**Yemen Prime Minister Holed Up As Separatists Seize Most Of Key Southern City – 1/31/18**

The South Yemen flag, for years a relic of the country's fragmented past, billowed brightly once more above pickup trucks and tanks patrolling the key southern city of Aden on Tuesday. Black clouds of smoke billowed across the city's skyline, too. Separatist fighters fly the old, pre-unification flag of South Yemen above their pickup as they patrol Aden on Tuesday. Yemen's internationally recognized government has accused the separatist Southern Transitional Council of orchestrating a coup as it has moved closer to controlling the government's de facto capital.

Troops loyal to the Southern Transitional Council, a separatist group seeking to reclaim southern independence, have seized most of Aden from the forces of Yemen's internationally recognized government. The intense fighting, which erupted Sunday between the two former allies, has left the presidential palace in the city surrounded — and the cabinet, including Prime Minister Ahmed Obaid Bin Daghar, holed up inside.

Though the violence between them calmed to a degree Tuesday, the International Committee of the Red Cross reports the fighting — [which included](https://twitter.com/cbatallasICRC/status/958048029084405761) "heavy guns and light artillery" — [has claimed](https://twitter.com/ICRC_ye/status/958051191216377856) at least 36 lives and left another 185 wounded.

The past few days' gunfire also claimed another, less tangible casualty: the tenuous alliance shared by the southern separatists and Hadi's government, forged in the opening days of the war against the [Houthi rebels](https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/01/23/379282727/who-are-the-houthis-of-yemen). The Shiite rebel group overran much of the country's northwest — including the capital, Sanaa, where it [seized power](https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/02/06/384292512/yemens-houthi-rebels-dissolve-parliament-seize-power) from Hadi's regime in 2015 — but it failed to make inroads in Yemen's southern regions, mainly due to the uneasy partnership shared by Hadi and the separatists. Now, that partnership appears shattered.

Smoke reaches skyward Tuesday in Aden, the Yemeni government's de facto capital. Since clashes began between government forces and southern separatists Sunday, several dozen people have died and dozens more have been injured.

And the broken pact threatens to undermine still another, the Saudi-led Arab coalition that has been conducting an airstrike campaign intended to dislodge the Shiite Houthis since 2015. Saudi Arabia backs Yemeni President Hadi, who has stayed in Riyadh since his ouster. At the same time, a key member of that coalition, the United Arab Emirates, has closely backed the STC with an eye toward maintaining crucial oil shipping routes in Yemen's south.

On Tuesday, coalition members projected a united front. "The coalition again requests all parties to speed up the cessation of all clashes immediately and the end of all armed manifestations," the group said in a statement translated by [the state-run Saudi Press Agency](http://www.spa.gov.sa/viewstory.php?lang=en&newsid=1714819), "and the coalition confirms that the it will take all necessary measures to restore security and stability in Aden."

The U.S., which has at times supported the Saudi-led airstrike campaign with logistical and targeting support, echoed the coalition sentiment Tuesday. "We call on all parties to refrain from escalation and further bloodshed. We also call for dialogue among all parties in Aden to reach a political solution," State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert [said in a statement](https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2018/01/277745.htm).

"The Yemeni people are already facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Additional divisions and violence within Yemen will only increase their suffering. A political dialogue represents the only way to achieve a more stable, unified, and prosperous Yemen."

Supporters hop on a tank operated by Southern Transitional Council separatists, as they patrol near the presidential palace in Aden on Tuesday. As the State Department noted, Yemen's civilians — caught for years between these shifting, warring factions — are facing what aid groups are calling the "world's worst humanitarian crisis." Between vast outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria, desperate food insecurity and a crumbling infrastructure incapable of handling either, the ICRC [says now](https://twitter.com/ICRC/status/958157837280034816) "80% of the population need aid to survive."

As for Hadi's government, narrowly holding onto a foothold in its de facto capital, the future appears far from clear. [Reuters reports](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-clashes/yemen-separatists-capture-aden-government-confined-to-palace-residents-idUSKBN1FJ17E) that STC officials say Prime Minister bin Daghar and his cabinet are in negotiations to flee the city — but sources within bin Daghar's deny that he has any intention of leaving.

**India’s ‘Unwanted’ Girls Number In The Millions, New Report Finds**

Indian families’ traditional preference for sons over daughters has led to the existence of millions of “unwanted” girls in the country, [a new government report](http://mofapp.nic.in:8080/economicsurvey/pdf/102-118_Chapter_07_ENGLISH_Vol_01_2017-18.pdf) estimates.

Many parents eager for boys continue to have children until the desired number of sons are born, according to a report released Monday as part of the [finance ministry’s annual economic survey](http://mofapp.nic.in:8080/economicsurvey/). A lot of daughters are born during this process, too. The report estimates that these “unwanted” girls number more than 21 million. As they grow up, they often receive [poorer nourishment and less schooling](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/29/india-has-63-million-missing-women-and-21-million-unwanted-girls-government-says/?utm_term=.52d4a1f55387) than their brothers.

Despite those “unwanted” girls, India’s male-to-female sex ratio at birth still tilts significantly in favor of males. And it hasn’t improved even as incomes rise. The skewed ratio [crosses socioeconomic classes](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/29/india-has-63-million-missing-women-and-21-million-unwanted-girls-government-says/?utm_term=.52d4a1f55387). Even families in wealthier Indian states show a preference for having sons.

“The challenge of gender is long-standing, probably going back millennia, so all stakeholders are collectively responsible for its resolution,” the report’s authors write. “India must confront the societal preference ... which appears inoculated to development.”

For India as a whole, the sex ratio at birth is about 1,108 males per 1,000 females, the report states. In two higher-income states, Punjab and Haryana, the sex ratio for those between infancy and 6 years of age is even worse: 1,200 males per 1,000 females. The natural sex ratio at birth is about 1.05 males for every female, according to the report.

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How has the male-to-female ratio been skewed in India? Tests to determine the sex of a fetus are [illegal in India](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-39176668), but families still test and then procure sex-selective abortions. The authors estimate these abortions, in conjunction with the country’s [higher mortality rates for female children](https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/30/health/india-unwanted-girls-intl/index.html), have led to a gender gap of about 63 million women, whom they classify as “missing.”

And yet the researchers also found that India had improved on several indicators of gender equality, including women’s education and women’s power to make decisions in their households.

“In some sense, once born, the lives of women are improving but society still appears to want fewer of them to be born,” the authors write.

The report suggests several possible reasons for India’s preference for sons. Male offspring perform important religious rituals for their parents. Property is often passed down within the male line, while women are traditionally expected to move in with their husbands’ families, taking their labor with them.

Sending a young woman to her new husband with a dowry has been [illegal in India for decades,](https://www.vox.com/first-person/2017/2/6/14403490/dowry-india-bride-groom-dilemma) but many families still practice this custom. This means the birth of girls represents an extra financial burden for their parents.

The authors of the report urge Indian society as a whole to reflect on this cultural preference for sons ― especially with the growing evidence that when women acquire greater personal agency and participate equally in the labor force, it can boost the economy of an entire country.

“The intrinsic values of gender equality are uncontestable,” the authors write.

**Trump Executive Order Helps Cement Guantanamo’s Status As A Forever Prison**

WASHINGTON ― President [Donald Trump](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/donald-trump) signed an executive order keeping the detention center at Guantanamo Bay open, formally ending an [unsuccessful](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/obama-guantanamo-bay_us_5881141ee4b0e3a73567bd5c) Obama administration effort to close the controversial military facility. Trump’s executive order will cement the existence of a detention facility that has fueled international disagreements in the 16 years it has been open.

The White House announced the move ahead the president’s State of the Union address on Tuesday. The announcement came as the government revealed in court filings its [intent to “demolish”](https://twitter.com/ryanjreilly/status/958473419519090688) part of the detention facility to clear the way for future renovations.

“I just signed an order directing Secretary [Jim] Mattis to re-examine our military detention policy and to keep open the detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay,” Trump said during his address to Congress.

Trump, shortly after winning the 2016 election, said he’d keep the controversial facility open and “load it up with some [bad dudes](https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/11/14/502007304/trump-has-vowed-to-fill-guantanamo-with-some-bad-dudes-but-who).” Trump has yet to send any prisoners to the detention center, but he said in November that he’d “[certainly consider](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-nyc-terrorist-attack-gitmo_us_59f9f53ae4b046017fb07430)” sending the suspect of an Oct. 31 New York City terror attack to the facility.

But his campaign promises have smacked into reality: Guantanamo is really bad at convicting alleged terrorists. The federal court system regularly convicts terror suspects, but the military commissions system is [deeply troubled](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/16/obama-guantanamo_n_2618503.html). The trial against the alleged perpetrators of the Sept. 11 attack has dragged on for years, and there’s not even a firm start date.

“Would love to send the NYC terrorist to Guantanamo,” [Trump tweeted](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/926053970535243777) in early November, “but statistically that process takes much longer than going through the Federal system.”

“The notion that Guantanamo is worthwhile would be laughable if it wasn’t so tragic,” Hina Shamsi, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s National Security Project, said in a statement. “In addition to the incalculable human suffering, it costs taxpayers more than $445 million a year to detain the 41 men now there. Congress should prevent President Trump from continuing unlawful detention and unconstitutional military commissions. And we all must pledge — not one person more in Guantanamo, not in our names.”

Trump’s move is more of a political statement than a practical change. President Barack Obama’s 2009 executive order to close the prison, which he warned was a recruiting ground for terrorist groups at the expense of taxpayers, faced strong opposition in Congress that prevented him from transferring detainees to the United States.

The Obama administration managed to transfer nearly 200 inmates from the facility. There are just 41 inmates at Guantanamo today.

Obama, in his final days in office, said that “history will cast a harsh judgement” on the United States for not closing Guantanamo, and [said](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/obama-guantanamo-bay_us_5881141ee4b0e3a73567bd5c) Republicans had “placed politics above the ongoing costs to taxpayers, our relationships with our allies, and the threat posed to U.S. national security by leaving open a facility that governments around the world condemn and which hinders rather than helps our fight against terrorism.”

Attorneys for Guantanamo detainees are now trying to use a Trump tweet stating that “there should be no further releases” from Guantanamo as a way to [challenge their clients’ ongoing detention](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/11-guantanamo-legal-challenge-trump-habeas-indefinite-detention_us_5a57b053e4b068abc338cb62).