

# A restored Palestinian library in Jerusalem preserves heritage, encourages research

Author:

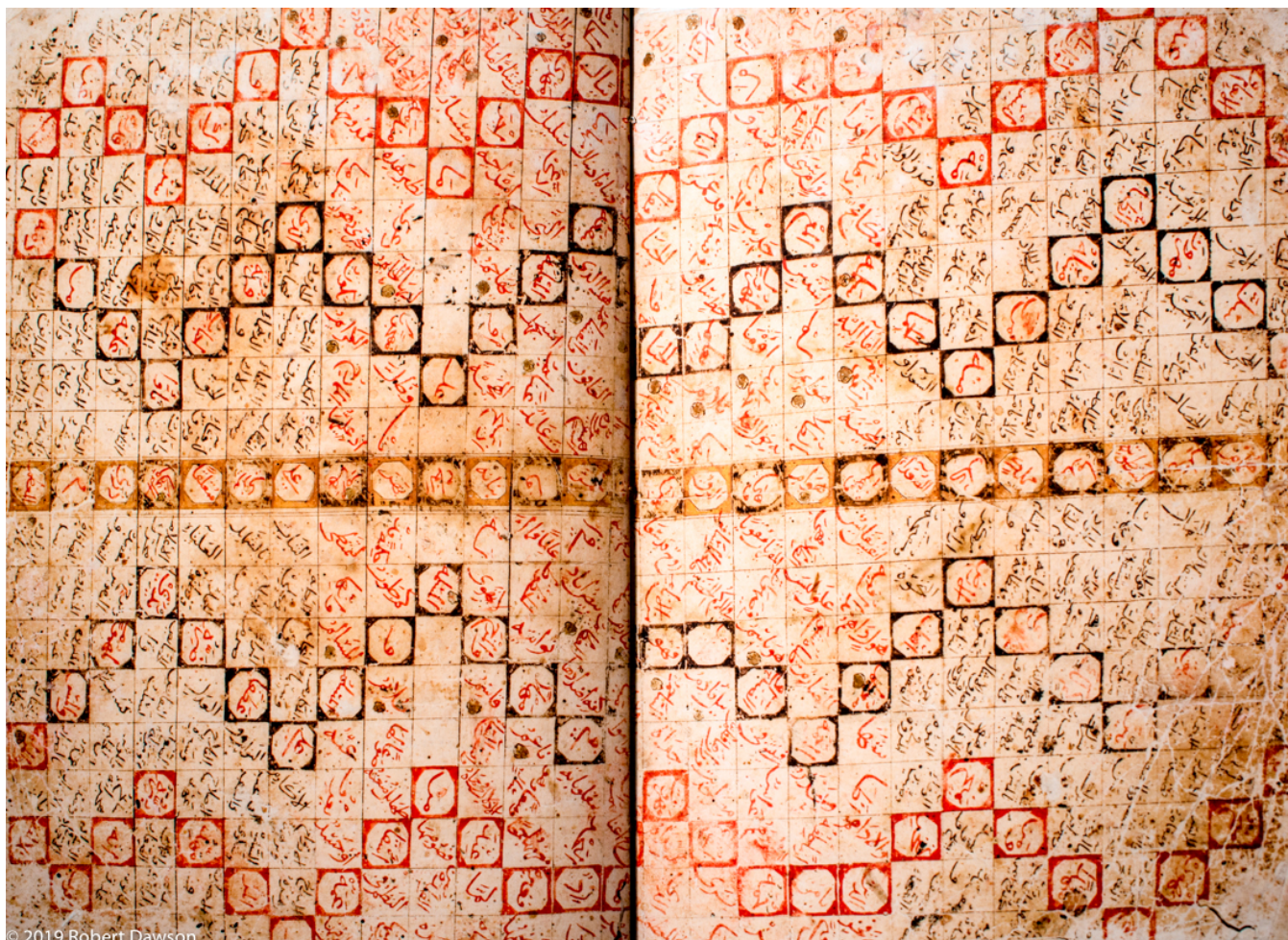
Fri, 2021-01-29 00:41

AMMAN: At the turn of the 20th century, Hajj Raghib Al-Khalidi realized he must act to preserve the rich collection of books and manuscripts his family had assembled over many generations.

In 1900, the Jerusalem-based intellectual gathered together the many volumes and papers scattered among his extended family and catalogued them in a single location. With that, the Khalidi Library was born.

Now, over a century later, Khalidi's descendants have carried out a major restoration, which has seen the library's centuries-old collection preserved and digitized for scholars to access worldwide.

The library, known in Arabic as Al-Maktaba Al-Khalidiyya, was established in the Old City of Jerusalem in Tariq Bab Al-Silsilah near the Bab Al-Silsilah, one of the main gates to Al-Haram Al-Sharif – also known as Temple Mount – home of Al-Aqsa Mosque.



An old manuscript found at Khalidi Library in Jerusalem's Old City.  
(Supplied)

It contains one of the world's biggest private collections of Arabic manuscripts (approximately 1,200 titles), the oldest of which is about 1,000 years old. Among them are about 200 extremely rare Islamic texts, many of them intricately decorated with geometric motifs in colored ink.

Its printed collection, mostly of 19th century vintage, contains around 5,500 volumes. There is also a massive archive of family papers going back to the early 18th century.

The Khalidis claim to trace their ancestry to the early Muslim conqueror Khalid ibn Al-Walid, who died in 642. A family called Khalidi was documented in Jerusalem in the 11th century. The best attested family lineage, however, dates back to the 14th and 15th centuries during the Mamluk Empire.

The Mamluk-era building where the library is situated has also stood the test of time. Built in 1389, it has outlasted successive rulers from the Umayyad Caliphate and the Ottoman Empire to the British Mandate, standing proud even today under Israeli occupation.

For Palestinians, the library is a living testament to their historic claim to the Holy City, dealing the "false Zionist narrative" a sound rebuttal, according to one of Khalidi's descendents.

## **KHALIDI LIBRARY MILESTONES**

- 1389 – The Mamluk-era building is constructed.
- 1900 – Raghib Al-Khalidi establishes library.
- 1967 – East Jerusalem is annexed by Israel.
- 1989 – Friends of the Khalidi Library is incorporated.

"A library of rare books and manuscripts that goes back to the 10th and 11th century is proof that Jerusalemites and Palestinians have been a center of culture and civilization for millennia," Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian-American historian of the Middle East and Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University, told Arab News.

"(Zionists) argue we don't exist and that we have a fabricated history and that other people are indigenous to this land and we are not. We the Palestinians are the people of this land while the other narrative is that of the settler-colonial project that was imposed on us."

At the close of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, Jerusalem was left divided between Jordan and the fledgling state of Israel. The Arab defeat sparked a massive flight of Palestinians to Arab countries of the Levant region that is known as Al-Nakba – literally "the catastrophe."

At the conclusion of the 1967 war, matters became even worse for the Palestinians when Israeli forces overcame the Jordanian army's resistance and



captured East Jerusalem. The resulting shift in the balance of power drove out much of the remaining Arab population. In 1980 Israel annexed Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally.

More recently, in a controversial decision in 2018, Donald Trump's administration moved the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, officially recognizing the city as Israel's capital. Palestinians have long sought East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.



No matter which party is in power in Washington, Israeli settlements keep expanding into occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank, dimming hopes of a peaceful resolution to the decades-old conflict and the creation of a Palestinian state. But the descendants of those displaced families, scattered across the Middle East and in the far-flung corners of diaspora, have not stopped lobbying for the right of return.

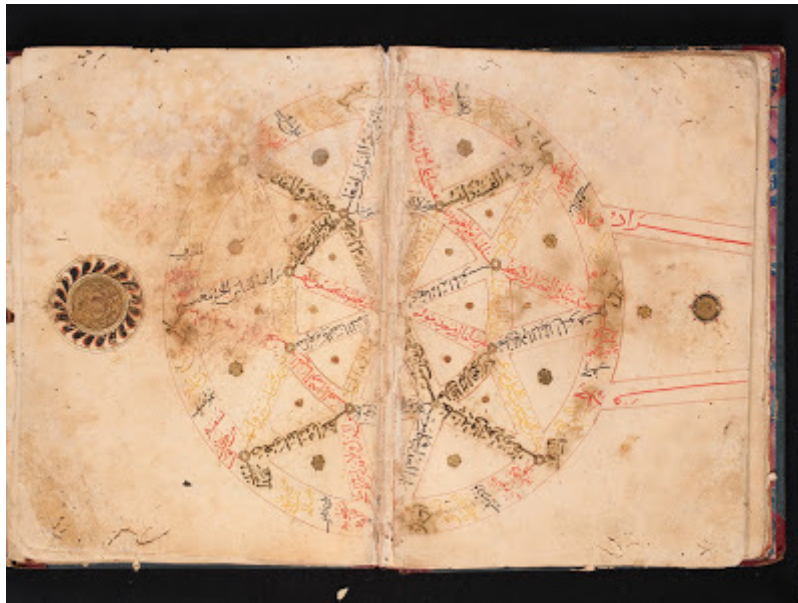
"After the 1967 occupation, there were serious concerns we would lose the library even though it is registered as a protected family endowment," Raja Khalidi, another descendant of the library's founder, told Arab News.

Raja is the director-general of the Ramallah-based Palestine Economic Policy

Research Institute (MAS), who previously served as a senior economist with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

He spent most of his life in the diaspora, but returned to Palestine in recent years to join the family's efforts to protect and preserve the library which bears their name.

"Different members of our family rebuffed Israeli attempts to confiscate the library and in the end parts of the roof were confiscated to allow for the creation of Jewish yeshiva (religious schools)," he said.



An old manuscript found at Khalidi Library in Jerusalem's Old City.  
(Supplied)

In 1989, the Friends of the Khalidi Library (FKL) was incorporated in the US under the chairmanship of Walid Khalidi to rally support and solicit funds to protect the site.

Donations quickly flooded in from members of the extended family, the Ford Foundation, UNESCO, the Dutch government and the Arab Economic and Social Fund in Kuwait, among many other sources.

With these funds, according to the Khalidis, the Boston-based FKL was not only able to stave off Israeli encroachments but also completely renovate, refurbish and re-equip the library and preserve its valuable holdings.

Raja and his fellow court-appointed administrators, Asem and Khalil, worked hard to save the old manuscripts with the help of foreign experts, who trained local staff to continue the preservation work.

Every document, book and manuscript has finally been scanned and catalogued. "It took us years to do that but we are excited that all the original manuscripts are now saved and protected and their content is scanned for all researchers to use online," Raja said.





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Inside the Khalidi Library in Jerusalem's Old City. (Supplied)

Several of the texts held by the library shed light on the history of Palestinians in Jerusalem, explore the Arab presence in the region, and tell the story of the Khalidi family and its connections to the city.

The goal of the library is not only to preserve heritage but to also encourage research, according to Raja. "We want to be known not only as a repository but also a regenerator of original publications," he said.

To this end, the library, in addition to preserving old manuscripts, has branched out into publishing, recently printing a work by Rouhi Khalidi, who died in 1913, titled "Zionism, or the Zionist Question" – quite possibly the first book on the subject penned by a Palestinian.

Rashid feels it is wrong to deny Israelis their national identity. "Just like in America, we recognize the American people even though they created a country by the expulsion of the indigenous people and created their own settler-colonial reality," he said.

Even though many Israeli researchers "are blinded by their chauvinism and racism and who disbelieve that we have a legitimate national history," Rashid believes the Khalid Library could serve as a useful resource for the many Israeli researchers who acknowledge the Palestinian narrative.

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Grand Mosque library uses ozone tech to preserve manuscripts

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## [Former MEPs slam Iran's terror campaign across Europe](#)

Author:

Fri, 2021-01-29 01:06

LONDON: A group of former Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) have slammed Iran for its campaign of terror across Europe. A cross-party panel of former European policymakers and experts on Tehran's use of terrorism criticized the regime for using intelligence assets as terrorists.

The panel, hosted by the International Committee in Search of Justice (ISJ),

gathered amid a diplomatic crisis between Iran and the EU, with an Iranian diplomat currently on trial for planning to bomb an anti-Tehran rally in Paris.

Assadollah Assadi – a senior Iranian diplomat at the embassy in Vienna, Austria – and his three co-conspirators are charged with plotting a terror attack on an annual gathering of the Iranian opposition in 2018.

The “Free Iran” gathering was launched to show support for the Iranian opposition leader Maryam Rajavi’s proposed roadmap for the future of Iran, which calls for the universal right to vote, free elections, and a market economy.

A court in Belgium is expected to offer its ruling on the case of Assadi and his conspirators on Feb. 4.

The ISJ panel included Alejo Vidal-Quadras, former vice president of the European Parliament, Giulio Terzi, former Italian foreign minister, Struan Stevenson, former Scotland MEP, and Paulo Casaca, a former Portuguese MEP.

Vidal-Quadras said: “I would advise policymakers that if you want peace and stability in the region, if you want human rights to be respected in Iran, do not engage with this regime.”

On the foiled plot to bomb the rally in 2018, Vidal-Quadras said: “Fortunately, this plot was disrupted through the cooperation of European governments. The latest revelations from the trial show that the Iranian-Belgian couple Nasimeh Naami and Amir Saadouni, who received the bomb directly from Assadi, were instructed to place the explosive device as close as possible to Rajavi.”

He added: “I was sitting very close to Rajavi. First-rank political figures were sitting in a space of a few meters around her. You can imagine the consequences if such an attack succeeded.”

Terzi told the audience: “There are many questions about this case and European policy. How is Europe going to stop these terrorist activities? If we look at history, there have been a lot of terrorist actions on European soil that the regime has denied despite a huge amount of evidence that pointed to Iran. How will Europe stop these terrorist attacks against Europeans and political refugees?

Asked by Arab News how the EU could combat Iran’s reign of terror across the continent, Stevenson said: “The only policy that works is toughness and decisiveness.”

He added: “To stop Tehran’s terrorism, the EU must list the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, the Quds Force and the intelligence services as terrorist outfits.

“Secondly, the EU must investigate who Assadi met in Europe, and whom he paid. Identify and arrest these agents and expel them.”



His final suggestion was for the EU to “shut down Iran’s embassies until we have absolute assurance that the regime will dismantle their terror network in Europe.”

Casaca said: “European institutions should reinforce European unity, uphold the rule of law, and ensure the protection of values that keep our countries together, including freedom and protection from terrorism.

“They must not bow to foreign terrorist powers that want us to bow before them. The regime must not enjoy impunity in causing terrorism.”



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[Lebanon launches online platform for](#)

# vaccine registration

Author:

Fri, 2021-01-29 00:02

BEIRUT: Lebanon on Thursday launched an electronic platform for citizens and residents wishing to receive the coronavirus vaccine.

Meanwhile, protests over the full lockdown have spread to cities in the south of Lebanon, considered as pro-Hezbollah and Amal Movement.

Demonstrations in Tripoli turned violent – a protester was killed and tens of people were injured during clashes with security forces that have continued for the fifth consecutive day.

In a conference on Thursday, Lebanon's Caretaker Health Minister Hamad Hassan hoped citizens would "respond to the national plan to inoculate over 80 percent of the population and achieve herd immunity to protect society from the virus."

Registration began as soon as the platform's launch was announced, with an average of 2,000 people visiting the site every five minutes.

The Health Ministry said that "the official vaccination platform protects the privacy of beneficiaries as well as the database and was tested under the supervision of an IT team from the World Bank to ensure it cannot be hacked."

Hassan, who has recently recovered from COVID-19, said: "The vaccination plan requires the commitment of all institutions and administration to the principle of equality and justice above any other consideration, whether political, regional or sectarian."

Caretaker Information Minister Manal Abdel Samad said in a press conference: "The number of coronavirus cases in the productive sectors is extremely high, with 72 percent of the cases from the productive segments of society, i.e., those between 20 and 59 years old, which reflects the danger of this pandemic."

Abdel Rahman Bizri, head of the national committee for the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine, told Arab News: "Lebanon needs to vaccinate between 70 and 80 percent of its population to achieve herd immunity."

"The Pfizer vaccine that Lebanon has chosen for its vaccination plan is expected to arrive to the country between Feb. 7 and 15, to be followed by more doses in March," he said.

The first phase of the vaccination plan is expected to cover medical staff and workers in the health care sector, as well as citizens and residents who are 75 and older, to be followed by younger groups in the next phases.

MP Assem Araj, head of Parliament's health committee, said: "No serious side effects have yet been seen to the vaccination against the coronavirus. Do not



hesitate to take it.”

People on social media have been sharing videos and medical articles warning against the vaccination, claiming that the vaccine causes dangerous side effects or alters recipients’ DNA.

To counter these claims, the ministry has launched the message “count to 10 before you spread it,” urging people on social media to check their facts before spreading false and misleading information.

The programmer of the vaccination platform, Ali Roumani, said: “Racing for registration will not give priority to anyone. The vaccine will be given according to clear and specific criteria.”

People who register on the platform will receive a text message with the date of the vaccination of the group they belong to. After receiving the first dose, the platform will automatically set the date for the second dose, which will be given about three weeks later.

Claudio Cordoni, director of UNRWA affairs in Lebanon, has reassured Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that “they will be included in the free national vaccination plan.”

The Health Ministry received food and medical aid from Egypt and the Arab Ministers Council on Thursday. Three warplanes arrived in Rafic Hariri International Airport, two of them carrying aid from the Egyptian government and one from the Arab League.

Egypt’s Minister of Health Dr. Hala Zayed said that the airlift carried “a message of love and solidarity from President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and the Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit.”

“The airlift consists of two aircrafts carrying medicine and medical supplies to address the coronavirus and a third aircraft carrying milk for babies. The airlift was launched after the Beirut blast and will continue as long as needed,” she said.

The Arab League later announced in a statement that “the council of Arab Health Ministers has decided to support Lebanon by providing health equipment worth over eight million Egyptian pounds or half a million dollars.”

Lebanon has been reporting new records in the number of coronavirus fatalities in the past few days, reaching 80 deaths a day.

Authorities have discussed the possibility of extending the full lockdown until Feb. 15.

On Thursday, Tripoli bid farewell to Omar Farouq, the young protester who died of injuries suffered during overnight clashes.

In the Tripoli clashes, protesters used hand grenades for the first time, and were shot with live bullets by security forces.

Protests spread to Bekaa, where activists closed some roads. For the first time, protests also spread to Nabatieh and Tyre in the south of Lebanon, where protesters raised Lebanese flags and denounced “the state’s starvation policy.”



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Violent lockdown protests wound dozens in northern Lebanon  
Lebanon’s top Christian cleric lashes out at ‘stubborn and destructive’ officials

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## [Egyptian Health Ministry to receive 50k AstraZeneca vaccine doses in February](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-01-28 23:47

CAIRO: A contract has been signed by the Egyptian Authority for Unified Purchase with pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca, and expects to receive 50,000 coronavirus vaccine doses from the company in February, announced Egyptian Health Minister Hala Zayed.

The minister explained that the vaccines will be distributed using the



country's electronic registration system, and that medical workers, the elderly and critical cases would be prioritised given that the initial doses will only be enough to inoculate 25,000 people.

She said that the vaccinations would reduce the number of deaths, and would blunt the symptoms of the disease, preventing infection and limiting its spread.

In total, the ministry expects to receive 20 million vaccine doses from AstraZeneca, and 40 million doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine, as well as securing vaccines for about 20 percent of the population through the GAVI Vaccine Alliance.

In previous statements, Zayed said that a partnership contract had been signed with an international company to manufacture vaccines in Egypt, with the aim of exporting them to other African countries.

The ministry has set up a complex for vaccines in Helwan, on an area of 10,000 square meters, with 27 storage fridges.

She explained that the ministry is currently conducting consultations with one of the companies producing the single-dose coronavirus vaccine for this purpose.



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# Security and aviation experts inspect Hurghada airport to prepare for return of Russian tourists

Author:

Thu, 2021-01-28 23:38

CAIRO: A Russian security delegation inspected Sharm El-Sheikh and Hurghada airports on Thursday in preparation for the resumption of Russian flights to Egypt, sources close to Egyptian Civil Aviation said.

The sources confirmed that the delegation's visit would continue until Feb. 4.

The delegation will follow up on security and safety procedures carried out in travel and arrival halls to protect travelers from the risk of coronavirus infection.

The sources confirmed that Egyptian airports were ready for Russian inspections, as insurance standards inside airports were applied according to international aviation organizations. The security system inside airports had been completely modernized, and airports had passed European and American inspections recently, with many companies making plans to fly to Egyptian airports, they said.

On Wednesday, Cairo International Airport received a Russian delegation that included security and aviation experts to inspect security measures.

Delegation members are to be divided into three groups to inspect the three airports. At the end of the tour, the delegation will meet officials of the Ministry of Civil Aviation before submitting their final report on the visit to the civil aviation authorities in Russia.

Mohamed Manar, the Egyptian Minister of Civil Aviation, has met representatives of Russian companies involved in air navigation to follow up on the implementation of the contract signed between the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Russia to develop the Egyptian airspace.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the stages of implementing the agreement, and cooperation mechanisms to create a flexible, safer and more effective airspace for international and regional movement.

Direct Russian flights to the tourist destinations of Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh have been suspended since an Airbus 321 aircraft crashed in the Sinai desert on Oct. 31, 2015, with 224 people on board.

Although direct flights between Moscow and Cairo were resumed on April 11,



2018, Red Sea resorts have remained closed to Russian charter flights.



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