

Middle East will get to net zero on its terms with realistic targets

Mon, 2021-11-01 00:04

LONDON: Leaders of the Middle East emphasized their commitment to step up investment in renewables when they met in Riyadh earlier this week.

But the real message that came out of the inaugural Middle East Green Initiative is that the transition to a net-zero future must be gradual and must not damage regional economic growth.

The economies of the Gulf states, of course, rely heavily on oil income. But it wasn't just the heads of oil-producing countries making the case for realism as the world seeks to combat global warming.

Larry Fink, the billionaire chairman of US investment giant BlackRock expressed the same view. Fink was one of several high-profile financial and political figures who made the trip to Riyadh to attend MGI, a list that included the US climate czar John Kerry, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, and HSBC UK boss Noel Quinn.

While Fink predicted that the next thousand "unicorns" – startups valued at over \$1 billion – will be sustainable companies, he also confirmed BlackRock, the world's largest fund manager, had no plans to divest from hydrocarbons. Fink said: "We're supportive of hydrocarbon companies, and believe they will be part of the solution of the green revolution of new green technology." This was echoed in comments made at MGI by Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman. Prince Abdulaziz said: "We are working on technologies to ensure we extend the duration of use of hydrocarbons albeit in a way that would let it be mitigated and therefore not contribute to any additional emissions."

He reiterated that Saudi Arabia, the world's top oil exporter, supplying 10 percent of global demand, was "not moving away" from oil and gas but "diversifying" to broaden the Kingdom's energy base and the wider economy.

FASTFACT

Saudi Arabia will reach net zero emissions by 2060, a target the Kingdom insists is more realistic than the global benchmark of 2050 because many of the new technologies required for the energy transformation won't be fully effective before 2040 at least.

Prince Abdulaziz added: "We are the holders of the cheapest solar kWh, the cheapest when it comes to wind, and we believe we will continue to be competitive. We believe we will continue to produce hydrogen, and again, we will be the cheapest producer of hydrogen." Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Ali Allawi, whose country is the sixth-largest oil producer, also called for the transition to be carried out in a "gradual manner." He added the West needed to do more to transfer knowledge and technology to

developing countries to help them reach emissions goals.

During the summit, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reiterated his pledge that Saudi Arabia will reach net zero emissions by 2060, a target the Kingdom insists is more realistic than the global benchmark of 2050 because many of the new technologies required for the energy transformation won't be fully effective before 2040 at least.

Bahrain has also pledged to reach net-zero by the same date, while the UAE has said it will do so by 2050 – at the same time as it also plans to expand its oil production capacity 25 percent by 2030.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also announced the Kingdom will invest \$1 billion in climate change initiatives as part of a regional \$10.4 billion fund to reduce Middle East carbon emissions. Saudi Arabia also announced plans to establish a regional carbon capture and storage center, a regional early storm warning center, a regional cloud seeding program, and a hub for climate change.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom's own Saudi Green Initiative program will involve a range of separate investments, totaling around \$190 billion by 2030, which will include carbon capture, direct air capture – a technology capable of pulling the greenhouse gas out of the air – and hydrogen.

Saudi Arabia also plans to plant 450 million trees in a bid to reduce almost 300 million tons of carbon emissions a year.

Commenting on MGI, the UN's Amina Mohammed said the summit offered a strategic vision to transition regional economies away from unsustainable development, to a model "fit for the challenges of the 21st century."

She said: "It will not only help reduce emissions from the oil and gas industry in the region but will also create new carbon sinks and help restore and protect vast swaths of land through afforestation."



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COP26 may mark a turning point in historyGlasgow students quids in as COP26 comes to town

[Daughter of Edward Said remembers her 'best friend' on his 86th birth anniversary](#)

Sun, 2021-10-31 21:28

DUBAI: The world will always remember Edward Said as a man of letters with a wide range of interests.

Born to Palestinian parents in British-ruled Jerusalem in the 1930s, he became an internationally recognized author, critic, professor, public thinker, gifted pianist, founding figure of postcolonial studies and lifelong proponent of the Palestinian cause.

However, in the eyes of his only daughter, the actress, playwright and author of "Looking for Palestine," Najla Said, he was simply "Daddy."

Her earliest memory of her father shows just how attached she was to him from a very young age.



Young girl Najla and her “best friend” dad. (Supplied)

“I remember being about two or three years old and I had a bloody nose. My mother told me to lie down and hold my nose, but I remember when my dad came home from work, I jumped up, shouting ‘Daddy!’ and ran toward him while blood was running down my nose,” she told Arab News in a video interview. “I was so excited that he was home. I loved him very, very much.”

Najla Said grew up in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, where she faced a personal identity crisis as an Arab-American, feeling like an outsider at a posh all-girls school that she said lacked diversity.

“I was never around people like me and it was very confusing,” she said. “My friends were all blonde, they had tiny little bones, and they all seemed to know each other from their summer houses. I spent a lot of my childhood in Lebanon, going back and forth before I started school, and I came from this

enormous, wonderful family that I loved but as soon as I went to school, I realized that somehow I was different.”

The older she got, the more prominent her father became in the public eye, which she found embarrassing at the time.

“A lot of people have said to me, ‘How could you have grown up with this person and been ashamed of being Palestinian?’ But that’s the whole point, because I think people don’t realize that before the last 20 or so years, people in America from other countries would be very uncomfortable revealing their ethnic identity, because the whole idea was to be American and assimilate.”

Today, as an adult woman, she views her father differently.

Said’s magnum opus, “Orientalism,” presented his perspective of how the West had degradingly perceived the East, or “the Orient,” in everything from literary texts to popular representation.

Though it was published in 1978, it remains highly relevant and is required reading for college students in many countries.

Said’s speeches were so captivating that, as one close friend said, “when he spoke, the whole room was just spellbound, not daring to say a word.”

“After 9/11, in the last couple of years of his life, I was really proud to be his daughter. I was old enough to understand,” Najla Said told Arab News.

As his fame grew, so too did the aggression of his critics, she recalls. His life was in danger, subject to death threats, and his office at Columbia University, where he taught for four decades, was once set ablaze.

Said describes her father as “ahead of his time.”

“I think he was saying things people weren’t ready to hear.”

She believes he paved the way for people to openly assert their multi-layered identity. “When I went to college in the early 1990s, when the political correctness movement was just beginning, everyone was saying, ‘I’m African-American, I’m Asian-American.’ He gets the credit for ‘Asian-American’ because he was the one who said, ‘oriental’ is not a good word.”

Najla and Edward are alike in several ways: Like him, she is passionate, temperamental and expressive in her writing. She cherishes some of the moments she shared with her father, including rubbing shoulders with literary giants.

Attending a UNESCO committee in Paris together in 1993, they met the Italian philosopher Umberto Eco and the Colombian novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

“My dad was parading me around on his arm and Gabriel Garcia Marquez came up to me and asked me, in French, which of his books I’d read, and I said, ‘None of them.’ Marquez said, ‘I can’t believe that girl said that to me,’ and he

took me by the arm, saying: 'I like her!' My dad felt so proud of me."

To Najla, her father was a gentleman, a man who loved to puff away on his pipe and listen to Wagner. He collected pens and ties, and his tweed suits were tailored in Savile Row, in London. He was conversational and loyal, but did not mince his words.

Edward Said befriended the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and disagreed with Yasser Arafat. On air, he challenged television journalists such as Charlie Rose and Tim Sebastian over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He did not like pop music, nor the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum, who he said sounded like she was wailing.

His passion for classical music led him to work with his friend, the veteran Israeli-Argentinian conductor Daniel Barenboim, to establish in 1999 the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, made up mostly of Arab and Israeli musicians. "He even said, at the end of his life, that the greatest thing he ever did was that orchestra," said Najla.

She said her father encouraged her pursuit of the arts and was supportive when she struggled with anorexia, heartbreaks and self-doubt. "I was in college and I had shown him a draft of my senior thesis and said, 'I'm so dumb'." In a handwritten note, he responded: "There are a lot of things you are, Naj. Dumb isn't one of them."

Najla Said remembers her dad as sweet and loving and a man who always made time for his family. "The only place I ever felt safe was with my mother (Mariam), father and brother (Wadie). It was like us against the world. The idea of 'home' is: My family is home," she said.

To this day, she finds her father's fame surreal. "I'm still surprised by how many people know who he is," she said. "I went back to one of my college reunions at Princeton, which is a very white, preppy school, and the kid, a typical American boy, who checked me in said, 'What's your last name?' and I replied, 'Said,' and he goes, 'Oh, like Edward!'"

He changed how the world approached representation. In 2015, a fashion exhibit entitled 'China: Through the Looking Glass' was put on at the Metropolitan Museum, and on the wall at the beginning they flashed up his name. "The people at the museum were like, 'We have to be careful of how we present,'" she recalled. "I never thought I'd see my dad on the wall of a fashion exhibition."

The fact that her father remains alive in the hearts of so many has been a source of comfort for Said. "I feel like I'm not alone. If I'm in an unfamiliar place and someone knows who he is, I feel, 'OK, I'm safe here,' because someone knows who I am and they're OK with that."

Najla was only 17 when Said was diagnosed with leukemia in the early 1990s, a battle he fought until his death in 2003, six months after the US invasion of Iraq.

"He used to joke that he 'took off' as soon as we invaded Iraq," she said.

“He was like, ‘Ah! I’m done. No one’s listening to me. I’ve got to go.’”

As the disease began to take its toll on Said’s health, he lost weight and his voice became hoarse, his daughter recalled, but “he still had this fire in him.”

Nearly 20 years after his death, Edward Said continues to be an inspiration for marginalized peoples the world over. “What he was saying was basic and universal, and ultimately about humanity,” she said.

Said would have turned 86 on Nov. 1. He loved birthdays and an ideal gift for him was clothing.

On a day that is heavy with emotions for the family, Najla Said has a wish. “At the end of the day, losing a parent is hard,” she said. “I miss him so much, it’s hard to even explain. I was definitely a daddy’s girl and he was my best friend. So, I would say: ‘Please come back. This is nonsense.’”

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Refugee who keeps the memory of Palestine alive
Palestinians in Saudi Arabia reflect on home as 51st Naksa is marked

[Tens of thousands protest Sudan's coup, 3 protesters killed](#)

Sun, 2021-10-31 02:21

CAIRO: Tens of thousands of Sudanese took to the streets across the country Saturday, in the largest pro-democracy protest yet since the military seized control earlier this week.

Three protesters were killed and dozens injured – several by live rounds – as security forces opened fire in several locations, a doctors' union said.

The coup, condemned by the international community, has threatened to derail Sudan's fitful transition to democracy, which began after the 2019 ouster of long-time autocrat Omar Al-Bashir. Since then, the military and civilian leaders have governed in an uneasy partnership.

Pro-democracy groups had called for protests across the country Saturday to demand the re-instating of a deposed transitional government and the release of senior political figures from detention.

The United States and the United Nations had warned Sudan's strongman, Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, that they view the military's treatment of the protesters as a test, and called for restraint.

Burhan has claimed that the transition to democracy would continue despite the military takeover, saying he would install a new technocrat government soon. But the pro-democracy movement in Sudan fears the military has no intention of easing its grip, and will appoint politicians it can control. Saturday's large turnout is bound to increase pressure on the generals who face condemnations from the US and other Western countries to restore a civilian-led government.

Crowds began to gather Saturday afternoon in the capital of Khartoum and its twin city Omdurman. Marchers chanted "Give it up, Burhan," and "revolution, revolution." Some held up banners reading, "Going backward is impossible." The demonstrations were called by the Sudanese Professionals' Association and the so-called Resistance Committees. Both were at the forefront of an uprising that toppled longtime autocrat Omar Al-Bashir and his Islamist government in 2019. They are also calling for the dismantling of paramilitary groups and restructuring of the military, intelligence and security agencies. All three protesters killed Saturday were shot in Omdurman. One was shot in his head, another in his stomach, and a third in his chest, the Sudan Doctors Committee and protesters said.

The committee, which is part of the Sudanese Professionals' Association, said security forces had used live ammunition against protesters in Omdurman and nearby. It said it counted more than 110 people wounded, some with gunshots, in Khartoum, Omdurman and the eastern province of Al-Qadarif.

Sudanese police denied using live ammunition and said in a statement that a policeman was wounded by gunfire. They said they used tear gas to disperse groups of demonstrators who allegedly attacked their forces and "important positions." The statement did not elaborate.

Elsewhere, security forces fired tear gas at protesters as they attempted to cross the Manshia Bridge over the Nile River to reach Khartoum's downtown, said Mohammed Yousef Al-Mustafa, a spokesman for the professionals' association.

"No power-sharing mediation with the military council again," he said, marching at an area protest.

Anti-coup protests also erupted in other areas, including the Red Sea city of Port Sudan, Kassala in eastern Sudan, and Obeid, in North Kordofan province, according to activists.

As night fell, plain clothes security forces chased off protesters in Khartoum and Omdurman, to prevent them from setting up sit-ins, activists said. In some neighborhoods, protesters blocked roads with makeshift barricades.

Earlier on Saturday, security forces blocked major roads and bridges linking Khartoum's neighborhoods. Security was tight downtown and outside the military's headquarters, the site of a major sit-in during the 2019 uprising. Since the military takeover, street protests have been daily. With Saturday's fatal shootings, the overall number of people killed by security forces since the coup rose to 12, according to the Sudan Doctors' Committee and activists. More than 280 others were wounded. Troops have fired live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas at anti-coup demonstrators, and beat protesters with sticks in recent days.

Meanwhile, talks are ongoing to try to mitigate the crisis.

Late Friday, the UN special envoy for Sudan, Volker Perthes, met with Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, a coup leader seen as close to Burhan. Dagalo commands the feared Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary unit that controls the streets of Khartoum and played a major role in the coup.

He said the UN's transition mission for Sudan is facilitating dialogue between the top generals and civilian leaders. Perthes said this "remains the only path toward a peaceful solution to the current crisis."

A Sudanese military official said Saturday that a UN-supported national committee began separate meetings with Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and Burhan to find common ground.

The official said Hamdok demanded the release of all government officials and political figures arrested since the coup. Burhan, the official said, gave an initial approval to release "most" of the detained, but rejected the release of others, including Khalid Omar, the minister of Cabinet Affairs, saying they face accusations of inciting troops to rebellion.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to release the information.

Meanwhile, the UN said it is closely monitoring security forces' response on Saturday.

"They will be held individually accountable for any excessive use of force

against protesters,” said Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, the UN special rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Burhan has claimed that the takeover was necessary to prevent a civil war, citing what he said were growing divisions among political groups. However, the takeover came less than a month before he was to have handed some power to a civilian.

Burhan installed himself as head of a military council that he said will rule Sudan until elections in July 2023. Observers say it’s doubtful the military will allow a full transition to civilian rule, if only to block civilian oversight of the military’s large financial holdings.





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Sudan braces for 'million-strong' march against bloody coup
Sudan coup leader says technocrat will lead new government, ousted PM could return

[UN urges talks on Western Sahara after cease-fire breakdown](#)

Author:

Sun, 2021-10-31 00:07

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council extended the UN peacekeeping mission in disputed Western Sahara for a year on Friday, expressing concern at the breakdown of the 1991 cease-fire between Morocco and the pro-independence Polisario Front and calling for a revival of UN-led negotiations.

The vote was 13-0 with Russia and Tunisia abstaining.

The US-drafted resolution makes no mention of US backing for Morocco's claim to the mineral-rich territory in the waning days of the Trump administration as part of efforts to get Morocco to recognize Israel.

Morocco annexed Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony believed to have considerable offshore oil deposits and mineral resources, in 1975, sparking a conflict with the Polisario Front.

The UN-brokered the 1991 cease-fire and established a peacekeeping mission to monitor the truce and help prepare a referendum on the territory's future that has never taken place because of disagreements on who is eligible to vote.

The Front ended the 29-year cease-fire with Morocco last November and resumed its armed struggle following a border confrontation with Morocco which continues today.

The Moroccan military had launched an operation that month in the UN-patrolled Guerguerat border zone to clear a key road it said had been blockaded for weeks by Polisario supporters.

Morocco has proposed wide-ranging autonomy for Western Sahara.

But the Polisario Front insists the local population, which it estimates at 350,000 to 500,000, has the right to a referendum.



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Sahara tension: Moroccan row deepens with Germany Morocco, Algeria clash at UN General Assembly over Western Sahara

[Lebanon's FM sees possible breakthrough in diplomatic spat sparked by pro-Houthi minister](#)

Sat, 2021-10-30 23:54

BEIRUT: Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdullah Bou Habib on Saturday expressed optimism that the diplomatic crisis triggered by the country's information minister would soon be resolved.

George Kordahi's statement – that Yemen's Houthis were only defending themselves – did not sit well with Saudi Arabia as well as Yemen's legitimate government and their allies, who have been fighting the Iran-backed militia

since 2015.

The militia seized Yemen's capital, Sanaa, and other provinces from the UN-recognized government in 2014, prompting Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries to organize a coalition to contain the threat. Since then, the Houthis had been launching ballistic missiles, rockets and armed drones against civilian targets in Saudi Arabia.

As the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement came to Kordahi's defense, the crisis worsened on Saturday, with [Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE recalling their ambassadors from Lebanon](#) in solidarity with Saudi Arabia. They also ordered Lebanon's ambassadors to leave their countries within 48 hours.

Habib's committee, tasked by Prime Minister Najib Mikati to resolve the crisis, failed to reach a way out of the scandal during the closed meeting it held on Saturday apparently due to objections by the Marada Movement, to which Kordahi is affiliated.

Richard Michaels, deputy head of the US mission in Lebanon, joined the meeting at Bou Habib's request but left the meeting half an hour later.

Mikati had asked Kordahi to resign on Friday night, but Marada Movement head Suleiman Frangieh objected.

"If I were to serve my personal and political interest, I would encourage Kordahi to resign as he has offered to submit his resignation at the Baabda Palace and in the Maronite Patriarchate, but I refused because my conscience does not allow me to ask this of a minister who did not make a mistake, but simply gave his opinion in a free country before he was appointed," he said.

Frangieh added: "We have a firm conviction of wanting excellent relations with the Arab countries. Our position regarding Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Gulf countries is clear."

He refused to "sacrifice" Kordahi for anyone, saying that if the minister were to resign or be fired then the movement would not name a replacement.

Nonetheless, Habib mentioned a possible breakthrough in the coming hours. He also pointed to the participation of the US in resolving the crisis.

"I was the one who invited the American diplomat to join the meeting because the Americans can help in asking Saudi Arabia to find a way out," he said.

Habib dismissed Frangieh's comments as "political opinions that have nothing to do with our meeting, and we are working technically to solve the crisis."

US State Department spokesman Samuel Warberg told the Lebanese Al-Jadeed TV station: "The US urges the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE, and countries in the region to communicate with the Lebanese government.

He said the US government was working with the international community to secure support for the Lebanese government. "We are waiting to see transparency and accountability on the government's part," he added.

'Adding fuel to the fire'

[Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit](#) expressed his “deep concern and regret over the rapid deterioration in Lebanese-Gulf relations, especially at a time when efforts were made to restore positive ties to help Lebanon overcome the challenges it is facing.”

He said the Lebanese should have handled the crisis caused by Kordahi's comments “more carefully, instead of adding fuel to the fire.”

Lebanese officials have tried to contain the diplomatic crisis, amid Hezbollah's insistence that Kordahi should not resign under the pretext of “preserving Lebanese sovereignty and national dignity,” according to a party statement. This position was reiterated by a number of Hezbollah MPs on Saturday.

“Hezbollah and the Amal movement could make their ministers resign from the government if Kordahi were to do so,” the Al Markazia news agency reported.

Former Lebanese Prime Ministers Fouad Siniora, Saad Hariri and Tammam Salam denounced “Kordahi's positions that violate the Arab, diplomatic and moral principles and norms.”

They demanded that he immediately submit his resignation, as his ministerial position now posed “a threat to Lebanese-Arab relations and to Lebanon's interest.”

They stressed the policy of disassociation they had adopted and warned against “joining the axis led by Iran in the region.”

They said Hezbollah had been interfering and playing a destructive role since its involvement in Arab crises and wars, not to mention its involvement in the Yemen war waged by Iran against Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Hariri criticized “the reckless ideas in the name of sovereignty that lead Lebanon to an unprecedented Arab isolation, the price of which the Lebanese people are paying.”

He said: “The responsibility, first and foremost, in this regard lies with Hezbollah, and its professed hostility toward the Arabs and the Arab Gulf states.”

Hariri said: “You want a state with sovereignty and national dignity, so remove Iran's wing from Lebanon, put an end to arrogant policies and stop threatening the Lebanese with an army that outnumbers the state's army and its security and military institutions.”

Hezbollah rules

Kataeb Party head Samy Gemayel believed Kordahi's comments were “proof” of how the country's political forces had “surrendered” to Hezbollah, allowing

it to take over the presidency, government and parliament.

The diplomatic crisis between Lebanon and the Arab Gulf states coincides with one related to Lebanese exports to the Gulf, following the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs saying the Kingdom had banned all Lebanese imports.

According to statistics from the Lebanese Association of Agriculture, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries import 173,300 tons or 55.4 percent of Lebanon's total exports of vegetables and fruits.

This means Lebanon will lose \$92 million annually under this ban, which is the equivalent of \$250,000 per day.

Lebanese economic bodies have criticized "the misfortunes that unexpectedly come upon Lebanon, at a time when the Lebanese are suffering in various aspects of their lives and were waiting for an initiative from the government to pull Lebanon out of the gutter, not ruin Lebanese relations with the Gulf states that have constituted a strategic economic lever for Lebanon over the years."





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Arab League expresses concern over deterioration of Lebanese-Gulf relations
Saudi foreign minister says crisis with Lebanon has its origins in Hezbollah dominance