

# Project to restore Egypt's Groppi cafes to their former glory

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-29 22:38

CAIRO: In 1884, Giacomo Groppi (1863-1947) came from Switzerland to Egypt where he would establish a celebrated food business bearing the family name.

In 1890, Groppi arrived in Alexandria, where he built a large number of shops. And at the beginning of the 20th century (1909-1925) he established three cafes in Cairo, which still carry his name.

The most famous cafe is located in Talaat Harb Square, in downtown Cairo. This place was the favorite of the upper class in Egypt, and some considered it the most luxurious cafe in the world.

The legendary "Groppi Talaat Harb" is situated at the heart of the Egyptian capital and was until recently a destination for many visitors before it was closed for maintenance and restoration.

"We used to come in the 1950s to the Groppi Garden every morning to eat fresh croissants. I still remember the taste today," Shafiq Nakhla, an architect, said. "Groppi's products were better than they were in Paris at the time."

"No one could compete with Groppi. We could see the aristocratic class who seemed to be going to a party descending from a Rolls-Royce or Cadillac wearing the best hats and neckties, and entering Groppi. "The women wore outstanding dresses," Shafiq said.

"I learned from my father that many of the characters had their own seats, including the journalist and poet Kamel Al-Shennawi, as well as the writer Tawfiq Al-Hakim and the Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz, who read the newspapers there," said Mustafa, one of the senior waiters.

"I also heard that during World War II the men of the British Eighth Army frequently visited Groppi in Adly Pasha Street, including General Montgomery, who was visiting to enjoy the evenings of jazz in the garden," Mustafa said.

## **FASTFACT**

**Groppi is famous for introducing a number of desserts, along with natural juices and chocolate varieties. It received fame worldwide as it held concerts and hosted musical groups.**

"King Farouk, the former king of Egypt, was very impressed with the chocolate made at Groppi and in World War II he sent 100 kilograms of chocolates to King George and his two daughters, Elizabeth and Margaret," the waiter said.

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In 1981, Chizar and Bianchi, the last of Groppi's heirs, sold the business to the Arab food company Lokma, which tried to preserve the traditional character of the shops in form and style.

To this day Groppi retains its charm, although its condition has somewhat diminished.

Alchemy Design Studio announced in November 2017 that it was reviving the place. The company added through its official account on Facebook that it sought to add modernity to this icon and stressed that it had a sense of pride and responsibility to implement the project.

The National Committee for the Development and Protection of Cairo's Heritage also issued its recommendations to accelerate the development of the Cafe Groppi.

It previously announced that the project would take six months to a year and was likely to be available again to the public in the second half of 2018, but so far no official statement has been issued for the opening of the Groppi in Talaat Harb.

The other branch, on Adly Street, is also undergoing development work, especially in the garden, while the cafe is half completed. The third branch, located in Cairo's Heliopolis area, is the only one that is operating at full capacity.



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# Protesters say clashes among security forces kill vendor

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1559159114994557200

Wed, 2019-05-29 14:59

KHARTOUM: A Sudanese medical union says a gunfight among security forces has erupted, killing a female street vendor by mistake, as protesters resumed their two-day general strike.

The Sudan Doctors Committee says the clashes took place Wednesday in the capital of Khartoum and that a number of protesters have been wounded.

The committee is part of the Sudanese Professionals Association, which has been spearheading the protests that led to the military overthrow of longtime ruler Omar Al-Bashir last month.

Also on Wednesday, thousands of Sudanese resumed the final day of their two-day strike in a bid to press the ruling military council to hand over power to a civilian-led authority.

The strike comes as negotiations between protesters and the generals, who took over the country after Al-Bashir's ouster, remain deadlocked.



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Sudan protesters begin 2-day strike to press ruling military Sudan's transitional council vows to back Saudi Arabia against Iran threat

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## [Netanyahu scrambles for allies as deadline to form government looms](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-05-29 22:25

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu scrambled to cobble together parliamentary support for a coalition on Wednesday, just hours ahead of a deadline to form a new government or face the possible end of his decade of combative leadership of Israel.

In a parallel countdown, the 120-seat assembly debated a motion to dissolve itself and trigger snap elections that Netanyahu could contest anew, rather than being forced to step aside for a rival to try to form a coalition.

Netanyahu's plans for a fifth term following an election in April were cast into doubt by a presumed ally, rightist ex-defence minister Avigdor Lieberman, who has conditioned sitting in government with ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties on amendments to their military draft exemptions.

Three hours before the 2100 GMT deadline, Netanyahu's conservative Likud party announced that it had managed to sign up 60 lawmakers – half the assembly but just shy of a majority.

Even that account was disputed, however, by the centre-right Kulanu party, which had previously said it would run with Likud.

"Kulanu has not signed a coalition deal," the party tweeted.

In another sign of Netanyahu's strong desire to retain the premiership, the opposition centre-left Labour party said it had been offered – and had refused – an offer to join a Likud-led coalition. Likud, which said it plans to head a right-wing government, neither denied or confirmed this.

Political sources said Netanyahu was simultaneously seeking agreement with the leaders of parties on voting to dissolve parliament and setting a mid-September date for a new election.

Having declared himself the election winner last month after he squeezed past an insurgent centrist challenger, ex-general Benny Gantz, Netanyahu saw his political future hang in the balance.

Failure to forge a coalition would take the task out of the 69-year-old Netanyahu's hands and empower President Reuven Rivlin to ask another legislator, either from Likud or the opposition, to try.

Political commentator Chemi Shalev, writing in the left-wing Haaretz daily, said a last-minute agreement was still possible and Netanyahu would still be the favourite to win a new election.

**LAST STAND?**

But he said Netanyahu's critics now find themselves fantasising about a world without him. The prime minister, first elected in the late 1990s, has been in power for the last decade.

"It's not an easy task, given his decade in power and the four more years he supposedly had coming. Young Israelis can't even begin to imagine an Israel without him: Netanyahu as prime minister is all they've ever known," Shalev wrote.

Lieberman has stuck to his guns in a battle with the ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism party, a member of Netanyahu's current interim government, to limit traditional military draft exemptions for Jewish seminary students. Without the support of Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party, which has five Knesset seats, Netanyahu cannot put together a majority government of right-wing and religious factions.

The brinkmanship six weeks after the closely contested April ballot has deepened political uncertainty in a country riven with division.

A new election could also complicate U.S. efforts to press ahead with President Donald Trump's peace plan in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even before it has been announced Palestinians have rejected it as a blow to their aspirations for statehood.

The White House team behind the proposal, including Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, is in the Middle East to drum up support for an economic "workshop" in Bahrain next month to encourage investment in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The group is due in Israel on Thursday.

Lieberman said on Wednesday he was not backing down in what he termed a matter of principle over the conscription issue, and he denied Likud allegations his real intention was to oust Netanyahu and lead a "national camp".

Until the drama over coalition-building, public attention had been focused more on moves Netanyahu loyalists were planning in parliament to grant him immunity from criminal prosecution and to pass a law ensuring such protection could not be withdrawn by the Supreme Court.

Netanyahu faces possible indictment in three corruption cases. He has denied any wrongdoing in the cases and is due to argue at a pre-trial hearing in October against the attorney-general's intention, announced in February, to indict him on bribery and fraud charges.



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## [Gaza's Omari Grand Mosque: A combination of civilizations](#)

Tue, 2019-05-28 23:35

GAZA CITY: Previously a pagan temple and then a church, the Omari Grand Mosque in Gaza City was converted to a Muslim place of worship under Caliph Omar ibn Al-Khattab.

During Roman and Greek rule, the site was a temple to worship the god Marna, said Heyam Al-Bitar, head of the tourism and archaeology department at the Tourism Ministry in Gaza. It was built during the reign of Roman Emperor Hadrian.

The temple was converted to a church in 406 AD, and then into a mosque in 634 AD, said archaeologist Dr. Salim Al-Mubaid.

“It was the first mosque to perform Friday prayers in Gaza after the Islamic conquest,” he added.

During the Crusades, it was turned into St. John’s Cathedral in 1149 AD. It was converted back into a mosque in 1192 AD, but retained its Gothic architecture.

It was expanded by Mamluk Sultan Nasser Muhammad during Ottoman rule. Large parts of the mosque were destroyed during World War I, said Al-Mubaid. Historian Othman Mustafa Al-Tabbaa said it has 38 marble columns.

Al-Bitar said the mosque’s minaret, a model of Mamluk architectural style, is one of its most famous features. Its lower half is square and its upper half is octagonal.

The mosque’s library, built under Mamluk Sultan Al-Zaher Baybars, was a scientific beacon for scholars.

Having contained thousands of books and manuscripts on various sciences, the library was destroyed during the Crusades and World War I.

Today, it contains what books and manuscripts were not destroyed or looted. It is the oldest mosque library in the Gaza Strip.









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Israel strikes Gaza mosque as death toll tops 120

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## Lebanon receives Israeli response to border demarcation

Tue, 2019-05-28 23:08

BEIRUT: David Satterfield, deputy US assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, conveyed Israel's response to Lebanon regarding negotiations on border demarcation.

Sources at the Lebanese prime minister's office said negotiations will focus on demarcating the maritime border, and will also tackle disputed points on the Blue Line, a border demarcation published by the UN in June 2000 to determine whether Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon. There are 13 disputed points on the Blue Line.

Lebanese Foreign Ministry sources said after Satterfield's meeting with Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil that the atmosphere was "positive."

They added that the final touches were being put on the form of negotiations and the role of concerned parties, including the UN, Lebanon, Israel and the US. Satterfield also met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri.

Lebanon's presidential media office said President Michel Aoun on Monday discussed with Jan Kubis, the UN special coordinator in Lebanon, the UN's role "in helping to demarcate the southern Lebanese border."

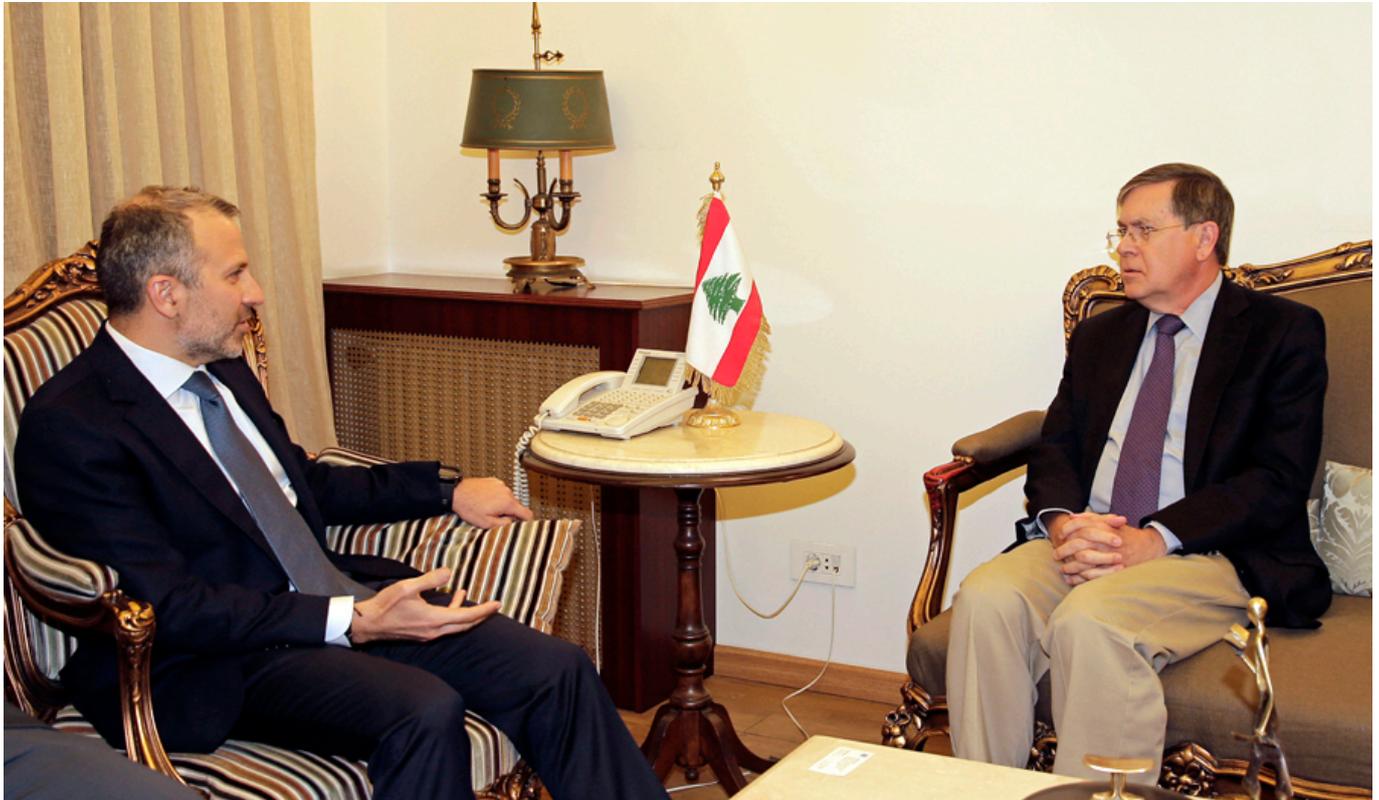
Lebanon delivered a proposal to Satterfield stressing its "determination to demarcate the maritime border through the tripartite commission originally formed in April 1996, as was done for the Blue Line after liberation in 2000, which is to be completed by a White Line in the sea."

Beirut said it rejected "any direct Israeli-Lebanese negotiations," and "demanded negotiations involving officers from Lebanon, Israel and the United Nations, with the participation of topographic and oil experts. The function of the tripartite committee is to demarcate the maritime line. There is no objection to the participation of American diplomats in the tripartite demarcation, provided that they are neutral."

The head of the union of workers in the gas and exploration sector in Lebanon, Maroun Al-Khouli, said: "Solving this problem with Israel will establish a significant renaissance in Lebanon's investment in its oil resources in the maritime economic zone, especially as Lebanon is preparing

to begin drilling for oil and gas in blocks 4 and 9 in its territorial waters.”

He added: “This will also help large companies, including American companies, to enter the field of exploration in the second licensing cycle, which will be launched later.”



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Israel open to US-mediated talks with Lebanon on sea border  
Israel, Lebanon move to ease tensions after border skirmish