

From: "Thibault, Erica (Tunis)" (b)(6)@state.gov>
To: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Ferdinand Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>
Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
CC: Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>
Subject: RE: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis
Date: Tue, 2 Feb 2021 23:43:27 +0000

Hi Baybars and Ferdi

We have another organization that Embassy Tunis would like to recommend for the factchecking project. Last spring the Embassy received funding from GEC to combat fake news related to COVID. The implementing partner in Tunisia is Les Grandes Ecoles de Communication (ironically, also GEC), which is a small NGO that has successfully implemented two MEPI local grants. The Embassy believes that this could be the right fit because the team has already proven to be responsive and capable partner, and they would benefit from additional training. I provided additional information on the current GEC-funded project below. Please let me know if you would like us to arrange an introduction.

This project aims to support the MoH to implement a Communication of Crisis and Risks and disseminate information ensuring Community Engagement -- by creating a platform to check facts and news during the COVID-19 crisis and training social media influencers in 24 governorates.

Les Grandes Ecoles de Communication (GEC) plans to select and train 240 social influencers in the 24 governorates by starting to engage established social media influencers with large pools of followers, which will help the project gain visibility and credibility.

The project will be working on achieving two main objectives:

1. Launch a Fact Check platform to provide accurate information to media outlets, government officials, and social influencers to counter the Disinformation on the Covid-19
2. 240 youth are trained to be social influencers or descramblers promoting accurate information in their local communities to help the Ministry of Health MoH disseminate The Crisis and Risks Communication plan related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Erica Thibault

(b)(6)@state.gov

Cell (b)(6)

Office (b)(6)

I am currently teleworking

From: (b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Monday, February 1, 2021 3:49 PM

To: Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>; Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>

Cc: Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis)

(b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: RE: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Good afternoon Erica,

I defer to Baybars from Poynter and Vonda from IWPR (who manages this sub-award for GEC). From the latest IWPR monthly report I received, Poynter is preparing to roll out its initial trainings in February in select countries, although it is unclear when Tunisia activities will occur.

To note, Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network received a 2021 Nobel Peace Prize nomination. We are thrilled to support Baybars on such impactful work.

Kindly,

(b)(6)

Sent from my iPhone

On January 29, 2021 at 02:24:51 EST, Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:

Hi Baybars and (b)(6)

Happy New Year. I'm checking in to see if you have any updates on the Poynter Tunisia project. I look forward to your feedback.

Erica Thibault

(b)(6)@state.gov

(b)(6)

I am currently teleworking

From: Thibault, Erica (Tunis) <(b)(6)@state.gov>

Sent: Monday, October 19, 2020 11:27 PM

To: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>

Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis

(b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>;

Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>; (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hi Baybars

I hope that you are doing well. As Gabby noted, HAICA appears to be a great fit. Is there anything specific that you need from Embassy Tunis in order to move forward? If not, what is your current timeline and your planned next steps, knowing that COVID may require adjustments?

Best regards,

Erica Thibault
Counselor for Public Affairs
U.S. Embassy Tunis

(b)(6)@state.gov

(b)(6)

I am currently teleworking

From: Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org>

Sent: Friday, October 16, 2020 6:44 PM

To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis)

Cc: (b)(6); Vonda Wolcott; Alan Davis; (b)(6) Ferdi Ozsoy; Thibault, Erica (Tunis); Fanous, Mary K (Tunis)

Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hi Gabrielle,

Thanks for sharing those with me.

Hope you have completed your transition smoothly.

Erica and Mary,

I'd be more than happy to jump on a call and discuss about this to know more about their fitness to our program.

Would that be possible to do it next week?

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Best-

Baybars

On Wed, Oct 7, 2020 at 1:26 PM Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:

Hi Baybars,

I am transitioning out of post, so I will leave my colleagues Erica and Mary to respond to this officially. I think the HAICA proposal looks promising and that it is worth serious consideration. (My only issue with the proposal is that they have the Covid timeline in Tunisia wrong.) It appears to dovetail with another project supported by the Embassy / GEC on Counter disinformation and propaganda on the Covid-19

pandemic in Tunisia. Our grantee is the Grande Ecole de la Communication (GEC) which is working with the Tunisian Ministry of Health.

Best regards,

Gabrielle

From: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2020 3:21 PM
To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>; Thibault, Erica (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hello again,

Hope this finds you in a good health.

Just wanted to kindly remind my inquiry about your thoughts on HAICA from Tunisia as a potential local partner for our training engagement in the country.

I'm sharing two documents that I've received about the organization (via UNDP) and kindly asking your feedback on their status and eligibility to be a good partner for this project.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best-

Baybars

On Fri, Sep 25, 2020 at 10:35 AM Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org> wrote:
Hello everyone,

Just wanted to get a quick feedback on haica.tn and their collaborative initiative <https://tunisiachecknews.com/>

UNDP and Council of Europe seem to be supporting them

I'm aware that HAICA is a constitutional body set up after the revolution and is not a private organization, however, wondering if they are more independent than similar organizations around the world.

Thanks a lot!

Baybars

On Mon, Sep 21, 2020 at 12:42 PM Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org> wrote:

Hi Gabby,

Hope you had a great weekend!

Just wanted to kindly check in since I have not received an invite yet.

I believe we are still confirmed for tomorrow 11am EDT.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best-

Baybars

On Fri, Sep 18, 2020 at 9:25 AM Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov wrote:
Super!

From: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>

Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 2:22 PM

To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>

Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>;

Thibault, Erica (LEO) (b)(6)@state.gov>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>

Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hi Gabby,

Sure thing! Please kindly feel free to send an invite with your preferred method of communication.

Looking forward to it!

Best-

Baybars

On Fri, Sep 18, 2020 at 9:16 AM Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov wrote:
Baybars,

That's great. Would it be possible to push the moving back to 11 am Tampa / 4 pm Tunis? That better suits a key person on our side. We can set the meeting up via Teams or Zoom. Let us know your preference and we'll send a link by Monday am our time.

Thanks again,

Gabby

From: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>

Sent: Friday, September 18, 2020 2:07 PM

To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>; Thibault, Erica (LEO) (b)(6)@state.gov>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Yes, that works for me.

Looking forward to it!

Baybas

On Fri, Sep 18, 2020 at 5:53 AM Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:
Hi Baybars,

Tuesday morning (Eastern time) works well for us too. Are you available around 10 am Tampa / 3 PM Tunis?

Thanks,

Gabby

From: Baybars Orsek (b)(6)@poynter.org>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2020 5:35 PM
To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Cc: (b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis (b)(6)@iwpr.net>; (b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy (b)(6)@poynter.org>; Thibault, Erica (LEO) (b)(6)@state.gov>; Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>
Subject: Re: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Hi Gabby,

Great to hear from you!

Next week would be very ideal for me!

I'm based in Florida, Eastern Time Zone

My Tuesday morning (EDT) seems flexible. I hope that would work for you given the time difference and your schedule.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best-

Baybars

On Thu, Sep 17, 2020 at 12:31 PM Price, Gabrielle M (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov> wrote:

Dear Baybars,

It is a pleasure to meet you. Perhaps we can meet next week over Zoom. Please let me know where you are based so that we can work out a date and time. I would like to include our incoming PAO, Erica Thibault, and our new press officer, Mary Fanous in the call.

Best regards,

Gabby

From: Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org>
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2020 3:52 PM
To: Price, Gabrielle M (Tunisia) <(b)(6)@state.gov>; <(b)(6)@state.gov>; Vonda Wolcott <(b)(6)@iwpr.net>; Alan Davis <(b)(6)@iwpr.net>; <(b)(6)@state.gov>; Ferdi Ozsoy <(b)(6)@poynter.org>
Subject: Fwd: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis

Dear Gabby Price and all,

Hope this email finds you well.

Thanks a lot for this introduction, Nick! Happy to be connected.

Gaby, we are lacking a trainee organization in Tunisia to kick off the trainings. Dogruluk Payi from Turkey will be our regional partner in those trainings, therefore will be providing guidance and support throughout the implementation of the engagement.

We like to hear your thoughts and guidance on identifying a Tunisian newsroom and/or non-profit organization to engage with and train them to be eligible for the International Fact-Checking Network's Code of Principles.

I'll be more than happy to connect with the colleagues at the embassy to seek help in our search for a partner in the country.

Available for a call at your convenience.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best-

Baybars

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <(b)(6)@state.gov>
Date: Wed, Sep 16, 2020 at 5:35 PM
Subject: Update on Poynter and Tunisia -- Connecting with U.S. Embassy Tunis
To: <(b)(6)@poynter.org> <(b)(6)@poynter.org>

Cc: Vonda Wolcott <(b)(6)@iwpr.net>, Alan Davis <(b)(6)@iwpr.net>, (b)(6)@state.gov

Baybars,

I hope you are doing well! I'm touching base with you regarding the Tunisia portion of your IFCN program. I understand from your recent amendment that Poynter still seeks a local Tunisian organization with whom to partner.

May you provide our public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy in Tunis with an update on where things stand regarding Tunisia **by open of business tomorrow (Thursday)**? Her name is Gabby Price and her email is (b)(6)@state.gov. She is already aware that you and IWPR will reach out with an update and to begin coordinating on potential local implementers. The embassy likely can assist you in your search.

Please cc myself, Vonda, Alan, and (b)(6)@state.gov from our Near Eastern Affairs Bureau on your email. I ask with urgency because Gabby is leaving her position within the next several days. She would like to brief her successor on all pending projects to avoid any disconnect or confusion that the transition may cause. It would also be useful for you to mention that you've identified Doğruluk Payı -- the Turkish fact-checking organization -- as the one who will be connected with the Tunisian organization TBD.

Thank you again, and I do hope you and your family are remaining healthy these days.

Kindly,

(b)(6)

Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
(b)(6)@state.gov

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network
[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)



--

[Baybars Örsek](#)

Director | International Fact-Checking Network

[@baybarsorsek](#) / [@factchecknet](#)

Sender: "Thibault, Erica (Tunis)" (b)(6)@state.gov>
Baybars Orsek <(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Ferdî Ozsoy <(b)(6)@poynter.org>;
Alan Davis <(b)(6)@iwpr.net>;

Recipient: (b)(6)@state.gov>;
Fanous, Mary K (Tunis) (b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
(b)(6)@state.gov>;
Vonda Wolcott (b)(6)@iwpr.net>

AMERICA FIRST LEGAL FOUNDATION