

# An Egyptian portal opens employment opportunities for people with disabilities

Fri, 2020-01-03 01:40

CAIRO: Work opportunities are hard to come by for the nearly 12 million people with disabilities living in Egypt.

Mindful of the challenges facing such individuals, non-profit organization Ebtessama launched Majidah this year to improve their chances of employment.

“Majidah was born out of our on-the-ground efforts and experience for over 12 years,” said Ashraf Osman, chairman of the board of Ebtessama.

“We work on the training, qualification and employment of people with disabilities.”

Things have been changing in Egypt over the past couple of years, with both government and non-government bodies trying to improve the working conditions of individuals with disabilities amid numerous challenges.

“There were entities out there (that) wanted to train or hire people with disabilities, but they weren’t properly in touch with one another, and the communications were extremely random,” Osman, 39, said.

“So, while constantly growing, the numbers of people we were able to help were still far from enough.”

Cairo-based Majidah came to life to fix the apparent communications dilemma. “It’s a training and employment platform with all different entities that work on qualifying and hiring people with disabilities under one umbrella,” Osman said.

Through Majidah, people with disabilities gained access to a service they desperately needed, and it was made possible by virtue of technology.

“Some of them need a special kind of training or preparation to work, and then they need to find a place to hire them.

Workplaces, on the other hand, need to be able to reach people who are suitable for the vacancies they have, as well as an entity to train them if necessary,” Osman said.

The online platform connects all these different parties. A person with a disability will register on Majidah as someone looking for a job, mentioning their disability, skills, previous experience and other relevant information.

“It’s a smart platform, capable of matching the different parties based on the data collected from each,” Osman said.

“The company looking to hire, on the other hand, mentions its vacancies and the desired set of skills. The training entity would add in what trainings it offers and the skills the trainee would acquire.”

Creating a platform like this was not easy, and financing was naturally going to be the biggest problem.

“Majidah is a new idea. Past approaches were mostly concerned with on-the-ground action, but this was more focused on the future, which made it hard to find funding since most sources felt uneasy backing something that isn’t tangible,” Osman said.

Thankfully, Vodafone Egypt Foundation stepped in and provided the resources needed to launch the platform.

“The second challenge we faced was making people believe in what we were doing, which was not plausible for many,” Osman said.

“Fortunately, because many really needed this and our team worked really hard, we started getting interaction with the platform, and now we have close to 16,000 persons with disabilities registered.”

Majidah, whose soft launch took place several months ago, will be fully operational in November, but the future holds more for the platform, including improved communication among all parties to exchange experiences and knowledge.

“We want to provide a lot of services for people with disabilities without them having to go anywhere, things they usually have to move to get,” Osman said.

“When it comes to training and hiring people with disabilities, we’re all learning and experimenting. So, we need to share the success stories as well as the failures because we’ll learn a lot from both.”

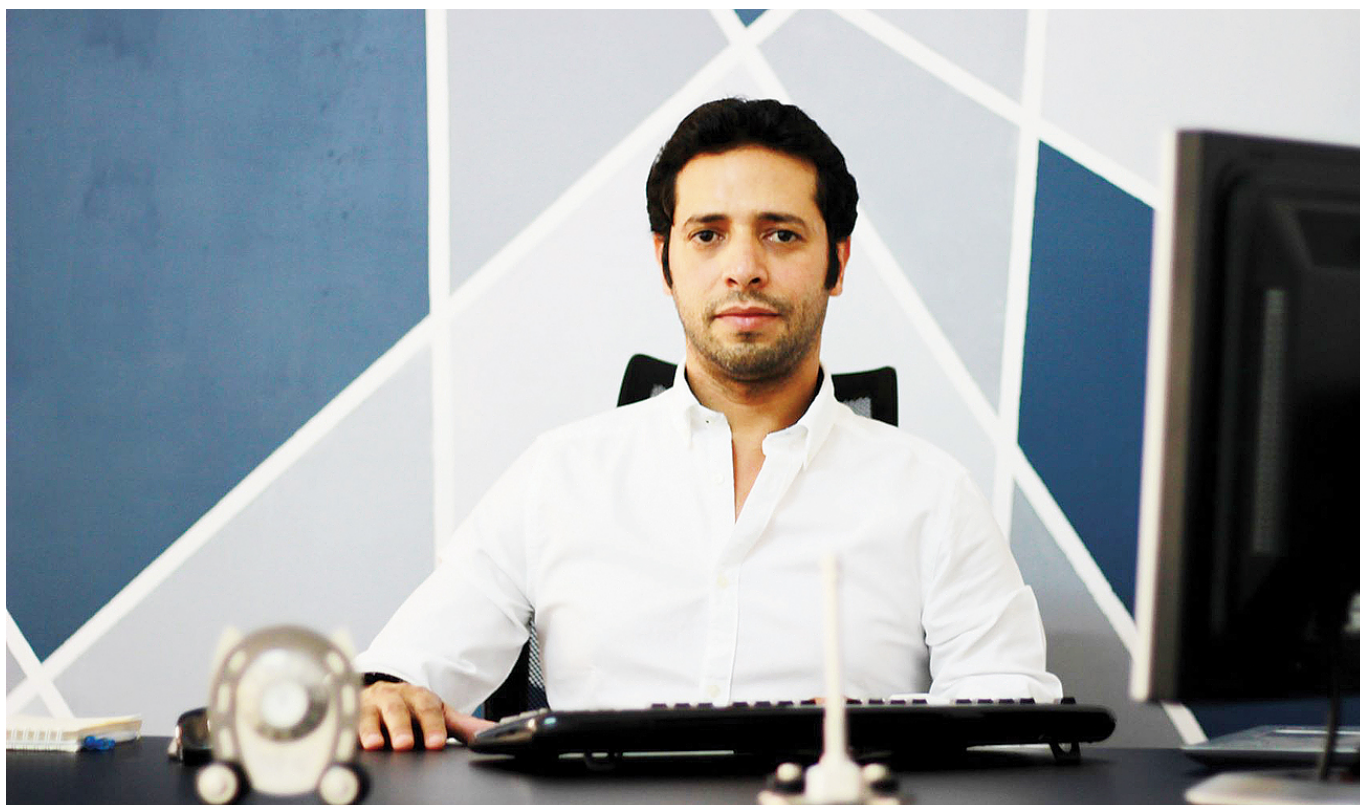
To continue providing its service, Majidah needs all the support that it can get. “I hope everyone who can help in any way possible in what we’re doing steps in,” Osman said.

“If we all stand together, we’ll truly be able to make a difference.

“We’re talking about millions here, and if we all don’t do our part, they won’t be able to get their basic human right of having a job.”

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*This report is being published by Arab News as a partner of the Middle East Exchange, which was launched by the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to reflect the vision of the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Arab region.*



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## [Rockets fall on Baghdad International Airport injuring several people - security unit](#)

Fri, 2020-01-03 01:33

BAGHDAD: Three Katyusha rockets fell on Baghdad International Airport, the military-run Security Media Cell said in a statement on early Friday. The rockets landed near the air cargo terminal, burning two vehicles and injuring several citizens, Security Media Cell added.

– Developing story.



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## [Turkey, Iran sign deal to strengthen religious ties](#)

Fri, 2020-01-03 00:56

JEDDAH: Turkey and Iran have agreed to strengthen their religious ties in a new deal signed last week in Ankara between the religious authorities of both countries.

The new initiative – led by Abouzar Ebrahimi Torkaman, the head of Iran’s Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, and Ali Erbas, the head of Turkey’s Religious Affairs Directorate – includes the translation of theological books, the organization of activities “to strengthen the unity of Ummah,” joint publications to combat Islamophobia in the West, cooperation over services to pilgrims, the exchange of religious texts, and an Islamic teaching exchange program.

Speaking at a joint event, Erbas said, “We mobilize all our resources to combat the agitation that is targeting Muslims, and the measures that are

taken by some Muslim countries in the region, which regrettably compromise Muslims' esteem and pride."

The deal has come as a surprise to many, since Turkey is a Sunni state and Iran a Shiite theocracy. The two were once fierce adversaries, during the times of the Ottoman and Persian empires. And the new initiative has sparked concern among Muslims in Turkey who are critical of its potential repercussions in the teaching of Islam. The hashtag #WeAreNotShia was trending on social media in Turkey after the deal was announced.

Seth J. Frantzman, executive director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis, said the new religious deal builds on economic cooperation between the two countries and their mutual interests – along with Russia – in Syria.

"It also comes in the wake of a meeting in Malaysia where both Iran and Turkey expressed interest in a new 'gold dinar' currency. There is a growing consensus that Turkey and Iran have much in common in the region and globally," Frantzman told Arab News.

#### **FASTFACT**

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The new deal, he suggested, shows that the two countries are keen to cooperate in other spheres of interest.

"It illustrates that the concept of the Shia-Sunni divide is partly a myth," he said. "The Muslim Brotherhood – which underpins the AKP in Turkey – and Iran's Ayatollahs have things in common. The Iranian IRGC and the Brotherhood met in 2014 in Turkey to discuss joint strategy."

The agreement comes just a few months after Ankara and Tehran – guarantors of the Astana process in Syria alongside Russia – found themselves at odds over their regional policies.

Iran, a close ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, opposed Turkey's military operation in northern Syria against Syrian Kurdish forces as well as its establishment of military posts inside Syria. In return, Turkey accused Iran of betraying the consensus between them.





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## [Turkey's pro-government papers closing down](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-01-02 01:39

ANKARA: Pro-government Turkish media outlets are closing since the election of a new Istanbul mayor in June, with two surprise shutdowns earlier this week.

Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, from the secular main opposition Republican People's Party, took the reins from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) which, along with its Islamist predecessors, had run the city for the last 25 years.

Newspapers published by the pro-government TurkMedya group were largely financed by Istanbul's metropolitan municipality for decades until the city changed hands, with Imamoglu stopping their funding for impartiality reasons.

Gunes and Star, two TurkMedya newspapers, shut in a surprise decision on Monday, and pro-government outlets make up the bulk of Turkish media.

TurkMedya was said to receive about TRY10 million (\$1.68 million) a month from the municipality under AKP rule, but has been facing serious financial challenges since local elections, and had to close some of its newspaper supplements.

Sarphan Uzunoglu, a media and communications specialist and editor-in-chief at the digital journalism academy NewsLabTurkey, said it was unsurprising that pro-government media outlets were experiencing financial problems.

"Massive purchases by local governments were their primary sources of income," he told Arab News, adding that the shutdowns backed industry rumors that circulation rates were manipulated.

"If you observe the change in the daily circulation of the pro-government Star newspaper between Dec. 2019 and Dec. 2018 you can see there is no significant change, it is still around 100,000 copies per day. In other words, there is no setback that could justify such a dramatic change in the circulation rate," he said. "Turkey's currency crisis is deeply affecting the media industry and all types of media outlets, including the ones which report higher circulation rates, suffer from high paper prices and regular costs. Advertisers do not trust the media anymore primarily due to a meltdown of trust and the lack of clarity regarding the truthfulness of circulation rates."

Uzunoglu said most Turkish newspapers would have died without official advertisements as was the case with the independent and left-leaning newspapers Evrensel and Birgun, which announced they were experiencing hardship because income from official adverts had dried up for months.

"What is more tragic is that, despite the financial resources granted by official and corporate advertisements, pro-government media outlets cannot provide sustainability, and we will hear more news outlets going digital in the coming months due to the financial and democratic crisis of Turkey," he said.

But he said the products from pro-government media outlets were problematic in themselves.

"These outlets do not meet the expectations of the audience and they have lost the trust of their audience. These newsrooms cannot address society as a product nor as an ideological instrument. This shows that these newsrooms, both politically and commercially, are at the end of the road."

Orhan Sener, director of the academy at the Journalists' Union of Turkey, said the downsizing of pro-government papers was a turning point.

“The closure of these media outlets, which have served as a propaganda instrument for the government rather than real journalism, is beneficial for the media sector and public good of the country, except for the unemployment of staff working for them,” he told Arab News.

He said that the shutdowns showed that no outlet could survive in the long-term if they proved to be inefficient and if their sole purpose was to serve as a propaganda instrument for the government.

“They have been a burden in economic and political terms. Government sources couldn’t afford to finance them after the local elections,” he added.



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# Hope, grief for Somali family hit by bomb blast

Author:

Thu, 2020-01-02 01:24

MOGADISHU: As wounded men screaming for their mothers were brought into a Mogadishu hospital after a huge truck bomb blast on Saturday, doctors fought to save eight month-old Mohammed Hassan, whose mother was already dead.

The baby had lost too much blood to cry, but on Tuesday, hooked up to oxygen tubes and IV and swathed in bandages – he flexed his uninjured hand, sending a waterfall of tears coursing down the cheeks of his father, Somali farmer Abdi Abukar Hassan.

“Oh thank God,” Hassan exclaimed as his son moved for the first time after his right arm was shredded and his back torn by shrapnel in the bombing, which killed at least 90 people and wounded dozens at a bustling checkpoint. “Look, he is alive now, please let’s recite the Qur’an over him!”

Somalia’s Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Shabab insurgency claimed the bombing, saying it was directed at Turkish engineers and their government-provided security detail. In a rare admission, the group acknowledged civilian casualties but said they had been “unintentional.”

Al-Shabab wants to overthrow the UN-backed but weak government in Mogadishu. The conflict is complicated by layers of clan loyalties and rivalries between regional powers like Qatar and Turkey, which are jostling for power in the Horn of Africa nation.

On Wednesday, Hassan thanked the Turkish-run Erdogan Hospital for its free treatment, saying nurses had told him the oxygen and intravenous tubes would be removed from his baby and he may open his eyes later in the day.

Two Turkish nationals were killed in the explosion, which took place as Turkish engineers visited a construction site near the checkpoint.

Mohamed’s grandmother had left her tin shack to help the baby and his mother onto a minibus when the bomb went off. Mohamed’s mother was killed instantly.

His grandmother, wounded in the legs, staggered toward the family’s home, clutching him and screaming for help before she collapsed.

A neighbor ran out, shoeless, and tried, unsuccessfully, to flag down motorbike taxis fleeing the scene before catching a minibus to the hospital, cradling the baby’s bleeding arm attached by only a thin piece of skin. Hassan’s aunt called him to break the news.

“My wife, Naimo Mohamud Jeylani, she was very kind. May God rest her soul and take her to paradise,” said Hassan, as his six-year-old daughter Khadija and four-year-old Sadaq leaned silently against their father. “Thank God, my son

is now moving. I am happy he is alive. Yesterday, I thought he was dead'."



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