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CIVIL SOCIETY



DEMOCRATIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE ARAB WORLD

March 1993

Issue No. 15

Palestinian deportees

Egypt

parliament pushes union law through

Qatar

the struggle for democracy

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Tunisia

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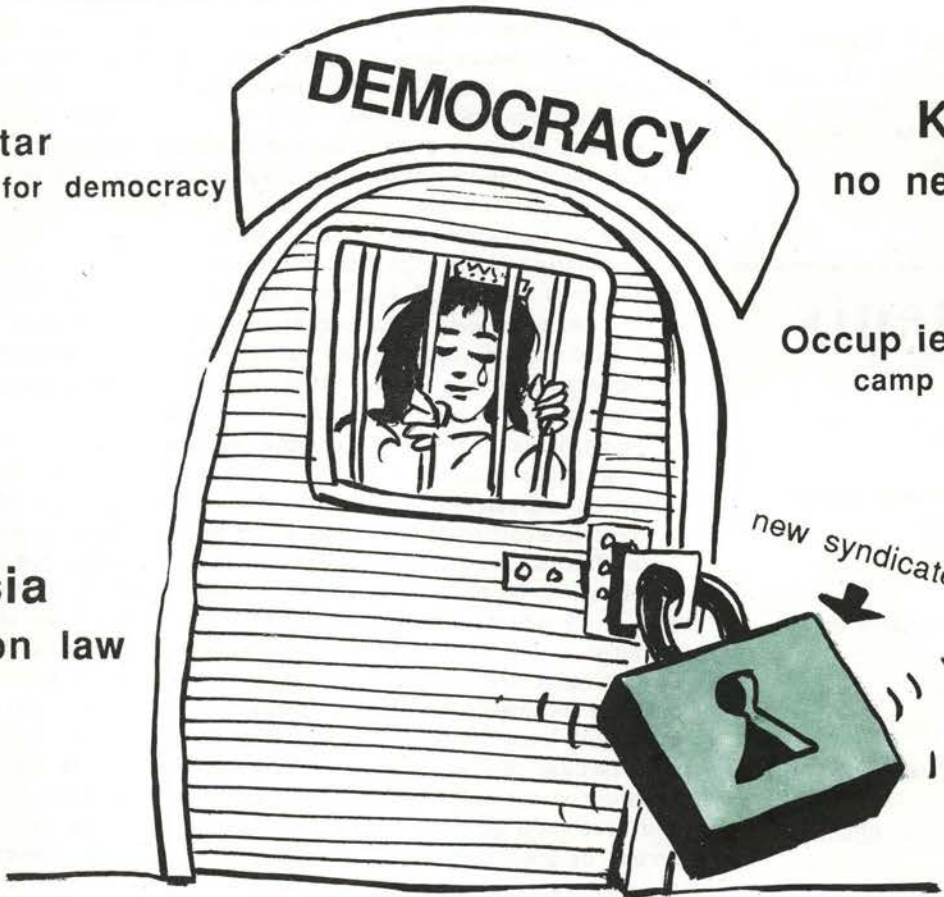
new syndicate law

Sudan

peace is difficult... but attainable

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referendum on Political Future



Civil Society

Democratic
Transformation In The
Arab World
No.15 March 1993

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Editorial

Egypt's Civil Society A Big Step Backward..A Small Step Forward

Late in February, 1993, two events with contradictory implications resonated with Egyptian public opinion. The first was the passing of a new law (No. 100 of 1993) to regulate elections in professional unions (syndicates). The second was the public initiative of the New Civic Forum, dedicated to the revitalization of full-fledged liberalism.

Despite the misnomered title of the Law for Democratic Guarantees in Professional Syndicates, most of the three million members of these syndicates saw through them and experienced deep apprehensions about the law (see the text inside). Even the chief editors of the state dailies and weeklies (AL-Ahram, Akhbar al-Youm, and Al-Musawar) joined in repudiating the new law. While all concerned recognized that the new law was prompted by the growing domination of the Islamists in the professional syndicates (of Doctors', Engineers', and Lawyers') they felt that government and its National Democratic Party are going about it in a heavy-handed manner. The law requires a quorum of 50 per cent of the registered members to make elections of professional unions valid. If that quorum does not materialize, then a few weeks later it would be valid with 30 percent of the membership; otherwise the government would appoint a provisional board of directors from judges and senior members of the union. Given the chronic low turnout of voting in the unions, as in national and municipal elections, many feel that the new law amounts to giving the government defacto and dejury powers to control Egypt's professional unions. Such an eventuality means that the most important organs of Egypt's Civil Society would become extensions of the state. While many Egyptian professionals have been as alarmed as the government by the Islamists takeover of their unions, they would have preferred to manage the conflict democratically in their own way without governmental intervention. And there were recent examples in which this was done - i.e. the Islamists were prevented or ousted from syndicates' boards of directors, such as journalists, teachers, and social professions. In short, Law 100 for 1993, as the equally notorious Law 32 of 1964 regarding voluntary associations, represents a serious blow to the march of Egypt's Civil Society.

One bright spot, however, appeared a few days after the passing of Law 100. This was the public initiative of the New Civic Forum. Headed by a leading Egyptian economist-intellectual Dr. Said El-Naggar, N.C.F. was founded by a score of the country's foremost liberals of all ages and wolks of life. The initiation meeting was in Cairo's International Conference Hall on February 20, attended by several hundred of Egypt's public figures. The inauguration speech given by Dr. El Naggar was no less than a full alternative vision fo Egypt's future. Extensive of his speech will be reprinted in the April issue of Civil Society. El-Naggar criticized the policies of Egypt's successive regimes from 1952 till the present; and offered his own blue print and supposedly that of NCF. Though his point of departure was economic reform, El-Naggar forcefully argued the futility fo such a reform without concomitant socio-political reforms. The essence of his message is that no sound economic liberalization can take place without social equality and full political democratization. The three must go hand-in-hand. Civil Society welcomes the birth of the New Civic Forum. Its public birth in the same week as Law 100 dramatizes the ever lasting dialectics between authorities and democratic forces in our society.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim

Egypt Parliament pushes union law through

At a stormy six-hour session on Tuesday February 16, 1993, the People's Assembly approved a law outlining new regulations for professional union elections. Islamist-controlled syndicates denounced the legislation as a blow to democracy but ruling party deputies hailed it as a rejection of "the dictatorship of the minority".

The apparent purpose of the new law appears to be to make it harder for Islamists, particularly the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood, to maintain control of the governing councils of professional unions. The legislation requires 50 per cent of a syndicate's members to vote in the first round if an election to its council is to be valid. The Islamists already control the governing councils of the doctors', pharmacists', engineers' and lawyers' unions.

At the opening on Tuesday's debate, Speaker Ahmed Fath'i Sorour announced that he had received notice from the Engineer's Syndicate threatening to withdraw confidence from its chairman, Housing Minister Hasabllah El-Kafrawi, as well as its council. The Syndicate also threatened to expel from its membership any member of the People's Assembly or Shura Council who would vote for the new legislation, Sorour said.

In the name of the Assembly, Sorour announced his rejection of "these threats, blackmail and pressure. We will not allow anybody to put pressure on members of this Assembly who seek to express their views freely," Sorour said. "Giving in to such pressure would be a setback for democracy.

In a general debate that followed, deputy Mohamed El-Gweili, one of the sponsors of the new legislation, praised it for "bolstering the exercise of democracy". But Dr Hamdi El-Sayed, chairman of the doctors' union, said professional unions should have been consulted in advance; he demanded a



week's postponement of the debate until this has been done.

Deputy Hussein Megawer of the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) said: "It is inconceivable that a small minority should be in control of the majority at professional unions." But another NDP deputy, Hilmi Nammar, who chairs the commerce union, rejected the legislation because it authorizes the judiciary to run professional unions in the absence of a quorum of voters to elect the union's council.

The Assembly then moved on to an article-by-article discussion of the new draft; a number of amendments were introduced which will have the effect of softening some of the new regulations.

As approved, the new law requires a 50 per cent quorum of voters if the elections of the union's chairman and council are to be valid. If this is not possible, a second round should be held two weeks later, at which the required quorum would be one third of the union's members.

Failing this, the outgoing chairman and council of the union would continue to exercise their functions for three months, at the end of which a third round of elections would be held. The required quorum in the third round is also one third of the union's members. Failing this again, a provisional committee would be set up to run the union, made up of the

chairman of the Cairo Court of Appeals, four of his deputies and other members of the judiciary. This committee would call for new union elections within a six-month period and would go on calling for elections until the required quorum became possible.

In approving the above-mentioned key clauses of the new legislation, the Assembly considerably softened the provisions of the original draft. This draft had required a 50 per cent quorum in a first round of elections, to be reduced to 40 per cent in a second round. Failing this, a judicial committee would be formed to run the union and to call for new elections within a six-month period.

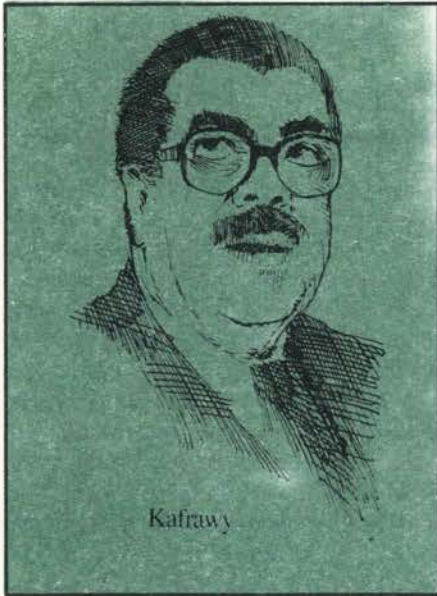
As approved, Article Seven of the new legislation obligates all members of professional unions to cast their votes in any union elections. Those who lag behind would be required to pay a fine, equal to the cost of the annual membership fee.

Article Eight prohibits professional unions and their branches from raising funds or accepting donations and gifts for purposes other than the original purposes of the union. The article also prohibits unions from participating in activities that do not serve its original objectives and from spending money for purposes other than the service of its members.

The new legislation was submitted to the House by four NDP members along with Abul-Fadl El-Gizawi, an independent opposition deputy. Among those who objected to it was Khaled Mohieddin, leader of the leftist National Progressive Unionist Party (NPUP) who argued that it was inconceivable to ram the new law through the House without having consulted the professional unions themselves.

Another deputy who objected to the new law was Dr. Ibrahim Awara, who said that it was illogical that some members of the People's Assembly could win their seats by a 10 per cent turnout

reprinted from *Al-Ahram Weekly*



of voters and then require a 50 per cent quorum of voters in professional union elections.

Defending the new legislation, Justice Minister Farouk Seif El-Nasr said that it boosted the exercise of democracy and that none of its provisions ran counter to the constitution.

Reactions to the new union law

The legislation provoked wide ranging debate, not least among commentators who see it as the latest stage in an ongoing battle between the regime and the militant Islamist opposition.

Criticism of the new law was not confined to opposition party newspapers. Last Friday Al-Ahram's editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Nafie, launched a severe attack against the law and its supporters in parliament. Nafie wrote: "Some of the leaders sitting in the Egyptian parliament seem to be unaware of the wide-ranging democratic transformation advocated by President Mubarak. A wide gulf exists between those parliamentarians and what is taking place worldwide." Nafie continued: "It seems that some members of the People's Assembly do not take democracy, pluralism and civil liberties seriously. They think, rather, that such slogans are mere political manoeuvres on the part of Egyptian policy makers, instead of seeing these goals as a constant and firm aim of the Egyptian

regime."

Nafie complained that members of parliament lack the initiative to consolidate the democratic drive advocated by the president and stated that "parliamentarians do not actively participate in proposing laws" to match the spirit of the democratic transformation advocated by the executive power. "Even worse, when these parliamentarians make an exception and propose draft laws that have serious bearing on important domestic matters, the spirit of what they draft falls short of the aspirations and expectations of the nation." Nafie said.

Citing the new law for controlling unions as an example of laws that contradict the spirit of democracy, Nafie wrote: "This law is of prime importance as it affects pioneering sectors in the nation that need everyone's support if they are to play a prominent role in the democratic process. There can be no democracy or pluralism in our country without active professional unions."

Nafie continued: "Unfortunately such an understanding does not seem to be shared by some parliamentarians and politicians who instead of conducting a wide debate on a draft law that was opposed by the majority of union leaders because it contradicted the most basic principles of trade unionist democracy, they chose instead to draft a law that does not fulfil the aspirations of trade unionists. . .A number of writers and top trade unionists opposed this undemocratic law which does not at all respond to the imperatives of Egyptian political reality."

Nafie's conclusion was: "Let those who want a confrontation with certain political forces in control of certain professional unions conduct this confrontation within each union by means of active union participation, not by issuing a law that contradicts the interest of the majority of trade unionists."

He continued: "The very fact that the political forces (those whom the law wants to control) are capable of mobilizing votes on election day means one thing: that the forces opposing them

are incapable of mobilizing members of the union behind them and that they are isolated within their unions...Frankly speaking some political parties are trying to make up, by such a law, for what they had failed to achieve through political work."

Al Shaab opens fire

Also on Friday, the opposition Al Shaab (voice of the Labour Party) appeared with black defiant banners proclaiming "Come to our rally today and defy the enemies of democracy", "Tyranny will not make you stronger...or halt the Jihad against you", and "We will continue saying 'Islam is the solution' no matter what you do to us."

Al-Shaab's defiant stance against the unions' law was easily predictable in the light of the fact that the regulations introduced by the new law were understood as a means of curbing the influence of the Islamists within certain professional unions. Yet that defiant stance gained an added impetus from the fact that a breakaway faction of the Socialist Labour Party (main ally of the Islamists) was holding a conference on Friday to declare the leadership of the party illegal and take legal steps to take control of the Party's headquarters and newspaper, Al-Shaab.

Thus the editorial of Friday's Al-Shaab, signed by the paper's chief editor, Adel Hussein, warned its readers that Friday's issue may be the last. Hussein wrote: "We are witnessing the massacre of democracy. Last Tuesday they passed a law against professional unions, and today (Friday) they will issue a resolution stipulating the liquidation of the Socialist Labour Party and the abolition of its paper Al-Shaab. If their machinations succeed (may God frustrate such machinations) that would mean that the issue you are reading is the last to appear... I do not see how, if this happens, Mubarak can continue to say that his rule has never witnessed the silencing of a writer. "

Hussein continued: The responsibility of this democratic setback, when completed, does not totally fall on the shoulders of President Mubarak. The US certainly shares a responsibility in this setback, as it cannot possibly be a

coincidence that such a coup against the constitution and the laws should take place on the eve of the arrival of the American Secretary of State in Cairo."

On Saturday, the veteran columnist Mustafa Amin dedicated his daily column in the national Akhbar El-Youm (the weekend edition of the daily Al-Akhbar) to the issue of closure threats facing Al-Shaab. "Al-Shaab alleged in yesterday's issue," he wrote, that it is facing a conspiracy and that yesterday's issue may be its last. I do not believe this terrifying news because I am firmly against the silencing of any voice... A closure of one paper is tantamount to closing all papers in the country. We know of previous governments which tried to dig graves for the press only to find themselves buried in the graves they dug.

"True, Al-Shaab is an opposition paper, and very vocal at that," he continued, "yet this is no justification to close it, or conspire against it by trying to hand it over to a Labour Party splinter group... This is an act of rape, and the rape of a newspaper marks the beginning of dictatorship and the end of democracy.

"Do not turn the lights off. In darkness all sorts of crimes thrive and corruption prevails. Leave newspapers to talk and attack. This is the only proof that you are strong," he concluded.

But we had not seen the last of Al-Shaab after all since it reappeared on Tuesday with its usual defiant banner headlines and Adel Hussein's fiery editorials. Its front-page headline proclaimed: "God is Greatest,



Mubarak." Another main headline announced "The battle will not be decided in a few weeks... It is a long battle that requires time, patience and sacrifices."

Adel Hussein's front-page editorial stated: "Ramadan finds us in the midst of a severe battle, a battle forced upon us by the rulers of this country, who represent oppression and corruption. Only days before Ramadan the arrogance of those rulers reached a climax with their onslaught on the Labour Party and the unions. Yet they did not reckon on one factor, namely that during Ramadan the gates of heaven are opened to the prayers of the oppressed... Thus the prayers of all sections of society nationwide will turn against you for all your wicked machinations against Muslims... God will punish you severely".

The Left joins the campaign

Yesterday the left-wing opposition weekly Al Ahali appeared with its banner stating: "A new draft law to entitle the Parties Committee to liquidate parties if they change their programme or political directives."

Al-Ahali's editorial, signed by the paper's board chairman, Lutfi Wakid, was entitled: "What next after the unions law?" "Under the slogan of democracy and the widening of popular participation," he wrote, "the ruling party used its parliamentary majority to pass a law concerning professional unions with unjustifiable speed and insufficient consultation with the professions concerned... We are against this flouting of the rights of millions of Egypt's intelligentsia to debate a law that has a very serious bearing on their professional performance."

* * *

A press release by the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights

The law of "The Democratic Guarantees of Professional Syndicates", issued on February 17, 1993, represents an evident violation of Syndicalistic liberties and the rights of forming syndicates. It is a violation of international conventions of Syndicalistic Freedom and the Protection



of Syndicates, and the rules of both the "International Convention on Civil and Political Rights" and the "International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" which were all approved by the Egyptian government and hence became an internal legislation according to article (151) of the Egyptian Constitution.

Article (3) of the international convention specified the right of syndicates to put their own rules and regulations, elect their representatives, organize their administration and activities, and form their programs freely. Also, it prohibited the authorities from any interference that would limit those rights or prevent performing them. Article (7) prohibited the subjection of syndicates to any condition that would restrict the application of Article (3). Moreover, Article (8) prohibited the governments - whether through legislations or actions - from lessening any of the guarantees determined in that Convention.

The EOHR realizes that the new law is a violation of all that is claimed in its title, i.e. "providing democratic guarantees" by limiting the right of the members of each syndicate to run it themselves, by putting its own rules and ruining the right of election itself, and opening the door to imposing on the syndicates a board of directors - through appointment - that might stay for ever.

It is worth noting that the new law was issued within 24 hours, and in the

absence of those who are concerned, i.e. the syndicates' boards of directors and general assemblies. Furthermore, a number of syndicates' chairmen and board of directors clearly opposed the law before it was issued by the People's Assembly.

The new law cannot be separated from the rapid deterioration of the state of human rights in Egypt during the last few years, and in the last year in particular. This is manifested in a wave of "legislative terrorism" under the banner of confronting terrorism. Several legal amendments of penalty laws, criminal rules, and party regulations were issued to strengthen government control. Also, there were news about similar measures concerning the law of societies and military court to include them as equal part of the normal civil court system, in harmony with the increasing desire to transform what is exceptional in Egyptian law into a permanent situation.

Translated by Samah Emam

* * *

Mubarak defends syndicates law

President Hosni Mubarak defended the new professional syndicates law, declaring that it aims at ensuring the broad participation of the majority in syndicate elections. According to him, the new professional syndicates law, which the opposition castigated as a blow to democracy, was aimed at ensuring the broad participation of the majority of voters in any syndicate elections and their proper representation.

Addressing a public rally during a visit to the New Valley - a string of oases in Egypt's western desert - Mubarak said he was determined to defend democracy "by right, justice and the law." As Mubarak spoke at Al-Kharga Oasis, the state media announced that the new legislation was signed by the President, less than 24 hours after it was approved by the People's Assembly. Mubarak said the draft law was sent to the Assembly only after "large numbers" of professionals declared support for it. The existing councils of the professional syndicates

are not affected by the new legislation, he said. "The aim of the new legislation is to ensure the broad participation of the grass roots and their proper representation in a way that reflects the will of the syndicate," Mubarak said.

Islamists, particularly from the mainstream Muslim Brotherhood, have gained control of several syndicates, including those of the doctors, engineers, pharmacists and lawyers. Some analysts have attributed the Islamists' success to their superior ability to mobilize their supporters - well-organized minorities within the syndicates - to cast their votes, in contrast to the general apathy of a 'silent majority' of syndicate members.

* * *

Text of the syndicates law

Article 1

The regulations of this law are applicable to the Professional Syndicates.

Article 2

It is a mandatory to obtain a 50% quorum of voters if the elections of the union's chairman and board are to be valid. If this is not possible, a second round should be held two weeks later, at which the required quorum would be one third of the union's members.

Falling this, the outgoing chairman and council of the union would continue to exercise their functions for three months, at the end of which a third round of elections would be held. The required quorum in the third round is

also one third of the union's members.

Article 3

Failing this again, a provisional committee would be set up to run the union, made up of the chairman to the Cairo Court of Appeals, four of his deputies and other members of the Judiciary. This committee would call for new union elections within a six-month period and would go on calling for elections until the required quorum became possible.

Article 4

If the position of the chairman is open before the end of his session, the general assembly replaces him with the oldest representative or deputy. If the required quorum in Article 2 is not possible, the general assembly would be called within 3 months to elect the chairman and the call would go until the required quorum become possible.

Article 5

Syndicate elections should not be held on Fridays and holidays, and the time of the elections should be published in two widely-circulated daily Arabic newspapers.

Article 6

All syndicate elections must take place by secret ballot, and they are supervised by a judiciary committee headed by the chairman of the Court of First Instance, and a membership of four of its previous chairmen. This committee determines the election stations which are formed of the chairman of a Judicial institution - approved by the Minister of Justice - and not less than 3 other members. Also, it decides on all the issues concerning the electoral process. The job of this Judiciary committee ends at declaring the results of the elections.

For each 500 members or more - who has the right to elect - a secondary election station is fixed, putting into consideration the address or the member's place of work. The secondary stations should be determined and their places declared before the call for the general assembly.

Article 7

All members of professional unions are obliged to cast their votes in any union elections. Those who lag behind



Fawzia Abdel Sattar

would be required to pay a fine equal to the cost of the annual membership fee.

Article 8

Professional unions and their branches are prohibited from raising funds or accepting donations and gifts for purposes other than the original purposes of the union. Also, unions are prohibited from participating in activities that do not sever its original objectives and from spending money for purposes other than the services of its members.

Article 9

All the regulations concerning the by-elections - according to the existing laws - in professional syndicates are cancelled. As an exception to the regulations of the previous article, the by-elections for the present existing councils are to be held according to the regulations of the new law.

If the required quorum (previously mentioned in Article 2) is not possible, the rest of the members would run the union, with the same measures mentioned in Article 3.

Article 10

Any regulation that is contrary to this new law is cancelled.

Article 11

This law is to be published in the official Gazette and becomes effective starting the following day.

* * *

Factions inside the SLP

A power conflict that plagued the ranks of Ibrahim Shukri's Socialist Labour Party (SLP) for nearly four years erupted into the open last weekend when a breakaway faction led by Ahmed Megahed held what he called a general party congress. A few hours later on Friday, Shukri's mainstream group held a separate rally to affirm confidence in Shukri's leadership and Megahed's dismissal from party ranks.

At their general congress, Megahed's followers, who broke away in 1989 claiming they are the true SLP, re-elected Megahed as party "chairman." Both Shukri and Megahed took their power conflict one step further by submitting memoranda to the

Political Parties Committee, each asking for government recognition of his group as the true SLP. Shukri also filed a lawsuit with the Administrative Court, demanding a court injunction that would nullify the proceedings of Megahed's "general congress" and all its consequences.

In his opening speech to the "general congress", Megahed complained that the semi-governmental Political Parties Committee has continued to deal with Shukri's faction, which he described as an "illegal entity." The Committee's action, he said, was a violation of "multi-party democracy" as well as the provisions of the law governing the activities of political parties. Megahed recalled that the conflict first began in 1989 when Shukri made a distinction between Islamists and secularists within the party membership, declaring his support for the Islamists. Accusing Shukri of rigging party elections that were held at the time, Megahed said: "It was they who broke away from the party, deviated from its programme and committed aggression against its statutes." Megahed, rejecting accusations that he and his faction were, "tools in the hands of the state," counter-charged that Shukri's, faction, in fact, was manipulated by the state because it continues to have its protection.

Within hours of Megahed's "general congress" on Friday, about 5,000 Shukri followers held a rally to renew confidence in Shukri's leadership and policies. Shukri and his followers believe that Megahed's actions are part of a government conspiracy to liquidate the SLP and shut down its newspaper.

At the conclusion of the rally, Shukri's followers issued a statement urging all political forces to support the SLP in its battle against "the ferocious offensive that seeks to liquidate the party and end the narrow margin of freedom" that is allowed by the government. In Tuesday's edition, Al Shaab claimed that Megahed's "general congress" was organized by the Interior Ministry and amounted to "aggression against Islam, freedom and the law."

* * *

Islamists Cause Book Withdrawal

Government publishers in Egypt have removed copies of two books from their shelves after Muslim fundamentalist scholars objected to them. Officials at the General Egyptian Book Organization said Chapter C (Ayat Al Geem) by Hassan Al Taleb and Creatures of Soaring Desires (Makhluqaat Al Ashwaaq Al Taiira) by Edward Kharrat were "forbidden" and unavailable since scholars linked to Al Azhar, the most famous seat of learning in Islam, condemned them late last year.

The organization, which published both books, sent them back to warehouses after the Islamic studies group attacked Taleb's poems for imitating the language of Islam's Holy Book, the Koran, and Kharrat's short stories because they contained some sexually explicit scenes. The books are not officially banned. Writers and intellectuals say the cases show that the authorities, while rising to a violent Muslim fundamentalist campaign, are backing out of an intellectual battle against a growing tide of puritanical religious fervor.

* * *

Death verdict for militant

A Military court in Alexandria sentenced an Islamist militant to death on Tuesday Feb. 23 for killing a police officer and wounding another who attempted to arrest him.

The three-man court, headed by Col Faisal Heiba, found Hassan Shehata Hassan, described as a member of the underground Jihad organization, guilty of killing Capt Ali Khater and the attempted murder of Lt Col Mahmoud El Makhzangi in November 1992. The two officers were leading a police detachment that raided Hassan's hideout in Alexandria. Resisting arrest, he opened fire with a pistol, killing Khater and wounding El Makhzangi.

Eight other Jihad members were sentenced to death in December under a new anti-terrorism law passed in July, 1992, to confront an upsurge of violence by Islamist militants. Seven of the eight were tried in absentia.

* * *

Occupied Palestine Camp of Return

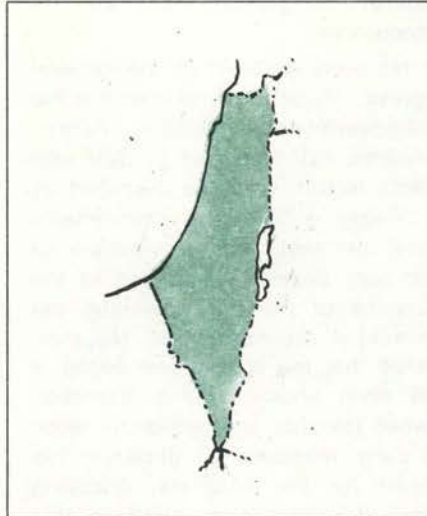
To look at, the Marj El-Zohour area covers around one sq. km of grassy mountainous terrain. The grass has only just begun to appear as it was covered in thick snow until recently. Fresh running water trickles through abandoned water pipes and is ice cold at it's warmest. Members of the press find it difficult to endure the cold whilst sitting inside their heated cars. To be forced to endure it all day; to have to wash one's hands, face and hair in it is any average human beings' nightmare.

The previously mentioned examples are only trivial matters which the occupants of the camp have all learned to endure as part of their daily struggle for survival. Their fight is met with brave faces, many of which are now adorned with beards in an attempt to endure the harsh weather, as well as an undying source of faith. Their camp has been named "The Camp of Return". The return they speak of is to their homes, in Palestine, however long it may take.

The group of deportees, comprised mainly of university professors, business men, students, engineers, sheikhs and so forth, represent a highly competent, intellectual body and one who's talents have not gone to waste but rather been put to the test.

The main life-line of the camp is a self-devised system of organization which is practised both mentally and physically. Organization, in the physical sense, is strongly visible throughout their establishment of twelve committees dealing with all aspects of the new lifestyle they have been forced to adopt.

Of the most important committees, which also serves as the voice of the "Camp of Return", is the mass media committee. Represented by several spokesmen, statements are given to the press, daily, in both English and Arabic. According to Dr. Abdulla Dweik, who is the main English spokesman, making statements to the press and standing in front of cameras was a position he



never believed he would have been able to fulfill prior to his deportation. He now feels that his role is one which is necessary in order to present his cause and that of his people to the rest of the world.

Reporters, also among those deported, continue to serve in their field. Interviews are conducted with press members who come to the camp then written into articles for future publication. Films are given to visiting reporters for developing. Photographs brought back provide sources of archives for the press committee. These are distributed to press on their trips to the camp in order to aid publications and potentially, in bringing the solution to the problem that much closer.

Another of the twelve committees present is the medical committee. This provides the best medical treatment it can for the camp. Attempts have been made by members to cultivate natural plants and herbs in making medicines. Amongst these is the Dardar plant which, according to Dr. Faryouni, also among those deported, can be used in the treatment of constipation which is a common ailment of the camp.

Other committees present engage in meeting with remaining, basic needs of

the Camp of Return's occupants such as cooking, cleaning, the collecting of water, wood for fuel, etc...

Physical needs are not the only ones catered to in the camp however, as mental needs are also provided for. Students who were enrolled in universities up until their deportation represent around one hundred of those currently present at the Camp of Return. Their education continues, however, as several professors have been responsible for the initiation of the University of Ibn Taymiah.

Lectures take place daily for students on the grassy hills of Marj El-Zohoor. Several lectures are also arranged, weekly, dealing with issues such as politics, religion, society and whatever other areas of expertise are present among the deportees and willing to contribute.

The main source of faith, according to Dweik, is God. The majority of the camp's residents belong to either Hamas or Jihad. The two groups are considered to be the main fundamentalist organizations operating in the occupied territories.

Despite the fact that Hamas members tend to spend more time together and inhabit tents on one side of the camp, while Jihad members occupy the other, this has not created divisions within the committees. Hamas and Jihad members serve together and alike.

Their gathering at "Azas" together, traditional ceremonies where prayers are said for the dead, several of which have been organized following news of deaths in the occupied territories, has not been affected nor has their conjugation at the Friday prayer. Prayer mats are aligned side by side and the request for God's mercy and aid is voiced by all. The call to prayer echoes into the mountains and can almost surely be heard as far as the Israeli checkpoint at Zamrayya, only a few kilometers into the hills.

Constant attacks on the Palestinian

deportees' morale have yet to meet with effect. Occasional marches, organized by the camp and intending to walk back into Palestine, were forced back on reaching Israeli checkpoints after being fired at.

Now, five kilometers along a winding path leading from the camp to the Israeli checkpoint at Zamrayya, lies a minefield surrounded by barbed wire as a deterrent to future marches. Exchanges of shelling can be heard in the distance which occasionally breaks out between Hizbollah factions, engaged in the south of the camp, and between Israelis.

The Lebanese army, positioned at several checkpoints along the road leading into the Camp of Return and responsible for subjecting vehicles to thorough inspection, withhold newspapers, radios and other sources of information from reporters before entering the Marj El-Zohoor area. Still, this has not been completely effective in stopping some smaller items such as pocket transistor radios from reaching the deportees.

Food items are among other banned goods from entering the camp through the Lebanese army checkpoints. Members of the Druze community, who reside in the surrounding mountains, were said to be the main suppliers during the beginning of the camp's establishment. Lately, rumors have been circulating that certain Saudi and Iranian companies have been providing other basic sources of nourishment to the deportees who make daily trips into the mountains to collect their supplies.

Bags of tea, coffee and packets of cigarettes often find their way in also, in the hands of visiting press, although in negligible amounts, as moral support. "I feel the importance of the media, especially after deportation," said Dweik. He added that the press has been one of the most important sources of communication for the camp, both from the inside to the outside and vice versa.

Still, patience is beginning to wear thin with regards to the apparent standstill relating to any forthcoming solution. Faith is also weakening in the bodies responsible for arriving at decisions, namely the United Nations which, according to the deportees and

Palestinians, should be making stronger attempts at playing an active role preserving peace inside the occupied territories.

Until a change in the current, uncompromising situation can be brought about, it seems that the Camp of Return will be forced to continue to grin and bear the cold, meanwhile relying on God and each other for faith. Should a solution not be reached within the coming few months, perhaps it will be the heat they will have to start learning to deal with next.

Mona El-Sayed

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Deportees Fundamentally Divided

When Israel deported 417 Palestinians, she believed that they were Hamas activists responsible for crimes of terrorism. Most of the deportees are denying this accusation, however they are not denying that they are sympathetic with the radical Islamic movement which has been responsible for the killings of several Israeli military and police personal

"We have a right to fight against the Zionist occupation of our land," explains Abdallah Dweik who is one of the spokesmen for the deportees. Dweik refers to himself as "sympathetic" with Hamas, however he denies that any of the deportees are active members of the radical Islamic movement. "This accusation is totally false. No Israeli court could indite us as Hamas activists so we were deported", declared Dweik.

However, for all intents and purposes, the deportees are radical Islamist's when it comes to their religious and political beliefs. Dweik has urged Muslims all over the world to stand up and present their Islam. "Sacrifice is the price for real freedom, and sacrifice is highly appreciated by God Almighty," claims Dweik who feels that Islam needs to be defended inside and outside the Occupied Territories, even if it requires armed force.

The Geneva Convention allows any people under occupation to resist occupation, even if its means using violence," said Abdel Aziz Rantissi, the

official spokesman for the deportees. Dweik echoed Rantissi stating, "we would like to see justice and peace coming back, with what ever means possible, even if it is going to require an armed struggle."

According to a deportee who goes by the name of Abou Hamms, "we are not blowing up buses or killing innocent people. We are fighting against soldiers in uniform." Nevertheless, not all the deportees feel that Hamas is doing enough for the Palestinian cause. Among those deported are alleged members of Islamic Jihad.

Islamic Jihad is another radical Palestinian organization. Stark theological and political differences exist between the two groups. Practically speaking, the difference lies in the intensity of violence. Dweik says, "Islamic Jihadist's focus on the armed struggle, while Hamas believe that although armed struggle is very important, it should not be considered a priority."

Dweik insists that the two groups are brothers in Islam. However a physical division within the camp is present. One section of the camp is dominated by Hamas sympathizers, while another is occupied by Jihadist's. When questioned on the matter the two groups highlighted the difference between their ideologies.

The debate have revealed that these Jihadist sympathizers feel that a total armed resistance against the Zionist state is needed at this point in the Palestinian struggle for self determination. On the other hand, Hamas sympathizers have indicated that while the armed struggle is important, this is not the time to focus totally on violence. Building a grass root movement, educating the Palestinians, and developing the necessary institutions for nationhood are more important.

Despite their differences, the two groups have been united against the PLO on several occasions. Dweik says "nobody in the Muslim world will accept the PLO giving up Jerusalem, or the Occupied Territories. We will not accept that." Many of the deportees, including Dweik feel that the PLO is engaging in a humiliating surrender, rather than a

peace process. "My word to the PLO is, if you are tired, then move away and let others who have full hope in God defend the cause," asserted Dweik.

"The PLO is the victim of a new international conspiracy aimed at strengthening Israel," said Dweik. However, Muslims are also considered to be targeted by that conspiracy. He describes the holocaust of Muslims in Palestine, Bosnia, India, Afghanistan, and else where, as an "old conspiracy." The culprit being the West. Nevertheless, Dweik remains optimistic, "I know the Western world from the inside. Their failure is very close. The only people to inherit the East and the West are the Muslims."

Dweik's frustration with the West, is compounded by Israel's harsh measures. "They are carrying a big gun and they speak softly. But Hamas are talking hard and they are only throwing stones."

Khaled Kazziha

* * *

Public Opinion Poll

The Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC), a leading Palestinian press and Information agency, released the result of a public opinion poll they conducted in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip on the eve of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to the region.

The poll showed that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians, 84 per cent, reject any return to the peace negotiation until the problem of the deportees is solved. Only 14 per cent said they are ready to participate in the talks despite the deportee issue. Another significant conclusion was drawn from the poll. Sixty per cent of respondents said they were in favour of a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Ahmed Seif of the JMCC said that "despite the feeling of frustration and anger amongst people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the supporters of a peaceful solution to the conflict are still in the majority." Seif added that "the opposition to the peace talks is gaining more support but not enough to tip the scales or to create a split amongst Palestinians in the political

decision-making arena."

Of the respondents 35 per cent think Palestinians should not go back to the negotiations even if the deportation issue is resolved. The poll was carried out from 18-20 February on a random sample of 1,190 Palestinians over the age of 17 throughout the occupied territories. In response to the question, "Who do you think represents the Palestinian people?", 58 per cent said the PLO, around 13 per cent expressed support for the Islamic movement, and 26 per cent thought that true representation can only be achieved through democratic elections.

Seif said that amongst those who favour elections were sympathizers of both of the two main political movements here, PLO and the Islamic movements. Hanan Ashrawi, the official spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation, said, in response to the poll: "the result indicates the deep commitment of Palestinians to peace but at the same time shows the deep effect the mass expulsion has had in the minds of the public, and therefore how it has the potential to totally destroy the peace process."

* * *

According to another opinion poll published recently, more Israelis now favour ceding occupied Arab lands and the formation of an independent Palestinian state than at any other time in the past six years. The survey of 1,139 Israelis by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies showed 60 per cent favoured trading part of the occupied territories for peace—up from about 40 per cent in 1987.

The Tel Aviv University center released the poll after the arrival on Monday of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Israel to revive Middle East peace talks

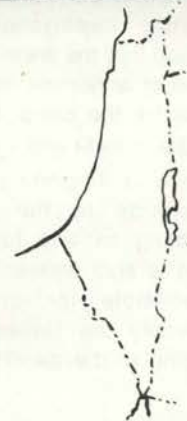
It also showed that 36 per cent of Israelis were ready to accept the establishment of an independent Palestinian state next to Israel, up from 20 per cent in 1987. "This shows that the Israeli public are strategically dovish. More and more Israelis are willing to return territories, deal with the PLO and deal with the possibility of a Palestinian state," center deputy

director Joseph Alpher said.

The survey showed little change in feelings about an Israeli pullback from the Golan Heights in return for a peace treaty with Syria, despite nearly 16 months of peace talks between the two countries. The poll found six per cent were willing to return all of the strategic plateau to Syria, the same as in 1987. It showed 46 per cent opposed any withdrawal from the heights, down from 49 per cent in 1987.

Middle East peace talks have been suspended since Israel expelled 415 Palestinians to Lebanon in December. The poll, conducted in the first half of January, did not touch on the expulsions. Alpher said the questionnaire was prepared before Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government banished the Palestinians to Lebanon.

Al-Ahram Weekly



Algeria

Referendum on Political Future

Algerian Head of State, Ali Kafi, promised on January 14 a referendum on the country's political future for a new start after a year of conflict between security forces and Muslim fundamentalists.

He gave no date for the referendum nor for fresh elections for which opposition politicians have been clamoring. The authorities cancelled parliamentary elections in January, 1992 to stop the fundamentalist from winning. Some diplomats said Kafi's long-awaited speech was likely to disappoint Algerians. They had hoped for specific details - dates for presidential or parliamentary elections, a decision on ending the state of emergency (was due to expire on February 9 but extended indefinitely), or on lifting a night curfew now in force across much of the country. "If they had been able to offer something specific, I think it would have helped them," said one European diplomat.

Kafi said the referendum would seek the people's advice "on the management of the transitional period and on a project for changing the constitution to assure a new balance between the top authorities." He did not say what changes would be proposed. A new constitution would be the fourth since independence in 1962. The last, in 1989, opened the way to democracy after nearly three decades of one-party state. Kafi said he was committed to this "democratic option" and the "people's free choice."

On the economy, he added: "Initiatives free from all restraints will be encouraged. We will allow the national economy to face the new demands of a market economy." Political violence and social scourges such as poverty, unemployment and housing shortages, which officials say encouraged recruits to join Islamic movements must be eradicated, Kafi said.

The fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) took a huge lead in the first round of the last parliamentary election,



in which voting was by constituency. The authorities crushed street protests against the cancelation of elections but they had less success against underground guerillas who have ambushed and killed 210 members of the security forces. The FIS was outlawed last March.

Kafi, speaking a year after the collective presidency was formed on January 14, 1992, said Algeria had been gravely shaken by the events of the past year. But he added: "that year enabled us also to suppress the danger which threatened us." Kafi said the leadership agreed with Prime Minister's forecast that the government needed at least three years to turn round the economy, crippled by foreign debt. Kafi also promised more talks with political parties, but added: "We exclude from this step all those who practice or support violence to accede to power." He added: "1993 will be a decisive year."

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Erosion of press freedom

Article 19's recently published **Algeria: Press Freedom Under the State of Emergency** reports that over recent months a relatively free press has been seriously eroded. January 1992 saw the beginning of

severe repression of the press by the military and civilian authorities. At first the press, which supported or was sympathetic to FIS, was singled out, while the non-Islamic and secular print media continued to enjoy editorial freedom. With the imposition of emergency regulations in February, however, this sector, including even government-controlled newspapers, also became a target. Article 19's report describes many cases of censorship during this period including arrests of journalists, closures of publications, raids on newspapers offices and seizure of copies of newspapers supportive of FIS or other Islamist parties or associations.

The state of emergency imposed on February 9, 1992 included severe measures designed to restrict freedom of expression. New powers were introduced to restrict freedom of movement, particularly in Algiers itself, and to stop participation in unofficial strikes which were made illegal. These measures were consolidated by powers to close public meeting places and to ban demonstrations deemed inimical to law and order. Military tribunals were empowered to deal with criminal cases and serious offenses which threatened state security.

Measures to curtail the press were strengthened further in mid-August 1992 when the Algerian authorities issued a supplementary presidential decree authorizing the suspension or closure of any company, organ, institution or body whose activities endanger public order and security, the normal functioning of institutions or the supreme interests of the country. In effect, this decree bans any activities considered destabilizing, whether they take the form of publishing in the press or preaching in mosques.

A new anti-terrorism law was introduced on October 1 which, amongst other measures, imposes sentences of between five and 10 years'

imprisonment for anyone who defends or reproduces documents of "terrorist" associations. The prime minister subsequently announced on November 29 the dissolution of all institutions, including charitable, cultural and labor organizations controlled by FIS, and warned, "Everything published containing subversive ideas should be confiscated and those who write, print or publish such material should be brought before the law."

The independent media have not only suffered as a result of official censorship, but have been forced into self-censorship as a result of fellow journalists having been prosecuted or verbally threatened, in some cases by Islamic extremists. The foreign press at first met with cooperation and openness from the authorities, but very soon had their freedom of movement severely curtailed. Some were subjected to harassment and

others were deported.

The Algerian authorities have declared themselves committed to freedom of expression and to democracy, yet they have employed and continue to use repressive censorship methods against the press. The future of the free press in Algeria is being seriously challenged by their violations of free expression.

Kurds No near solution

Kurds join hunger strike

Kurdish politicians have joined 700 Kurds on a hunger strike in Brussels to put pressure on Western governments to prevent what they say are Turkish plans for genocide in Kurdistan.

The politicians, elected in Europe to a Kurdish parliament in exile, urged the European Parliament at a news conference on 26 January to send a delegation to Kurdistan to investigate human rights abuses. "We want to make known to the world the tragedy of our people's situation and to make Western public opinion aware of the approaching genocide," the MPs said in a statement.

Since 24 January, 700 Kurds have been camping in a former meat market in central Brussels. They have consumed only sugar-water and tea and spend most of the day sitting on thin foam mattresses.

About 2,000 people responded to the appeal for a hunger strike but there was only enough room in the Brussels hall for 700. Turkish Kurds in Canada and Australia also joined the protest action. "We are on an unlimited hunger strike. People may die, but we are prepared to carry on until we get a response from Western governments," said Ilhan Kizilhan; a member of the Kurdistan National Assembly, the parliament in exile.

The politicians accused Western states of ignoring events in Kurdistan and said they had been "taken in by the Liberal

mask" of the government.

Belgian parliamentarians have supported the strike call. Senator Hugo Van Rompaey said he visited Kurdistan in 1991 and was alarmed by human rights abuses there. "We must bring pressure on the Turkish government to respect human rights and to find a democratic way to solve the problem of the Kurdish people," he said.

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150 Kurds killed in air raids

About 150 Kurdish separatist, half the population of a rebel camp in the Eastern mountains, are believed to have been killed in two days of Turkish air raids on January 15. Unidentified military officials in Bingol province said the estimate was based on video recordings made by attacking Cobra and Sikorsky helicopters, the semi-official agency said. The helicopters launched the raid on January 14 against 300 rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (KWP) hiding in a camp on Serik hill in the mountains of the province.

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How to solve it?

In a report entitled: "Peace and Justice for the Peoples of the Middle East, Perspectives of the Peace Research Community", the problem of the Kurds was given an important portion of the discussion. The report, out in January 1993, was

prepared by the **Commission of Peace Building in the Middle East of the International Peace Research Association**. It was noted that issues relating to Kurdish cultural autonomy, political rights and human rights could be effectively addressed if the United Nations Secretary General were to explore with regional bodies the possibility of holding a multilateral conference regarding the situation of Kurds in the region, possibly in Geneva. The conference would not consider any changes in borders, but would address the rights of movement of people and information across existing borders. Furthermore, provisions for cultural autonomy in regard to language, education, modes of economic development and other matters such as self-determination within existing states, could be discussed.

The conference should involve government representatives from Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Iran and relevant Central Asian Republics, as well as Kurdish political parties and Kurdish citizens groups in the region and abroad, as for example the Kurdish community in Europe. While Kurdish autonomy is a difficult matter to discuss multilaterally, it is even more difficult to manage within any one country. The conference might proceed without all governments being represented, but it is important that at least two governments participate to get negotiations started.

National and transnational citizens'

organizations, both Kurdish and non-Kurdish, also should explore options, including conferences and informal dialogues, for dealing with the need for more secure lifespaces for Kurds in the region as a whole as well as in the four-country area referred to as Kurdistan.

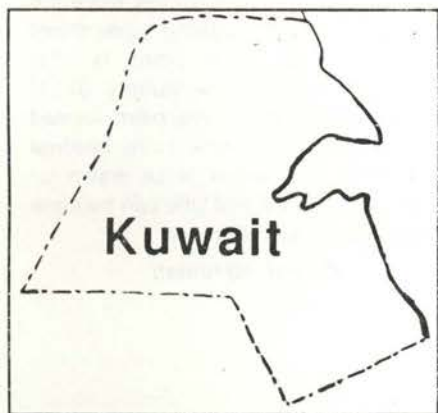
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Kuwait By-elections

Members of the electoral districts number 14 and 16 voted a second time for their representatives for the Parliament after the Constitutional Court had dropped their membership because of contraventions that took place during the last elections of October, 1992.

About 8,000 persons voted in the elections, which were held in an unprecedented competitive atmosphere in Kuwait. All the candidates agreed upon the honesty and discipline of these elections.

It is worth mentioning that this by-election is the first of its kind in Kuwait. In December 29, 1992, the Constitutional Court dropped the membership of the representatives of districts 14 and 16, after another two candidates submitted an appeal against the result of the elections in those two districts, relying on the fact that a number of military personnel voted in the elections in contradiction with the Kuwaiti election law.



Qatar The struggle for democracy

There are organized groups in Qatar who have been demanding a democratic system of government, one that would guarantee freedom to all citizens of Qatar. Those demands have been strongly objected to by the Qatari government. The government has been charged with arresting, torturing, and humiliating those who called for changes

The first public demand for freedom and Arab unity took place on 17 April, 1963, in the form of a large and non-violent demonstration. The Qatari authorities reacted to this massive demonstration violently. One of the royal family members, Abdurahman Bin Mohammed Al Thani, with the police forces fired live ammunition at the demonstrators, killing four persons and injuring a score of others.

In 1969, Qatari oil employees went on strike. They were demanding improved working conditions, increased pay, and the filling of the various open positions in the oil company with Qatari nationals instead of importing laborers. The government, represented by Khalifa Al Thani, the minister of oil and finance, and Hamad Al Thani, the present Emir, was willing to negotiate with the employees only if the employees agreed to end their strike. The employees did end their strike, but the Qatari government did not keep its promise of honoring the workers' demands.

In 1971, a **temporary constitution** for the country was introduced. On 22 February 1972, Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani seized power in Qatar after a successful coup against his cousin, Ahmed Bin Ali. This coup was then called "the correction movement" but the new Emir did not introduce major reforms into the existing system of rule.

He modified the basic rules of 1971 by selecting the 40 members of the **Consultative Council** for the first term and promised to hold elections for the second term. Those promises have never been fulfilled and the temporary

constitution of 1971 has become the permanent constitution of the state of Qatar.

In 1982, 10 years after the "correction movement," some prominent Qatari figures issued a statement bearing the title "The Nation's Voice." The statement focused on the undesirable internal political affairs of the nation which included: "a temporary constitution, permanent ministry, increasing absolute authority of the Emir, the uneducated members of the Consultative Council, and the administrative corruption in the country." Those who issued the statement called for a legislative council that would defend people's rights.

Since the Gulf crisis, a number of public political debates related to the motives and outcomes of the Gulf war took place in Qatar. Fifty-four of the most well-educated social figures in Qatar signed a petition in December 1991 demanding the following: making reforms in all areas of life throughout the country, electing a legislative council that enjoys real and independent authority, and drafting a permanent constitution that guarantees democracy and freedom.

In response, the Qatari authorities called the individuals who signed the petition and forced them to withdraw their signatures and make a public apology. Some of those those who signed were humiliated, arrested, and tortured by the Qatari secret police. One of those arrested was Rashid Al Hasaifri, whose family is related to the Emir of Qatar. Others were threatened with dismissal from their jobs, and some were banned from traveling abroad.

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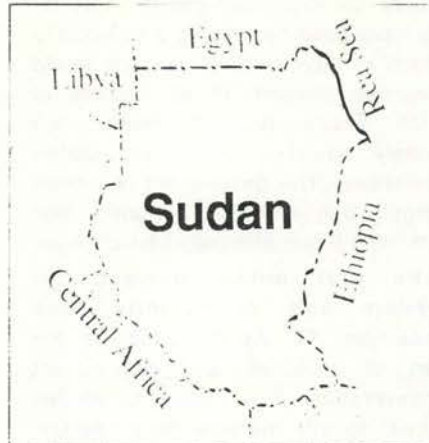
Sudan

Peace is difficult... but attainable

A high-powered Sudanese government delegation led by the Economic Planning Minister Ali Al-Hajj Mohamed visited the Ugandan capital Ugandan Kampala on Sunday, February 21. Diplomatic circles in Kampala suggested that despite the fact that the peace talks actually commenced on Monday after a bumpy start, little headway was made to resolve the conflict between the SPLM and Khartoum. A complicating factor was acknowledgement of the fact that there is at present another African mediator, namely the Nigerian government headed by President Ibrahim Babangida. The earlier peace talks held in the Nigerian capital Abuja broke down in a deadlock last November, but the Nigerian-sponsored talks have not been written off completely. The question is: why is there a need for parallel peace talks?

The Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni is a personal friend and former classmate of the SPLM leader Dr. John Garang. Kampala has a good working relationship with Khartoum, and there is a mutual desire to step up trade between the two neighbors. The River Nile is the lifeline of Sudan, and Uganda straddles the Great Lakes region where the river's main tributary the White Nile originates. Furthermore, the SPLM's forces are now mostly confined to the mountain ranges along Sudan's border with Uganda. Relief aid mainly comes across the narrow strip that constitutes the SPLM's present stronghold on the Ugandan-Sudanese border for distribution in the more outlying areas further north in southern Sudan, where starvation is rife.

The second reason why new avenues for mediation were sought is that Nigeria is itself embroiled in the fever of general and presidential elections scheduled for later in the year. The Sudanese fear that Nigeria might be so preoccupied with its own internal struggle for the continuation of a peaceful evolution of the democratic process that it will be less anxious to



devote the amount of time and energy on the Sudanese peace process that it has in the past. Nigeria itself shares the burden of religious and regional conflicts which have threatened the unity of the nation. Religious riots raged in many Nigerian cities over the past few years, and the question of whether or not to apply the Islamic Sharia laws is one that has proven to be a sticky issue in the political arena.

Uganda, on the other hand, has a relatively harmonious religious mix of Christians and Muslims. There is an urgency in the Ugandan attempts to resolve the conflict in southern Sudan as Sudanese refugees have fled the fighting there to more secure havens and refugee camps on Ugandan territory. Uganda has pressing economic problems of its own, and can do without the burden of sheltering ever-increasing numbers of Sudanese refugees. Moreover, there are a number of ethnic groups that live on both sides of the Sudanese-Ugandan border. The Ugandan authorities are anxious to play down the ethnic tensions that have been fueling factionalism and the fragmentation of the SPLM forces in recent years.

The Sudanese government of Lieutenant General Hassan Al Bashir is capitalizing on ethnic and tribal factionalism in southern Sudan, pressing for all the splinter factions of the SPLM to attend the peace talks on an equal

footing. SPLM leader Garang rejects this particular political posturing of the Khartoum government. Feelings are running high on all sides, as hundreds of thousands of southern Sudanese are being uprooted from their hometowns and an ugly situation is threatening to develop which rivals that of neighboring Somalia in its ferocity. Devastation in the wake of the war is endangering the social stability of the southern Sudanese region and threatens to spill over into neighboring countries including Uganda and Kenya. Agricultural development is wrecked and the region relies ever more heavily on outside food aid.

The efforts of the relief workers are hampered by the civil war and by uncontrolled factionalism. The Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association, which is the humanitarian wing of the SPLM, is firmly under the control of Dr. John Garang. But even then, relief workers are often robbed by breakaway factions of the SPLM. The Nasir faction, headed by Riek Mashar is notorious for attacking relief convoys and is dominated by Nuer tribesmen from the Upper Nile province of southern Sudan. The Upper Nile has seen the worst factional fighting, and is hardest hit by the war generated famine. The Sudanese government seizes on these factional disputes among Southerners and the government troops are poised for a new wave of offenses in southern Sudan against the SPLM. Uganda's President Museveni hopes to halt the bloodbath that has claimed so many lives since the SPLM took up arms against government troops in 1983. The point is that differences between the various SPLM splinter factions that have been formed over the past 18 months have become insuperable. The lesson to be drawn for Sudan seems to be that little can be done without the threat of force.

Gamal Nkrumah

Libya

Military course for the opposition

The Libyan National Army (the military branch of the opposing 'National Front for the Salvation of Libya') started a training course for hundreds of officers and soldiers in one of the big camps south of the United States.

The leader of the army, Colonel Khalifa Waftar, said that "this course has an exceptional importance since it is an implementation of the strategy of the front declared at the end of the Third National Council held last April in Dallas". He confirmed that the only assistance the army gets from the US is logistic in nature, pointing out that a group of the army has already finished a special training course using most modern military equipments.

Meanwhile, the vice leader stated that "this course comes under special circumstances and in the light of important news coming from Libya about conflicts among the military, senior officers, and members of the revolutionary committees which firmly control the barracks".

On another level, the opposing "Libyan National Board of Coordination for the Democratic National Forces" confirmed that Ahmed Kadaf al-Damm, the coordinator of Libyan-Egyptian relations, is on his way to Washington in a new attempt to solve the Lockerbie Crisis. Germany accepted to host the trial of the two accused persons but later retreated as a result of pressure by both the British and American governments.

The Coordinating Board was formed in the Summer of 1992. It includes the Libyan National Democratic Gathering, the National Libyan Movement, the National Libyan Organization, the Libyan Democratic Party and some independent figures. During mid February, 1993, the board unanimously elected Major Abdel Moneim Al Hawry as its chairman.

Major Al Hawry demanded that Al Qadafi hand his authority to the Revolutionary Command Council to set matters right. Moreover, he confirmed

his insistence on electing Colonel Abu Bakr Unis to lead the country after Al Qadafi's departure. He also submitted two notes to both President Clinton and Dr. Boutros Ghali, UN Secretary-General, demanding the lifting of the air embargo on Libya, the necessity of freezing Libyan assets and the application of an oil embargo and political boycott instead.

Samah Emam

Morocco

Left withdraws

Morocco's socialist opposition party has withdrawn from a national commission set up to control parliamentary elections in April, a party leader said on February 1. The Socialist Union of People's Forces (USFP) suspended its participation indefinitely because of human rights violations, said its secretary, Mohammed Elyazghi. The move follows an appeal court decision on January 28 to uphold a two-year jail sentence on an outspoken union leader allied to the USFP.

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common stand on polls

Morocco's four main opposition parties said yesterday they would hand together to face parliamentary elections due in April but had not decided whether they would contest them.

The four party Democratic Block, formed last May, said it would wait for the government's response to a list of complaints about lack of political freedoms before deciding whether to contest the April 30 elections for the Chamber of Representatives, the first in eight years.

Party spokesman said they were planning to present a joint memorandum of their grievances to the government

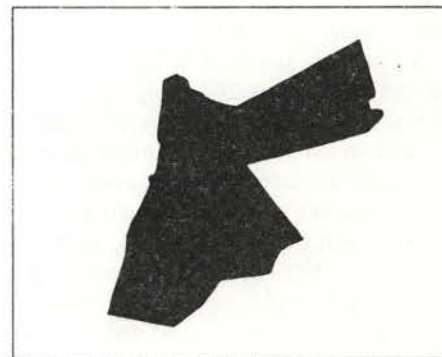
soon. If they stood in the elections, they would present a joint list of candidates and a common platform.

Jordan

New parties

Jordan licensed a national communist party and another pro-Iraqi group on January 18, reversing a controversial decision to reject them, a government official said. "The Interior Ministry summoned the officials of the two parties and informed them that as of today, January 18, they can operate formally throughout Jordan," the official said. He said that the Jordanian Communist Party and the Jordanian Arab Socialist Baath Party has resolved some question about their platforms since the Interior Ministry rejected them.

On January 24, Jordan licensed a PLO independent offshoot as a political party reversing an earlier controversial decision rejecting it, the group said. The Jordan People's Democratic Party (JPDP), headed by Tayseer Al Zabri, became the ninth political group authorized to operate formally throughout the Kingdom since Jordan lifted a three-decade-old ban last October. It will compete in Jordan's first multi-party parliamentary elections since 1956, planned to be held before November 1993.



Tunisia

Publication law

The Tunisian Parliament is to discuss soon a draft law concerning the amendment of the Publication Law of 1975 after approving it in a meeting of the cabinet at the beginning of 1993. In 1988, the Parliament made some amendments concerning the present law. Nevertheless, in a speech at the end of last year, President Ben Ali confirmed that he would work to improve the Press Law so that media would be able to play a greater role in "transmission, enlightenment and culture". Also, he charged a committee of experts to prepare a draft law with the aim of making new amendments regarding the Publication Law since he believes that those amendments represent major reforms which include, among other things, "fulfilling equality between a citizen and an official before the law, and the protection of judicial guarantees of the press and the journalists".

Somalia

Politics of hope

NGOs at the forefront of relief efforts

Most of the actual relief work at grassroots level has been done in the past two years by some 31 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), their local staff, and a dozen Somali NGOs. The UN Secretary-General acknowledged the "critical role" of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and such NGOs as Save the Children Fund (SCF), CARE, Concern, and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) most of which stayed in Somalia during the heaviest fighting, and expanded their operations as the famine worsened. Working with community elders, doctors and others, NGOs have delivered food, nutrition and health services, and aided government health and agriculture

departments.

The ICRC has the largest programme, with medical and veterinary services, seed distribution and, with numerous Somali (and mainly women) local staff, over 800 kitchens feeding a million people a day. The SCF has several clinics along with supplementary feeding and immunization programmes. It also provides technical advisors and inputs for rehabilitation in the health, education and agriculture sectors. CARE distributes WFP shipments in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Bardera and numerous villages in the Bay, Berdale, Gedo and Bakol regions, and has distributed seeds to over 35,000 farm families. To help promote longer-term recovery, CARE, Concern, Oxfam-UK and other NGOs have been distributing seeds and tools to farmers in the Bay, Gedo, Bakol and Jubaland regions. These NGOs also work with returnee and displaced farmers to repair irrigation canals, water supply and sanitation facilities.

NGOs such as MSF and the International Medical Corps have surgical and medical teams at hospitals and health posts, along with immunization, water, sanitation and nutrition programmes in key towns and villages. Besides training medical personnel, they are also developing a chain of cold stores for vaccines. Pharmaciens sans frontieres is setting up a French and European Community-funded central pharmacy with supplies from WHO and UNICEF airlifted by WFP to major depots in Djibouti, Nairobi and Mogadishu.

The Islamic African Relief Agency (IARA) and the Islamic Call Organization (DAWA) also distribute food, and run health and feeding centers, while the IARA has also given out seeds. Cross-border operations by NGOs include feeding programmes run by Catholic Relief Services in conjunction with ICRC from Kenya into Somalia's Gedo region, while the International Red Crescent is planning a similar operation out of Liboi, Kenya.

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Rioting in Mogadishu

American troops in Mogadishu shot and killed nine Somalis on Wednesday Feb. 24 during rioting by thousands of

supporters of warlord Mohamed Farah Aided who attempted to storm the US and French embassies.

The rioters appeared to target white soldiers. African contingents of the multinational task force keeping the peace in war-ravaged Somalia were virtually untouched by the hail of stones the rioters rained on the Americans.

The Somalis, out in the streets for a second straight day, chanted "Go home Americans" and "Down with America" in the worst violence to rock Somalia since a 23-nation force headed by the United States arrived in December under UN mandate. The Associated Press said rioters stormed and looted the Egyptian embassy, then threw two hand-grenades into its compound, where coalition soldiers took positions on the roof. The embassy which was later retaken by coalition forces, was unoccupied when the looting began.

Djibouti

Violence erupts

Dozens killed in Fighting

A human rights group in Djibouti said on 25 January dozens of people were killed and hundreds wounded in fighting between government troops and rebels in the Red Sea state.

The Djibouti Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Freedom (ADDHL) said in a statement faxed to Paris that dozens of bodies littered battlefields in the north, central and south of the country, raising the risk for epidemics. It said helicopters were ferrying hundreds of wounded soldiers every day to the capital's hospitals. The group, which is linked to the opposition, said government troops, reported to have launched an all-out offensive against rebels last month, had suffered a setback near the northern town of Tadjourah and were forced to retreat from headquarters at Lake Assal.

ADDHL said government troops summarily executed three soldiers for refusing to fight and tortured two

wounded prisoners of the rebel Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy. The group called for immediate peace

talks between the government and repeated an earlier warning that the fighting could plunge Djibouti into

Somali-like lawlessness.

Transitions From Authoritarian Rule in the Arab World

Mustapha Kamel Al Sayyed, political scientist at Cairo University, gave a lecture at the American University in Cairo on February 14 in which he analyzed the lack of democratic rule in the Arab world, summarized the obstacles in the way of democracy and finally speculated about dilemmas facing any government in the Arab world attempting to make the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. According to Al Sayyed, "democracy will have to wait for another 30 years or so." Al Sayyed concluded by saying that he was pessimistic because of his "realism". But how realistic is this pessimism?

Al Sayyed's analysis can be summarized as follows: While the "Third Wave" of democratization has swept through many parts of the world since the mid-seventies, in the Arab world one can at best detect only "a change of facade of regimes." First signs of liberalization appeared in the period immediately following the Six Day War of 1967. Some Arab countries experimented with multi-party systems in the mid-seventies, but the core of the problem remains as it always has: Heads of state of Arab countries remain in power and with their position unchallenged.

Al Sayyed gave three explanations for why democratization hardly occurred in the Arab countries.

* The absence of an active middle class that "historically led the struggle for democracy in other parts of the world", above all the French Revolution. In Arab countries, public expenditure exceeds private expenditure considerably. This means that the Arab "bourgeoisie" depends on the government for trade and profit. Al Sayyed claims that the bourgeoisie actually has concluded a very lucrative deal with the government. While risky investments are left to official circles, the bourgeoisie invests in highly profitable, low-risk, short term projects. This created a lack-lustre private enterprise which has little incentive to challenge the government and demand more democracy. "The Arab entrepreneurs are faced with the following choice: Either they rule or they make money. They sacrificed the right to rule," said Al Sayyed.

* The apathy of the masses in the Arab world and consequently the absence of pressure "from below". Al Sayyed is disappointed by the fact that no demonstrations were held in Arab countries in the name of democracy. Demonstrators only raise slogans attacking official economic austerity programs and the failure to implement Islamic law. In other countries people take to the streets demanding democracy, as in Latin America and today in Zaire. Liberalization in Arab countries

has not been as a result of political pressure on the part of the masses, but a "strategy" be undertaken by the ruling elite itself, or in other words "a change from above." Liberalization is used as a strategy to divide and rule, granting rights discriminately. Liberalization is not meant to be a first step to democratization, or a transfer of power.

* The weak commitment to democracy as such among the elites. Even opposition groups care more about "nationalism, Islamism, and socialism" and mention democracy only if it coincides with their self-interest. Indeed, the internal organization of so-called democratic movements remains authoritarian. Surveys conducted amongst Kuwaiti and Egyptian students reveal that "family" and "economic success" is much more highly valued than "democracy". Al Sayyed claims that "cultural attitudes" towards democracy "are based on realistic assessments of the potential of democracy to solve social economic problems." The "failure of democracy" in Sudan to solve the country's problems made Arabs skeptical of democracy.

According to Al Sayyed, governments which seek to implement democracy will be faced with dilemmas. First, any economic liberalization would require "sacrifices" on the part of the elites and the masses. Al Sayyed doubted that these sacrifices would be made voluntarily, or in a democratic way. Second, Al Sayyed forecasted severe problems if ethnic minorities use democracy to raise their demands. Democracy could lead to separatism, as the example of Yugoslavia shows. Third, implementing democracy would not mean that elected governments would act democratically. "Even human rights groups are characterized by authoritarian features," he said. Fourth, Arab countries lagging behind in the process of democratization will try to subvert the process of the neighbor states. In this instance democracy would result in greater vulnerability to external interference.

Al Sayyed's conclusion: "Democracy in the Arab world has to wait another 30 years or so."

Pessimists always claim to be realistic, but often forget that their assumptions were pessimistic from the start and underestimate 'the positive'. Of course, nobody is impressed by Arab 'democracy' as it is today, but in his explanation of the lack of democracy, Al Sayyed falls into the trap of determinism.

Al Sayyed begins by mixing up the concepts of liberalization and democratization. He does not believe in liberalization from the top down because regimes would always have the opportunity to reverse the process if they so choose. A quick

By Reinoud Leenders

look at transitions in Latin American countries, though, shows that liberalization is always, by definition, initiated by elements inside the regime. This is what differentiates it from democratization. Alfred Stepan, a scholar of Latin American politics, extracted eight main "paths to democracy" from historical transitions. His conclusion is that democracy was very rarely a result of the sudden breakdown of authoritarian regimes, but more often the falling apart of the regime into "hard - and softliners" (whatever the reasons for this may have been). The French Revolution did not set an example for the modern transition to democracy. Modern transitions to democracy rarely embrace the romanticisms of revolution and heroism. The 'art of liberalization' is to hold regimes to their promises of liberalization, not radically challenging their control of the process. The process of liberalization is self-fulfilling: ultimately it will break the strength of authoritarian regimes, inaugurating a democratic era. Democratic forces can then take over smoothly. Here the process of democratization could start. Al Sayyed's pessimism is therefore unwarranted. Liberalization is not bound to stop or drag on for ages just because it was initiated "from above."

Does democracy need an enlightened "bourgeoisie"? Maybe this was so in the West. But does this mean the bourgeoisie has a "historical role" to boost democracy? More than 25 years ago historian Barrington Moore claimed that the only democracy clearly founded by the "middle class" was in England. And yet, democratic systems have been adopted elsewhere. There is certainly no proof that the history of democracy contains a universal trend requiring the existence of an enlightened bourgeoisie. Thus, the economic incorporation of the bourgeoisie by Arab regimes does not sufficiently explain the absence of democracy and it certainly does not forestall the persistence of authoritarian rule.

Do Arabs need to carry banners in the streets demanding democracy? This is what Al Sayyed claims. Arabs are only interested in material rewards and not in the salvation of democracy, his argument runs. Al Sayyed again overestimates the meaning of democracy. Rather than an ideology, democracy is better defined in loose terms as the optimum implementation of a priori agreed rules of decision-making that grant a country's full scale of ideologies and political preferences influence on outcomes. Who can expect the 'masses' to take to the streets for this?

I think it is naive to claim that the world's "Third Wave" of democratization can be explained by the role of masses demonstrating for democracy. For parts of Latin America, in Chile and Argentina for example, one can argue that democratization was largely the result of an unromantic perception of necessity. The growing dislike of authoritarianism in the two countries aside, the simple fact that their repressive regimes failed to realize the two main tasks of government (national security and economic development) made replacement of their imposed systems a matter of necessity. Authoritarianism failed to realize its claims of national unity and speedy effective economic development, giving free rein to democracy. The change did not come about because the middle classes had suddenly changed their 'authoritarian minds' (many supported the military

coups) into 'democratic minds'. The question is therefore, to what extent is democracy in the Arab world perceived as necessary?

It is accepted that the all-embracing ideologies in the Middle East have lost their mass support. Egypt is a good example of this. Clear policy choices are no longer made; economic liberalization goes hand in hand with prevailing state dominance of the economy; authoritarianism coexists with parliamentary politics; the suppression of religious extremism is followed by the issuance of official fatwa's banning films and books, etc. As Yahya Sadowski put it, Egyptian politics is characterized by a process of muddling through. This is an ideal atmosphere for people to realize that the past failure and current lack of a dominant totalitarian ideology makes democracy a necessity. To use the vocabulary of Robert A. Dahl, opponents come to perceive that the exclusion of each other is more costly than their toleration.

So, this concept of democracy by necessity leads us to have some more hope for democratization in the Arab world, even if one cannot find so many enlightened 'democrats' in the region.

But will Islamists be convinced with this argument? This remains to be seen. Religious extremism is probably the main reason that the Arab world missed the 'third wave' of democracy. Liberalizing regimes and moderate opposition groups are not eager today to give a fair chance to groups that may proclaim a perpetual victory tomorrow. It is here that Al Sayyed's "realistic assessments" of democracy are relevant, not by judging a disastrous democratic experiment in Sudan. If political historical developments in Sudan would have such a tremendous impact on the rest of the Arab world, Numeiry's support of Islamic fundamentalism would equally have led to the complete disappearance of radical Islam in the whole region. This, of course, did not happen. The upsurge of fundamentalism gives reason for some pessimism on the future of democracy in the Arab world, but Al Sayyed did not even mention the problem.

The protagonists in Al Sayyed's conception of Arab politics are states, regimes, political parties, the middle classes, and the masses. For Al Sayyed their conduct gives rise to deep pessimism. Suppose Al Sayyed is correct in this, optimists could still point to other actors that are not mentioned by Al Sayyed such as non-governmental organizations. While some sociologists refer to the potential of NGO's to change cultural attitudes in favor of democracy, political scientists recognize the ability of NGO's to exert pressure and make regimes compromise.

I am conscious that I have sought only to undermine Al Sayyed's arguments rather than offer a new set of explanations for the lack of democracy in the Arab world. Moreover, Al Sayyed's gloomy and pessimistic analysis of 'Arab democracy' is, unfortunately, not totally without foundation. Rather, I have tried here to restore a sense of careful optimism, which I believe will also add a sense of realism to the study of liberalization in the Arab world.

Ibn Khaldoun Center News flashes

The report entitled "Peace and Justice for the Peoples of the Middle East: Perspectives of the Peace Research Community" acknowledged that "one important recent step toward the strengthening of civil society in the Middle East is the publication of a newsletter entitled *Civil Society, Democratic Transformation in the Arab World*, by the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Development Studies in Cairo. Its stated purpose is to strengthen "nascent democratic forces in the Arab world and at the same time to serve as a networking function among organizations of Arab civil society".

* * *

This month, we received a reaction on the feature of the last issue "Palestine: peace of deportees"

"In the February issue of Civil Society, the article "Palestine, peace of deportees" is illustrated by a map of undivided Palestine. Since the article does not bear the name of its writer, the editorial staff is fully responsible for it.

I have been writing for Civil Society but I do not want to work for any magazine that does not recognize the existence of the state of Israel.

I therefore ask the editors of Civil Society to "be certain" that in the future every article bear the name of its writer."

Shirly Haasnoot

*Editor

The map shows only the outside contour of what you called the "undivided Palestine" since it was not our intention to address its subdivisions which presumably compromise something besides Israel also. Much as we welcome your contribution to Civil Society, we regret that we cannot accept conditions concerning the name of writers.

* * *

New Civic Forum

Responding to the new changes sweeping the world in the last few years, and to the growing problems and challenges of Egypt's political and socio-economic order, a new cultural association was formed in March, 1991 under the name of "New Civic Forum".

The aim of this forum, as stated in its 32-page Arabic language well printed manifesto, is to "arrive at a complete liberalization of the economic, political, and social system in Egypt in a way that ensures a descent living for the poor, achieves social justice, and consolidates the principles of true democracy". Through "lectures, research, panels and conferences", the new forum plans to achieve its goals.

The New Civic Forum is based on the believe that the individual is the source of development, and hence individual initiatives and creativity should be encouraged and formulated in a way that serves the interests of the individual and the society. Human rights and freedoms, in their comprehensive meaning, are of prime importance, in this regard, because they are the foundation of human creativity and progress. Economic liberalization, since it touches on every part of the society, cannot go without political and social liberalization since each one completes the other.

The opening of the Forum's first cultural program was on Feb. 20, 1993, with a lecture on "Egypt and the current challenges". An interview with its president, Dr. Said El-Naggar, a prominent economist, will appear in our next issue (April) of Civil Society.

* * *

Young Presidents' Organization (YPO)

The Young Presidents' Organization is planning an International University (conference) to be held in Cairo from April 28 to May 1, and in Jerusalem

from May 1 to May 6, 1993. During this conference, presentations will be scheduled concurrently. The education program is being designed around the theme - "Legendary Experiences." issues in the areas of business, geopolitics, environment, technology, personal development, arts and religion will be addressed. **Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim of Ibn Khaldoun Center will be giving a presentation on "Islamic militancy in Egypt and the Arab world"**

* * *

Minority Rights Group

The Minority Rights Group is organizing a one-day seminar in London on March 7, 1993, to discuss the new UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities and a cooperative programme of actions to promote the issues covered in the Declaration. **Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim will be representing the Ibn Khaldoun Center at the seminar.**

* * *

Ibn Khaldoun Center Annual Report (In Arabic)

500 pages of in-depth insight on Arab politics, democratic transformation, civil society, elections, human rights, development, and Islamic fundamentalism

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The role of religion in Palestinian-Israeli conflict resolution Reconstruction of Justice and Peace in the Middle East

The conflict in the Middle East, the creation of Israel and the occupation of Palestine, parts of Syria, Lebanon (and even Egypt, until the Camp David Accord and the international arbitration for Taba), is a political conflict. However, religion has been used to justify the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

That was the 19th century model after the end of the Austrian-Hungarian empire and the creation of National States based on territories, ethnicities, common languages and heritages. The Jews were not assimilated in their own national states. They lived in Ghettos. Fearing assimilation, they refused Napoleon's offer to be considered as citizens. Persecution began in Eastern Europe, Russia and culminated in France in Dreyfus affair. Since one of the formative elements in Romanticism in 19th century was "returning back to the origin", to Mother's Womb, the Jews switched from spiritual Zionism (Al-Khali), the preservation of Jewish spiritual identity, to political Zionism (Herzel), the establishment of a Jewish state, returning back to Jewish spiritual origin and the reestablishment of the Kingdom of David in Palestine.

The history of the Jews with the Arabs was different. Jews lived in Arabia before Islam. Judaism was an Arab religion inside and outside the Arabian Peninsula. Islam as well as Christianity emerged from Judaism. Islam is a free choice between Law and Love (an eye for an eye or forgiveness). The golden age of the Jews was during Muslim rule in Spain. Jewish philosophy, Theology, jurisprudence, philology, science...etc were formed within Islamic parallel disciplines. Men of learning like Saadia Gaon, J. Halevi, Ibn Gabirol and Maimonides were disputed by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Jews were not only scholars but also traders, governors and ministers. After the fall of Toledo, Seville, Cordoba and Grenada, Jews and Muslims alike fled Spain to Morocco in fear of the Inquisition.

The future is not far away. As Jews and Arabs lived in Arabia before Islam, and as Jews and Muslims lived in Spain during Islamic rule, Jews as well as Arabs and Muslims can live together, not only in Palestine but also all over the Arab and Muslim World. Semitic identity does not come from territorial borders, rivers, oceans, mountains and valleys. Jews and Arabs are wandering Bedouins, not settlers. They carry their tents on the back of their camels in the desert looking for grass and water. Their identity comes from the belief-system: God in Heavens and Law on Earth. Covenant, promised land...etc are only defended by Orthodox and conservative Judaism while reformed and liberal Judaism make them available for each individual and every community fulfilling the moral law.

In this time, looking for peace and justice, conflict resolution can come only from a common value-system shared by all human beings and religious traditions.

Dr. Hassan Hanafi