

# Ahlam Al-Nasr: Daesh poet of poison

Sun, 2019-12-15 01:39

LONDON: "There is no life but through jihad and its honor ... jihad is our life and our victory It is what the soldiers of the enemy fear ... and it is what created happiness in our lives."

The above two stanzas are taken from a poem by the poet and writer Ahlam Al-Nasr encouraging women from around the world to join the terror group Daesh.

While little is known about Al-Nasr, her unconditional support for Daesh's extremist, expansionist aim of imposing strict Shariah law on the world is obvious – and clearly evident through her writing.

"Ahlam Al-Nasr's poetry was punchy and fresh, while still using mainly classical Arabic and the traditional monorhyme and focusing on the timeless tasks of praise, celebration, lament and lampoon," Dr. Elisabeth Kendall, senior research fellow in Arabic and Islamic Studies at Pembroke College, Oxford University, told Arab News.

"Al-Nasr's most powerful and enduring poems are simple clipped compositions that are ideal for conversion into nashids (anthems).

## **BIO**

- Nationality: Syrian
- Place of residence: Unknown
- Occupation: Poet,
- Daesh propagandist
- Medium: Poetry, book entitled 'The Blaze of Truth'

"Set to non-instrumental music and sometimes with violent video footage, their catchy sing-along rhythms can appeal to aspiring Daesh fighters in the West even if their Arabic is weak."

Al-Nasr, whose real name cannot be verified, is thought to have been originally named Shaima Haddad, a young girl from Damascus who fled after the Syrian civil war erupted in 2011. A report by the New Yorker magazine claimed that firsthand experience of the Syrian regime's air raids had triggered her radicalization.

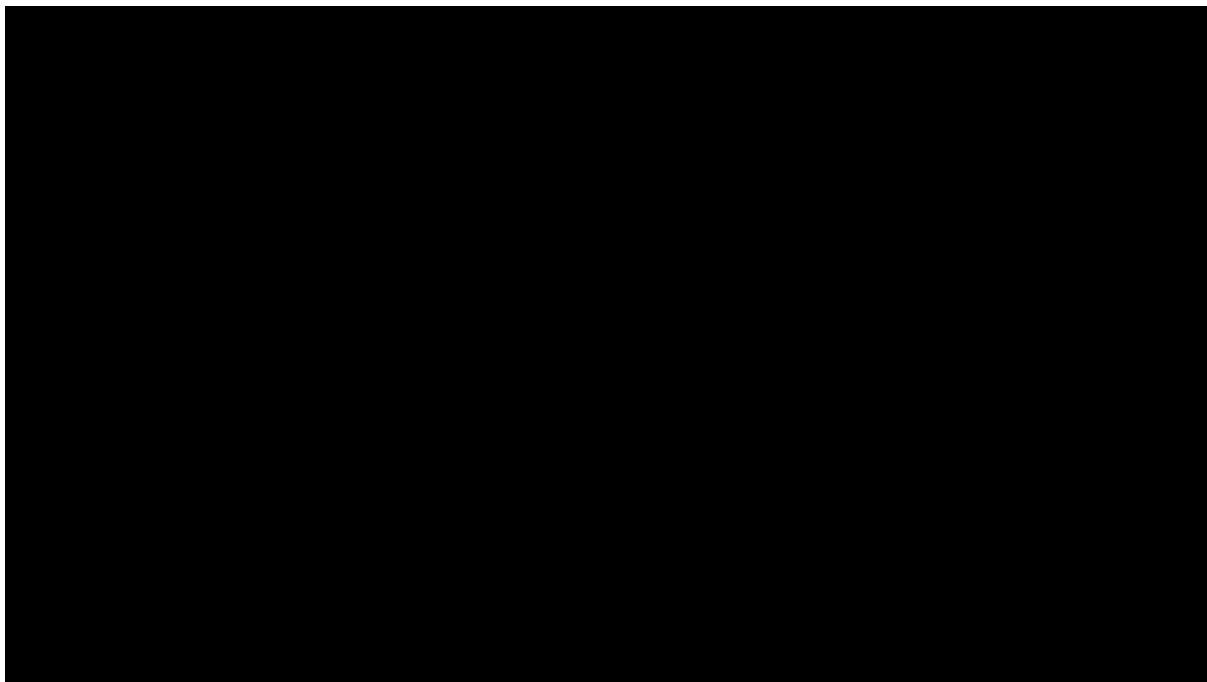
"Their bullets shattered our brains like an earthquake/Even strong bones cracked then broke. They drilled our throats and scattered/our limbs – it was like an anatomy lesson!/They hosed the streets as blood still/Ran/Like streams crashing down from the/Clouds," reads one of her earlier poems on the bloody conflict.

Al-Nasr's family fled to Kuwait shortly after fighting broke out, but the writer did not plan on staying in the small Gulf state for long.

She returned to Syria in June 2014 and, four months later, wed Vienna-born extremist Abu-Usama Al-Gharib in the terror group's de-facto capital Raqqa, which capitalized on her recruitment into Daesh's ranks.

Al-Nasr quickly rose to prominence among the extremists. Her poems covering death and destruction, of loyalty to the caliphate and the beheading of apostates, spread like wildfire among militants and commanders, spurring them even further through romanticized versions of their plight.

"Poetry is an incredibly powerful medium of communication in the Arab world, much loved among educated and illiterate alike," Kendall said. "The Arab version of 'Pop Idol' features aspiring poets and has over 70 million viewers.



"More importantly, poetry endures. Militant jihadi Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and chat forums can be closed down, but the poetry remains lodged in the collective memory."

Al-Nasr was a court poet in Raqqa and was used as an official propagandist for Daesh – an ironic move given the strict restrictions the terror group places on women.

Her book "The Blaze of Truth" is a collection of 107 poems praising the militants' goals and supporting their "journey," with the poetic, elegant prose designed to recruit even more extremists.

In one of her poems, she incites Muslims across the world to kill and burn the enemies of Islam, saying: "Our innocent children have been killed and our free women were horrified/Their only crime was being Muslim/They have no savior/Where are the heroes of Islam?/Kill them and burn them and do not worry about the consequences/follow your almighty sword, and you will make the best news."

# Opinion

This section contains relevant reference points, placed in (Opinion field)

Other poems include praise for Daesh's self-proclaimed caliph and Preacher of Hate Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who committed suicide during a US raid in October, as well as a poem titled "Osama, You Have Left" in which she mourns Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden and refers to him as a "reformer."

Al-Nasr not only writes poems, but has also delivered a 30-page essay detailing her support for Daesh's decision to burn captured Jordanian pilot Muath Al- Kasasbeh.

Much is yet to be discovered about Al-Nasr and her place within Daesh as the organization crumbles in the face of international coalition raids, but one thing is certain – her poetry will continue to be sung by the militants.

"My own survey work in Yemen shows that 74 percent of the population consider poetry either 'important' or 'very important' in daily life," Kendall said.

"No surprise, then, that extremists use it to spread their message," she added.



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## Turkey seeks more EU funds for refugees' upkeep

Author:

Sun, 2019-12-15 00:48

ISTANBUL: The EU should spend more than the €6 billion (\$6.6 billion) already allotted to fund Syrian refugees in Turkey, and speed up the flow of that money, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's EU point person said on Saturday.

EU funds support the roughly 3.5 million Syrian refugees in Turkey, after Syria's more-than eight-year war killed hundreds of thousands and pushed millions from their homes. In turn, Turkey has agreed to halt further immigration to Europe.

"The flow of funds should be sped up and the amount of funding should be increased," said Faruk Kaymakci, a deputy Turkish minister of foreign affairs.

"As long as the crisis is there we have to work together. The €6 billion will not solve the problem when it is finally all spent," Kaymakci told reporters in Istanbul.

The EU, which set up the funding in 2015, says more than €5.6 billion have been allocated, more than 3.5 billion contracted and more than 2.4 billion disbursed.

Kaymakci said hosting the refugees costs Turkey some \$40 billion in total.

Europe's relations with Turkey are strained on several fronts including disagreement over a Turkish military incursion in October against a Kurdish militia in northeast Syria.

Turkey in late October threatened to "open the gates" to allow refugees into Europe unless Europeans back its plan to resettle them in northeast Syria.



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## [Untiring protesters come up against elite in Algeria](#)

Author:

Sun, 2019-12-15 00:15

PARIS: Algeria's unpopular presidential election was meant to reset the country's politics after months of crisis, but it exposed a rigid system determined to perpetuate itself, analysts say.

"You get the impression of two parallel Algerias: A ruling class which congratulates itself on organizing elections and a populace that holds protests," said Maghreb expert and historian Karima Direche.

The North African country plunged into crisis in February when veteran President Abdelaziz Bouteflika announced he would seek a fifth term, sparking mass demonstrations.



Bouteflika quit under popular pressure in April, but the Hirak protest movement has kept up the pressure with weekly mass rallies to demand sweeping reforms.

Thursday's presidential vote was bitterly opposed by Hirak, which saw it as an establishment ploy to cling to power.

Anti-election rallies rocked major cities and in the Berber-dominated region of Kabylie, protesters ransacked polling stations and clashed with police.

Fewer than four out of 10 Algerian voters cast their ballots on Thursday, according to election officials. Direche suspects the real figure may be less than half that.

Officials "stuff the ballot boxes, they fix the numbers. They don't even make the effort" to hide their manipulations, she said.

On Friday, vast crowds descended onto the streets of Algiers to reject newly elected president Abdelmadjid Tebboune, a longtime government insider and former premier under Bouteflika.

But the opposition to the poll "matters little to a regime committed to a sham election intended to prolong its tenure," said Anthony Skinner, regional director at risk analysis firm Verisk Maplecroft.

Algeria's elite, dominated by army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah, sees the turnout as "enough to bestow what it sees as legitimacy on the next president," he said.

"Gaid Salah will probably still treat the election as a success."

Yet with the protest movement showing no sign of abating, that calculus may be wrong, said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor at Sciences Po university in Paris.

"Gaid Salah failed in his bid to stifle popular protest through imposing this election," said Filiu.

The protesters on the other hand "succeeded in making participation the only real issue in this poll, rather than the identity of the future president," he said.

"By sticking to a non-violent approach ... the Hirak is continuing to erode military decision-makers' stranglehold on the country. There will be no going back" to the status quo.

For Direche, the poll was "a new humiliation for the Algerian people," compounding the February decision to allow Bouteflika, 82 and partially paralyzed by a stroke, to attempt to extend his two-decade rule.

Direche said the Hirak may now change its strategy from one of peaceful Friday parades that pose little danger to the Algerian economy, to one of mass strikes and civil disobedience campaigns.

The amorphous movement may have to reconsider its strategy of having no leadership, given that the country's political elite is "running the shop" without any limits on its power, she said.

But Direche said the Hirak has already created a shift in Algerian political life by retaking public space and encouraging citizens to take part in politics.

"It's no longer the same Algerian society or the same country – but it's still the same political system," she said.

"Everything moves, but nothing changes" at the top of the state apparatus.

Algeria's "political software" is "completely obsolete," she added.

"While authoritarian regimes from time to time give some ground so the machine doesn't get stuck, in Algeria, it has already completely broken down."



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Algeria declares former PM Tebboune winner of presidential election

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# Lebanese security forces and Hezbollah supporters clash in central Beirut

Sat, 2019-12-14 18:32

BEIRUT: Clashes broke out on Saturday between Lebanese security forces and Hezbollah supporters in downtown Beirut, some of whom tried to break into a barricaded central district of Lebanon's capital.

Teargas and rubber bullets were fired at the protestors, and the Lebanese Red Cross said several members of the security forces had to be taken to hospital with injuries.

A heavy security presence was put in place central Beirut after the Hezbollah supporters tried to advance to the city's main central Martyr's square, and riot police put out calls through loudspeakers for people in the Al-Khandaq Al-Ghamiq area of central Beirut not to gather.

Hundreds of people were gathered as part of a wave of protests that have swept Lebanon since Oct. 17, furious at a ruling elite that steered the country towards its worst economic crisis in decades.

Since the protests pushed Saad Al-Hariri to resign as prime minister in late October, talks between the main parties have been deadlocked over forming a new cabinet.

Lebanon urgently needs a new government to pull it out of the crisis which has also shaken confidence in its banking system. Foreign donors say they will only help after the country gets a cabinet that can enact reforms.

State news agency NNA said the tear gas had made several people faint, while the Lebanese Red Cross said 14 people were injured, six of them badly enough to need taking to hospital.

The unrest erupted from a build-up of anger at the rising cost of living, new tax plans and the record of leaders dominating the country since the 1975-90 civil war. Protesters accuse the political class of milking the state for their own benefit through networks of patronage.









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## [Morocco ex-diplomat to UN accused of visa fraud over workers](#)

Author:

Reuters

ID:

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Fri, 2019-12-13 20:49

NEW YORK: Prosecutors in New York have charged a former Moroccan ambassador to the United Nations and others with visa fraud, accusing them of bringing workers to the United States using fake employment contracts and then exploiting them.

Abdeslam Jaidi, his ex-wife Maria Luisa Estrella and her brother Ramon Singson brought in more than 10 workers from the Philippines and Morocco since about 2006, according to the indictment filed in federal court in New York.

The visa applications said the workers would be employed as administrative or technical staff at the consulate or Moroccan UN mission, and some included fake employment contracts, it said.

Instead, the workers were used as personal drivers, domestic helpers and farmhands, the indictment said.

They were paid low wages – sometimes less than \$500 a month – and worked long hours without time off. Some had to hand over their passports, it also said.

“This case sends a strong message that diplomatic immunity does not equal impunity,” said Martina Vandenberg, head of the Washington-based Human Trafficking Legal Center.

“Even high-ranking diplomats can be called to account if there are allegations of visa fraud and exploitation.”

Jaidi served as UN ambassador from Morocco.

Other foreign diplomats in the United States have been accused in recent years over treatment of their employees.

Earlier this year, the US government suspended new visas for domestic employees of Malawian officials after one of its diplomats failed to pay \$1.1 million in damages to a woman she trafficked in the United States.

Supporters have warned that domestic workers employed by diplomats are vulnerable to abuses and even human trafficking because their visas chain them to specific employers.

Being tied to a specific employer means they cannot switch to a better job



and if they quit, they typically must leave the country. The charges, filed on Thursday in US District Court in White Plains, N.Y., were conspiracy to commit offenses and defraud and conspiracy to induce aliens to come to, enter and reside in the country. The crimes carry maximum sentences of five and 10 years in prison, respectively. Estrella, 60, was arrested in March, while Jaidi, 82, who lives in Rabat, Morocco, and Singson, 55, who lives in Manila, are at large. Her lawyers declined to comment.



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