

# VOICES FROM THE SOUTH



THE  
**KARIBU**  
FOUNDATION

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## Stop Outsourcing Peace: Control the use of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs)

*Hired by governments and companies to perform operations previously carried out by national military forces, Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) are the modern equivalent of mercenaries: armed civilians operating for profit in conflict zones.*

*In this month's Voices from the South, Ismaeel Dawood of Karibu partner the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) calls for the need to control and reduce the use of PMSCs in his home land of Iraq, and in all conflict and post-conflict states where peace and security are becoming big business.*

**By Ismaeel Dawood**

**Policy and Advocacy Officer for the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) and Un Ponte Per (UPP)**

Concerns are growing about the dramatic, increase in use of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) in conflict and post-conflict states.

Ten years have passed since the invasion of Iraq and the war that followed, the first war in the history where private military and security contractors outnumbered regular troops. But while the occupying troops have departed, reliance on PMSCs continues.

The use of these companies appears to have become normalized in fragile states and countries facing security challenges. PMSCs have become accepted as necessary for guaranteeing

public safety, without any deep discussion on where this may ultimately lead.

Human rights organizations and affected individuals have called for monitoring the international humanitarian law and human rights violations that PMSCs and their employees commit, in order to hold them accountable and require them to make restitution to their victims. There is pressure for new international and national legislation to regulate PMSCs, including a Draft Convention by the UN Working Group on the Use of Mercenaries.

Nation states and PMSCs are exploring best practices and a voluntary code of conduct for private contractors as part of the Montreux process.

But nowhere to be seen are the vital and difficult questions being asked concern-

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**Iraqi Civil Society  
Solidarity Initiative**

The Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative (ICSSI) is dedicated to bringing together Iraqi and international civil societies through concrete actions to build together another Iraq, with peace and Human Rights for all.

*To learn more, visit  
[iraqicivilsociety.org](http://iraqicivilsociety.org)*



## “PMSCs cannot turn Iraqi communities - or communities anywhere - into places of lasting peace.”

ing the impact these companies have on the prospects for long-term security in conflict and post conflict states.

As the case of Iraq reveals, there are many negative consequences of relying PMSCs to build a lasting peace.

In Iraq during and after the 2003 US invasion, the US army relied heavily on PMSCs to control territory and maintain order by means of “security missions” that were conducted throughout the country. These security missions varied in form, yet they all entailed private civilians, mostly foreigners, heavily armed, acting in isolation from local communities, protecting “strategic places” and “important persons”.

Moreover these contractors followed “rules of engagement” that defined their missions as being solely “to protect the client!”

And PMSCs were extremely well paid. Private security always meant more weapons and more “security devises”. While some technology may enhance human security, it cannot replace the legitimate role of state authority.

It is a state’s responsibility to protect its citizens and their property on a non-discriminatory basis; hence the state holds a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Such use of force must be motivated by public interest and regulated by the rule of law. At the same time, citizens play a crucial role in building communities relations, contributing to and creating peace where they live. This vital relationship between state and citizen is totally transformed when you outsource inherent state functions to PMSCs.

In the last 10 years, however, state authority has been further eroded as international organizations, and increasingly the Iraqi government, have also chosen to outsource their security to PMSCs.

This outsourcing has had both direct and indirect negative impacts in Iraq. The direct impacts included the violation of human rights

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committed by PMSCs in Iraq; in many cases Iraqi civilians were killed, tortured, and their property was destroyed by contractors.

For those who suffered or died, and for their families, there was no effective remedy.

The well known “Al-Nisour Square” case is only one example of such atrocities. International PMSC employees opened fire on civilians in Baghdad killing seventeen innocent people; the youngest of them was only nine. The impunity with which the contractors acted, the protection from prosecution they enjoyed, and the outrage and feelings of injustice that Iraqis experienced were one of the main explanations for the spiralling increase in violence throughout Iraq.

There were also indirect negative impacts that occurred with increased reliance on PMSCs. Today dozens of Iraqi PMSCs are active throughout the country. Security has become big business, a booming new industry! These companies, led by powerful political parties and former militias, are part of an ever-expanding web of corrup-

tion and violence.

Most Iraqi members of parliament spend public money on private contractors who protect them. These substantial, government budgets for security become ways to buy support, make bribes, and control people. And if there is violence, the government spends more on private security, in effect rewarding the PMSCs for their failures while further fuelling political corruption.

As a result, the discourse today in Iraq concerning peace is totally different from what it was before 2003. Then, the state had clear and full responsibility for security, even if under the Saddam regime it fell far short of respect for human rights and freedoms. Today, the message has become security whatever the price: more weapons, huge walls of cement, more checkpoints and greater profits for the PMSCs.

Major institutions are hosted behind barricades in the “green zone”, isolated from the people. Citizens see armed personnel everywhere, uncertain exactly who they are. Trust within communities is eroded by fear and anxiety.

We must insist that true security requires rule of law and a reduction in arms. Security is every citizen’s right and should not be purchased with government funds for only a select few.


Short-term security provided in aggressive ways by private contractors undermines the authority of the state and erodes confidence in the rule of law. PMSCs cannot turn Iraqi communities – or communities anywhere – into places of lasting peace.

This is why the Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative is leading an international campaign to reduce drastically the use of PMSCs and to promote the alternatives of conflict resolution, dialogue and diplomacy.

We hope that civil society organizations throughout the world will join us in this important effort to control PMSCs.

*Ismaeel Dawood, and the ICSSI, can be reached at <http://www.iraqicivilsociety.org>*

**SIGN OUR DECLARATION!**

**CONTROL PMSC** 

“In defence of the rule of law, the responsibility of States to promote and respect international human rights and humanitarian law, and the fundamental rights and freedoms that define democracy, we call for the adoption of a legally binding international convention to oblige States to regulate the activities of private military and security companies.”

To learn more about the Control PMSC Campaign, and to sign their open declaration, visit:  
<http://www.controlpmsc.org>

