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AL-SAHAF
America's Monthly Middle Eastern Newspaper

PALESTINIAN CHAIR UNITED NATIONS

See Cover Story Pages: 4-5



PALESTINE

**Wedding Bells
and a Baby for
Wael Kfoury!!**

See Pages 10-11



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Palestinian Bid for Statehood at the U.N.

At this year's annual U.N. General Assembly - it was a week of speeches and exhausting meetings and deliberations over what to do about the Palestinian bid for statehood. In a way, it was the speeches that told the story. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas delivered what must have been, literally, the speech of his life. It was a powerful, personal, and passionate retelling of the Palestinian narrative: from dispossession, dispersal and occupation to standing on the threshold of statehood. It was broadcast live, on split screen, showing the U.N. chamber, on one side, and the crowd in Ramallah's Arafat Square, on the other. Abbas' remarks were repeatedly interrupted by applause. It was a speech worthy of the moment, and when he held up the copy of his letter to the Secretary General petitioning Palestinian statehood, both audiences erupted in cheers.

Abbas' declaration puts the Palestinians on a collision course with the U.S. and Israel, which have both insisted that the only way to

establish a Palestinian state is through direct negotiations. The Palestinians have countered that their dramatic policy shift is required because several decades of on-again, off-again peace talks have led to nowhere, but a circle of violence.

In his speech, Abbas said his government's demand that Palestine be recognized by the UN as its 194th member state, was not designed to isolate Israel. "Nobody can annul Israel's legitimacy," he said. "It's already a recognized country." But "we need to put an end to the occupation and take away the legal status of the occupation," Abbas said, referring to territory that Israel has held in East Jerusalem and the West Bank since the 1967 war.

As the date of the Palestinian demand for UN recognition approaches, the U.S. and the European Union both have been pressuring the Palestinians and the Israelis to somehow reach a compromise to at least delay the

showdown for several months. The Palestinian bid for statehood comes at a complicated time for Israel diplomatically. Amid great uncertainty about where the Arab Spring might eventually lead, the Jewish state's key relations with Turkey and Egypt have become seriously frayed at a time when the U.S., beset by serious financial problems and an uncertain war in Afghanistan, appears to be losing influence across the region.

Well readers; At the end of the day, the success of regional reform depends on a renewed commitment to peace and progress, supported by a courageous global community. And what better place to bring this matter to the global stage, than the United Nations. Perhaps now, in a moment shaped by Democratic hope and "Arab Springs" in the Middle East, the time has come for both the Palestinians and the Israelis to finally make peace and give each peoples the dignity of having their own country - with the United Nations leading the way.



Fatima Salaheddine with Former Palestinian Ambassador to Washington DC; H.E. Dr. Affif & Christ'1 Safieh



Lebanese-American



We are pleased to announce, that the Al-Sahafa Newspaper is an official U.S. correspondent to: The Lebanese Broadcasting Channel, Future TV, MTV Lebanon, and The Al-Jazeera Network. Please stay tuned for broadcast features from America, to be seen all over the globe, through these very important Middle East Media Satellite channels.

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- Distribution takes two days subsequent to printing in order to reach the familiar racks/businesses and postal mailings, due to Al-Sahafa's National distribution.
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Mission Statement

The Al-Sahafa Newspaper is a monthly publication produced about the Middle East. Al-Sahafa (which means the MEDIA or the PRESS in Arabic) is the first of its kind, providing readers with a scope of Events, Cultural Highlights, Featured Editorials, Success Stories, as well as an Arab perspective on News, Religion and Politics. Published in the English language, Al-Sahafa contains a broad range of topics, (something for everyone to enjoy), and proudly reaches a large audience of readers throughout the United States, and Internationally.

There is no doubt, that the media in general, plays a huge role in image and perception. And depending upon the type of media outlet - the underlying message can undoubtedly give and eventually reinforce a negative perception about Arabs, Arab Americans and the Middle East to a vast audience. The MISSION and GOAL of the Al-Sahafa Newspaper is to initiate and open dialogue to help bridge the gap of tolerance and acceptance each month, by providing news - with the "Arab" viewpoint. Reminding readers, that "there is always the other side to every story told".

"I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in your church. For you and I are sons of one religion and it is in the spirit."

-Khalil Gibran (Arab American poet)

Palestinian Statehood Bid at the United Nations

by William M. Reilly

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 23 - Palestine's dramatic formal application for United Nations' full recognition as a member state has already resulted in Security Council consultations and the diplomatic Quartet setting out a framework for negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas triggered the fast-moving series of events when he handed the one-page formal request to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon minutes before noon local time and headed to speak before the 193-member General Assembly last month.

He received a standing ovation before saying a word and his 40-minute speech was interrupted five times by applause, including another standing ovation. Calling settlement activities the core of the problem over Israel's occupation, Abbas said these policies violate international law.

He said Israel has been trying to "redraw the borders on our land according to what it wants and to impose a fait accompli on the ground that changes the realities, and that is undermining the realistic potential for the existence of the state of Palestine."

The secretary-general reviewed the application and within hours a spokesman said the request had been sent to the UN Security Council, where it would ultimately face a vote. UN procedure calls for Ban to review and forward such a petition if deemed proper.

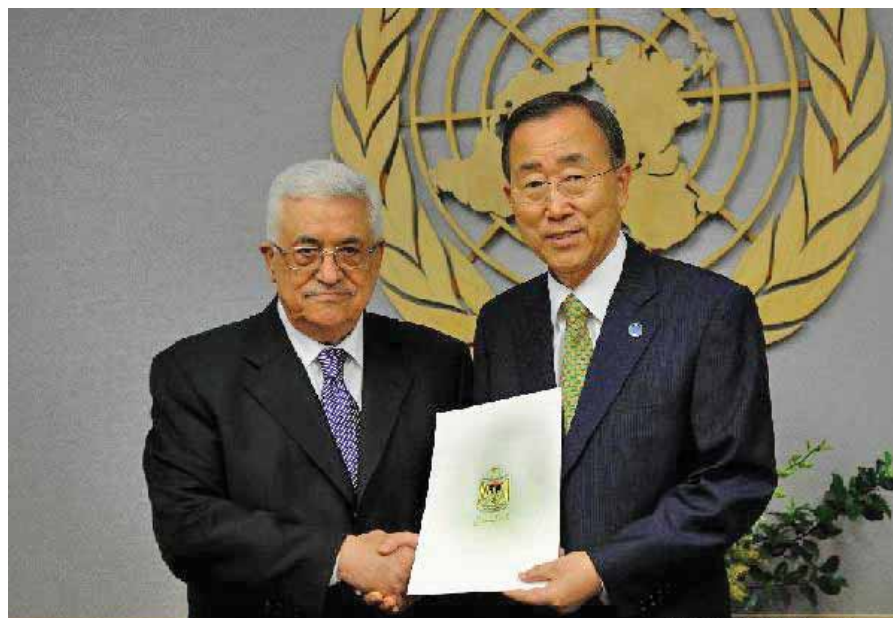
Several countries in the council have pledged their support for Palestinian statehood bid, but Israel's close ally, the United States, has threatened to use its veto.

Shortly after it was sent, Ambassador Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's permanent representative at the United Nations and this month's president of the Security Council, consulted with the other 14 members of the panel and agreed to schedule initial consultations.

It is likely to go to a committee made up of all member states of the council for consideration before returning it within weeks to the full council for a vote.

Procedure in the world organization calls for the panel of 15 to "recommend" the application to the General Assembly before the 193-member body.

If it fails to garner nine votes in the council, without a negative vote by one of the five veto-wielding permanent



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (L) hands the application letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in a bid to seek the UN recognition of Palestine as a full member state, at the UN headquarters in New York, the United States, on Sept. 23, 2011.

members of Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, it dies.

However, the door would still be open for the Palestinians to take their bid directly to the General Assembly in an attempt to gain a lesser status of non-member observer state. It already has widespread support and the measure would likely be approved by a simple two-thirds majority.

The notion of the United Nations granting statehood is incorrect since it does not. An entity is regarded as a state when it meets conditions of the 1933 Montevideo convention.

Those protocols spell out a state should have a defined territory, a permanent population in it, a government representing it and the ability to enter into relations with other states.

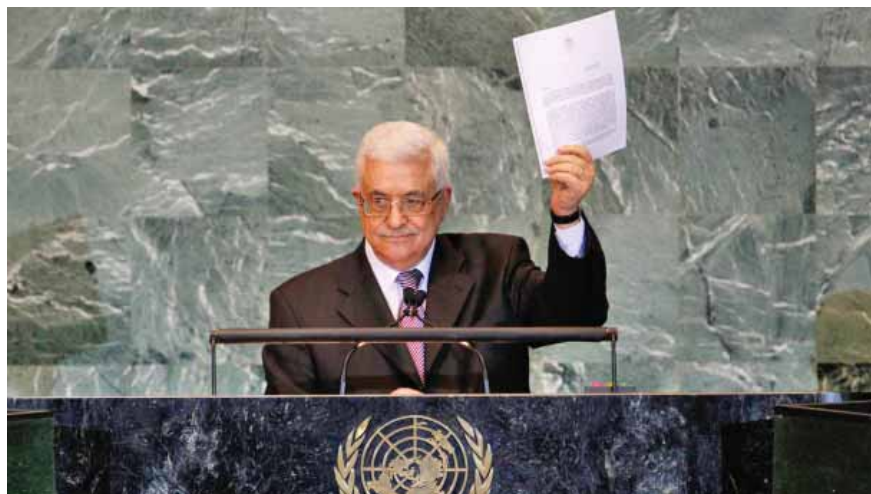
Abbas concluded his speech by saying that Palestinian statehood would not preclude or contradict the peace talks with Israel that have currently been suspended due to Israel's decision not to renew a moratorium on settlements in the West Bank.

He was followed in the General Assembly just over an hour later by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who extended his country's hand to the peoples of the region in peace, respect and admiration for "those trying to build a democratic future; to the other peoples of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, with whom we want to forge a new beginning; and to the people of Lebanon, Syria and Iran, with awe at the courage of those fighting brutal repression." Most especially, he said, "I extend my hand to the Palestinian people, with whom we seek a just and lasting peace," he said, stressing that Israel's hope for peace had never waned.

Later, he challenged Palestine to start negotiations "here today, in the United Nations."

The challenge was not met.

On the sidelines, the diplomatic Quartet of the European Union, Russia, United Nations and the United States greeted the statehood bid with a timetable for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.



Cover Story

"That Quartet statement calls upon the parties to return to negotiations straight away," said Quartet representative Tony Blair, explaining beyond diplomatic jargon that it lays out "a very clear timetable for those talks" for a preparatory meeting within a month.

"Within three months both sides have got to present comprehensive proposals on borders and security -- the two first issues to be discussed," he said. "Within six months there's to be substantial progress. Then there's to be a framework agreement not later than the end of next year."

The former British prime minister also said the statement requires "a clear set of steps the Quartet will take in order to support the parties."

"I very much hope, and the secretary-general just said this a little earlier, the parties will respond positively and agree to have the preparatory meeting and get this thing underway," He added.

UPDATE: U.N. may delay vote on Palestinian statehood application

The move would let Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas keep his promise of seeking U.N. membership but allow the U.S. to avoid casting a veto in the Security Council.

By Paul Richter, Los Angeles Times
Reporting from the United Nations — Diplomats raced to nail down a plan to deflect the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations, crafting a face-saving formula that could lessen the immediate prospect of a Security Council veto, which the Obama administration desperately sought to avoid.

Under the plan, the council decision on the application for recognition, which Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas plans to make, would be put off indefinitely. That would buy time for the U.S. to try to restart negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, and would keep \$600 million a year in American aid and other international assistance flowing to the Palestinians. Congress had threatened to cut the U.S. aid.

Diplomats said Abbas, who is scheduled to meet Wednesday with President Obama, had signed off on the plan.

The scenario, which Western officials have been trying to engineer behind the scenes for weeks, "is now likely," a senior European diplomat said.

Hanan Ashrawi, a Palestinian legislator and ally of Abbas who is in New York for the U.N. General Assembly session, said Palestinian officials are willing "to accept some delay, of the kind you would have under normal United Nations procedures."

But she said that if the United States or other countries delay the process to undermine the Palestinians' bid for enhanced international standing, "we have recourse to other action," such as approaching the General Assembly rather than the Security Council.

The General Assembly is regarded as being more pro-Palestinian.

Palestinian officials recently had expressed concern that the U.S. was lobbying hard against its measure, pressuring Security Council members to vote against it or at least abstain. The focus has centered on nations such as Gabon, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Portugal. Palestinians had predicted that they would win support from at least nine of the 15 Security Council members, the minimum needed for approval absent a veto by one of the five permanent members. But they acknowledged that they were not 100% confident.

Abbas this year decided to approach

the United Nations because of his frustration that nearly two decades of U.S.-led negotiations had not led to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Israel has feared that the Palestinians would use enhanced status at the U.N. to take legal redress against it in the International Criminal Court and other institutions.

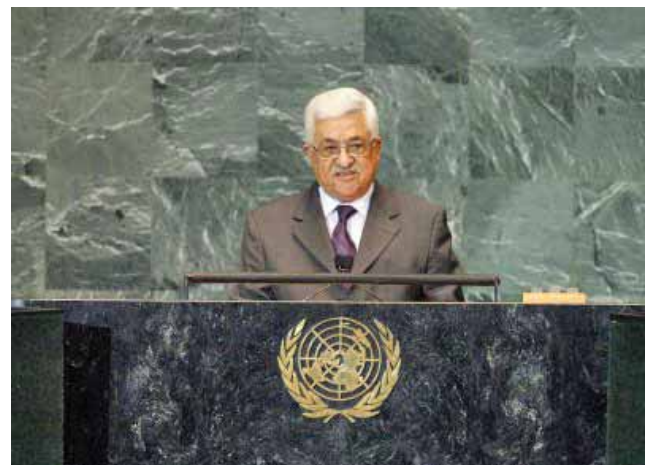
A move to slow the deliberations will ease the current crisis atmosphere, avoiding a confrontation with the United States while allowing Abbas to say that he had fulfilled his promise to formally seek U.N. membership. Abbas' move was motivated in part, Palestinian officials say, by his desire to improve his countrymen's condition as Arabs throughout the region are rising up against oppressive governments.

Ashrawi, who is also a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization executive committee, said she believed that the idea of a delay originated with the United States or other Western powers. But other Palestinians said they believed that Abbas supported the idea because his other options were looking bleak.

The Security Council has sometimes moved immediately on membership requests, as it did this year on the application of South Sudan. But in other cases, it organizes committees to deliberate on the matter.

That might have been likely here in any case, because of indications that the council members are deeply divided on the issue. Countries such as Brazil, South Africa and India appear to support membership, but the U.S., Britain, France and several developing countries seem inclined to oppose it, diplomats said.

Catherine Ashton, the European Union's foreign policy chief, and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair for



several weeks have been pushing behind the scenes for a delay in council actions.

Alain Juppe, the French foreign minister, hinted in an interview Tuesday with Europe 1 radio that a delay might be coming. The Security Council has a procedure for "dealing with such requests, and it can take a few days or weeks or more," he said.

U.S. officials have rebuffed Abbas' demands for new commitments on the key issues in negotiations. But they have also wanted to avoid doing damage to his administration, fearing that his decline would only strengthen extremists in the Palestinian territories.

**Times staff writers Tina Susman and Christi Parsons in New York and Edmund Sanders in Jerusalem contributed to this report.*

Hanan Ashrawi on Palestinian Bid to the United Nations By Sam Hussein (The Washington Stakeout)

Big story in mid September was the Palestinian U.N. bid. Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi was on ABC's "This Week" and Christiane Amanpour of questioning revolved around when the Palestinian delegation would resume talks with the Israelis that have gone on for decades.

Cover Story, cont'd on page 18

Media & The Middle East

Media Reforms in the Middle East

Broadband TV News announced that Deutsche Welle has launched an Arabic channel, DW-TV Arabia. The television channel will broadcast news and cultural programming across the Arab world, from Morocco to Oman.

The channel's programs will include the popular DW news program Journal, along with programming in multiple languages with subtitles including Arabic, German, and English. The network has been broadcasting in Arabic since 2002, beginning with a two-hour block that has grown over the years. DW-TV Arabia will air via Nilesat and Arabsat/Badr 4 in the region and also in Europe.

Meanwhile, the Gulf Times reports that broadcast network Al-Jazeera has planned large arts and cultural festivities for its 15th anniversary. The festivities include an international forum designed to analyze Al-Jazeera's Arab Spring coverage and its affect on events, including theatrical and musical events, and an art fair.

The festival's main event is a poetry contest held in conjunction with Qatar's Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage. The contest – which poetry event project manager Mohamed al-Marri emphasizes is more of a celebration of freedom than a competition – accepts entries from any poet under the age of 40, in either standard Arabic or a colloquial dialect. Winners will read their works aloud in one of three hour-long episodes devoted to the contest.

“Poetry is considered the most preferred medium to express feelings and aspirations. Hence the committee saw that it is most suitable for the current circumstances to give voice for the young people who have initiated the move for freedom,” said Al-Jazeera's executive officer manager and festival organizer, Mounir Daymi.

RapidTVNews.com reports that state-run Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) is expanding, and this month announced plans to establish a Qatar-based media city. This would join existing Middle East media cities in Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates (including



Prince Alwaleed during the press conference to announce the launch of Al Arab News Channel.

Dubai Media City and twofour54 in Abu Dhabi).

Mubarak Jaham al-Kurawi, QMC's executive president, said that QMC plans to launch more Qatar Radio stations and Qatar Television channels, along with establishing a journalism academy to train younger Qataris in broadcast media.

Media Reform, cont'd on page 19

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A photograph of Dr. Reza Aslan, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark suit and a green tie. He is sitting on a set of wooden steps, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression.

Education In Bahrain: A Non-Stop Reform Process

Bahrain has the oldest public education system in the Arabian Peninsula. The system was established in 1919 when the government assumed responsibility for operating two preexisting primary schools for boys. Subsequently, separate facilities for girls and various secondary programs were established.

Since the 1970s, education has been one of the largest current government expenditures. Literacy levels among Bahrainis born since independence in 1971 were high because an estimated 70 percent of primary and secondary school-age children attended school.

Today every child has the opportunity and is literate.

Education in the public system, which included six-year primary schools, three-year intermediate schools, and three-year secular secondary schools. The Ministry of education in Bahrain provides free education for all Bahraini and non-Bahraini students in public schools.

Students receive supplies, uniforms, meals, and transportation to and from school at no charge.



A Graduation Ceremony at the University of Bahrain

In addition to the public education system, Bahrain has a wide variety of private schools following different national curricula, available to both Bahraini and expatriate children, for a complete listing of the schools in Bahrain please use this government website which lists all registered private schools in Bahrain. <http://www.education.gov.bh/english/private/index.asp> [\[ertysite.com/schools.html\]\(http://ertysite.com/schools.html\)](http://thebahrainprop-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Bahrain also is home to St Christopher's School, which the Guardian has named as one of the eight best international schools in the world, the only school in the Middle East to make the list.

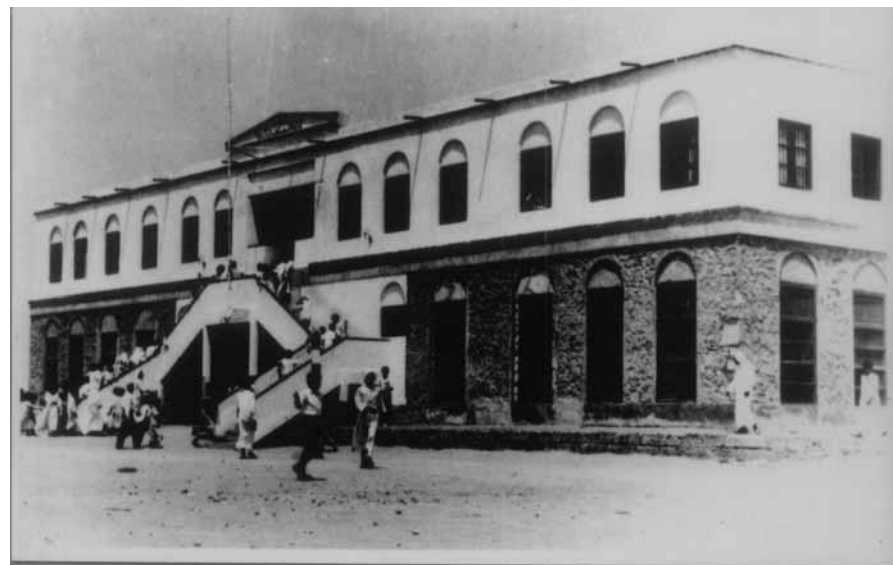
The Ministry of Education also caters for children with special needs and supports their education.

The Special Education Group at the Directorate of Primary Education is responsible for identifying the handicapped students and the supervision of students with special needs in public schools as well as special institutions abroad.

Some government schools have remedial classes for slow learners and low achievers according to the school's needs for these classes. The Ministry also adopts in a group of schools the project of integrating students with special needs into ordinary classes together with their normal peers with the aim of avoiding their separation from the environmental life, i.e., the ordinary schools and classes.

The Special Education Group takes also the responsibility of discovering other cases such as mentally retardation, deaf, speech defect, and blind in government schools and transferring them to the specialized institutions and centers supported by the Ministry.

In addition to the public education for children with special needs there are also private schools which are affordable and subsidized by the Ministry of education like Alia for early intervention. Alia is a centre set up in November 2004 by the Bahrain Society for Children with Behavior and Communication Disorders. An American education consultant group, Applied Behavior Consultants (ABC), was employed to help set up the school and train staff, in line with an approach called Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). The consultants revisit Alia every four months to assess the progress they are making and



Al-Hedaia Al-Khalifiya School: First Public School Established in the Arabian Gulf (1919)

to deliver more advanced training. In November 2005, Alia was awarded ABC accreditation in ABA approaches and they are now certified to train parents, teachers and other professionals in educating children with behavior and communication difficulties. <http://www.ali-aschool.com/ourprogram/specialneeds.html>

Higher education takes the lead in providing cutting-edge skills necessary to thrive in an increasing global competitive environment. There are a vast number of specialist colleges offering courses in subjects such as finance, medicine, and IT.

The University of Bahrain plays host to regular business symposia. For example, in December 2008 the University discussed the role and future of Islamic banking. The event is considered to be one of the most prominent and largest student activities in the Kingdom.

The University of Bahrain also provides Cost and Financial aid for those who cannot afford the expenses. www.uob.edu.bh/english/

The Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (<http://www.bibf.com.bh/content/index.htm>) is host to the Centre for Islamic Finance. In January 2009,

the centre for Islamic Finance received the CPI Financial Islamic Business and Finance 'World's Best Islamic Training Institution Award' for 2008. (DePaul University, New York Institute of Technology, RCSI-Medical University of Bahrain, Arab Open University, Royal University for Women, Arabian Gulf University)

A new Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAA) was launched in February 2009. The QAA reviews and assesses schools, universities and training institutes, as well as conducts national exams. The body raised Educational standards within Bahrain to international levels. The QAA regulates four monitoring units: Schools Review Unit, Vocational Review Unit, Higher Education Review Unit, National Examinations Unit. <http://en.qaa.bh/>

Tamkeen, Bahrain's independent authority which formulates strategic and operational plans to enhance the overall prosperity of Bahrain by investing in Bahraini education, employability and job creation and has made a \$100 million investment to provide more than 18,000 Bahraini nationals with sector-specific skills training via a four year plan. <http://www.lf.bh/en/>



Food For Thought



Chef's Story Presents

“Jihan's Molokheeye”

Have you ever wondered the story behind a unique dish? Who made it? What are the ingredients? Or how old is the recipe? The passing of a recipe from generation to generation has been a common thread among families for centuries. It's even more important when the recipe helps Arab-Americans stay close to their culture.

Each month Al-Sahafa will be visiting the kitchen of family cooks to get the story behind the dish and its journey in becoming a family tradition. The Cook's will answer questions and provide the story behind their dish. Then for an added treat, we'll provide step-by-step cooking instructions, straight from the chef themselves, in our new CHEF'S STORY series, as part of our FOOD FOR THOUGHT section. So go ahead read, cook and enjoy!



For this month's feature we would like to clarify to all our Lebanese and Syrian and English readers that the dish: Jihan's Molokheeye' can be made in many ways but typically contains a green leafy soup. It also is known as molokhia or mulukhiya Mallow Leaf, Mallow, Jute Mallow or Nalta. It varies from village to families throughout the Middle East, and is sculpted to the person's own taste buds.

By Nijma Awadallah

This month's Chef Story is on an old favorite of many, some may even call it the Arab “Mac N' Cheese” and the cook in this story has been making it her own for over 20 years!

Jihan Musa is from Silawad, Palestine. She was the eldest in her family, so she was the one responsible of taking care of her younger siblings. To this day whenever she cooks, she imagines her mom standing next to her in the kitchen, teaching her step by step.

“I just close my eyes and remember how my mom showed me how to make it. It helped when she wasn't around.” says Jihan.

Jihan is introducing us to one of her family's favorite, “Molokheeye”- a meal fit for a king, well sort of. Molokheeye' was eaten by the ancient Egyptians, where the name, “Molokheyyah” originates. In the Ancient Egyptian language, the word: Molokheeye' means “for kings and nobles” because it was believed that only the most prestigious were allowed to eat it.

According to Jihan, some even say this dish was named after a king, “Molokheeye' literally means, “Food of the King,” it was named after a King who was obsessed with being served this dish every day.”

Today, obviously Egypt doesn't have a King, and fortunately for us commoners, Molokheeye' is now widely eaten by anyone who can make it to the local store, or come across those delectable leaves!

Molokheeye' is a dark leafy green plant that looks similar to spinach, but tastes very different from what you may be used to. “Many countries consider it a National dish” says Jihan as she gathers the items for the dish, “and it's common to serve it for a family dinner night, it's

very similar to the American idea of how Macaroni and Cheese- is a comfort food. “

Jihan starts to chop up the fresh Molokheeye' leaves, “In many Arab countries, the fresh leaves are picked and then minced using a manual grinder, (usually with two wooden handles and an arched blade, similar to the Italian mezzaluna)” Of course, now a days we have an electric grinder or people could easily chop with a regular knife- it just takes a little longer.

Soon the aroma of the freshly cut Molokheeye' filled the house, and no words could describe my anticipation till I was able to have a bowl of my own!

“This dish is enjoyed either with rice or toasted khibiz (Arabic word for pita bread), or you could have it by itself.. According to Jihan, it's what accompanies the dish that makes it best. “You could have it boiled or with roasted chicken, rice, diced red onion, chilies, sumac, the additions are endless! That's the good part!”

There are a variety of ways that Molokheeye' is made throughout the

Arab and Middle Eastern world. For example, Tunisian Molokheeye' is a very time-consuming dish. The leaves are first dried and made into a powder, then mixed into tomato paste and olive oil to make a sauce and then cooked for several hours. What surprised me the most though was how Molokheeye' is prepared in the sub-Saharan African countries – In Kenya, the leaves are first boiled in water, then stewed with tomatoes, onions, and spices in oil. In Sierra Lyone, the leaves are mixed with palm oil and made into a mixture called Pavala sauce. Molokheeye' is defiantly a versatile vegetable... all this is such interesting stuff!

If nutritional benefit has any impact on your love for food, you'll be happy to hear that Molokheeye' has plenty to offer. According to Jihan, “The plant has lots of antioxidants. Also, I've heard people say that cooked Molokheeye' smooths the blood flow and helps stop the forming of clots and allows the digestion to move smoothly.” It's also important to mention, Molokheeye' leaves are also rich in iron, potassium and Vitamin C.

So after simmering the mixture and my stomach lacking its patience, it is finally time to eat. I pour myself a bowl, but before I get to take my first bite Jihan stops me. “ Wait! You must add lemon over it before you eat.” Now it's finally ready to eat! - are YOU ready to eat like a King!?

Molokheeye' Ingredients





International Institute Hosts Citizen Open House

The International Institute of Akron will hold a Citizenship Open House on Saturday, November 19th from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. at 207 E. Tallmadge Ave. in Akron.

The event will provide immigrants with information about becoming U.S. citizens. Ms. Kim Adams, Cleveland Field Office Director for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will be on hand to answer questions about the naturalization process. A brief flash presentation created by USCIS, *Becoming a U.S. Citizen*, will be shown.

Legal advisors will answer individual citizenship questions on a confidential basis. There is no cost to attend. Call 330-376-5106, Ext. 15 or visit the Institute's website at www.iiakron.org.

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216/361-9240

www.thehousingcenter.org

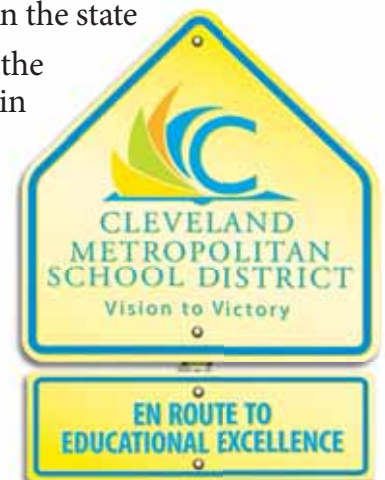


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Idol Is Heading To Arabia!



In the search for next big star and of course an authentic singing aficionado, MBC 1 has announced the launch of ARAB IDOL. The show is a re-make of the internationally acclaimed show which has already had huge success in over 44 countries around the world. The 10 year-old talent-spotting show is a fantastic platform for budding musicians to show the world their talent and ARAB IDOL is set to open the door of opportunity to young Arab people with exceptional voices. Contestants who will be chosen from 44 Arab countries will get the chance

The 'Idol' franchise, now on its 11th season in the US, was launched in the UK in 2001. The show made a household name of British record producer Simon Cowell, and the format been sold to broadcasters in 43 countries worldwide; from Armenia to Kazakhstan. ARAB IDOL will follow the format seen in other regional versions, with amateur singers aged between 15 to 28-years-old auditioning in front of up to four judges in pre-recorded episodes. Singers will then be voted off one by one in weekly live finals until a single winner is left. Broadcaster MBC is understood to have signed a three-year deal with UK-based producers Freemantle Media Enterprises, owners of the Idol franchise, MBC, which also broadcasts the audition talent show Arabs Got Talent, claims up to 45 million daily viewers.



to compete for a record deal with the production company Platinum Records.

Renowned producer and composer Hassan El Shafei will join famous Arab singers Ragheb Alama and Ahlam to judge promising new acts from across the region.

The television show ARAB IDOL has already started with casting sessions in Dubai, Kuwait City, Beirut, Cairo, Damascus and Casablanca. As the weeks and competition continue through to the finale of the show, the ultimate winner will be chosen solely through the viewers' votes in the final round.

ARAB IDOL will launch in December 2011 on the MBC channel – stay tuned for Al-Sahafa's next issues, for further details!



Abdou Grini nominated for MTV Award?!

Moroccan artist Abdou Grini has been nominated for an MTV EMA 2011 Award, which will be held in November. He will compete with many singers from the Middle East and India alongside Artists; Black Coffee from South Africa, Cabo Snoop from Angola, Fali Labo from Congo and so on. Grini has made a big effort in the late few years to go International – Let's support our Moroccan Artist – hope he wins!



Elissa on the Boat... and then on to Australia!

Starting October 7th, Lebanese Artist Elissa will be participating in the upcoming "Cruise of the Stars" to the Bahamas organized by Producer Youssef Harb. Elissa will then be singing in a series of concerts: Detroit on October 14th, the next day in Washington DC, then New Jersey on October 21st. She will then travel to Las Vegas to meet Lebanese Superstar Singer; Assi Hellani for a huge Vegas concert on the 23rd of October – and finally on to Australia for a series of booked Concerts.



Assala and " Ah Al Kursi Law Yehki "

Anyone who knows, Syrian singer; Assala, - knows how much she is clear and declares her point of views. She recently wrote and recorded a new patriotic song for Syria entitled; "Ah Al Kursi Law Yehki" (If Only This Seat/Chair Could Talk). While many rumors say that it is dedicated to Syrian citizens – Assala denies that it is talking about the current Syrian internal Political situation and explained her point of view in a press conference.

Singer; May Slim delivers in the US!

May Slim travelled to the US with her husband in the middle of September, to deliver her first baby girl, to ensure American citizenship/nationality for the baby. As this is a habit of many singers, businessmen, politicians from the Middle East. On the other hand, May introduced her new single entitled "Fakra" to her fans, while she takes a maternity break and gets back to the preparations for her upcoming Khaliji album.



Wassouf will be shooting "Zekrayat" !

Sultan Al Tarab; George Wassouf denies as well as his child Wassouf Junior, that he was recently arrested from going on a drinking binge. On the other hand, he will be shooting a new video clip for his song "Zekrayat" taking place in his Syrian family village of Kafroun.



Rida Launches "Aysheen"

Lebanese Artist Rida will be launching his upcoming album entitled "Aysheen" (We're Living) produced by Arabica Music, in which he cooperated with many composers, poets and music arrangers. Rida has postponed the launch of his album many times due to the political situations / Arab uprisings currently going on in the Middle East. Good news is that the Arabica Channel will soon air his video clip for "Aysheen".



Souad Hosni - Arab World's "Movie Screen Cinderella"

Egyptian actress Alia Kebali stars in a new film entitled "Al Tho'ban Al Aswad" (The Two Black Coats/Uniforms) which tells the story of the very much loved actress Souad Hosni. The movie will be released during the first week of November. The late Souad Hosni, was the Arab World's "Movie Screen Cinderella". Her death is still a mysterious story, and the movie promises audiences with new and fresh information about the actress's turbulent and very colorful life and death.



Wael Kfoury = MARRIED AND A DADDY!

It seems Wael Kfoury really knows how to keep a secret!

Although the romantic Lebanese singer; Wael Kfoury has done a very good job in hiding the fact that he tied the knot and has gotten married months ago, he didn't keep that happy news of the birth of his first daughter "Michelle" under wraps!

Wael Kfoury and wife Angela Bechara welcomed a baby girl on September 14th ... and the little cupcake also happens to share her birthday & her name with her daddy! (You do know that Wael's real name is Michel, right?).



Middle Eastern Fashionista's- 2011 Fall Fashion Trends

By; Nijma Awadallah

Say good-bye to the summer and say HELLO to the fall! As we put away our hot shirts and replace them with some cool sweaters- it's time to embrace the HOT Fall trends-that will have you screaming FASHIONISTA! The love of fashion is multi lingual with any region or culture. Women and men from all over the world dive into the trends, manipulating it into their own. The Middle East has influenced fashion for centuries but has made a huge impact over the past decade. The Abaya continues to make transformations and world designers are taking notice of its market value. Fall trends are easily adaptable to every Arab fashion diva while simply adding staple pieces that suit their lifestyle. Take a look at the Middle Eastern fashion and trends that will be coming soon, to a closet near you!

Middle Eastern Inspired Fashion over the Decade



Nancy Ajram - Arab Veil Fashions

Middle Eastern-inspired fashion is currently en vogue around the world from the streets to the catwalks. But rather than merely dabbling in aesthetic exoticism, designers have explored the region's sartorial traditions.

Kaffiyehs (traditional Arab headdress) were an integral part of the Eighties bohemian look worn by American girls. They caught on with Japanese teenagers in the early part of the decade, but by the mid-2000's, hipsters from all over the United States were again seen sporting the traditional Arab scarves around

their necks, making a statement purely for the sake of style. Soon, they were available at places like H&M and Urban Outfitters.

MC Hammer made them popular in the 80's and 90's when they were known as Hammer pants. After nearly a decade, the harem pants made a comeback in early 2008's when they were spotted on many trendsetting women, the look soon took on a life of its own. During the spring/summer 2009 collections, countless female fashion goers began wearing them as part of their show-going outfits. To this day Arab fashion continues to make its mark throughout history and vice versa – bet you all didn't know that!

From the color you're going to be stocking up on, to new takes on old favorites, here are the 2011 fall trends you'll be seeing very soon.

"1001" Abaya's and fashion collections

Dubai's Fashion week 2011 showcased many Abaya's for the Fall/Winter collections. The Abaya is the traditional long flowing robe worn by Arab women. Many spectators took notice, but only a few collections made a mark on the fashion scope such as the "1001 Abaya's collection" by designers Safa and Mariam Al Medfaei. Influenced by the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa, this assortment of abayas scream Arab modernization. The round hemmed abayas, worn over matching pat-



Arab twist on traditional & modern dress.



HAIFA- Arab veil made fashionable

terned leggings, were a unique concept sure to stir up frenzy and become all the rage for Arab fashionistas across the globe.

Kuwaiti-designer Montaha Al Ajeel's Fall/Winter line "Montaha Courture abaya" featured heavy Arab, Oriental, Mexican and Dutch influences. Al Ajeel's designs stayed true to the traditional cut of the abaya. Bodysuits and leggings worn under Al Ajeel's kaftan-esque abaya's provided a body-conscious alternative to her traditional cuts.

Highly sought-after designer Rabia Z collection "Ayesha's Autumnal Journey" plays with fall colors of olive, khaki and grey. Staying conservative chic, structured jackets and soft tops matched with wide trousers are adding the "it" factor. There are also innovative "jacket abaya's" in brown making it an instant wearable addition to any Arab woman's wardrobe. Loose tops, long silk skirts as well as drape dresses with embellishments rounded out this fall's trends overview.



Fashion & Style



and change.. Scarf clips and broaches are heavily desired by Islamic women, not only serving as a practical reason to prevent the scarf from getting loose it adds a little bling to any outfit. Many other Middle Eastern fashionista's add scarves around their neck or hips to accentuate their curvey figures.

Make Up

MAKE UP! It could be a girl's best friend or simply a frenemy. Arabic makeup is best known for its dramatic emphasis on eyes and lips. The Arabic culture seems to be stylish, attractive, and mysterious. Get some make up tips right here and highlight the natural beauty that

And how could we forget our Arab men? I am sure they would like to stay fashionable as well! This fall, trends for men include a range of thobes from casual to formal wear. Designs are modern and simple with hip accents of bold piping and hardware. Zips and pockets galore are added to bring out the casual facet of the thobe. Suit styles never go out of style! Relaxed tailoring, fashionable work wear and overalls are all included in the men's fashion trends for the fall season.



Must have ACCESSORIES:

Sunglasses



Nawal Zoghby- Big Sunglasses

Many Middle Eastern women are fond of sunglasses. By and large, sunglasses add an instant glamour to your personality. They are fond of sunglasses not only because they add glamour to their personality but also protect their eyes from harmful U-V rays.

Scarves

The scarf is a wonderful fashion accessory for Middle Eastern women. Different styles add a bit of fashion



Allah (Arabic word for God) has blessed you with.

“Pay attention to your eye makeup. Consider your eye color,” says Shadia Nassar, CEO/Owner of SuSu's Beauty in Washington, D.C. “If you are a dark eyed girl, then go for lighter shadow colors and if you have light eyes, go for dark colors, especially black. It is always fun to experiment with various colors of eyeliner –gray, blue-they're all great colors, have fun. While many individuals believe wearing makeup is to subtly emphasize your features, (the Natural, no make-up look) - Arabic makeup takes a much bolder approach!”

Nowadays, make up is emerging as a first concern for most of the Middle Eastern girls on the move in the ethnic scale of success. Makeup is about your aspirations and your style. Dramatic colors and styles continue to dominate the fall fashion trends. See what colors may work with you this fall!

The cross-cultural influence in fashion is clearly a two-way street, with designers drawing inspiration from all over the world and the Middle East seems to be fashion's new “muse”. The transition from summer to fall doesn't signal an end, but rather a



HAIFA- ARAB VEIL MADE FASHIONABLE



HAIFA- ARAB VEIL MADE FASHIONABLE

new beginning. A beginning to indulge in this season must-have trends, from sheer and vintage maxi dresses to crystallized and embellished abayas, all sure to turn heads whether you are walking down the streets of New York or on the sands of Dubai.

- Here are just a few of our Arab World's famous singers – trending the Arab Fashions through their clothes, hair, make-up and accessory styles!

Mission Possible: Putting Dubai on Film map!

By: Vasanti Sundaram
(a Dubai-based freelancer)

Jamal Al Sharif worked tirelessly to bring the filming of **Mission: Impossible 4** to our shores. As managing director of Dubai Media City and Dubai Studio City, he is determined the emirate will make an emphatic mark on the international film scene

The contact list on his phone runs to over 1,800 numbers and includes high school friends, colleagues and acquaintances in almost every part of the world. So important are people to him, that he dislikes being alone. In fact, he would rather skip lunch than eat alone. That said, facebook and twitter are not his options to stay in touch and he prefers instead to pick up the phone to have a more personal connection.

Jamal Al Sharif, 36, is the managing director of Dubai Media City and Dubai Studio City.

Credited for successfully leading Dubai's engagement with Paramount Pictures for the filming of Mission: Impossible 4 (MI4) last year, he and his team look forward to its worldwide release on December 16 with an enormous sense of anticipation and fulfillment. "It will be another moment in the sun for Dubai when the world will watch its myriad moods being played out on the big screen," he says.

Chatting with Al Sharif has a familiarity about it, as if catching up with a high school friend. Born and brought up in Deira, one of the oldest neighborhoods of Dubai, Al Sharif's early lessons about managing expectations came in California, where as an undergraduate student he was expected to find his way around in a new country.

After graduating in 1999 from the University of San Diego, Al Sharif was all set to return to Dubai with a degree in business studies when his father recommended that he stay on in the US to complete his masters. "At first I had doubts about this decision as a few of my friends had already returned to the UAE, some even before completing their education, and were well entrenched in the corporate landscape. I felt I was missing out on being a part of the dramatic growth that Dubai was witnessing then. But I decided to stay on, sure that my father knew better."

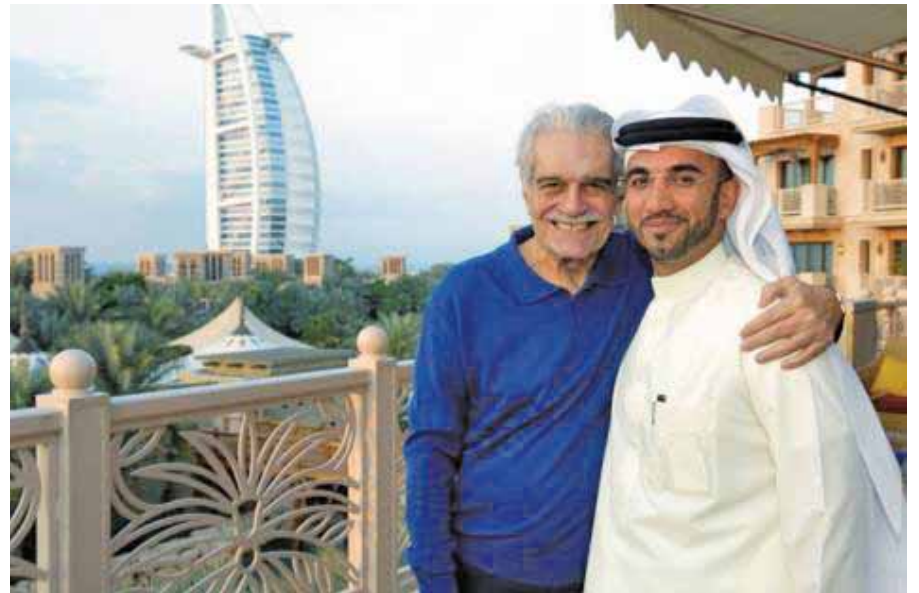
Around this time, Al Sharif did a four-month real-estate course through Anthony Schools in San Diego to become a licensed real-estate broker in the US. While negotiating successful deals as an agent, he also did a six-month internship with Merrill Lynch to gain the mandatory work experience prior to enrolling into a Masters program in international business administration.

December 2001 saw Al Sharif returning to the UAE, just when landmark projects such as Dubai Internet City, Dubai Media City and Dubai Knowledge Village were beginning to take shape. Wasting little time, he immediately applied for a job in Dubai Internet City (DIC). "My friends dissuaded me, saying DIC would shut down in six months as the internet boom was over and many people had lost money in stocks. I was instead advised to join an oil company, which my father endorsed as we had family members working in the oil giants."

Remaining resolute in his decision, Al Sharif began a career with Dubai Internet City in April 2002 as partner relations manager. Hard work and dedication paid off, and soon he was given the responsibility of overseeing nearly 220 companies within the ICT free zone. In 2005, when Dubai Studio City (DSC) was born, Al Sharif's career steered into a new direction when he was invited to be a media manager in this free zone for film and broadcast media. "I asked for a better title but was immediately told to earn it! This was enough to convince me to put in my best effort."

His first project was to organize a ten-day visit for a team of eight members to review the film studios in seven countries. "I wondered why I was being given a secretarial job. Little did I know that the assignment demanded extraordinary project-management skills. Fortunately, the visits went well and I realized no job is too small for anyone. During this trip, we visited film cities, production houses... Wherever we went, we perceived a sense of excitement in people about Dubai's concept of setting up a film city. Everyone wanted to be a part of it."

In early 2008, Al Sharif was named director of the DSC and the free zone was ready to welcome new tenants. Starting out with 15



In good company... with movie icon Omar Sharif

clients, the DSC achieved full occupancy by the end of 2008.

Work

A truly major project I was involved in began in December 2009 when I received a call from a friend and Hollywood media adviser Richard Klein in Washington. I was informed about plans for a "big film" to be shot in Dubai although the name couldn't be revealed at that stage.

A month later, the New Year brought with it good tidings in an email that would catapult Dubai into the league of Prague, Toronto and the US as one of the four locations identified for the MI4 shoots. Although Dubai had earlier provided a setting for films like *Syriana* and *The Kingdom*, MI4 will be the first full-fledged movie to be filmed in the city. A series of one-on-ones with producer Tom Cruise, director Brad Bird, and the teams from Paramount Pictures followed. From facilitating a meeting with His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to taking the teams around Dubai at the peak of summer in July last year, all of us at the DSC had to get it right.

We rented buses from FilmWorks, thanks to Tim Smythe, whose support can never be quantified. We were received with enthusiasm by everyone from Dubai Police to the Roads and Transport Authority, Dubai Municipality, to numerous ministries, you name it.

As a way of comprehending what it took to host a 400-member film crew onsite, I flew to Prague to witness the shoot there. It was at this time that I was appointed managing director of Dubai Media City and Dubai Studio City. This meant additional responsibility. So here I was, charged with overseeing DMC, DSC and a huge project, MI4, on hand.

Ramadan 2010 brought in a whirlpool of discussions with Hollywood every single night after Iftar. For all of us, it was 'mission possible'. Every minute detail was looked into, from arrivals to organizing chartered aircrafts for the equipment. We would send helicopters three or four times a day to monitor Burj Khalifa, and secured permission to film in the desert and fly over areas that are otherwise off-limits.

The first day of the shoot in November 2010 was a crazy day, with high media glare. The crew started setting up the cameras from five in the morning. The creek by the dhows in the big parking area near Baniyas Square had been shut down. With Tom Cruise walking down, the cameras started rolling. It all felt like a dream.

All credit to my team, we did everything possible to ensure Dubai delivered on its promises. We closed one section of the Dubai ports for almost three days to position a whole set of camera and crew for the shoot and stop dhows from coming in, probably breaking news in any other country.

Mission Possible, cont'd on page 15

Entertainment – Movies

Mission Possible, cont'd from page 14

It helped that Tom Cruise is so down to earth. A happy guy and extremely talkative, he always enquired about my family, kids and about how I worked. He was quite surprised to know that I had watched more than half of the 40 or so movies that he has done to date.

The day the crew left, happy, after a 45-day shoot, I sat in my room alone and felt a relief that I had never experienced before.

Play

I come from a very strong and progressive-minded family. Nothing came easily for my grandfather or father, a reason I tell myself not to get carried away with what I have. Keeping yourself grounded isn't easy. But it's even more important to keep it simple and know who you are.

I am a regular at the gym and cycle three times a week on the track in the Khawanej park. I take my kids when I go cycling and hope one of them will turn into a professional cyclist although I am open to the choices they would like to make. I am into water sports too and enjoy jet skiing.

I look forward to travelling and am generally not fastidious about the destination as I believe there is some learning no matter where you go. I have travelled widely in Europe and Asia. I have not done Africa and would like to take my children along on a safari.

I have a fascination with cars. I remember during my student years, my father paid for my masters and I took care of my day-to-day expenses, which included an indulgence in

fancy cars. I still feel my pulse race when I see a fascinating car. I call them 'poetry in motion'.

We have a large library at home that includes a vast collection of fiction and classic literature. My wife is a voracious reader and I am glad she encourages our children to read. Personally, I enjoy rereading Shaikh Mohammad's My Vision. Graeme Wilson's Rashid's Legacy is another favorite that gives a profound insight into the history of Dubai. Right now, I am reading The 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene and Joost Elffers.

Dream

I am passionate about Dubai and the UAE, and like any other Emirati, or for that matter even expatriates who have lived here for a long time, there is something about this city that charms you.

Had it not been for the Ruler's vision, I would not have had the courage to lead ambitious projects. I salute and thank him for the inspiration. It is, therefore, only natural for me to take his vision forward and grow the cinema industry in Dubai and the region.

I'm aware it's not something that will happen overnight. But with a platform like Dubai Studio City, talent in the form of Ali Mostafa, Nayla Al Khaja, Mohammad Al Hareb and Haider Mohammad and a bridge such as the Dubai International Film Festival, I am confident we will make an emphatic international mark in the next ten years when cinemas worldwide will play made-in-Dubai films.

I would like to improve my education level and do a PhD in



Jamal Al Sharif and his team had to be painstakingly thorough to ensure filming of Mission Impossible 4 went smoothly.

strategy management. Fortunately, for us in Dubai, we do not have to travel far and have some of the best academic institutions on our doorstep.

I would also like to hone my management skills. I am very flexible and open with my team but I need to learn to draw the line between being friendly and firm. I neither want to be feared or loved too much!

I am a people's person and enjoy helping others' dreams come true. Recently I met an acquaintance from India who set up a 300-square-foot software business at the DIC in 2003. His company has grown several times over, catering to markets as far as the US. It felt good to know that we had given him a head-start in business. I would like to continue being one of the reasons for such success stories.

Nadine Labaki's New Movie: Where Do We Go Now (W Halla2 Lawein)

Movie Review by: Elie Fares

Attendees of the Toronto International Film Festival have voted to award the 2011 Cadillac People's Choice Award, the festival's highest honor, to Nadine Labaki's Where Do We Go Now?, a Lebanese drama that premiered at the Cannes Film Festival back in May and is still seeking domestic distribution.

*****Please Note:** This Award has previously gone to four films that went on to win the best picture Oscar.

Lebanese cinematic talent has not been given much room to grow. In a country where art is the least concern, cinema has found it especially hard to take off. However, a stream of Lebanese movies has been finding its way to our theaters. Some like Nadine Labaki's previous movie, Caramel, were a huge hit with viewers. Others were not as lucky.

But the fact remains that the Lebanese audience is hungry for movies that describe its society, its problems, its worries and woes.

And then comes Nadine Labaki's new movie: Where Do We Go Now, with its Lebanese title: W Halla2 Lawein (also in French: Et Maintenant, On Va Ou?)

The premise of the movie is quite simple – and for many Lebanese, worry-inducing for fear of overuse of clichés. The overall basis of the plot is the coexistence of Lebanese Muslims and Christians in one community, sometimes peacefully and other times not. Many, like yours truly, felt the issue was overdone. Maybe not in cinema but in everyday life. Most of us are sick of being bombarded with commentary about the struggles that face our very diverse community. But this is not the case in Where Do We Go Now.

An unnamed village during the later part of the 20th century has its only connection with the outside world in the form of a very rudimentary bridge, around which landmines had been planted and never removed. Even TV reception is very poor to the village and the movie begins with a few youngsters



searching for a broadcast signal to set up a TV night for the town-folks. This village is also a religiously divided community where the Church and the Mosque are only a house apart. And more often than not, the people live together happily.

But as it is, and despite barely having any access to news from the outside world, the men of this village start to confront each other in violent ways. Little things that would pass unnoticed cause them to ex-

Movie Review, cont'd on page 20

America & The Arab World

A Different Election For Arab Americans, the 2012 election will be different.

By James Zogby (Arab American Institute President)

Many of the same critical issues that shaped the 2008 contest are still in play, and will define the national agenda in 2012: Iraq remains unsettled; there is no Israeli-Palestinian peace; the U.S. economy is still in shambles; and intense partisanship continues to impede solutions to some of our nation's most pressing problems. Nevertheless, this election will be different.

For one, the Arab world is different, with dramatic new developments reshaping the political map of the region. Across the Middle East, Arabs have risen up demanding change. No longer satisfied with the status quo, they are holding their governments accountable. As a result, Arab leaders have become more responsive to their public's opinion.

This, of course, presents America with a new challenge. We, too, must now listen more closely to the aspirations of the Arab world, placing serious constraints on policy makers. Congress may continue to play "politics as usual"; pursuing a dangerously one-sided pro-Israeli agenda, but presidents won't have that luxury. They will need to be more attentive to Arab realities.

The politics here at home are also different. At the very moment in history when America needs to better understand and be better understood in the Arab World, the Tea Party and religious fundamentalists are being incited by dangerous and well-funded anti-Arab and anti-Muslim fringe groups. We saw the damage they could do with the anti-mosque and anti-Islam hate campaign they launched during the 2008 Presidential and 2010 Congressional elections. All signs point to their continuing to find ways to exploit fear of Muslims, using it as a political wedge issue. Already we see an intensification of their efforts leading up to 2012, with anti-Muslim comments from many of the presidential candidates and an organized national campaign focused on passing legislation to ban the application of Shariah law in America.

These anti-Muslim campaigns send a message to the world of a growing intolerance in America. They also make it difficult to engage in reasoned discourse on critical issues facing our nation and the world. Additionally, such hate campaigns ultimately threaten the very social fabric of our country. But when crass politicians find an issue that mobilizes their supporters, they are all too prone to say "the country be damned."

Finally, the general mood in the country is different, with the prolonged recession leading to long-term unemployment and under-employment, home mortgages threatened, and pensions at risk. All of this has shaken confidence in the American dream. This, in turn, has fueled the Tea Party movement and the hyper-partisanship that has paralyzed Washington. As a result, the hope many felt in 2008 has evaporated, and has now been replaced by cynicism or anger.

For these reasons, this 2012 election will be different. The challenges we confront are greater than ever before, as are the dangers we face should we not responsibly address these domestic and foreign policy imperatives. But for many Arab Americans, this election is shaping up to be a contest between a candidate who has disappointed them and candidates who scare the hell out of them.

Arab Americans voted overwhelmingly for Barack Obama in 2008. After eight long years of the recklessness and neglect that characterized the Bush Administra-



tion's approaches to the Middle East, civil liberties and the economy, Arab Americans voted for change. Three years later, they are still waiting for real change to occur. They see the Middle East undergoing a dramatic transformation, while politics in Washington are paralyzed and getting meaner and more out of touch with Middle East realities with each passing day.

There are a few things we know for certain: the 2012 election will take place with or without us; the challenges facing our country won't go away by themselves, nor will they be solved by one election or by one leader, from the top down.

While it is true that the Arab World is changing, the change we need begins here at home, in our understanding of and our approach to this critical region of the world. And this we know won't happen unless we are organized to play a role in helping to shape the national debate in 2012.

This is going to be a different election. Just how different it will be depends, in part, on how organized and engaged we are.

A black and white photograph of Subodh Chandra, a man in a suit and tie, is on the left. To his right, the text reads "CIVIL AND CRIMINAL TRIAL LAWYERS" in large, bold, white capital letters. Below that, in smaller white text, it says "Subodh Chandra", "Managing Partner", and "Former Cleveland Law Director and federal prosecutor".

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- Obtained directed verdict in civil-mortgage-fraud trial.
- Obtained dismissal of criminal-mortgage-fraud charges.
- Obtained federal court ruling on behalf of Federation of India Community Associations that Ohio law discriminating against naturalized citizens in voting was unconstitutional.
- Obtained multiple multimillion-dollar wrongful-death settlements.

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The facts and law governing each individual case are different, so past results are no guarantee of a particular result in a case.

America & The Arab World

What has really changed in The Middle East?

By Michael Singh (Managing Director of The Washington Institute)

The annual melodrama in New York over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has largely overshadowed the real historic drama that is playing out in the Middle East today. The region seems turned upside-down: rebellions are taking place across the Arab world, Turkish-Israeli relations have dramatically deteriorated, and tumult seems to be the rule.

Nevertheless, trying amid the chaos to determine precisely what has changed in the region is no easy task. In some places, like Libya, the change is total -- Qadhafi is ousted, and leadership has passed to a cobbled-together group comprising both jihadists and bureaucrats. In others, like Egypt, the change is worryingly superficial -- Mubarak is gone, but the military chieftains who have succeeded him have reimposed his draconian "emergency laws" and continue to drag bloggers and activists before military tribunals. In others still, like Syria, little change at all has come -- protests grind on, and so does the regime.

For Western officials looking to protect or advance their countries' interests in the Middle East, sorting the superficial from the fundamental changes is a vital task. While the outcomes of the revolutions in Egypt, Libya, Syria, and elsewhere remain far from certain, it is possible to identify three shifts in the region which are significant and likely to endure.

First, there can no longer be any question that internal politics matter in the Arab world. Before the Arab rebellions, the conventional wisdom in the West was that understanding policy in a country like Egypt meant understanding the views and intentions of essentially one person -- Hosni Mubarak. He in turn was able to impose his will on the country through a mixture of coercion and co-optation. Public opinion and the views of opposition groups were important on their own merits and for understanding the deeper dynamics of the country, but had little actual bearing on Egyptian policy. This point of view was questionable before, and is certainly wrong today. There are now a multiplicity of political groupings and power centers, and issues such as the U.S.-Egyptian or Israeli-Egyptian relationships are political footballs important as much for their symbolism as their substance. Influencing, much less predicting policy in Egypt, Libya, or Tunisia will require diplomats and officials to do something which is second nature to them in places

like Europe, but to which they have been unaccustomed in the Middle East -- cultivating relationships beyond the presidential palace and its immediate environs, and understanding the interests, motivations, and aspirations of a broad swath of society.

Second, the new governments that spring up around the Arab world will likely be more anti-Western, and anti-Israel, than those they succeeded. Fairly or not, the West and the United States in particular is strongly associated with the old regimes in the Middle East, and thus seen as accomplices in oppression. This is in part a problem of our own making -- the United States supported Arab dictators during the Cold War as foils to Soviet expansionism. When the USSR fell, however, we continued to support those dictators rather than pressing for democratic reform. Those moments, such as the mid-2000s, when the US took a different approach, were not sustained, leading raised expectations in the region to be dashed and leaving our public esteem lower than it began. Our image has not been helped by US policy during the Arab Spring, during which we have been perceived as a fair-weather friend, taking sides only when a conflict's outcome was already clear rather than acting on our pro-democracy proclamations.

The cold peace that has long prevailed between Israel and its Arab neighbors is also perceived throughout the region to have been an unsavory arrangement that worked to the benefit of repressive regimes. The blame for Israel's isolation in the region is often laid squarely at the feet of Israeli leaders for their perceived failure to make peace with the Palestinians; the reality is more complicated. Egyptian leaders, for example, studiously maintained peace with Israel and enjoyed the strategic and economic benefits accompanying it. But they never made the case to the Egyptian people for this peace. Instead, they cynically employed both anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric in the official media as a means (ineffective, it turns out) of deflecting public anger from domestic issues.

Third, and most troubling, the Middle East is likely

AMERICA WATCHES CLOSELY AS THE WINDS OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE ARE BLOWING IN THE ARAB WORLD...



to be a more dangerous and volatile region in the future. For the past several decades, a relatively stable regional order has prevailed, centered around Arab-Israeli peace treaties and close ties between the United States and the major Arab states and Turkey. The region was not conflict-free by any means, and Iran, Iraq, and various transnational groups sought to challenge the status quo, albeit largely unsuccessfully. Now, however, the United States appears less able or willing to exercise influence in the region, and the leaders and regimes who guarded over the regional order are gone or under pressure. Sensing either the need or opportunity to act autonomously, states like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iran are increasingly bold, and all are well-armed and aspire to regional leadership. Egypt, once stabilized, may join this group. While interstate conflict is not inevitable by any means, the risk of it has increased and the potential brakes on it have deteriorated. Looming over all of this is Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon, which would shift any contest for regional primacy into overdrive.

It is likely that there are more fundamental changes in the Middle East which we have yet to detect, or that some changes will be short-circuited as events unfold. As it unfolds, the Arab Spring is unlikely to fulfill the dearest hopes of U.S. policymakers for democracy or bring to pass their darkest worries of radicalization; it is certain, however, to change the Middle East forever in ways we are only beginning to apprehend.

Cover Story Cont'd

Cover Story, cont'd from page 5

HANAN ASHRAWI: “The P.L.O. has given the U.N. Security Council a dead-line of two weeks to act favorably on Palestine’s Application to become a full-fledged Member State in the United Nations Organization. If for any reason the Security Council does not so act favorably by Monday, October 10, then the P.L.O. should invoke the Uniting for Peace Resolution and turn the matter over to the U.N. General Assembly for definitive action. The General Assembly can then admit Palestine as the 194th U.N. Member State no later than Friday, October 14. From the ovations President Abbas received in the U.N. General Assembly, it is obvious that the votes are there for Palestine’s immediate admission to the U.N. as a member state. The Palestinians have waited long enough for U.N. Membership.”

Sam Husseini: Will you be applying for U.N. state membership, specifically to the UN General Assembly within three weeks if the U.S. blocks your application at the Security Council — either invoking United for Peace as international lawyer Francis Boyle has recommended or a simple two-thirds majority as professor John Quigley, another noted international lawyer, recommends?

Hanan Ashrawi: Yes, that’s the thing: now that we have applied to the Security Council we hope that better sense will prevail in the U.S. — that they will act wisely and not constantly isolate themselves with Israel on the wrong side of the law and they will not veto. But if they do veto then suddenly we have other options. As President Abbas said we will be going home; the leadership will [be] meeting to discuss different options and the General Assembly certainly is an option. And there are different ways. You could go Uniting for Peace, or you could ask — and we do have a two-thirds majority. Actually, most of the world recognizes the injustice done to the Palestinians and most of the world has already recognized the Palestinian state. The problem lies within the Israeli occupation and extremist hard-line policies and within the U.S., that has put on blinders and refuses to see the injustice of the situation.



Hanan Ashrawi

SH: But what’s the timeline on this? What’s to stop this from dragging out just as the negotiations have dragged out?

HA: No we won’t allow this to drag out. —

SH: So what’s the timeline? —

HA: If we see that the Security Council is stalling then certainly we will seek other options, yes.

SH: Many Palestinians have criticized the U.N. membership effort as a ploy, basically, to preserve the position of the Palestinian Authority given the failure to provide for the safety, the well being and, much less, the self-determination of the Palestinian people. How do you respond to that?

HA: By saying that the U.N. is the natural home for the Palestinians. We are basing all our efforts on international law and we want the international community to be engaged. This is not subject to Israel unilateralism and party politics or American monopoly over peace talks. We need the international community to be engaged on the basis of legality. That’s why we see this as a process of rectification — a corrective move. Taking the issue back home to the international community. Those who are skeptical of course have the right to be skeptical because the U.N. so far has taken so many resolutions, they’ve all been shelved, none of which has been implemented on the ground because Israel enjoys immunity — it acts, as I said, with full impunity with no consequences, no accountability whatsoever. But we cannot in this sense renege on all the agreements and say that’s it. But if the situation continues the way it is then certainly you will see a breakdown in Palestine. You will see probably even throughout the region a breakout of violence. But this case, to the Arabs as a whole, to the Palestinians, to people of good-conscience in the world, is a case of justice, and therefore justice has to be seen and also to be done. And if it continues then it threatens the stability and security of the whole region.

SH: That sort of begs the question — the PLO recognized Israel in 1988 —

HA: Yes.

SH: — and sought statehood from various countries — over 100 countries. Why the wait of more than 20 years to get that recognition at the U.N.? Why wasn’t that done forthwith?

HA: The PLO recognized Israel, Israel recognized the PLO but not Palestine.



Hanan Ashrawi & Mahmoud Abbas

SH: Right, but why didn’t —

HA: — We want the world to recognize Palestine to safeguard our rights so that our territory will be designated clearly, not as Netanyahu says “disputed land.” It is occupied territory. —

SH: — So why wasn’t it done 20 years ago?

HA: Well we tried to do it repeatedly but the thing is it’s not a question of getting membership now, it’s a question of preventing Israel also from destroying the territorial base of the two-state solution. So we have been engaged. Some people say, “Why have you talked so long? 20 years.” —

SH: It’s not a matter of talking —

HA: — And some people are saying: “You should talk some more. You haven’t talked enough.” The question is: when history evolves and develops, you have to find the right time and the right opportunity to do the right thing. As I said, conditions on the ground are deteriorating so rapidly that you have to intervene positively to give people a sense of hope that there is still a chance for a peaceful, nonviolent, legal human and moral solution. And if you don’t give them that hope, and if you don’t find means of finding Israel accountable, then certainly the current dynamic will run its course and it will be disastrous for everybody.

SH: But I’m not talking about negotiations or not negotiations. You got recognition from China, from India, from Brazil — why did you wait so long to get recognition from the U.N.?

HA: I just explained to you. We were engaged in negotiations.

SH: Why does that preclude it?

HA: We applied to the U.N. for upgrading our status in 1988 when we accepted the two-state solution and we upgraded the status of the P.L.O. And we are moving. This is an incremental process.

Middle East News

Media Reform, cont'd from page 6

"Even before the launch of Al-Jazeera channel, we had a program titled 'Issues and Opinion' that was launched under the patronage of the Emir, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who was then the Heir Apparent," Kurawi says. He notes that Qatar TV and Qatar Radio were given a "high degree of freedom" when reporting news coverage from the region and worldwide.

Also in the works, Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz Alsaud Unveils The Name of His News Channel: 'Alarab'. – which will be the name of his new international news channel scheduled to be launched in 2012.

The well-known Saudi journalist, Mr. Jamal Ahmad Khashoggi, will be managing this new 24-hour channel which will target Arabic-speaking viewers across the Arab world and beyond.

Alarab will focus editorially on the important shifts taking place across the Arab world with an emphasis on freedom of speech and freedom of press. Furthermore, it will uphold the principle of free transfer of information as well as, objective, balanced and credible reporting. The News channel will cover the latest developments around the world and will also highlight political, social and economic issues in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world.

HRH Prince Alwaleed also announced an agreement with Bloomberg LP in which Bloomberg will support the creation of five-hours of financial and economic news programming throughout the day on the channel.

Bloomberg-branded business reports will air within Alarab's daily coverage with reports from the MENA markets as well as a weekly roundup of global fi-

ancial news. Moving beyond the news headlines, it will also feature regular segments on Arab business leaders from the Kingdom, the Gulf region and the international Arabic speaking world.

A team of Bloomberg media specialists and producers will be provided to the Alarab channel and will assist in the production of the channel's economic and business coverage drawing on Bloomberg's extensive financial and economic data from the Bloomberg Professional service and reporting from Bloomberg's 2,300 journalists in 146 news bureaus across 72 countries.

The location of Alarab's headquarters and main broadcast center has not yet been announced, although Manama, Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Beirut are among the cities being considered. Alarab will hire experienced Arabic speaking media professionals in addition to

attracting new talent.

The news channel will offer Arab viewers premium and credible content and will be one of the most prominent news channels broadcasting from the region alongside other networks.

In his comments, Prince Alwaleed stressed that: "The Arab world is interested in the fields of business, employment, economic development, and is focused on prosperity and growth. Our alliance with Bloomberg and its credible source of financial and economic data, together with its extensive media experience, will provide the Alarab news channel with a strong and comprehensive economic platform to accurately cover Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Arab world."

Al Mubadarah: Arab Empowerment Initiative introduces mentoring program for women in Palestine

WASHINGTON DC— Social media uses are evolving beyond Facebook and Twitter, as human ingenuity continues to define this dynamic digital stage.

Al Mubadarah: Arab Empowerment Initiative, with partner organizations, is presenting one vision for social media's next phase through connecting people and building more prosperous communities.

The organization is recruiting entrepreneurs with at least five years of business development experience for the Cherie Blair Foundation Mentoring Women in Business Program. Participants will engage entirely through the Internet using Google technology tools that enable real time connection and collaboration.

By recruiting established successful business leaders worldwide, the mentoring program will support Al Mubadarah's mission of developing stronger ties between the global Arab Diaspora and the Arab World. Al Mubadarah develops its program around the needs and aspirations articulated by Arabs in the Middle East and the Diaspora.

Entrepreneurs recruited by Al Mubadarah for the Cherie Blair Foundation Mentoring Women in Business Program will connect with entrepreneurial women in the West

Bank who seek technical assistance and moral support for launching their business plans. Al Mubadarah will pair mentor and mentee with the hope and goal that a synergy will form between the two since they will meet online regularly, develop trust, network and discuss business concepts.

Candidates from diverse backgrounds with ethnic and cultural ties to the Middle East are especially encouraged to apply to serve as mentors for the Palestinian women. Exchanges between participants in such a program create the opportunity for Arabs to learn from, and about, one another while engaging through shared cultural references and traditions.

"The role of social media is hard to ignore, but it is the connections with people and the sharing of knowledge in a mutually beneficial way, that we're promoting here," said Al Mubadarah President and CEO, Hazami Barmada.

As events in the Middle East have unfolded over this past year, Barmada says she has already observed that there is a strong interest among those from the Arab Diaspora who have wanted to give back to the region but were unsure where to start.

"Palestine is in the minds and hearts of

many Arab people. This is linking global Arab professionals back to the Arab world," Barmada said. "This gives people a tangible way of helping Palestinian people: by participating in systematic community and professional development while being remote."

As the program gains speed, Al Mubadarah will recruit Al Mubadarah Fellows for women mentees throughout the region. Mentors and mentees will connect using online forums and other communication modes, including email and chat. Mentors bring knowledge and expertise that could help women mentees better understand steps they can take to strengthen and improve their businesses. Mentors and mentees must agree to meet for at least one hour every two weeks over the course of 12 months.

Al Mubadarah Advisory Board Member, Arab League Ambassador to the United States Dr. Hussein Hassouna, applauded the initiative for creating stronger linkages between Arabs worldwide and those in the Arab World.

"This is a great initiative that helps building bridges between people in the Arab World and Arabs abroad," Hassouna said. "It allows them to share their experiences, learn from each other and work together."



As more Al-Mubadarah fellows join the team, Al Mubadarah intends to burnish its credentials as a global exchange platform for Arabs. Using Internet technologies with information sharing capabilities, is just one way Hassouna said that Al Mubadarah will continue to take steps in examining, and addressing the loss of talent and expertise from the Middle East due to immigration.

"I hope that in the days ahead, Al Mubadarah will continue enlarging its membership and gain support. It is only through dedicated and collective efforts that this initiative can achieve valuable tangible results."

For more information visit www.arabempowerment.org

Cont'd Reading

Movie Review, cont'd from page 15

plode, signaling the anger they've been bottling in. And it is then that the few women of the village start to devise plots to keep the men busy, entertained and get their minds off being violent. These plans will vary from fake miracles to putting hashish in cakes. But these women will go to every measure possible and break every limit imposed on them by society to keep their town together. And it is for these women, representing a vast majority of our Lebanese mothers, that this movie is so aptly dedicated.

Nadine Labaki, director of the movie and starring as Amal, is astonishing as always. You, really, cannot see her eyes on screen and not be mesmerized. She's simply entrancing, even when she doesn't speak. Then how about when she delivers a tour de force performance as one of those women, who happens to be in love with a man from the town's other religion. But to be perfectly honest, the accolades one ought to give Labaki are not for her acting but for her directing. Never have I imagined a Lebanese movie can turn out this good and she makes it seem effortless. Her camera shots, her focus on details, her keen eye... all of this combine to give you a cinematic experience that will entrance you.

This movie, like *Caramel*, features mostly unknown faces and all of them deliver as well. It is hard to believe – and yet in retrospect so evident – that such acting can come out of common people that we all meet on the street. *Where Do We Go Now* is a movie of such epic proportions that these “unknown” actors and actresses (mostly actresses) deliver performances that are so subtly nuanced,



so exquisitely flavored and so astonishingly well-done that they would put the best actresses and actors of Hollywood to shame. Yes, I have said it.

The score of the movie is chilling and haunting and wonderfully executed by Nadine's husband Khaled Mouzanar. The movie also features a few highly intelligent songs, written by Tania Saleh.

And let's talk about the script. What an ingenious way to tackle the subject at hand. Not only did Nadine Labaki not fall to any cliché known to us as a Lebanese community, but she managed to introduce them in a subtle comical way that would make us laugh at ourselves for uttering or doing them in the first place. The script is so strong it will turn you bipolar. Yes, lithium is advised to be taken at the door while going in. Why? Never have I laughed so hysterically one moment and just wanted to cry the other. And then after being utterly devastated, it brings you back to laughter. The movie plays with you like a ping pong ball. And you cannot but love every moment of it.



I was talking to my friend Elia the day before we went to watch *Where Do We Go Now*, which happened to be the day it won the People's Choice Award at the Toronto Film Festival, and she said: “Elie, I'm very cautiously optimistic about this. I'm not letting my expecta-



tions overreach because I don't want to be disappointed.” Well, I'm pretty sure Elia agrees with me on this: *Where Do We Go Now* brings out things in you that you didn't even know you had. It brings out the best in you, as a Lebanese, sitting in that cinema chair for ninety minutes. And you need the best of the best to do that. Nadine Labaki, you deserve more than the few minutes of applause the people in the movie theater gave you. You deserve a full blown standing ovation. You have done the impossible. Again. Lebanese cinema has no excuse but to overreach for excellence now. And this movie deserves an Oscar win. Cheers to our mothers.

Chef's Story, cont'd from page 8

- 6 cups Chicken Stock
- Molokheeye' leaves (they come pre-packaged at any Arab Grocery Store)
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon salt

Optional Additions:

- 1 tablespoon fresh coriander leaves (also called cilantro) or fresh parsley, finely chopped
- juice of one lemon or a teaspoon vinegar
- ground cayenne pepper or red pepper
- tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 small onion, finely chopped

Molokheeye' Recipe

Chop the Molokheeye' leaves as finely as possible.

Over high heat, bring the chicken stock to a near boil in a large pot. Then add the Molokheeye' stirring it well. Add the tomato paste, Chile pepper, bay leaf, and onion (if desired), and black pepper, continuing to stir. Reduce heat and simmer. The Molokheeye' will simmer for about twenty minutes.

After the chicken stock and Molokheeye' have simmered for about ten minutes: heat the butter in a skillet. Grind the garlic, ground coriander, and the salt together into a paste. Fry the mixture in the oil for a few minutes, stirring constantly, until the garlic is slightly browned.

After the Molokheeye' has been simmering and has broken down to make a thick soup, add the garlic mixture and the butter it was fried in to it.

Stir well; Add any of the remaining optional ingredients that you like. Continue simmering and stirring occasionally for a few more minutes.

Serve immediately, hot. Molokheeye' soup is often served over boiled Rice and sometimes with boiled chicken or beef. A meal fit for a king!

Saudi women gain vote for the first time

By Catrina Stewart

Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah has ruled that women will be allowed to vote and run as candidates in nationwide local elections for the first time, a critical victory for those who have long campaigned for the most basic of rights in the ultraconservative Muslim kingdom.

The announcement in late September marks a major symbolic achievement for Saudi women, who have stepped up their public campaigns in recent months pushing for universal suffrage, the right to drive and a lifting of the strict guardianship laws that govern almost every aspect of their lives.

But the changes come much too slowly for some – women will not be able to participate in elections this Thursday as nominations are already closed – and leave the issue of other fundamental freedoms unaddressed.

In an annual speech to his advisory council, King Abdullah said that women will be able to vote for and stand in the next municipal elections four years from now, giving them access to the only public polls in the Islamic kingdom, and would also be appointed to the next session of the influential Shura Council, the unelected body which advises the King.

"Because we refuse to marginalize women in society in all roles that comply with sharia, we have decided, after deliberation with our senior ulema [legal scholars] and others to involve women in the Shura Council as members, starting from the next term," the 86-year-old Saudi monarch said.

"Women will be able to run as candidates in the municipal election and will even have a right to vote," he added.

Apart from the Kingdom of Brunei, where neither men nor women can vote, Saudi Arabia is the last country in the world to deny women the vote, and it held its first municipal elections in 2005. King Abdullah is seen as a reformer who is largely sympathetic to women's rights, but he has been reluctant to alienate conservative religious elements and even members of his own family.

His decision will be seen by some as a reflection of his fears that the Arab Spring could reach the oil-rich kingdom, so far untouched by the dissent that has agitated the region.

Saudi women have been inspired by the leading role of some women in the Arab Spring, encouraging them to step up their efforts to achieve the basic rights long denied to them. Besides not



having the vote, women are barred from driving and are unable to work, travel or even have a medical operation without the permission of a male guardian, usually the closest male relative.

"This is great news," Wajeha al-Huwaider, a Saudi women's rights activist, told Reuters. "Women's voices will finally be heard. Now it is time to remove other barriers like not allowing women to drive cars and ... not being able to function, to live a normal life, without male guardians."

The decision drew muted reaction on social-networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. "Shura Council is still unelected, and municipal councils are powerless, but women participation is important progress," tweeted Ahmed al-Omran, a Saudi blogger. But, from other quarters, the development was met with mockery. Modigliani40 tweeted: "Saudi women can go to vote! But on foot!"

Earlier this year, a Saudi woman launched the first-ever legal challenge to the laws barring females from voting. Several women took a more confrontational approach, turning up to polling stations to try to register for local elections, but were harangued by male voters.

More high profile, though, has been the campaign to overturn the driving ban, a cause intermittently revived since

a group of Saudi women prominently challenged the ban in 1991 following the Gulf War. Manal al-Sharif, a 32-year-old single mother, became a minor celebrity this year after she filmed herself driving around Al-Khobar in Eastern Province, leading to her arrest and brief detention.

... but they still can't...

Drive: Saudi Arabia is the only country where women are barred from driving. There is no written law, but fatwas from religious clerics have forbidden it and authorities do not issue 'driver licences' to women.

Travel without permission: Women are unable to leave the country without the permission of a male guardian. The "guardianship" system also prevents women from doing a range of day-to-day activities, such as opening a bank account or accessing healthcare, without the permission of a male family member or husband.

Choose their own clothes: A woman's entire body, except for her hands and eyes, must be covered in public or in the presence of men who are not family members. Tradition also dictates that clothes should be dull and unadorned, but the degree to which this is followed varies between regions. The city of Jeddah allows more freedom.



Lebanon at the United Nations: Support for Palestinians, Silence on Syria

Lebanese President Michel Suleiman reiterated Lebanon's commitment to UN resolutions and its international obligations in his address to the UN General Assembly. But while his speech was quite vocal on the question of the Palestinian statehood, Suleiman failed to make mention of the developments in Syria - or their repercussions on Lebanon. The question of Syria will undoubtedly emerge, however. As Prime Minister Najib Mikati and other Lebanese officials are hoping to dodge the Syria bullet by steering Lebanon away from potential political confrontation with the Syrian regime.

In his address to the General Assembly, Lebanese President Suleiman expressed Lebanon's support for the recognition of the state of the Palestinians and their right to obtaining full membership to the UN. He cautioned, however, that the recognition does not restore the "full rights nor could it be considered as a final solution to the Palestinian question." The final solution, he said, would guarantee the return of the refugees to their homeland - a thorny issue in the historical Lebanese debate on the Palestinian question. The Lebanese categorically reject the naturalization of some 400,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon due to the imbalance it would cause to the country's sectarian make-up.

The Syrian question proves more difficult for international and regional leaders alike. The question of how to deal with the uprising has become a divisive issue, with the U.S. and EU pressing forward with harsher sanctions while Russia is circulating a draft resolution encouraging all parties in Syria to "start dialogue at the negotiations table." Countries that have traditionally taken Assad's side are starting to chart new courses in their regional strategies - most important of which has been Turkey's decision to cut all ties with the Syrian regime.

The question is even more problematic for Lebanese officials - such as Mikati, who has strong international business ties and a close relationship with Syrian President Bashar Assad. The Lebanese government maintains that it should not "interfere" in Syria's affairs, and has taken this stance to the UNSC, where, as temporary president of the Council, it has chosen to act under the slogan "preventive diplomacy."



Lebanese Prime Minister- Najib Mikati

As Lebanese diplomats try to maneuver in a semblance of a "middle ground" in the Syrian quagmire, Syrian refugees - estimated to have reached 4,000 - continue to cross the border into Lebanon. They now fear for their lives even in Lebanon, after Syrian troops, in an attempt to arrest those who are fleeing the violence, fired into the northern border of Akkar last week, wounding one Lebanese civilian. The Syrian army has threatened to repeat its incursions into Lebanese territories should the Lebanese continue to offer Syrians protection. Residents of the Lebanese village of Akkar demanded the deployment of the Lebanese Army at the borders, but the Army will not be driven into a clash with Syrian troops.

Not surprisingly, this violation of Lebanese territorial sovereignty did not make it to the list of violations reported in President Suleiman's speech before the UN General Assembly. The Lebanese officials' caution with the Syrian issue may be understandable given the unequal relations between the two countries. However, they must not ignore the demands of a considerable portion of their population, neither should they act blind to the moral bankruptcy of the Syrian regime. It is a matter of time before Assad's backers realize that investing in a regime which lost the support of its own people is not the wisest judgment.

President Suleiman Commits to International Justice... Can Mikati Deliver?

In his address to the UN General Assembly, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman reaffirmed Lebanon's commitment to respecting resolutions related to international legitimacy such as the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL), investigating the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Suleiman remarkably stated that the STL is "in accordance with the spirit and ministerial statements of successive cabinets". But he did not allude to the difficulties Lebanon is facing in upholding its commitment to the court - namely, Hezbollah's objection to funding it. This is now pushing Lebanese leaders to bypass both the Hezbollah-controlled cabinet and parliament to secure the STL funds, but changing positions may force Hezbollah to make a compromise or risk losing government control.

Although Suleiman's statement may have paved the way for a smoother Lebanese discussion on funding the STL, the issue is not expected to pass without a confrontation between the March 8-controlled cabinet, in which Hezbollah allies oppose the Tribunal, and the current March 14 opposition that has supported the STL since its institution in 2007.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati increasingly finds himself in a tough spot, as he tries on the one hand to secure his cabinet's approval for funding and, on the other, to assure the UN Security Council next week that Lebanon is able to deliver on that goal.



President Michel Suleiman addresses the 66th United Nations General Assembly in NY

Lebanon is due to pay its annual share of the funding, \$32 million, this month. It is obliged to contribute 49 percent of the STL expenditure, while the rest of the cost is borne by voluntary contributions from UN member states.

On the eve of his trip, Mikati met in Beirut with U.S. Ambassador Maura Connelly, EU Ambassador Angelina Eichhorst, and UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams. After the meeting, Williams expressed his confidence that Lebanon would pay its share of funding - an indication of Mikati's confidence of his ability to gain the support of the cabinet's majority.

However, it is highly unlikely the Hezbollah-dominated government will support an institution that Hezbollah deems an "Israeli-American conspiracy." Hezbollah's Christian ally Michel Aoun said that he would oppose such a provision even if Hezbollah adopted it, given that it is "unconstitutional." Disagreement between rival March 14 and March 8 coalitions over this issue resulted in an ambiguous clause in the ministerial policy statement, which stipulated that the Lebanese cabinet supports it "in principle."

Since the adoption of that statement, however, both the President and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt have shifted their support to the Tribunal. The changing positions, in no small measure due to the changes on the ground in Syria, now risk isolating Hezbollah and its Christian ally. With less ministers and parliamentarians willing to cast their vote with Hezbollah's bloc, the Shiite militant group may find itself in weak position: it will have to either turn a blind eye to the STL funds or face the collapse of the government it now leads.

The deadlock over this issue has pushed Suleiman and Mikati to consider bypassing both cabinet and parliament and issuing a decree signed by the President, PM, and Finance and Justice Ministers to allow funding. Should the Suleiman's and Mikati's MPs join Jumblatt in his support for the STL, however, Hezbollah may have to compromise even before the potential decree is raised again.

Middle East News

TheDC Interview: US ambassador to Syria on what comes after Assad, witnessing regime's brutality

By Jamie Weinstein

"I'm sorta amazed that they're not fucking crazy," said Robert Ford, America's chief diplomat in Syria in an atypically undiplomatic moment.



U.S. Ambassador Robert Ford

Ford was discussing how impressed he is with those standing up to the regime of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, and specifically his amazement at how the "many [who] have been in prison for years and years, often in solitary confinement" have mentally persevered under trials that would have broken lesser men.

"The street protestors and the street protest organizers just amaze me for their sheer courage," he raved of the regime opponents more generally. "I don't think Americans can really get a grasp on really how dangerous this is, to go out on these streets with this army and these thugs."

Nominated in 2010 by President Obama to be America's first ambassador



to Syria since 2005, Ford ran into opposition from Senate Republicans who didn't think America should assign the state sponsor of terrorism an ambassador. But President Obama circumvented Senate opposition and gave Ford a recess appointment. He arrived in Damascus at the beginning of 2011, immediately before protests erupted against Syria's dictatorial regime.

Since then, the regime has killed more than 2,700 Syrians and injured many more, according to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

In an extensive interview with The Daily Caller from his mission in Syria, Ford detailed the difficulties of being an ambassador in Syria at this moment of tumult, his quest to bear witness to the evil of the Assad regime and what a post-Assad Syria might look like.

While Ford says he "can move around Damascus very easily," he says he has to "ask for permission" if he wants to leave the capital — requests the Syrian government routinely denies.

"I have asked for permission to visit five cities in the past week and every request has been rejected," he lamented. "So when I go out, and I ignore it, I always get this very stern warning that there will be consequences."

Though defying the regime carries risks, Ford says sitting at his desk all day would be "the worst thing you can do."

"At a certain point you just say, I do the best planning me and my security teams can do, and then you go out there and you do it."

Ford has made multiple trips outside of Damascus to meet with protesters and bear witness to Assad's brutality, most notably a visit in July to the Syrian city



of Hama. In 1982, Bashar-al Assad's father, Hafez, massacred tens of thousands of people in Hama while attempting to put down opposition to his regime. But Ford said that a massacre on that scale is unlikely today given how modern communication has made it near impossible to cover up.

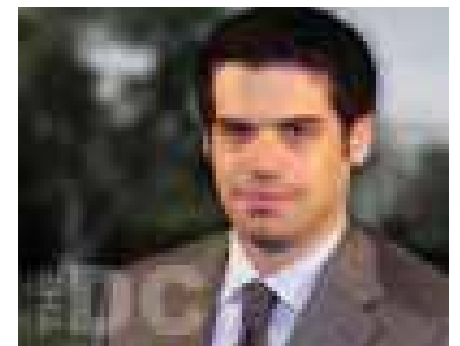
"I think the technology of modern communication has overruled the government's capacity to just kill," he explained. "It doesn't work. And I mean, the protestors, unlike 1982, are fully aware that the international community is watching them."

Also significant, Ford said, is his presence as a personal representative of the American president, which is why he says it is imperative the Senate officially confirm him.

"Lower level diplomats are great, but they don't carry the weight, they don't carry the prestige of the president's personal representative," he explained.

If the Senate doesn't confirm Ford, his recess appointment will expire at the end

of the year.



Jamie Weinstein

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How Arab Youth Found Their Voice

By Ibrahim Mothana (a 22-year-old activist, writer and a community worker from Yemen. He is a youth ambassador for the Arab Thought Foundation).

When Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in Tunisia in January of this year, he did not only ignite a series of unpredicted revolts but also heralded the first appearance of Arab youth on the stage of modern history.

Young people in the Arab world, who had been undermined and perceived as a development burden on the region, became a promise of progress in a new era.

Young people suddenly felt as if a new dimension was discovered through which they could mobilize. They finally exercised their rights and, more importantly, said “never again” to the era of absolute domination and authoritarian regimes.

Their ambitions led them to sacrifice their lives while calling for the replacement of the humiliation and dehumanization they have long experienced with human rights, democracy, equality and legitimate governance.

Millions of youth like me who lived an entire life under one autocratic ruler suddenly changed from being subjects in a society where public opinion didn't matter to being citizens reconfiguring the political, cultural and media spheres.

I received a warm welcome every time protesters found out I was from Yemen, and many insisted on inviting me for a “freedom tea.”

With these movements, a few months of the Arab Spring created a sense of Arab solidarity that decades of political rhetoric and ideological slogans failed to achieve.

I was lucky to visit Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and other Arab countries a few months before the uprising and then witness after that how those historical moments reshaped the identity of young people living in these countries.

Visiting Cairo again in July during the renewed protests was a completely new experience and I could not feel this sense of solidarity anywhere more than in Tahrir Square.

I received exceptional greetings and a warm welcome every time protesters found out I was from Yemen, and many of them insisted on inviting me for a “freedom tea” during which we had endless discussions about the situation in Yemen and the progress of the revolution.

Everyone was surprisingly well-informed and up-to-date with the events in every Arab country going through a process of profound changes and reform. I felt as if Cairo's Tahrir was the headquarters of the Arab uprising.

The dramatic shift in how young people in different countries recognize each other is astonishing. In the past our ties were shallow and negatively affected by numerous crises and conflicts we witnessed in the past decades, offering youth more reasons to disagree and even demonize each other in many cases.

But now a strong sense of mutual struggle and shared noble goals emerged. It is a feeling spontaneously arising from sharing similar grievances and from the need to address them through peaceful and democratic reform. These fostered mutual concerns and ambitions were present in all the youth I met in Cairo, Amman, Beirut and other Arab cities I visited recently.

In addition to strengthening their ties and asserting their commonalities, the Arab Spring created a new identity for young people living in the region. It gave them a dose of self-confidence and changed their attitudes; instead of simply blaming the status quo, they have come to strive to change it.

Even in monarchies, the number of social and political taboos that were broken is outstanding. The women driving campaign in Saudi Arabia and the hashtag

debates in Jordan are examples of the outreach of Arab Spring influence in countries that did not experience revolts.

Young people now are more willing to express their opinions and to be proactive in influencing their societies in whatever context they are living in and are clearly showing support for their fellow Arabs struggling in other countries.

In the past our ties were shallow and negatively affected by numerous crises and conflicts.

Marches, events and online campaigns supporting the freedom of people in Syria, Libya, Yemen have been continuous in the past months. Moreover, citizen journalists throughout the region played an important role in spreading the word and exposing human right violations through Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other social media.

And it is not only bread and material needs, as has been commonly portrayed, that caused the youth awakening and brought about change in these societies that were long denied freedom and opportunities; but rather more importantly, it is the indignities that ordinary citizens have experienced and their inability to exercise their political and social rights.



Thus the slogans of all the protests in the region were all about constitutional changes, rule of law and equality. Arab citizens are working to define themselves rather than be defined by authoritarian regimes or oversimplified Orientalist views. Such a process will definitely take time and require sacrifices, but the outcome on the long term will indisputably be a more prosperous region and empowered nations.

For me, as someone who had the blessing of living through such remarkable moments, the Arab Spring seems to be a resurrection of the Arab youth from the grave of marginalization and repression into an era of a homegrown renaissance.

When our lives seemed to be going towards a dead-end of frustration and video games, the Arab Spring offered the possibility for the first time of a life we could look forward to living.