

Ashrawi urges American Arabs to unify for Palestine

Mon, 2020-09-28 16:42

Hanan Ashrawi, a Ramallah-based member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee and popular English language voice for the Palestinian cause in the US, urged American Arabs to “mobilize” and set aside their differences to strengthen the voice of the Palestinian diaspora.

During a Zoom discussion Saturday with American Arab leaders, hosted by ArabAmerica.com, Ashrawi said the US Arab community faced many of the same “very difficult conditions and obstacles” that Palestinians face around the world.

But, Ashrawi said, if they could bridge their differences and unite around common principles of justice, they could become an important voice as advocates for the Palestinian cause.

She argued it was especially important as US society becomes more polarized, but argued that Palestinians and Arabs needed to respect each other in order to unify.

“You cannot antagonize others. You can’t intimidate others. You cannot insult others. You have to work with them to find common ground,” Ashrawi urged.

“Even when you challenge. I challenge a lot. I am known to be very blunt. I don’t mince words. But at the same time I don’t insult. I don’t bring other people down. What you need to do is to be able to challenge in a way that shows you respect yourself so that others will respect you. This is extremely difficult.”

Asked about how to bridge the divisions that segment Palestinians in the US and abroad, Ashrawi urged all sides to embrace their differences, saying: “Arabs are not identical and we are not monolithic. We have to celebrate our diversity.

“We are all under attack,” she said. “In the US, you are seeing the rise of identity politics ... You cannot be neutral in the face of such racism ... and such distortions. You must embrace your Arab identity and be proud of it. What we have to do is to mobilize to make our space in the public discourse.”

Ashrawi criticized the Arab League, calling it “a disaster” in confronting Israel’s atrocities and oppression. She acknowledged Palestinians could do a better job of communicating, but said that they were working under oppressive conditions and without major funding or backing.

“It’s difficult because what we do, we do voluntarily and there is no funding,” Ashrawi said.

“We have a problem, if you want me to be very frank with you. We have a

problem with many in the leadership think that they know it all.”

Ashrawi also said that rivalries prevented there from being a clear and powerful strategic message.

“They don’t think anyone else has the ability to present the cause. We don’t have the funds. We don’t have the institutions ... we try desperately to face a real assault,” Ashrawi said.

She added it was important for Palestinians and Arabs in the US to engage in the political system as a unified voice.

“You need to speak out. You need to stand up and speak out. You need to challenge. You need to make the facts known, to get people to unlearn what they have learned because for a long time Israel was dictating the agenda,” she said.

“Work within a group. Work collectively; organize, use the system. Work with other people because it is an intersectional issue. You can work with women. You can work with African Americans. You can work with youth. You can work with indigenous people. You can work with others who feel marginalized, excluded and oppressed. The mentality of oppression is the same everywhere.”

She stressed: “You have natural allies in the state. You have to work together ... Within the system you can influence political decisions. Hold your representatives accountable.”

Ashrawi defended the Palestine National Authority, adding they “do not make political decisions” unlike the PLO.

“It is unfair to say failure, failure, failure ... they did many things. They built many institutions,” she said.

“You have to place it in context. The Palestinian leadership is working under extremely adverse conditions and circumstances. They have no powers. They have no rights like everyone else. Israel controls everything, the lands, the resources, the water, our lives.”

Ashrawi added that while Palestinians continued to push for action from the International Criminal Court, Israel and the US continued to obstruct that legal process.

“They are punishing the individuals who are in charge of the global judicial and accountability system,” Ashrawi said. “This is unconscionable.”



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The many firsts of Hanan Ashrawi, one of Palestine's most notable politicians
Saudi Arabia says it stands by Palestinians, supports efforts for just solution

[Czech Republic to resume flights to Egypt](#)

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Sun, 2020-09-27 23:12

CAIRO: The Czech Republic will resume tourist flights to Egypt from Oct. 1. Jan Fulik, the Czech ambassador to Egypt, confirmed the move during a meeting with Egyptian Tourism Minister Khaled Al-Anani.

Al-Anani is visiting Sharm el-Sheikh with aviation and environment ministers, along with 30 foreign envoys, to celebrate World Tourism Day.

Fulik said this decision to resume tourist flights follows Al-Anani's visit to the Czech capital Prague last August for discussions with government officials on boosting tourism in Egypt.

Flights will operate from Prague to the cities of Sharm El-Sheikh, Hurghada and Marsa Alam, and reservations for trips have begun on online booking sites.

Al-Anani said he appreciated the efforts of Said Hindam, the Egyptian ambassador to Prague, to improve links between the two countries, and offered an assurance that Egypt would take precautionary measures in tourist governorates to protect visitors.

Several countries have relaunched tourist visits to Egypt after a halt due to the coronavirus.

France will resume trips to Egyptian coastal cities from October.

Germany is considering resuming flights, with one official saying Egypt has "special priority" because of the country's popularity with German tourists.



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Egyptian ministers, foreign ambassadors participate in bike marathon in Sharm El-Sheikh
Egypt launches campaign to promote nature reserves and ecotourism

Iranian chess referee seeking asylum reveals second reason she can't go home

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Sun, 2020-09-27 22:23

LONDON: The Iranian chess referee forced to seek asylum in the UK after letting her hijab slip during a match in Shanghai this year has revealed another reason she may never be able to return to her country – her secret Jewish heritage.

Shohreh Bayat told [The Daily Telegraph](#) that she had to conceal her family background in her native Iran.

“If they knew I had Jewish background, I would never be general secretary of the Iranian chess federation,” Bayat told the British newspaper.

The leading referee said she had heard anti-Jewish remarks made by chess officials in Iran.

Bayat was declared a public enemy by Iranian hard-liners and received death threats after photos of her emerged from the Women’s World Chess Championship in January with her red headscarf around her neck rather than covering her head.

“All my life was about showing a fake image of myself to society because they wanted me to be an image of a religious Muslim woman, which I wasn’t,” Bayat said, speaking about the Iranian regime.

The 33-year-old said she is not a fan of the hijab, but felt she had to comply – even if that meant covering only a tiny amount of hair.

Women are required to wear the hijab in public in Iran, and those who refuse can face prison.

After being photographed at the world championship match with her hijab around her neck, Bayat said she was warned by family and friends not to return home.

“My mobile was full of messages saying: ‘Please, don’t come back, they will arrest you’,” she told the newspaper.

“I woke up the following day and saw that the (Iranian) federation removed my picture – it was like I didn’t exist,” she said.

Despite death threats, Bayat continued refereeing the second leg of the tournament in Vladivostok, ignoring calls from Iranian officials for a public apology.

At the end of January, she changed her return ticket and traveled to the UK – the only Western country where she held a valid visa – and applied for asylum. She is waiting for her application to be processed.

Bayat’s paternal grandmother was Jewish and moved to Iran from Azeraijan’s

capital Baku during the Second World War.

Last week, Bayat celebrated the Jewish New Year for the first time in her life.

“It was amazing. It was a thing I never had a chance to do,” she said.



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Iranian chess referee fears government retribution after hijab uproar
Iranian chess referee fears arrest if she returns

[Egyptian ministers, foreign ambassadors participate in bike marathon in Sharm El-Sheikh](#)

Author:

Sun, 2020-09-27 21:16

CAIRO: Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Khaled Al-Anani, Minister of Civil Aviation Mohammed Manar, and 30 ambassadors of foreign countries in Egypt participated in a bike marathon organized by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Sharm El-Sheikh to celebrate World Tourism Day.

The marathon began in front of the ministers' and ambassadors' residence and lasted for nearly an hour, passing through the beaches, tourist attractions, and streets of Sharm El-Sheikh.

The ambassadors enjoyed the marathon, with the German ambassador in Cairo suggesting that an international bike competition be held in Sharm El-Sheikh.

The ambassador of Cameroon won first place in the marathon, and Al-Anani promised him that he would be the first to see the new archaeological discovery in the Saqqara antiquities area early next month, when it would be announced.

Al-Anani and Minister of Environment Yasmine Fouad accompanied the foreign ambassadors on a private cruise during their visit to Sharm El-Sheikh.

During this trip, the ambassadors were able to take in the nature and sunny atmosphere of the city, also experiencing the rich marine life characteristic to the Red Sea waters in a snorkeling excursion. They also toured a number of nature reserves in the city and visited both the Sharm El-Sheikh Museum and Sharm El-Sheikh International Hospital.

The ministers and ambassadors also inspected the precautionary measures in place at the Sharm El-Sheikh Airport and the safety controls applied in one of the city's hotels.

Al-Anani's visit to Sharm El-Sheikh began on Thursday.



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Grand Egyptian Museum receives 2,000 artifacts
COVID-19 kills an entire Egyptian family after a wedding

Jordan reopens trade gateway with Syria after month-long COVID closure

Author:

Sun, 2020-09-27 21:01

AMMAN: Jordan on Sunday resumed its land border traffic with Syria, following a more than month-long closure, after applying new rules to prevent truck drivers spreading the novel coronavirus into the kingdom, officials and businessmen said.

They said authorities imposed back-to-back handling of goods to ensure Syrian, Lebanese truck drivers and others entering the kingdom maintain a social distance from Jordanian customs officials.

Officials said in mid-August they had to close the crossing, the main gateway for goods from Lebanon and Syria to the Gulf, after dozens of infections among border officials linked to a spike in cases in neighboring Syria.

Before the decade-old conflict in Syria, the Nasib-Jaber crossing was also a transit route for hundreds of trucks a day transporting goods between Europe and Turkey and the Gulf in a multi-billion dollar annual trade.

The closure hit trade that had already shrunk because of the impact of COVID-19 and the Caesar Act – the toughest US sanctions yet that came into force in June and prohibited foreign companies trading with Damascus.

“We have had millions of dollars of losses as a result of the closure,” said Mohammad al Daoud, the president of the Jordanian Truck Owners’ Association that represents over 17,000 trucks.

The country’s other land crossings with Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Palestinian territories have been only open for commercial goods since a lockdown in March to stem the pandemic.

Syrian authorities said 70 trailers carrying, mostly fresh produce, entered Jordan on Sunday, including transit cargo heading to Gulf markets and Iraq. While the crossing was closed, Syria’s only normally operating frontier crossing had been with Lebanon, which itself has no other functioning land borders.

Lebanon was also hit hard by the closure. It relies on the crossing for overland connections to all other countries because its only other frontier is with Israel, with which it has no ties.

“This crossing is an economic lifeline for all our land exports,” said Ibrahim al Tarshishi, the head of the Lebanese farmers’ association.

(Reporting by Suleiman Al-Khalidi; editing by Barbara Lewis)



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Jordan COVID-19 cases at highest daily count since pandemic began
Jordan to stop isolating coronavirus infected buildings