

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 9, 2012 2:30 PM
To: H
Subject: FW: UAE -- NDI programs
Attachments: NDI GULF PROGRAMMING.docx

From: Posner, Michael H
Sent: Monday, April 09, 2012 2:25 PM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: UAE -- NDI programs

Cheryl,

Sorry for the delay in getting this to you. Following up on our call, the government of the UAE has accused NDI, whose Dubai office opened in 2008, of targeting sectarian divides and violating the sovereignty of the UAE through: 1) funding the primary Bahrain Shi'a party Wifaq, 2) training Muslim Brotherhood members from the UAE and the Gulf, and 3) training how to protest and evade security services. According to NDI, the UAE's allegations in general are "completely false" and NDI has records to prove it. The allegations go back to 2005 and are less focused on recent/ongoing activities. Les Campbell of NDI believes that UAE is more interested in their activities in the Gulf rather than the Iran-focused activities out of Dubai.

You may have already seen emails from the UAE desk (Patrick Fischer) through Jeff. Both DRL and NEA have undertaken an informal survey of USG funding provided to NDI, and have reached out to NDI to better understand their non-USG funded activities in the region.

Les Campbell reports that NDI has no programs or activities in the UAE but the Dubai location, chosen for its convenience and ease of travel, has been a coordinating office for programs in the Gulf region including:

- Training programs, in conjunction with the Saudi Ministry of Municipal Affairs, for Saudi elected and appointed municipal councilors. NDI has also organized seminars for Saudi women on leadership skills, public speaking and advocacy.
- Training programs for municipal councilors, in conjunction with local municipal authorities, in Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar.
- Partnerships with Kuwaiti civil society organizations advocating for universal suffrage and subsequent training programs for women interested in running for office in Kuwait. NDI has been invited to send international observers to the last two Kuwaiti national elections and has provided training to Kuwaiti citizen election monitors.

- Seminars and training programs for Bahraini political societies, youth groups and women's groups, from across the political spectrum, to encourage broader participation in the Bahraini political system.
- Seminars, in conjunction with the Bahrain Institute for Political Development and the Bahraini parliament, for members of parliament and the shura council.
- Training for Qatar's Central Election Commission staff.

Funding for NDI's programs in the Gulf region has been provided by the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor (DRL), USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED).

As with Egypt, our response to the situation needs to focus on the fact that the work that NDI coordinates out of Dubai is very much in line with what NDI does in other places, and was all fully transparent. For example, NDI's programs in Bahrain have provided technical assistance to political society leaders – government supported politicians – offering consultative assistance as all sides seek a positive way forward:

- to review relevant legislation;
- discuss the implications of and opportunities in the reform measures introduced by King Hamad;
- strengthen the role of youth and providing training and support for women running for public office; and,
- carry out trainings covering topics such as communication skills, electoral campaign planning, strategic planning, voter outreach, advocacy strategy, media election coverage, domestic monitoring, candidate training and awareness campaigns.

With regard to internet freedom, and in response to the third accusation:

DRL has a \$1.35m grant to NDI, signed in June 2011, in support of digital safety trainings for MENA activists and bloggers. These workshops take place in Istanbul and Beirut, with participants expected to then lead digital safety programs within their own countries (under NDI's continued guidance). **The workshops do include training on circumvention and secure communications.**

There have been no Emirati participants in trainings and no workshops held in the UAE. Gulf-wide, there were 4 Yemenis and 3 Bahrainis involved in a January training in Istanbul; there was 1 Yemeni involved in a March training in Beirut. **NDI's Dubai office is not involved in administering this program.** In fall 2011, NDI attempted to recruit someone to work on the program out of the Dubai office, but did not find anyone with the right skills and decided to drop it. In NDI's words, "Since then and beyond that, nothing related to this program has been run, managed, or even linked to the Dubai office," nor has the office referred any participants for workshops.

DRL has also provided an FY09 Internet freedom grant to NDI, signed and started in August 2010, that originally *would* have had an Iran component involving the Dubai field staff. **We switched that country pilot to Belarus,** so there has never been any Iran or MENA work under this grant, and **no involvement by the Dubai office.**

NDI also runs a NEA-USAID Iran Program, launched in September 2011. **One staff member, Slobodan Milic, is based in Dubai but no program activities take place in Dubai, nor would Iranians travel to Dubai for this program.** Their project is an online program which aims to increase awareness of the absence of personal freedoms for Iranian citizens and draw attention to the issue during the parliamentary election season. Activities include an online platform that provides a vehicle for uploading, reporting and mapping of human rights issues occurring around the parliamentary elections. Although the program includes guidance on the safe and effective use of technology, as do most of USAID-NEA's online programming, **this program does not deal with issues of circumvention or more general internet freedom/electronic communications objectives.**

For further background on USG funding to NDI in the Gulf, I have attached a more detailed paper here.

Let me know if you need more or have any questions.

Mike

SBU
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.