

In Mosul exhibition, Iraqi artists process brutal rule of Daesh

Author:

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ID:

1549214907101223300

Sun, 2019-02-03 15:01

MOSUL: A raven perched on the shoulder of a woman with flaming hair is Iraqi artist Marwan Fathi's symbol for the terrible events he and his home city Mosul have had to endure.

Three years under the oppressive and violent rule of Daesh and the military campaign which drove it out in 2017 left much of the northern city in ruins. Thousands were killed, rendered homeless or maimed. Those who survived are deeply traumatized.

"I still jump awake at night thinking an air strike is about to hit or that they are coming to take one of us," Fathi, 36, said. "Everyday is a struggle."

Fathi's work is on display in "Return to Mosul" – the city's first art exhibition since before it was seized by Daesh, whose ultra hard-line version of Sunni Islam prohibits most art forms.

Artists from across Iraq are taking part in the six-day show, including many who lived in Mosul when it was in the militants' grip.

Hawkar Riskin's haunting work 'destruction' depicts a giant skeleton standing on one leg, while Mohammad Al Kinani's series of paintings – 'Caliphate I', 'Caliphate II' and 'Caliphate III' represents the beginning and end of Daesh, and Mosul's rebirth.

Fathi said the artists who stayed in the city lived in constant fear and despair.

"There was a time when we considered killing ourselves. We reached that low. But then we thought, what would happen to the children?" Fathi, a professor of fine arts, said.

JONAH AND THE CITY

The show is in the newly re-opened Royal Hall of the Mosul Museum, which was looted and destroyed by Daesh and in the ensuing war to wrest control of the city.

Ahmed Mozahem, another Mosul-born artist, continued to work in secret while the city was under the militants'. Using a writing pad he kept hidden to avoid discovery, Mozahem produced 40 pencil drawings which are now among his most cherished possessions, an expression of what he and his family suffered. For "City of the Whale," his painting in the exhibition, Mozahem drew on the story of the prophet Jonah and the whale, which features Nineveh, the ancient Assyrian city which stood roughly where Mosul is today.

Following their capture of the city in 2014, Daesh went on a rampage, destroying many of Mosul's ancient sites and artefacts, including a shrine believed by many to be Jonah's tomb.

The militants not only destroyed the city, Mozahem said. "They also killed something inside, our spirit."

But Matthew Vincent, an American archaeologist, says technology can help preserve some of what was lost. Vincent is a co-founder of a crowdsourced, digital preservation project called Rekrei, which collects photographs of damaged or lost monuments and artefacts to re-create these in 3D representations.

At the Mosul Museum, visitors are now able to catch virtual glimpse of ancient Assyrian treasures destroyed by Daesh. One of them, the Lion of Mosul, was a colossal Assyrian guardian lion from about 860 BCE, one of two which stood at the entrance of the Temple of Ishtar at Nimrud, Iraq.

“It is never going to replace the original but new technology is giving us a path we simply didn’t have before,” Vincent said.





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[Egypt hosts Palestinian groups, urges calm with Israel](#)

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1549208671560720400

Sun, 2019-02-03 14:27

GAZA: Egypt will hold talks with leaders of two major Palestinian factions to try to salvage faltering unity efforts and to restore calm with Israel, officials said on Sunday.

The head of the Islamist militant group Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, led a delegation to meet with Egyptian security officials in Cairo. The leader of a smaller Gaza-based faction, Islamic Jihad, also headed to Cairo, Palestinian officials said.

Hamas has been in a bitter rivalry with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who is based in the occupied West Bank, for more than a decade. Numerous reconciliation efforts have failed.

Egypt is also trying to prevent an escalation in violence between Hamas and Israel, after months of tension along the Israel-Gaza border. Cairo sent officials to Gaza in recent weeks to keep an eye on the situation.

"Cairo is driven by its interest to avoid a new war in Gaza and in improving the living conditions of Gaza residents," said one Palestinian official, who asked not to be named.

Relations between Hamas and Abbas' Palestinian Authority (PA) worsened last month when Abbas ordered his men to leave their posts at the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, the main corridor for Gazans.

This prompted Cairo, which had in the past year coordinated operations with the PA, to close the crossing.

Gaza officials now say that Egypt has quietly resumed operations at the Rafah crossing over the past week, this time working with Hamas. However, there was no immediate comment on the reopening of Rafah from Egyptian officials.

On Sunday, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh passed through the Rafah crossing, along with dozens of other Palestinians.

Two million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip, where poverty is rampant and unemployment stands at 50 percent. Israel, together with Egypt, maintains a blockade of the enclave, citing security concerns.

Gaza's health ministry says more than 220 Palestinians have been killed in the past year by Israeli troops in weekly protests along the border, billed as pressing for an end to the blockade.



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[UAE ministry sends out weather warning ahead of papal visit](#)

Sun, 2019-02-03 16:19

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Interior warned motorists on Sunday to be cautious on the roads due to unstable weather conditions.

Thunderstorms and heavy rainfall swept across the UAE on Sunday morning, with satellite images from the National Centre of Meteorology showing more showers expected to come.

Pictures and videos of flooded streets were shared across social media.

[شلالات جبل جيس حاليا شمال رأس الخيمة #منخفض التسامح #مركز العاصفة](#)

٣ فبراير ٢٠١٩ pic.twitter.com/x8LWbMBp0n

– مركز العاصفة (@Storm_centre) [February 3, 2019](https://www.facebook.com/StormCentre/posts/10157111111111111)

Due to weather conditions Global Village – Dubai’s multicultural festival park – closed for the day.

The weather is also expected to drop over the next two days with strong winds at a speed of 25 – 35 kmh.

The rainy weather comes as Pope Francis is expected to arrive in Abu Dhabi at 10pm local time on Sunday.



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Severe weather sweeps across Saudi Arabia
Egypt reopens five ports after weather improves

[Fifth of Egypt’s MPs back bid to amend constitution](#)

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1549137057604044800

Sat, 2019-02-02 22:49

CAIRO: More than a fifth of Egyptian MPs have backed a request seeking amendments to the country's constitution.

Abdul Hadi Al-Qasabi, head of the majority Support Egypt parliamentary bloc, on Friday obtained the signatures of at least a fifth of Egyptian MPs in support of the amendments.

Al-Qasabi did not disclose which articles were the subject of proposed amendments. However, there have been repeated calls in recent years to amend article 140, which limits the presidential term to four years.

Dr. Ali Abdel Aal, the speaker of Egypt's parliament, called for extraordinary sessions next week beginning on Sunday.

Al-Qasabi will request the amendments next week and has the "required constitutional ratio" to make the request.

MP Mahmoud Badr said on his Facebook page that he and a group of "colleagues" had signed a request to amend some articles of the constitution that will be submitted on Sunday.

Article 226 of the Egyptian constitution states that the president of the republic or a fifth of parliament can request an amendment to an article or articles of the constitution. The amendment is then discussed 30 days from the date of submission.



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Egypt army says kills 8 militants in desert air strikes
Egypt to launch foreign currency bond offering in first quarter of 2019

[Egypt army says kills 8 militants in desert air strikes](#)

Author:

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1549128809633314900

Sat, 2019-02-02 17:18

CAIRO: Egypt's military said Saturday it had killed eight militants in air strikes in the Western Desert, as it leads a major campaign against Daesh. "The air force targeted the terrorist base... the completed operation has killed eight very dangerous terrorists", the military said in a statement. The military said "other people" had been arrested during the operation, but did not give details.

"The terrorist cell ... planned hostile actions that aimed to destabilise the country's security and stability", the army said, without elaborating. Egypt launched an operation dubbed "Sinai 2018" a year ago, in a bid to dislodge Daesh from the northeastern Sinai Peninsula and other parts of the country, including the Western Desert bordering Libya.

The security forces regularly announce that alleged extremists have been killed, but rarely identify the deceased, the groups they support, or the operations they were purportedly planning.

It is impossible to verify information on military operations through independent sources.

Groups including Human Rights Watch have denounced extra judicial killings, particularly in the Sinai peninsula.

Operation Sinai was launched on February 9 last year and was supposed to last three months, but is still ongoing.



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