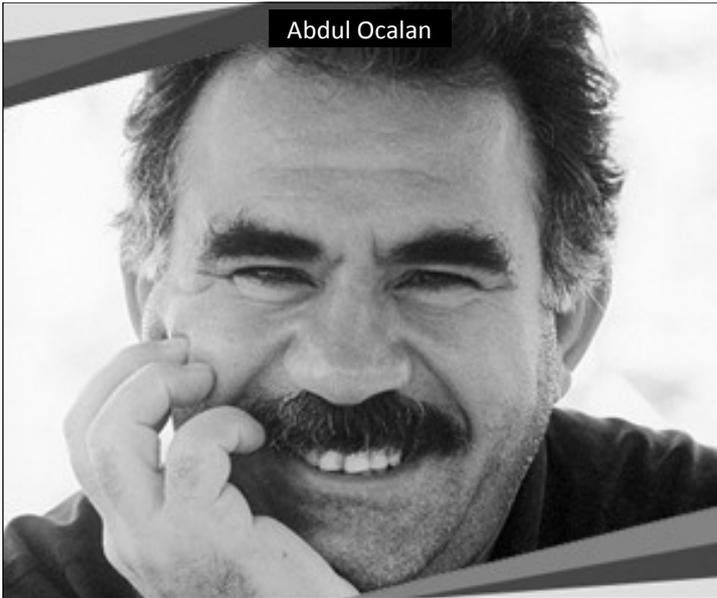
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Archives.html

Also at S.O.A.S

# Rojava administration responds to exclusion from Riyadh talks



Abdul Ocalan

**We received this statement from the Coordinating body of the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava about this week's talks in Riyadh which convened the 'Syrian opposition' – but excluded Kurdish representation of the PYD, TEV-DEM or the coalition of Syrian Democratic Forces:**

## **Public Statement Regarding the Riyadh Conference**

After nearly five years of suffering, hundred thousands of victims and rivers of blood in Syria, a Syrian opposition conference is held in Riyadh between 8th and 10th of December, 2015. Countries participants in the Vienna conference wanted to take the initiative and reunite the dispersed Syrian opposition in a balanced delegation to negotiate directly with the Syrian regime to put an end to this bloody war and to reach a peaceful solution to the Syrian dilemma. It was supposed that there will be interference in neither the work of the Preparatory Committee nor the host country and that the various opposition blocs invited are free to choose their delegations after the number of participants has been identified.

However, what happened was that interference by out-

side powers imposed policies commensurate with their own agendas, prevented other key actors on the ground to participate in the conference and interfered in the internal affairs of other entities – not to mention the internal schism and conflict between those artificial entities whenever an important decision is to be made. Consequently, the Riyadh Conference is taking place without a real representation of all components of the Syrian people regardless of their religious, ethnic and political backgrounds. The outcome of this conference will not represent the hopes and aspirations of the Syrian people, who have been suffering from all those tragedies and horrors in their revolution against tyranny and dictatorship. Convening a conference in this style and manner will only be considered as a conspiracy against the will of the Syrian people and will not serve the political solution to the Syrian crisis. It will eventually become an umbrella for some dark forces and various terrorists groups to pass some regional policies.

For the above-mentioned reasons, representatives of the Democratic Self-administration in Rojava and its political and military forces, which are an

essential part of the Syrian equation, have not been invited to attend the conference. Parties, participants in the Administration, were the forefront of the Syrian revolution when it was peaceful, were bombed by the Syrian regime when they liberated their areas; and defeated terrorism in a way that admired by the entire free world, who felt that these armed forces are defending democratic and noble human values and the brotherhood of nations.

We, in the Democratic Self-administration in Rojava, thank the host country for its efforts, but consider the outcome of this conference, similar to previous conferences, to be unfair and unjust, because the conference is not representative of all components of the Syrian society and delegates were chosen by regional powers, who try to implement their

own agendas and policies against the will of the Syrians. These powers fear the entrenchment of democracy and the brotherhood of nations in a stable, prosperous and harmonious Syria. Accordingly, we in the Democratic Self-administration in Rojava, with all its institutions, are neither concerned nor affected by the outcomes of the Riyadh Conference and nobody whosoever can impose any decision, which we were not part of its making, on us.

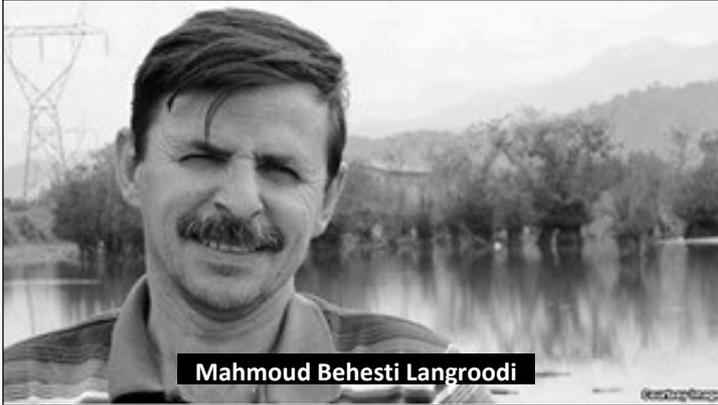
**10 December, 2015 By pik-campaignin Conflict resolution, UncategorizedTags: Democratic administration of Rojava, PYD, Riyadh Talks, Rojava, Syria, Syria opposition, TEV-DEM. The Coordinating Body of the Democratic Self-administration Cantons (Al Jazira, Kobani and Efrin) in Rojava**

**06/10/2015**



# Release Mahmoud Beheshti Langroodi

## Codir makes a Christmas Day appeal



**Solidarity group calls for the release of teachers' trade union leader**

The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has today launched a Christmas Day appeal calling for the release of leading teachers' trade unionist, Mahmoud Beheshti Langroodi. The former spokesperson of the Iranian Teachers' Association has announced that in protest against his 9-year prison sentence he has gone on hunger strike. Beheshti was sentenced in June 2013. His original sentence was for four years in prison, on trumped-up charges of "illegal assembly" and "collusion against national security", one extra year in prison for propaganda against the regime and a further four years of suspended imprisonment making a total of 9 years in prison.

The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has today launched a Christmas Day appeal calling for the release of leading teachers' trade unionist, The former spokesperson of the Iranian Teachers' Association has announced that in protest against his 9-year prison sentence he has gone on hunger strike.

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**Press Release - For Immediate Use 9th December 2013**

**The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has today condemned the execution of four members of the Arab minority in Iran. The four men had been sentenced to death on 15th August 2012 for the vaguely worded charges of "enmity against God" and "corruption on earth". The charges related to a series of shootings that had allegedly led to the deaths of a police officer and a soldier.**

The men all categorically denied any involvement in the shootings, saying their "confessions" had been obtained under torture and they had recanted them in court.

However these claims of torture have not been investigated. Torture and ill treatment, particularly during pre-trial detention, are common in Iran and are committed with impunity.

These executions are the latest in a long line of executions of political prisoners. Since September a number of political prisoners in Kurdistan and Baluchistan have also been executed.

Following the election victory of Hassan Rouhani, who was

elected on an allegedly reformist platform, atrocity and political execution in Iran has continued unabated. CODIR has made it clear previously, and repeats its view, that if Rouhani's reformist credentials are to have any currency he must stop such atrocities immediately.

CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, stressed the solidarity organisation's opposition to the death penalty stating,

"CODIR has consistently campaigned against the death penalty in Iran. It is a punishment which is made even harder to take given the vagueness of the charges brought against many of those executed."

CODIR has also stressed the inconsistency with Iranian law in the carrying out of the executions. Under Iranian law, lawyers must receive 48 hours' notification of any client's execution. However, the lawyer of at least one of the men has said he had not been told beforehand of the executions. In addition the families of the executed men were not told the exact date of the executions, either in advance or after they had taken place, and have been barred from holding memorial events.

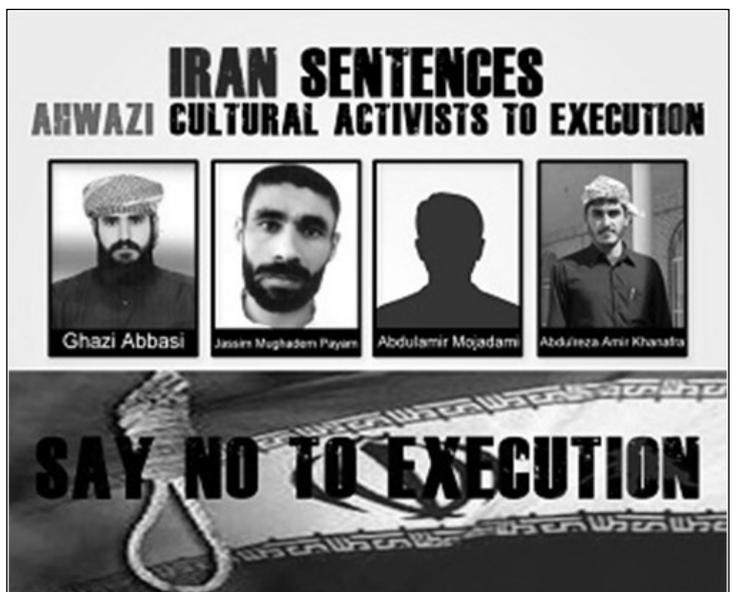
"These are the kinds of ac-

tions that keep Iran beyond the boundaries of international acceptability", continued Mr. Ahmadi. "All political detainees should have access to proper justice, access to a lawyer and independent defence council. The torture of victims under any pretext should cease. International pressure is always important to highlight the injustices of the Iranian regime and to expose their human rights abuses. That pressure must continue in this case."

CODIR extends its sympathy and solidarity to the families of the four executed men, Ghazi Abbasi, Abdul-Reza Amir-Khanafereh, Abdul-Amir Mojaddami and Jasim Moghadam Payam and pledges to continue its solidarity work to raise awareness of ongoing human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

CODIR is the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights. It has been established since 1981 and has consistently campaigned to expose human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

CODIR has worked closely with the trades union movement in the UK, the peace movement, all major political parties and Amnesty International to press the case for an end to torture in Iran's prisons.





**Reza Shahabi in hospital**

CODIR has consistently supported the international campaign for the release of Reza Shahabi, the imprisoned executive member of the Tehran Bus Workers' Union. Mr Shahabi's only crime has been to bravely and tirelessly work to defend the right of his fellow workers to organise as a trade union and to protect their wages, conditions and livelihoods. After more than three years in Evin's notorious cells, Mr Shahabi's health has been badly damaged and he needs medical treatment urgently. Below is an open letter written by his family demanding his immediate release. CODIR wholeheartedly supports their campaign and calls on its members, affiliated organisations and the trade union movement to do likewise.

**Reza Shahabi's family demands his freedom to prevent his paralysis!**

Copied to workers, workers' organizations, the media, government and judicial officials

Workers, labor organizations and all people of conscious!

As you are all aware, Reza Shahabi, a transit worker and a member of the board of directors of the Syndicate of Workers of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, has been incarcerated in Tehran's Evin Prison since June 12, 2010, only because of his advocacy for workers' rights and supporting the demands of his fellow workers.

During these years of unjust imprisonment, Reza has suf-

fered from an array of health problems, including but not limited to: decaying of a few lower vertebrates, problems with back and neck disks, liver and kidney complications, numbness of feet and hands, heart issues and dental problems. Because of such amalgamation of health issues, a cervical spine operation was performed on Reza in July 2012, but despite his physicians' recommendations for further hospital care and physiotherapy, he was returned to his cell, which has further caused many problems.

After close to three and half years of incarceration, the coroner has examined Reza's conditions inside Evin prison, and based on an MRI scan has determined that three lower vertebrates have been damaged and are in need of immediate surgery in a hospital. It should be noted that Reza has been suffering from lower back pain for months, his left foot becoming almost paralyzed as a result, with very little mobility left in it.

Due to numbness of left foot and severe back pain, on October 19, 2013, Reza was transferred to "Imam Khomeini Hospital". After all examinations, physicians have once again recommended that Reza is in no condition to be returned to a prison environment, and is in need of hydrotherapy and physiotherapy in a stress free environment outside of prison. They have also warned that

unless such treatments are provided there is a very high possibility that his entire left side could be paralyzed.

We, the family of Reza Shahabi, his wife and two children, declare that based on doctors' recommendations, Reza cannot endure prison conditions at all and must be released immediately. We hold security and judiciary officials responsible for Reza's severe condition. We ask all labor organizations and activists in Iran and around the world to continue protesting against Reza's prolonged incarceration.

Signed by: Robabeh Rezaie (Spouse), Mohammad Amin Shahabi (son) and Shirin Shahabi (daughter)

**Published by Reza Shahabi Defence Committee- October 23, 2013**

The Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) has condemned the sentencing in Iran this week of 24 year old actress, Pegah Ahangarani, to 18 months in jail for the alleged and baseless crime of "action against national security and links to foreign media".

The election of Rouhani has not changed this position. Indeed, there is no evidence that Ahangarani has been engaged in any "action against national security" or that she has "links to foreign media" over and above those which would be commensurate with her profession.

CODIR Assistant General Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, stressed the importance of the international arts community

taking up Ahangarani's case.

"International pressure is always important to highlight the injustices of the Iranian regime and to expose their human rights abuses", said Mr. Ahmadi. "In this instance it is particularly critical as many artists in Iran feel pressured to keep silent on Ms. Ahangarani's case, as they fear that speaking out will subject them to the same fate."

CODIR has contacted the key media unions in the UK including the NUJ, BECTU and EQUITY urging them to raise the case of Ms Ahangarani with the Iranian government.

"The 18 month jail sentence appears to be an attempt to gag Ms. Ahangarani and intimidate the wider arts community into silence, hardly the agenda of a reformist presidency", said Mr Ahmadi, "Pressure from the trades union movement in the UK and internationally is vital if we are to get this decision reversed and we are doing all in our power to make them aware of this case."

The Chicago Film Festival is currently showing Ahangarani's latest film, Darband, about a female university student who becomes the roommate of a young woman wrestling with financial problems.

BECTU, the independent trade union for those working in broadcasting, film, theatre, entertainment, leisure, interactive media and allied areas, has already supported CODIR's campaign. Please refer to the following link: <http://www.bectu.org.uk/news/2047>



**Pegah Ahangarani**



Hassan Rouhani

## Jane Green of Codir reports

**Legalised paedophilia in Iran condemned** The rights of women and girls in Iran continues to be an area of debate and disagreement. While the Rouhani regime continues to try and promote a more positive image internationally Jane Green highlights domestic legislation that continues to show the reactionary nature of life in Iran. 13th October 2013

On the 11th October the United Nations celebrated the day of the girl in an attempt to highlight the position of girls across the world and to improve their rights.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran however the day was marked by the the Guardian Council of the regime approving a bill passed by Iran's Majlis or parliament for the "protection" of the children and young people. The bill controversially contains a clause which allows men to marry their adopted daughters with the permission of a court. While the law applies to both male and female adoptive parents or children, given the patriarchal nature of the Islamic Republic, it is most likely that it will be used in the case of girls rather than boys.

Ironically, the bill had previously been denied and sent

back for review because it had originally banned the marriage of step-fathers and their adopted daughters. The Guardian Council found this to be in contradiction with Islamic Sharia law. Opposition groups have condemned the bill as legalised paedophilia, calling for the law to be revoked and for international pressure to be brought to bear upon the government of Iran.

The abuse of the rights of women and girls is a constant concern under the regime of the Islamic Republic. The catalogue of discriminatory laws and practices against women and girls is a long one. The age of marriage for girls is 13 years old, although it is possible before that age, provided the court and the father decide so. The age of criminal responsibility for girls is only nine years old. Girls have to wear the hejab at an ever-earlier age, supposedly to protect them from lustful eyes.

A statement by Salaar Moradi, an MP who sits on the Social Committee of the parliament betrays the sentiments behind the bill. Moradi stated that, "An adopted child is not the same as [one's own] child. The religious teaching allows a guardian to marry his adopted daughter". Furthermore said Moradi, "When a girl enters a family, she becomes Na Mahram (non-familial) when she reaches puberty, unless the oath of making Mahram, or marriage is taken".

Inside Iran, Shiva Dolatabadi, head of Iran's society for protecting children's rights, has warned that the bill implies that the parliament is legalising incest. "You cannot open a way in which the role of a father or a mother can be mixed with that of a spouse," she said. "Children can't be safe in such a family."

In the UK the Committee for the Defence of the Iranian People's Rights (CODIR) have spoken out against the new law. Assistant Secretary, Jamshid Ahmadi, made clear the need for action stating,

"This outrageous bill must be condemned as vociferously as possible. Girls must be protected from potentially being exposed to such damaging abuse. The Iranian government's efforts to portray a moderate image, internationally, should not divert attention from the severe violation of human and democratic rights of the most vulnerable individu-

als, in domestic policy. Such measures demand an outcry to stop the introduction of new laws that may lead to the destruction of young lives."

At a time that the president of the Islamic Republic is trying to promote himself as a symbol of moderation and decency, the new law exposes the reality of life in Iran for a huge section of the population.

If Rouhani is willing to be accepted as a moderate and a different type of leader in the "reformed" Islamic Republic then legislation of this character must be reversed. Iran cannot operate an internal policy so incompatible with the norms of behaviour at the beginning of the 21st Century.

Jane Green is National Campaigns Officer of CODIR (Committee for Defence of Iranian People's Rights), Iranian solidarity organisation, [www.codir.net](http://www.codir.net). For all enquiries please contact: [codir\\_info@btinternet.com](mailto:codir_info@btinternet.com)



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Bernie Saunders

### Outsider in the White House-Bernie Sanders and Huck Gutman

Verso ISBN 978-1-78478-418-8.

Bernie Sanders cut his political teeth in the 60s Civil Rights movement. Currently as Senator for Vermont he seeks the Presidential nomination of the Democrats. He has previously been Congressman for Vermont and the Mayor of Burlington, several times during which voter turnout doubled. Sanders is not a member of the Democratic party. He has stood and won as an independent, usually the only independent in the House or the Senate and as a socialist.

The book was originally put together when Sanders was in the Congress during 1996, when he had no Presidential ambitions but there is a forty page afterword by John Nichols, now that he has.

The authors deny that it is an handbook for political campaigning. In my opinion it is one of the best.

This is essential reading for anyone contemplating running an election.

James Grayson reviews



### George Anthony examines the Isis finances

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Better pay for combatants who pledge allegiance — and foreigners get the most

Isis pursuit of statehood squeezes ‘citizens’

Budgets reveal fighters are well supplied while public services suffer in militant-controlled areas of Syria and Iraq

In its polished online propaganda, Isis sometimes calls its health sector the Islamic State Health Service — the ISHS. The logo and typography are taken from the NHS, the UK’s free-of-charge state healthcare provider. The glossy pictures of doctors in their scrubs and well-equipped wards featured in ISHS posters could be too.

It is an illusion. True to its ambitions of statehood, Isis rakes in tens of millions of dollars each month from the resources in the territories it controls across half of Syria and a third of neighbouring Iraq. But while it holds more territory than some countries, and imposes taxes and provides some services for its “citizens”, the budget of the self-proclaimed caliphate shows that its priorities are still those of a militant organisation. Isis has built an efficient war machine that lavishes money on loyal members while squeezing others.

When Abu Qitada, a 16-year-old from eastern Syria, joined Isis as a fighter, he was assured he would receive medical care,

## A History of Struggle Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Liberation; formerly the Movement for Colonial Freedom. Stan Newens £3

whether that meant treatment at a frontline clinic or smuggling him to Turkey. “They pay for everything,” he told the investigation a few weeks after defecting. Like all those from Isis territory, he asked not to be identified with his real name.

In contrast, civilians like Um Eyyad, from Mosul, the Iraqi city that Isis seized in June, are treated like second-class citizens. She stopped going to public hospitals, even though she could barely afford private treatment for her sickly son. “When I entered the hospital, I’d feel scared,” says the housewife who fled to Kurdish-controlled Erbil in northern Iraq in June. “Everyone inside was Isis. Other patients have to bring their own medicine.”

An investigation based on interviews with dozens of Iraqis and Syrians trapped under Isis rule, as well as with senior diplomats and intelligence officials in the coalition against Isis, undermines the group’s claims of governance. “They are a very rich terrorist organisation,” say diplomat in the US-led anti-Isis coalitions one senior. “But they are a very [bad] state.”

#### The ledger

The war effort dominates Isis accounts. Over the past year, as the jihadis have expanded the territory they control in Syria and Iraq, they have netted at least \$900m from oil, taxation and confiscations. My investigation has found. But this revenue is a moving target: the international coalition has stepped up its air campaign against Isis oil wells in an effort to staunch the flow of crude — and cash — into the group’s war chest.



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