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How Media Creates Enemies

KABUL—Indeed, intelligence officials say that since September 11, al Qaeda has shifted the focus of its operations to smaller-scale attacks carried out by so-called super cells around the world with the Terrorists will Target Asia being scattered by the U.S.-led air campaign in Afghanistan.

Those attacks include an April bombing that killed 21 people near a synagogue in Tunisia, and a bombing in May outside a hotel in Karachi, Pakistan, that left 14 people dead.



buildings and bridges.

"It is more advanced than training," Guinetra said. "It is almost like doing the operation so that when they go to the real operational theater, they will be a hundred percent confident."

The training tapes also include step-by-step instructions on how to use a surface-to-air missile, raising concerns about the implications for civil aviation. Lessons on complex hostage-taking techniques and assassinating bombs in the name of Allah.

Islamic Militants Reportedly Massacre 26 in Western Algeria

Authorities report disrupting al Qaeda cells in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Morocco. Muslim leaders met in Washington-based think tank that focuses on international issues, says al Qaeda has links to terrorist organizations in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Kashmir, Uzbekistan and Algeria, among other countries.

The terror 'ties' stretch much farther west. Al Qaeda

I don't Troubled Democrat Name Aborigine as enemy, how sophisticated their training was, how well prepared they were and how they were working away secretly in imparting this advice," said Mopua Oti rebuke

Canadian Man for Child Sex Trade Terrorism and Political Violence at the University of St. Andrew's in Scotland.

The tapes show al Qaeda's training using explosives to destroy simulated houses, office

Women In Action covers a broad range of issues affecting women globally, but focusing on the particular needs and concerns of women in the Global South, and forwarding a progressive perspective tempered by the experiences of the third world women's movements. As a triannual, the magazine comes out in print form every four months of the year, and circulated worldwide.

Major articles are also posted onto the Isis Website.

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Linking women, sharing knowledge, reimagining change

We!

Isis International

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International Day for the Elimination of VAW Celebrated

Several women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IAEW) last 25 November with various activities ranging from sponsoring programmes to wearing white ribbons.

November 25 also marked the first of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which will end on 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

Men's groups have also joined the call for governments worldwide to work towards eliminating gender-based violence. (See related story on p. 2. "Canadian men do their bit to eliminate VAW")

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) celebrated the day with a short programme, "Not a Minute More: A Call to the World to End Violence Against Women." The event, held at the Dag Hammarskjöld Auditorium at the United Nations compound in New York City, was highlighted by the sharing of experiences among UNIFEM Trust Fund grantees who shared their experiences of overcoming violence in their lives.

Experts have brought to the public's attention the alarming statistics of violence perpetrated against women and girls around the world. A few of the statistics:

- The 2000 United Nations Study on the World's Women estimates that in the United States alone, a woman is beaten up by her husband or partner every 15 seconds. It also states that at least 160 million girls worldwide have died from sex-selective abortions known as female foeticide.
- In South Africa, a woman is raped every 23 seconds, according to the Rape Crisis Centre in Cape Town.
- In the United Kingdom, the Economic and Social Research Council's Program on Violence stated in September 2001 that...

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Deaths Abuses Rife at Ritual Schools

by Anthony Stoppard

JOHANNESBURG—It is a rite of passage that should lead to manhood, but for many young South African men, initiation rituals have led to death.

In several African communities in South Africa, youths go to initiation schools to learn about their culture and traditions, and to be circumcised. When they return, they are considered adult members of the community.

Circumcision is also considered necessary for health reasons.

Most of the initiates are teenagers. Where the schools are well run and managed by legitimate traditional leaders, they are considered a vital part of preserving the customs and traditions of communities. But, every year, many youths are beaten, mutilated and killed in initiation camps run by self-styled traditional surgeons and teachers for money.

There are also reports of the kidnap and forced circumcision of youths who do not want to go to initiation camps.

In late March, one of the coldest months of the year in the South African province of Gauteng, five initiates at a camp died, while others were found with pneumonia and septic wounds caused by beatings and badly performed circumcisions. Thirty other initiates were hospitalized.

Five teachers from the school

were arrested on charges of murder. They are also facing a charge of assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. They allegedly beat the initiates, mainly because they were not singing in unison.

The Gauteng provincial government has ordered the closing of a number of camps where initiates were allegedly abused. But others, including 40 where the provincial health department has checked living conditions and provided water and sanitation, continue to operate.

Since the incident in Gauteng, there has been a spate of reports of abuses at the initiation schools in other provinces in South Africa.

While the closure of initiation camps where abuses are happening may seem like an obvious solution, this is not as simple as it appears. The *Sunday Times* journalist Mondli Makhanya explains: "One of the by-products of our open society is that we have become afraid to be open lest we offend sensitivities. So we tread carefully, reluctant to call a crime a crime. In those parts of the country where the ritual is practised, it is an inviolable part of tradition. And the issue is complicated by the fact that the boys who take part do so voluntarily and enthusiastically. Because of

this, discussion about the terrible malpractice that goes on is invariably conducted in hushed tones and couched in guarded language. But it should not have to be like this. The issue is not about culture. It is about lawbreaking and should be seen as such."

Some traditional leaders who generally insist the custom cannot be done away with have instead called on the government to introduce legislation to govern initiation schools.

The leader of the National House of Traditional Leaders, Chief Mpiyezintombi Mzimela, says traditional leaders have already drawn up a discussion document that will be submitted to the relevant government departments for discussion.

Supporting the call for legislation, the Youth League of South Africa's ruling African National Congress said in a statement: "We have observed many young men dying in the hands of those who are supposed to help them grow. We fully understand the importance of initiation schools in the lives of those that believe in them...but...There is no culture that is above human life."

The League points out that as things stand, anybody who wants to open an initiation school is free to do so. It called on the national government to register the schools with the departments of health and culture, to

continued on page 7...Deaths Abuses

him “the right feeling.” “If I earned more than my husband, I would probably hurt his ego,” the woman said.

Showing ignorance is one thing, but advertising and enhancing the stereotypical social order is disturbing. For more than a century, many women and men have been working together to achieve gender equality to push for further social, political and economic development.

The media have a responsibility to help change traditional stereotypes, advocate gender equality and promote progress. “Media have the power to set the agenda,” writes Maria Victoria Cabrera-Balleza, Programme Manager of Media, Information and Communication Services of Isis International-Manila. “People tend to think that what they see in print and what gets to be broadcast are the more significant opinions of the day. Media practitioners should take advantage of this agenda-setting power (or potential) to give space to challenge the status quo.”

In fact, the media worldwide have been criticised time and again. A number of United Nations documents, for instance, reproach media for their portrayal of women from the perspective of traditional male-chauvinist culture.

Feng Yuan, one of the founding members of the national media watch network, points out that the media, in their search for things “newsy,” involuntarily become the spokespersons of old and outdated values.

The media reports of this current survey attempt to “put a ‘status quo’ spin on their interpretation of the statistics,” said Sylvia Spring, a TV producer from Canada.

Even the researchers concede in their study that their findings indicate that society, as well as many women themselves, is not ready to challenge the privileged status of men.

In fact, the 2-to-1 income disparity, regarded as the “balance point” that the researchers refer to in their research, “is evidence of an imbalance between the roles of women and men and their contributions to society,” Cabrera-Balleza points out.

“Couples who are changing the status quo will experience some stresses on their traditional roles and expectations,” said Spring. “That’s what comes with the struggle for equity in patriarchal societies.”

It is understandable that some people do not want to rock the boat by challenging the accepted values. But the media and journalists are duty-bound to promote social change and equality.

The media were asked by the Platform of Action passed during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 to provide portrayals of women who “exist as independent individuals and with independent values, rather than dependents of men.” They should trumpet those women who “should and actually develop into diversified

social roles,” and who are becoming “locomotives, creators and important operators of the process of advancement.”

“For the journalist to not see that or comment on it I think is a shame,” Spring said.

Source: *China Daily*, 18 July 2002

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ensure they comply with health standards and prevent criminals posing as teachers from conning the public.

It also demanded that existing schools suspend their activities and be subjected to health inspection before being granted licences to operate again.

Nurses, social workers and psychologists must be granted free access in these schools to assist in preventing more deaths. “To say nurses must not be allowed in these schools because they are predominantly women and that they have never undergone the initiation process is utter hogwash, which we reject with the contempt it deserves,” the statement said.

In some provinces and communities, the local government has trained legitimate traditional leaders how to perform circumcisions. As a result, the number of deaths and botched circumcisions—which leave young men scarred for life—has dropped.

Source: Inter Press Service, <http://www.ipsnews.net>, 4 July 2002