

APRIL 2007

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AL-SAHAF

Ohio's Monthly Middle Eastern Newspaper

جريدة العرب في اوهايو

*" U.S. Must
Lead the Peace
Process in the
Middle East"*



*His Majesty King Abdallah II of Jordan
Cover Story- See pages 4-5*

DRESS FOR SUCCESS
See Page 13



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EDITOR'S THOUGHTS

The Time Has Come for the U.S. to Step-up the Peace Process

Today the Arab-Israeli conflict remains the world's central challenge. Israelis and Palestinians both need an end to its bitter violence. So do the global millions who suffer the collateral damage: ongoing extremist violence and deep cynicism about international justice.

In 2002, Arab countries took a bold step forward, committing themselves to a two-state solution that includes security guarantees for Israel to live in peace with its neighbors; a sovereign and democratic Palestine; and a process that leads to a comprehensive settlement, addressing the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

The two-state solution recognizes what I have long argued. For lasting peace, Israel must be fully integrated into the entire region, from Morocco to Yemen. But this depends on creating an independent Palestinian state, whose people are, at last, able to live in dignity and hope. Unless this happens, there

will be no region-wide acceptance of Israel and no real peace.

In 2003, the parties agreed on the road map to peace. The United States and the eight leading industrialized nations were also on board. But the process has been trapped in an ongoing cycle of violence. Now, events provide fresh opportunities. New Palestinian leadership can carry forward the vision of a viable, independent Palestine by delivering on the reforms that statehood involves: competent governance, investments in public welfare, fighting corruption, tougher security against terrorism and a real partnership at the peace tables.

In Israel, the government can recommit to the road map and take confidence-building measures that will refute the charge that its recent policies are intended to sideline the peace process and further divide people. Both sides can now make the compromises that a comprehensive, lasting and just peace requires.

Just as important, with its 2008 Presidential campaigns underway, the United States can now refocus on this critical issue. The world's most powerful, most visible democracy has a chance to send a strong message to the region's people, especially its youth - a message of deeds, not words. That means fulfilling the promise of a rebuilt, violence-free, democratic and sovereign Iraq. And in the spiritual heart of the region, it means leading the peace process and insisting that both sides engage in genuine dialogue and live up to their commitments spelled out in the road map - one that President Bush has said could lead to the creation of a Palestinian state once again.

At the end of the day, the success of regional reform depends on a renewed commitment to peace and progress, supported by a courageous America. That achievement will bring global healing. Perhaps now, in a moment shaped by both loss and hope, the time has come.



Fatima Salaheddine,
Publisher & CEO

www.jesskramerphoto.com



Lebanese-American



We are pleased to announce that the Al-Sahafa Newspaper Corporation is the official Ohio correspondent to: the Al Jazeera Network, The Lebanese Broadcasting Channel, and Lebanon's Future Television. Please stay tuned for future broadcast features and details about our thriving Middle Eastern Ohio community, to be seen all over the world through these very important international satellite channels.

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Mission Statement

The name Al-Sahafa means 'the media' or the 'reporter' in Arabic. The purpose of Al-Sahafa Newspaper is to provide a bridge of communication for the direct benefit of the Arab-American community in Northeast Ohio. Al-Sahafa is open to all persons in any creed, race, religion, or organization. This publication does not and will not tolerate any form of Religious Contempt of Discrimination of country origin in the Middle East. We are all God's children. This publication is understandably controversial at times, but its contents sole purpose is to spark readers' interest and attention about the "Arab" view point on all past and current political, cultural and social issues effecting our daily lives.

"I love you when you bow in your mosque, kneel in your temple, pray in you church. For you and I are sons of one religion and it is in the spirit."

-Khalil Gibran (Arab American poet)

Cover Story

His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan Addresses the Joint Meeting of Congress

Washington, D.C.
7 March 2007

"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Madam Speaker,
Mr. Vice President,
Honorable Senators and Members of Congress,
My friends,

Thank you for such a warm welcome. It is an honor to stand, as my father did, before this historic institution. Allow me to thank you, on behalf of all Jordanians.

Jordan and the United States have had a long friendship. It is a special privilege to be here in the year that the American Congress welcomes its first woman Speaker, and its first Muslim-American member of Congress. These milestones send a message around the world about the America I know so well, a place where individuality is nurtured, a place where hard work is rewarded, a place where achievement is celebrated. The America I know so well believes that opportunity and justice belong to all.

In my days in Massachusetts, I also learned something of New England virtues. There wasn't actually a law against talking too much, but there was definitely an attitude that you didn't speak unless you could improve on silence.

Today, I must speak; I cannot be silent.

I must speak about a cause that is urgent for your people and for mine. I must speak about peace in the Middle East. I must speak about peace replacing the division, war, and conflict that have brought such disaster for the region and for the world.

This was the cause that brought my father King Hussein here in 1994. With Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin beside him, he spoke of a new vision for the Middle East. Their courageous work for peace received bipartisan support from your leaders. And there was tremendous hope for a new era. There was tremendous hope that people would be brought together. There was tremendous hope that a final and comprehensive settlement of all the issues would be achieved.

Thirteen years later, that work is still not completed. And until it is, we are all at risk. We are all at risk of

being victims of further violence resulting from ideologies of terror and hatred. It is our greatest and most urgent duty to prevent such dangers to our region, to your country and to the world. The choice is ours: an open world full of promise, progress and justice for all; or a closed world of divided peoples, fear, and unfulfilled dreams. Nothing impacts this choice more than the future of peace in the Middle East.

I come to you today at a rare, and indeed historic, moment of opportunity, when there is a new international will to end the catastrophe. And I believe that America, with its enduring values, its moral responsibility, and yes, its unprecedented power, must play the central role.

Some may say, 'Peace is difficult, we can live with the status quo.' But, my friends, violent killings are taking place as part of this status quo. Palestinians and Israelis are not the only victims. We saw the violence ricochet into destruction in Lebanon last summer. And people around the world have been the victims of terrorists and extremists, who use the grievances of this conflict to legitimize and encourage acts of violence. Americans and Jordanians and others have suffered and survived terrorist attacks. In this room, there are representatives of American families and Jordanian families who have lost loved ones. Thousands of people have paid the highest price, the loss of their life. Thousands more continue to pay this terrible price, for their loved ones will never return. Are we going to let these thousands of lives be taken in vain? Has it become acceptable to lose that most basic of human rights? The right to live?

The status quo is also pulling the region and the world towards greater danger. As public confidence in the peace process has dropped, the cycle of crises is spinning faster, and with greater potential for destruction. Changing military doctrine and weaponry pose new dangers. Increasing numbers of external actors are intervening with their own strategic agendas, raising new dangers of proliferation and crisis. These are groups that seek even more division: faith against faith, nation against nation, community against community. Any further erosion in the situation would be serious for the future of moderation and coexistence, in the region and beyond. Have we all lost the will to live together in peace celebrating one another's strengths and differences?

Some may say, 'But there are other, urgent challenges.' How can there be anything more urgent than the restoration of a world where all people, not only some people, all people have the opportunity to live peacefully? This is not only a moral imperative, it is essential to the future of our world, because long-term, violent crisis is the enemy of all global prosperity and progress.

Certainly, our era faces critical issues. There is great public concern here, just as in our region, about the conflict in Iraq. The entire



Reuters

international community has vital decisions to make about the path forward, and how to ensure Iraq's security, unity, and future. But we cannot lose sight of a profound reality. The wellspring of regional division, the source of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine.

There are those who say, 'It's not our business.' But this Congress knows: there are no bystanders in the 21st Century, there are no curious onlookers, there is no one who is not affected by the division and hatred that is present in our world.

Some will say: 'This is not the core issue in the Middle East.' I come here today as your friend to tell you that this is the core issue. And this core issue is not only producing severe consequences for our region, it is producing severe consequences for our world.

The security of all nations and the stability of our global economy are directly affected by the Middle East conflict. Across oceans, the conflict has estranged societies that should be friends. I meet Muslims thousands of miles away who have a deep, personal response to the suffering of the Palestinian people. They want to know how it is, that ordinary Palestinians are still without rights and without a country. They ask whether the West really means what it says about equality and respect and universal justice.

Yes, my friends, today I must speak. I cannot be silent.

Sixty years of Palestinian dispossession, forty years under occupation, a stop-and-go peace process, all this has left a bitter legacy of disappointment and despair, on all sides. It is time to create a new and different legacy, one that begins right now; one that can set a positive tone for the American and Middle East relationship; one that can restore hope to our region's people, to your people, and to the people of this precious world. Nothing can achieve that more effectively, nothing can assert America's moral vision more clearly, nothing can reach and teach the world's youth more directly, than your leadership in a peace process that delivers results not next year, not in five years, but this year.

How do we get there? Not by a solution imposed by one side. A lasting peace can only be built on understanding, agreement and compromise.

It begins with courage and vision. We, all of us, must take risks for peace. The Arab states recognized that reality in 2002, when we unanimously approved the Arab

Peace Initiative. It puts forward a path for both sides, to achieve what people want and need: a collective peace treaty with Israel and normal relations with every Arab state, collective security guarantees for all the countries of the region, including Israel, an end to the conflict, a dream every Israeli citizen has longed for since the creation of Israel, and an agreed solution to the refugee problem, a withdrawal from Arab territories occupied since 1967, and a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestine.

The commitment we made in the Arab Peace Initiative is real. And our states are involved in ongoing efforts to advance a fair, just, and comprehensive peace. His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia initiated the 2002 proposal; today, he continues to rally international support. Momentum is also building among Muslim countries outside the Arab world. Ten days ago, in Islamabad, the foreign ministers of key Muslim states met. They came together to assure Palestinians and Israelis that they are not alone, that we back their effort to make and build peace.

The goal must be a peace in which all sides gain. It must be anchored in security and opportunity for all.

It must be a peace that will free young Palestinians to focus on a future of progress and prosperity.

It must be a peace that makes Israel a part of the neighborhood, a neighborhood that extends from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, across the breadth of the southern Mediterranean, to the coast of the Indian Ocean.

It must be a peace that enables the entire region to look forward with excitement and hope, putting its resources into productive growth, partnering across borders to advance development, finding opportunities, and solving common challenges.

This goal is visionary, but my friends, it is attainable. History shows that longtime adversaries can define new relationships of peace and cooperation. The groundwork for a comprehensive, final settlement is already in place. At Taba, as in the Geneva Accords, the parties have outlined the parameters of the solution.

But we need all hands on deck. The international community, especially the United States, must be engaged in moving the process forward to achieve real results. Above all, we must make our process serve our purpose. We must achieve an agreed solution to the conflict.

King Abdullah, cont'd on page 5



Reuters

Cover Story

King Abdullah, cont'd from page 4

Madam Speaker,
Mr. Vice President,
Honorable Members,

Your responsibility today is paramount. Your potential to help Palestinians and Israelis find peace is unrivalled. This is because the people of the region still regard the United States as the key to peace, the one country most capable of bringing the two sides closer together, holding them accountable, and making a just settlement reality.

Time after time, there has been progress towards peace when Americans have actively engaged. Camp David, Madrid, Wye River: nearly every breakthrough was accomplished when America was determined to help the parties succeed.

On behalf of all those who seek and strive for peace in my part of the world, I ask you now to exert that leadership once again. We ask you to join with us in an historic effort of courage and vision. We ask you to hear our call, to honor the spirit of King Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin, and help fulfill the aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace today.

Let me reaffirm that Jordan is committed to playing a positive role in the peace process. It is part of our larger commitment to global co-existence and progress. Ours is an Islamic country with a proud record of diversity,



moderation, and shared respect.

Allow me to say, we thank the Congress and the Administration for supporting Jordan's progress and development. I deeply value the partnership between our peoples, and the contributions of so many Americans to the future of our country.

My friends,

"A decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small." That's how President Roosevelt – the great F.D.R. – described the basis of American foreign policy. He pledged American support for the four freedoms, freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion, everywhere in the world.

The Four Freedoms speech was given right here, before Congress. And that's entirely fitting. Because it is here in the People's House, that the voices and values of America have made hope real for so many people.

Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for these four freedoms. Today, the people of the Middle East are searching for new hope, hope for a future of prosperity and peace. We have seen the danger and destruction of violence, hatred, and injustice. But we have also seen what people can achieve when they are empowered, when they break down walls, when they commit to the future. And we know that Middle East peace can be a global beginning, creating new possibilities for our region and the entire world.

We look to you to play a historic role. Eleven American presidents and thirty American congresses have already faced this ongoing crisis. For not the future generation, but the generation alive today, let us say together: No more! Let us say together: Let's solve this! Let us say together: Yes, we will achieve this!

No Palestinian father should be helpless to feed his family and build a future for his sons and daughters. No Israeli mother should fear when her child boards a bus. Not one more generation should grow up thinking that violence and conflict are the norm.

As Roosevelt also said, "the justice of morality must and will win in the end." But he knew that it was up to responsible nations to stand up for justice when injustice threatens.

This is our challenge as well. And we must not leave it to another generation to meet this challenge.

Thirteen years ago, my father was here to talk about his hopes for peace. Today, we are talking about a promise that is within our reach.

We can wait no longer and that is why I am here before you. We must work together to restore Palestine, a nation in despair and without hope. We must work together to restore peace, hope and opportunity to the Palestinian people. And in so doing, we will begin a process of building peace, not only throughout the region, but throughout the world. How much more bloodshed and how many more lives will it cost for this grave situation to be resolved?

I say: No more bloodshed and no more lives pointlessly taken!

The young boy, traveling to school with his brother in Palestine, let him have a life of peace.

The mother, watching with fear as her children board a bus in Israel, let her have a life of peace.

The father in Lebanon, working hard to provide an education for his children, let him have a life of peace.

The little girl, born in Iraq, with her wide eyes full of wonder, let her have a life of peace.

The family, together eating their evening meal, in Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, Australia, and the Middle East, let them all have a life of peace.

Today my friends, we must speak; we cannot be silent.

The next time a Jordanian, a Palestinian, or an Israeli comes before you, let it be to say: Thank you for helping peace become a reality.

Thank you very much."

Kings of Jordan and Political Events

King Hussein ruled Jordan from 1953 to 1999, surviving a number of challenges to his rule, drawing on the loyalty of his military, and serving as a symbol of unity and stability for both the East Bank and Palestinian communities in Jordan. King Hussein ended martial law in 1991 and legalized political parties in 1992. In 1989 and 1993, Jordan held free and fair parliamentary elections. Controversial changes in the election law led Islamist parties to boycott the 1997 elections.

King Abdullah II succeeded his father Hussein following the latter's death in February 1999. Abdullah moved quickly to reaffirm Jordan's peace treaty

with Israel and its relations with the United States. Abdullah, during the first year in power, refocused the government's agenda on economic reform.

Jordan's continuing structural economic difficulties, burgeoning population, and more open political environment led to the emergence of a variety of political parties. Moving toward greater independence, Jordan's parliament has investigated corruption charges against several regime figures and has become the major forum in which differing political views, including those of political Islamists, are expressed. While King Abdullah remains the ultimate authority in Jordan, the parliament plays an important role.



Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan – Brief History

The land that became Jordan forms part of the history-rich Fertile Crescent region. Its known history began around 2000 B.C., when Semitic Amorites settled around the Jordan River in the area called Canaan. Subsequent invaders and settlers included Hittites, Egyptians, Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arab Muslims, Christian Crusaders, Mameluks, Ottoman Turks, and, finally, the British. At the end of World War I, the territory now comprising Israel, Jordan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and Jerusalem was awarded to the United Kingdom by the League of Nations as the mandate for Palestine. In 1922, in an attempt to assuage Arab anger resulting from the Balfour Declaration, with the approval of the League of Nations, the British created the semi-autonomous Arab Emirate of Transjordan in all Palestinian territory east of the Jordan river. The British installed the Hashemite Prince Abdullah I of Jordan, while continuing the administration of Palestine and Transjordan under a single British High Commissioner. The mandate over Transjordan ended on 22 May 1946; on 25 May, the country became the independent Hashemite Kingdom of Transjordan. It ended its special defense treaty relationship with the United Kingdom in 1957.

Transjordan has opposed the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948, and took part in the attack by the Arab states on the newly founded nation, and the subsequent warfare. The armistice agreements of 3 April 1949 left Jordan in control of the West Bank and provided that the armistice demarcation lines were without prejudice to future territorial settlements or boundary lines. In 1950, Transjordan annexed the West Bank, and the country was renamed "the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" to reflect this. The annexation was recognized only by the United Kingdom and Pakistan.

In the year 1965 there was an exchange of territories between Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Jordan gave up a relatively large area of inland desert in return for a small piece of sea-shore near Aqaba.

Jordan signed a mutual defense pact in May 1967 with Egypt, and it participated in the June 1967 war against Israel along with Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. During the war, Jordan lost its control of the West Bank and all of Jerusalem. In 1988, Jordan renounced all claims to the West Bank but retained an administrative role pending

a final settlement, and its 1994 treaty with Israel allowed for a continuing Jordanian role in Muslim and Christian holy places in Jerusalem. The international community as represented in the United Nations considers the West Bank to be territory occupied by Israel and believes that its final status should be determined through direct negotiations among the parties concerned on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and UN Security Council Resolution 338.

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy based on the constitution promulgated on January 8, 1952. Executive authority is vested in the king and his council of ministers. The king signs and executes all laws. His veto power may be overridden by a two-thirds vote of both houses of the National Assembly. He appoints and may dismiss all judges by decree, approves amendments to the constitution, declares war, and commands the armed forces. Cabinet decisions, court judgments, and the national currency are issued in his name. The council of ministers, led by a prime minister, is appointed by the king, who may dismiss other cabinet members at the prime minister's request. The cabinet is responsible to the Chamber of Deputies on matters of general policy and can be forced to resign by a two-thirds vote of "no confidence" by that body.

The constitution provides for three categories of courts – civil, religious, and special. Administratively, Jordan is divided into twelve governorates, each headed by a governor appointed by the king. They are the sole authorities for all government departments and development projects in their respective areas. The Royal Armed Forces and General Intelligence Department of Jordan are under the control of the king.

The Legal System of Jordan is based on Islamic law and French codes; judicial review of legislative acts in a specially provided High Tribunal; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction.

Legislative power rests in the bicameral National Assembly. The 110-member Chamber of Deputies, elected by universal suffrage to a 4-year term, is subject to dissolution by the king. Nine seats are reserved for Christians, six for women, and three for Circassians and Chechens. The 40-member Senate is appointed by the king for an 8-year term.



Community

AAI Foundation's Kahlil Gibran 2007 Awards Gala

The Arab American Institute Foundation's (AAIF) ninth annual Kahlil Gibran "Spirit of Humanity" Awards gala, which takes place on Weds., April 25 in Washington, D.C., will honor Search for Common Ground, Global Impact and Archbishop Emeritus of the District of Columbia, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Former Lexington, KY mayor Teresa Isaac will receive the Najeeb Halaby Award for Public Service, and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Anthony Shadid of the Washington Post will also be a special guest at the gala.

The Kahlil Gibran Spirit of Humanity Awards recognize individuals, corporations, organizations and communities whose work, commitment and support make a difference in promoting co-existence and inclusion in all walks of life. The awards aim to promote the positive forces of diversity and cultural interaction, and to showcase programs that foster democratic

and humanitarian values across racial, ethnic and religious lines.

The award is named for the author of "The Prophet" whose message of human endurance and triumph was so evident in his life and work. The award further symbolizes Gibran's pride in his Arab heritage, respect for the freedom he found in the United States and his universal love of humanity. The event is supported annually by a diverse group of corporate and individual donors and is organized by congressional, honorary and steering committees.

For more information; call the Washington D.C. office: (202) 429-9210

ADC 2007 Annual National Convention June 8-10, 2007

The Annual National Convention of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) will take place June 8-10, 2007

This year's convention, "Toward a More Perfect Union," will continue the legacy of the largest annual gathering of Arab Americans in

our nation's capital. This year we are pleased to announce Governor Howard Dean and Senator Chuck Hagel as two of our confirmed featured speakers. ADC is also delighted to announce that it will be holding the US premiere of the documentary "Reel Bad Arabs," along with a private audience with Dr. Jack Shaheen, both included as part of the Convention package. Additionally, NAACP's Hilary Shelton will be accepting the annual ADC 'Excellence in Advocacy Award' during the Convention.

For more information; call the Washington D.C. office: (202) 244-2990

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Community



A New Brand of Peacemaking?

Demonstrating the “new brand of politics” he’s been promising voters, Senator Barack Obama answered a question from an Iowa Democrat about the “human rights crisis” facing Palestinians saying, “Nobody is suffering more than the Palestinian people” and discussing options for increasing humanitarian aid. While the comments drew some predictable criticism, they also earned Obama praise from more than 100 Iowa caucus voters-including Arab and Jewish Americans-who sent a letter of support to the senator. “As Iowans, we have long advocated a foreign policy that reflects America’s values and commitment to justice and peace,” the letter said. “Your compassion and support for the establishment of a Palestinian state and the security of Israel are consistent with the positions taken by Iowa citizens for many years.” The letter points out that as far back as 1988, the Iowa Democratic state convention passed a resolution supporting “the right of both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples to a homeland achieved through peaceful means, negotiated by representatives of their choosing.” It’s time for candidates to catch up with the American people on this issue.

(Non) Diplomatic Letters...

Countdown reported last week on a letter circulating from Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL) and John Ensign (R-NV) regarding US reengagement in the Arab-Israeli conflict and relations with the new Palestinian unity government. As written, the letter addressed the issue of foreign aid to the Palestinians and went on to urge Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to sever contact with members of the Palestinian Authority, which would include Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas or any other member of a future Palestinian unity government. Responding to growing concern over the letter’s demands, the senators made changes to the language, insisting that Abbas had not been a target. While important, the changes still suggest that US officials should not have contact with members of the new government. For their part, the State Department insisted that they would maintain a positive relationship

with Palestinian leaders such as incoming Finance Minister Salam Fayyad, who is widely-respected for his record of anti-corruption and transparency. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, “Mr. Fayyad is a long-standing contact of the [US government], and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and an official of the PLO, in addition to his position as Minister of Finance. As we have indicated, the US will not suspend contact with individual Palestinians solely on the ground that they hold office in the unity government...”

Friends Don’t Let Friends Bomb Other Countries

In a must-read piece titled “Talking About Israel” in Sunday’s New York Times, op-ed contributor Nicholas Kristoff got it exactly right. “There is no serious political debate among either Democrats or Republicans about our policy toward Israelis and Palestinians,” he wrote. “And that silence harms America, Middle East peace prospects and Israel itself.” Kristoff contrasts the American silence-especially among presidential candidates-with the lively debate inside Israel and credits Jordan’s King Abdullah for his recent address to Congress. “Though widely criticized, King Abdullah was exactly right: from Morocco to Yemen to Sudan, the Palestinian cause arouses ordinary people in coffee shops more than almost anything else.” Ultimately, he argues, “security for Israel will emerge only from a peace agreement with Palestinians...President Bush would have been a much better friend to Israel if he had tried to rein in [Israeli Prime Minister Ehud] Olmert [during last summer’s war with Lebanon]. So let’s be better friends-and stop biting our tongues.”

The Prisoner: Or How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair

While stories about Iraq are often found on the front pages of national newspapers, Americans do not often have the opportunity to hear from Iraqis themselves. The new film “The Prisoner: or How I Planned to Kill Tony Blair” offers this rare opportunity as Yunus Khatayer Abbas, a journalist, tells the harrowing story of his nine-month imprisonment in Abu Ghraib’s Camp Ganci. The film is unsettling as it becomes increasingly obvious that Yunus (who was tortured under Saddam Hussein’s regime for his writing) is utterly incapable of the crime for which he has been jailed-a plot to assassinate British Prime Minister Tony Blair. How many thousands of prisoners are there like Yunus and his brothers? In the end, however, viewers can

find some solace in Yunus’ indomitable sense of humor and dignity and his genuinely affectionate relationship with American reservist, Benjamin Thompson, who refers to Yunus as his “brother.”

Yeah, We’ve Gone Country. . .

Move over, Toby Keith, there’s a new country sensation in Texas and he doesn’t just trace his

roots to Oklahoma-he’s Egyptian! Born and raised in Ponca City, OK, Kareem Salama is an aspiring country and western singer whose music, according to the Austin American Statesmen, forges “a path, identifying with much of what we think defines American culture while unashamedly promoting his faith.” It seems that country crooner Alan Jackson was right: everybody’s gone country-including Arab Americans.

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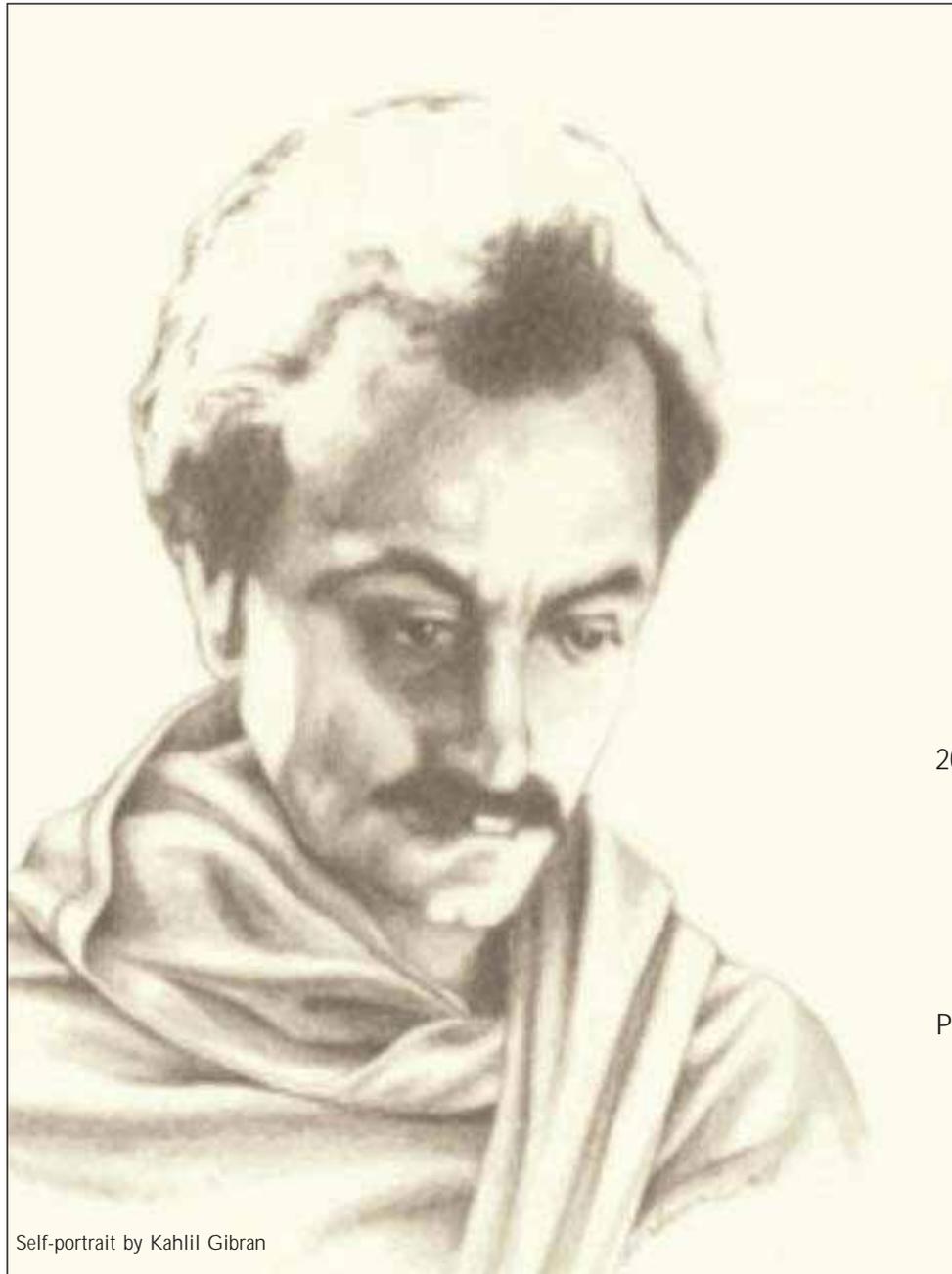
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Arab-American Issues

King Abdullah II's Challenge to Congress

By: James Zogby (AAI President)

By any reasonable measure, King Abdullah II of Jordan's speech before a joint session of Congress was both smart and courageous. He took advantage of being only the fourth Arab leader given this opportunity and chose to do the unexpected.

Some observers anticipated that he would focus his remarks on Iraq or on an appeal for more U.S. aid to his country now providing refuge to almost one million Iraqis. He did not. Nor were his remarks designed to pander or secure frequent applause. Instead, he focused his speech on a thoughtful and passionate appeal: the urgent need to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

His arguments were compelling. Iraq is of course a critical issue, but it is not, King Abdullah noted, the core issue that roils the region. "The wellspring of regional division," he observed, "the cause of resentment and frustration far beyond, is the denial of justice and peace in Palestine." This, he concluded, is the "core issue...producing severe consequences for our region... and for our world."

Throughout his remarks he spoke evocatively of Palestinian rights using words rarely heard in the halls of Congress. Speaking "as a friend who cannot be silent," he told of "sixty years of Palestinian dispossession" and "forty years under occupation," creating a "bitter legacy of disappointment and despair." He called on Congress to support efforts "to restore Palestine, a nation in despair and without hope."

King Abdullah infused his remarks with a moral and political challenge, reminding Americans of their precarious standing in world public opinion. He noted that Arabs and Muslims often ask "whether the West really means what it says about equality and respect and equal justice" and continued by observing that "nothing can assert America's moral vision more clearly, nothing can teach the world's youth more directly than your leadership in a peace process that delivers results not next year, not in five years, but this year."

King Abdullah went on to describe the Arab nations' collective commitment to peace as expressed in the Beirut Declaration of 2002, which supported a comprehensive resolution to the conflict that included two states at peace with normalized relations amongst all countries in the region. [This commitment is born out in the results of a recent Zogby International poll conducted in six Arab nations which found that well over 90 percent of Arabs support a two-state solution to the conflict].

The King spoke with a sense of urgency, making it clear that the clock was running out for peace to become a reality.

As I said, the thrust and content of the speech were unexpected. There was, of course, applause, and a number of standing ovations. But during long stretches you could hear a pin drop in the crowded chamber. From my vantage point in a box overlooking the assembled lawmakers, I saw many members in deep reflection, frequently nodding in agreement with the King's observations.

Some members of Congress with whom I spoke were deeply moved by King Abdullah's appeal. Of course, there were those who were not. Comments both critical and banal were issued by some who have been long opponents to a just resolution to the conflict. They will, no doubt, continue to find ways to obstruct the search for peace.

But there can be no doubt that the King's speech made an important contribution. It has empowered and invigorated Arab Americans and American Jews who want peace and has provided both with important leverage with which to press their case. The speech also provided food for thought for the still small but growing caucus of legislators who are convinced that the King is right – that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a core issue of concern, creating extremism in the Middle East and dividing the U.S. from the Arab world. They believe that the time for a solution is now, before "facts on the ground" and despair and more violence make such an outcome all but impossible.

There will be those who will find fault with the King's speech. Some will say it wasn't balanced enough, while others will argue it was too balanced. But the critics are wrong. King Abdullah used an extraordinary opportunity to deliver an important message. He is to be commended for doing so. The search for an Israeli-Palestinian peace is the core issue, and time is running out. He gave the search for peace his best shot. This is his challenge, to which all of us must now respond.



Dr. James Zogby

Pledge, cont'd from page 9

commitments and efforts. The laid-back ideology of "well my country is at peace and that's all that matters" should be avoided. Instead the workshop focused on being pro-active and taking responsibility towards understanding peace and how one can help spread it.

Just like the U.S. Institute of Peace, I also believe that what happens in one country has or will affect another country. Or in Mr. Smith's words, we have to put a stop to the "island" mentality, being that our neighbors that surround us are bodies of water. Geographically, we are all divided somehow, but we all crave for the basic things in life and one of them is peace.

Speaking of divided borders, for the first time last week, I saw up-close pictures of the wall dividing Israel and Palestine at the Sabeel International Peace Conference, that took place in Cleveland Ohio. Farmers are separated from their crops. Cousins are separated from their cousins. Kids are separated from an opportunity to learn what is on the other side. And no matter how many smiles I tried to put on my face and look at ease,

I couldn't be completely at ease. Who would be?

Likewise, I ask everyone to use the U.S. Institute of Peace as an example to pressure your institutions to follow in similar footsteps. There is no peace without a struggle, but its outcome is fruitful. Go ahead and write letters to college officials to offer courses in peace studies and homeland security. And Mr. Smith said that we not only have to fight terrorism, but also understand the

underlying reasons of terrorist actions. Basically, he asks, "What is the source of the frustration?" Once that is established, the solution slowly comes into place.

Again, I urge you all to step-up and be proactive, especially when it comes to mobilizing global peace. Do not rely on neighbors or friends to do the work for you or on your behalf. Each and every one of us is responsible in this journey to make our world a better place to live in. The idea of worrying about conflict resolution only when it hits home is ludicrous and unjust. As many of us put our heads down to sleep at night, there is a child somewhere in the world fleeing war, leaving everything and everyone behind. We all may divide ourselves according to country, language, religion or race. But there is no denial that we all belong to once race. The human race. And what better reason to do something about the world we live in.

For more information on the U.S. Institute of Peace and similar programs, visit the following sites and see what you can do:

www.usip.org
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And remember, peace is a beautiful thing!



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THE WORK OF A NATION. THE CENTER OF INTELLIGENCE.

Entertainment

Shireen Abdul Wahab



Music production company 'Rotana' has announced that Egyptian singer Shireen Abdul Wahab has joined their team. The company, which boasts over 120 singers, made its announcement after months of ongoing negotiations with the singer.

Elissa



Lebanese singer Elissa revealed that presently she does not have time for love or any type of intimate relationship. The singer said that as the sole provider for her family, after the death of her father, she has too much responsibility on her hands to make a real commitment.

Nancy Ajram



Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram is currently on tour in the United States. The concert tour is organized by "Stars on Tour Productions."

Egyptian singer Tamer Husni has miraculously survived a near death experience. The singer was using the elevator at the Journalist Union in Cairo when it suddenly dropped from the fourth floor. Tamer was in the elevator along with singer Shadi Shamel and seven other people.



Tamer Husni

Muna Zaki



The upcoming film "Taymour and His Sister," starring Egyptian actors Muna Zaki and Ahmad Al Sakka, is facing numerous setbacks.

Ruwaida Attieh



Syrian singer Ruwaida Attieh has denied circulating rumors that her recent divorce was caused by her mother and her singing career. The singer stated that ongoing personal disputes between her and her ex-husband had led to the divorce without the influence of any third party.

Juwana Malah



Lebanese singer Juwana Malah is caught in the middle of disputes between Egyptian music tycoons Najeeb Sweiris and Jamal Marwan after the breakup between "Melody Music Channel," owned by Marwan, from Sweiris's production company.

Lebanese singer Ragheb Alama has announced that he has ended his contract with the production company Alam El Phan on good terms without any disputes. Ragheb stressed that he refuses to sign any contract with a production company and give them the exclusive rights of his songs on their satellite music channels.



Ragheb Alama

One of the largest international telecom companies has chosen Lebanese singer Fadel Shaker to be the star for their mobile phones television commercials. The singer has filmed commercials for the company, which are published in different Arab magazines and newspapers. The singer had also recorded radio and television commercials for the company.



Fadel Shaker

Fifi Abdo



Egyptian belly dancer Fifi Abdo has denied circulating rumors of her resignation from belly dancing stressing that her success as an actress does not mean her giving up her number one passion. The dancer noted that she only eliminated dancing at private parties and weddings, but as long as her health condition allows it she will keep on dancing at certain occasions.

Lebanese singer Nourhanne has completed recording the songs for her new album, featuring nine songs, in which she has cooperated with poets like Ahmad Madi, Ahmad Darwish, composers Saleem Salama, Ahmad Barakat and Lebanese singer Ewan. The distribution of the music of the songs was by Naser Al Asaad, Adel Aish, Osan, Tony Sabba and Rogea Abi Aqel.

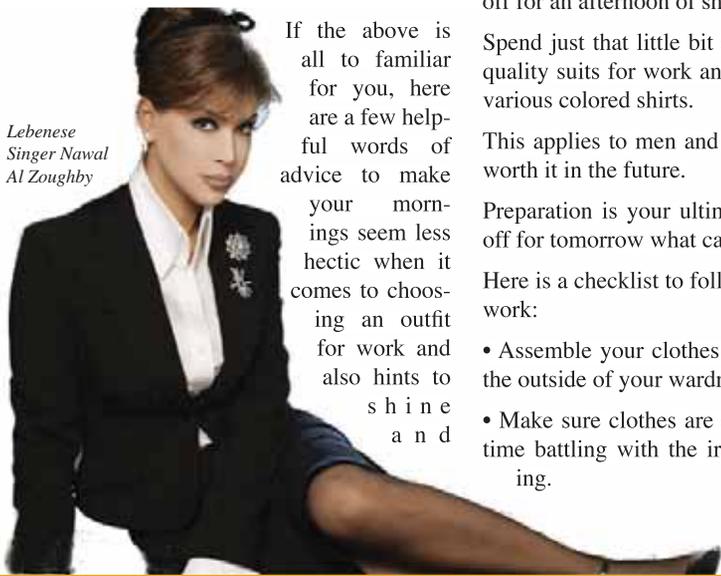


Nourhanne

What To Wear To Work

The alarm clock sounds, bringing you rapidly back into the world of consciousness, away from a lovely dream. If only you could switch it to snooze, but no, it's time to shower quickly, grab some clothes and face the world and get to work.

Lebanese Singer Nawal Al Zoughby



If the above is all to familiar for you, here are a few helpful words of advice to make your mornings seem less hectic when it comes to choosing an outfit for work and also hints to shine and

look sharp at that important interview.

When it comes to work wear, think smart but comfortable. There is nothing worse than looking at someone uncomfortably squeezed into an ill fitted suite or looking so casual they could be off for an afternoon of shopping.

Spend just that little bit extra money on a few quality suits for work and mix and match with various colored shirts.

This applies to men and women and it will be worth it in the future.

Preparation is your ultimate friend, (don't put off for tomorrow what can be done today).

Here is a checklist to follow the evening before work:

- Assemble your clothes and hang them up on the outside of your wardrobe (ready to grab).
- Make sure clothes are crease free (this saves time battling with the iron in the early morning.

- Shine shoes and place them by the

front door.

- Arrange workbag and also place by the front door.

When getting ready for an interview remember that first impressions are lasting impressions so keep an eye on your hygiene. Make sure hair is clean and bow dried, nails are well manicured – nothing worse than shaking a grubby hand with dirty nails. Ladies, keep your makeup natural and minimal.

Remember you're not off to a nightclub. Don't forget to add a hint of perfume or aftershave but nothing too overpowering and last but certainly not least, smile with clean white teeth of course!



Lebanese Beauty Haifa Wehbe

What's Hot?
Crisp laundered shirts and manicured nails.

What's Not?
Creased clothes, unclean nails and teeth.

SCENT of a Woman



lift before me, and through the floors it made me reminisce about a holiday I was on when I was a teenager wearing the same perfume. So it just goes to show you can never underestimate the power of a scent.

Perfumes smell differently on each individual and this is due to our hormones, body chemistry and also the Ph levels of your skin.

For example, dry skin will not hold the scent as long

THERE'S NOTHING more alluring than the smell of sweet perfume. It's amazing how the aroma of a perfume can quantum leap you back to a time and place so vividly.

I recently walked into an elevator, Sunflowers by Elizabeth Arden, had been worn by the individual in the as the lift descended

as oily skin types. Perfumes are made up of a base note, middle note and top note and each note releases over time. Base notes are normally the heaviest of the three scents, and therefore release last.

When applying perfume to the wrists don't rub together after spraying, this can alter the smell. The collarbone is a good place to apply, but be aware of the ingredients in citrus smelling perfumes. They can cause permanent staining of the skin when exposed to sunlight. If you plan on being out in the sun a lot, I suggest spraying your clothes instead.

With the number of western perfumes flooding the market in the Middle East, it is easy to forget that Europeans learned the art of perfumery from the Arabs. Arabs are very particular about the quality of the ingredients they use. They choose only the best and will bring 'oud' from as far away as Cambodia and India. Arabian Perfumes are generally classified according to one dominant odor. The floral group blends odors such as jasmine, rose, gardenia, lily of the valley. The spicy group includes aromas such as carnation, clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg. The woody group is vetiver, sandalwood and ce-

darwood. The oriental family combines diverse notes such as vanilla, balsam and musk and the herbal group features the aromas of clover and sweet grass.

The success of Arab perfumes and beauty products reminds us that scent making is a traditional Arabian industry. The inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula produced the finest incense and oil better known as 'attar' and furthermore, they were and still are phenomenal consumers!

WHAT'S HOT:

Designer sunglasses; Chanel, Couch or Juicy Couture.

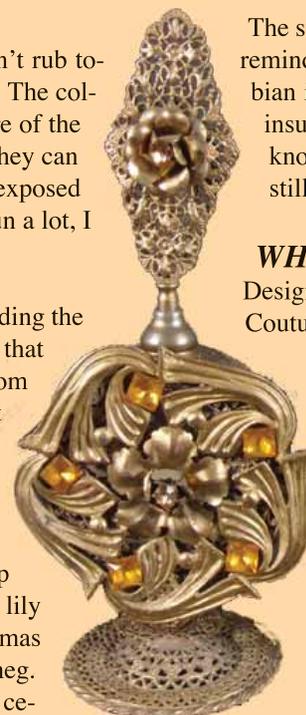
Oud oil perfume
Scarf ties on bags.

WHAT'S NOT

Conflicting gold and diamonds,
Out dated perfumes.

3 PERFUMES TO LOOK FOR...

- Vera Wang 'Princess'
- Ralph Lauren 'Hot'
- Anna Sui 'Magic Romance'

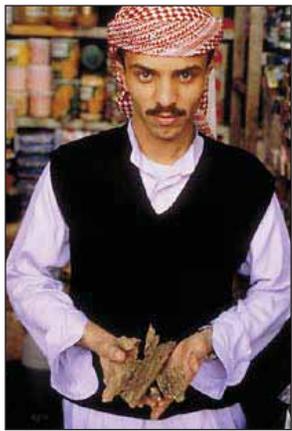


The Hidden History of Scented Wood

Contributed by Eric Hansen

Several years ago, in the perfume and incense market in the old city of Sana'a in Yemen, I caught sight of a large apothecary jar full of wood chips. The jar sat on a dusty shelf, tucked away in a dark corner of the stall owned by Mohammed Hamoud al-Kalagi. When I asked him to show me its contents, he placed the jar on the front counter and pulled out a chip of wood. Mohammed called the wood 'ud (pronounced ood), a name I did not recognize, but it looked very familiar. I could hardly contain my growing sense of excitement as I examined it closely.

Mohammed placed a tiny sliver of the wood on the end of a lit cigarette. Within moments we were inhaling a rich, sweet, woody fragrance that I had first smelled in the Borneo rain forest 15 years earlier. At that time, I was traveling with a group of nomadic hunter-gatherers known as Penan. We were looking for herbs used in traditional medicine, but one day the Penan cut



down a tree and collected pockets of fragrant wood from within the trunk and branches. They called these dark patches of wood gaharu. I rubbed a small piece of gaharu between my palms to warm it, and it smelled like cedar and sandalwood, but with subtle fragrance notes of roses and balsam. For years I had wondered what the wood was used for and where it was sent after leaving Borneo. The Penan thought gaharu might be used in Chinese medicine, because it was the upriver Chinese traders that bought it, but apart from that, they were mystified as to why anyone would want to buy those gnarly bits of wood.

Mohammed al-Kalagi, who thought that 'ud came only from India, was the first person to help me begin to unravel the long and convoluted history of this scented wood. He told me it was burned as incense throughout the Islamic world, and an oil was extracted from it that retailed for nearly \$20 a gram (\$500 an ounce) as a perfume.

When I told Mohammed that the gaharu collectors in Borneo considered the wood to have only a modest barter value, he laughed and recited lines that he attributed to the eighth-century Egyptian jurist and poet Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i:

Gold is just dust when still in the ground.

And 'ud, in its country of origin,

Is just another kind of firewood.

A few days after my visit, I walked through the narrow streets of old Sana'a to the home of Yemeni friends. The family lived in a tastefully restored stone tower house in the Turkish Quarter, and during the meal that night I discovered that 'ud has domestic uses beyond simple incense: A small chip placed amid the tobacco in the bowl of the mada'ah, or water

pipe, sweetens the smoke and keeps the pipe fresh. And although 'ud is generally considered more of a man's scent, it is also used by women who place bits of the wood in a mabkharah, a small, hand-held charcoal brazier used to scent clothes; it is also used to perfume hair and skin. My host explained that at women's get-togethers it would be considered strange not to pass around a mabkharah of smoldering 'ud or other incense so the female guests could perfume themselves.

"When you walk by a woman on the street and you smell 'ud, you know that she is from a good family," the husband told me. "It is a sign of wealth, good breeding, refinement and status."

Similarly, when Yemeni men congregate, it is customary for them to pass around a mabkharah of 'ud. Each man opens his jacket and censes his shirt and underarms, then his face and his machedah, or head scarf, if he is wearing one. The mabkharah is always passed counter-clockwise, and each man wafts the smoke onto himself and says, "God's blessings and peace on the Prophet Muhammad." 'Ud is burned ceremonially at weddings, too, and the oil is sometimes used to perfume the body of the dead before burial.

In Yemen, the price and quality of 'ud varies considerably: At an average wedding party in Sana'a it is considered appropriate to spend about \$30 to \$50 by burning 50 or 100 grams (two or three ounces) of one of the less expensive grades of 'ud, but for the well-heeled, 30 grams (a single ounce) of a superior grade can set one back \$250 to \$300.

Before I left the dinner party that night, my host placed a tiny drop of 'ud oil on the front of my shirt and explained that the fragrance would survive several washings—which it did. 'Ud oil is often placed on older men's beards or younger men's jacket lapels so that during the traditional cheek-to-cheek greetings its sweet, woody scent dominates.

Although the southern Arabian Peninsula has been long identified with aromatics, few Westerners are familiar with 'ud, a word that means simply "wood" in Arabic. This obscurity is partly due to 'ud rarity and cost, but it is also a matter of varying taste and differing cultural traditions. During the Hajj, for example, Muslim pilgrims from around the world come to Makkah and Madinah, where many are introduced to the scent of 'ud, which is burned in the Great Mosque as well as in many other mosques throughout Saudi Arabia. 'Ud produces a fragrance that is not soon forgotten, and for this reason small packets of 'ud chips are a common souvenir to take home from the Hajj.

In various other places in the Islamic world, 'ud is burned to help celebrate the important events of everyday life. In Tunisia, for



example, 'ud is burned on the third, seventh and 40th days following the birth of a child, a time when the mother traditionally remains at home while female relatives and friends come to visit.

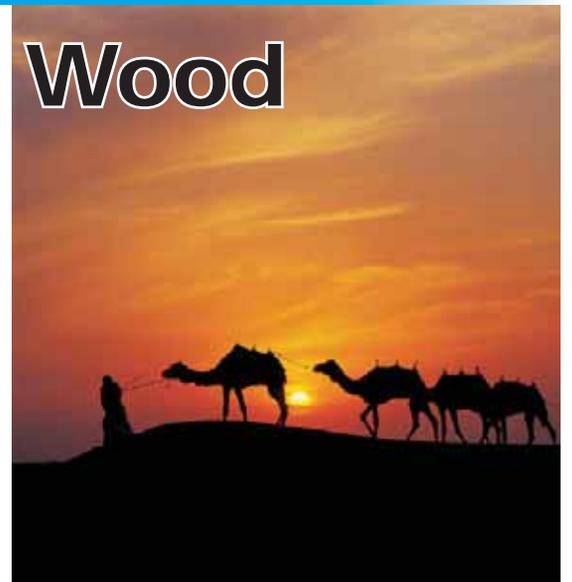
Throughout Malaysia and Indonesia, 'ud is called by the name I first heard in Borneo, gaharu, a Malay word derived from the much older Sanskrit term agaru, meaning "heavy." The scented wood was given that name because, indeed, a high-quality piece of gaharu will sink in water. The Susruta Samhita, one of the "great three" texts of Ayurvedic medicine, describes how people of the Ganges plain used smoldering agaru for worship, as perfume and to fumigate surgical wounds. In those times, agaru came largely from the tree Aquilaria agallocha, which was found in the foothills of Assam.

In the 16th century, the Portuguese, who were actively trading in Goa, Malacca and Macao, adapted the word agaru to pao d'aguila, or "eagle wood"—which at least had a meaning in Portuguese, though there is no connection between eagles and 'ud. In the English-speaking world today, the most common terms for 'ud are aloeswood or agarswood; this last word preserves a clear link to the original Sanskrit.

The best grade of 'ud is hard, nearly black and very heavy. In general, 'ud becomes inferior as it appears lighter in tone, flecked with diminishing amounts of resin. The only truly reliable way to test for quality, however, is to burn a small bit and evaluate the complexity and richness of the smoldering wood. 'Ud oil can be taste-tested: Touch a bit to your tongue, and a bitter taste points to high quality.

Historians are uncertain when 'ud first reached the Middle East. There are several references to "aloes" in the Old Testament, and estimates by historians of China Friedrich Hirth and W.W. Rockhill put the date as far back as the 10th century BC. This was when King Solomon began trade with the south Arabian Sabaeen kingdom, which was already trading with merchants on the Malabar (western) coast of India. (See *Aramco World*, March/April 1998.) Written accounts of Arab and Chinese travelers and merchants that mention it date to more recent times, approximately the first century of our era, a time of accelerating trade among the Arabian Peninsula, the Malabar coast and China that was made possible by the exploitation of the seasonal monsoon winds across the Indian Ocean. At this time, frankincense and myrrh from Oman and the Hadhramaut region of southern Arabia were being traded in the Far East, so it seems reasonable to assume that a reciprocal trade in 'ud would have traveled on the same maritime routes.

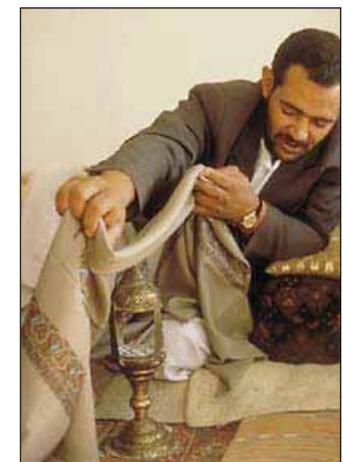
The Chinese role in the 'ud trade has been significant since the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), when Imperial perfume blenders used it along with cloves, musk, costus-root oil and camphor. Like the Indians, the Chinese named the wood for its density, calling it cb'en hsiang, "the incense that sinks in water." In those days, 'ud was sorted into as many as 20 different grades. Responding to the increasing domestic and international demand for 'ud, Chinese traders ventured into Annam, now part of Vietnam, where they found top-quality trees in abundance. This new



source of supply allowed them to become wholesale dealers and middlemen, and to this day they retain this position worldwide.

Arab and Persian traders had established settlements on the outskirts of Canton as early as 300, and a Chinese traveler named Fa-Hien noted the riches of the Arab 'ud traders from the Hadhramaut and Oman who lived comfortably in Ceylon. The Greek geographer Cosmas Indicopleustes, writing in the sixth century, also noted that the China-Ceylon-Middle East trade included large shipments of 'ud.

In his book *Silsilat al-Tawarikh* (Chain of Chronicles), Zayd ibn Hassan of Siraf (now in Iran) tells of the experiences of two ninth-century traders, one Ibn Wahab of Basra and another named Suleyman. Although they traveled at slightly different times, both



reported that the price and availability of 'ud in both Basra and Baghdad was much affected by frequent shipwrecks and by pirate attacks on trading ships. Their roughly similar routes went from the Arabian Gulf to the Maldives, Ceylon, the Nicobar Islands and

then on to Canton by way of the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea. At the time, the round-trip took at least two years, for the traders had to wait for seasonal winds, and customs formalities and the complexities of doing business in China consumed a good deal of time. Hassan relates that in Canton, Suleyman saw Arab and Persian traders playing a board game that appears to have been similar to backgammon: Occasionally the playing pieces were made of rhinoceros horn or ivory, but most commonly they were carved from fragrant 'ud.

Reading up on the history of the 12th- and 13th-century Arab-Chinese sea trade, I also came upon the *Chu-fan-chi*, a trade manual written by Chau Ju-kua, who was a customs official in the southern Chinese

Culture Corner

province of Kwangtung in the mid-13th century. In the text he mentions that the search for 'ud had intensified to the point that it was being collected from Hainan Island, parts of present-day Vietnam, lands about the Malay Peninsula, Cambodia and the islands of Sumatra and Java. By this time, he observed, it had become an established custom for well-to-do Muslims to wake up, bathe and perfume themselves with 'ud smoke before going to the mosque for the morning prayer.

In the early 14th century, Ibn Battuta described a visit to Ceylon where during a visit to Sultan Ayri Shakarwati he was shown "a bowl as large as a man's hand, made of rubies, containing oil of aloes." Ibn Battuta also mentioned that in Muslim lands every 'ud tree was private property, and that the best trees grew in Qamara, or Cambodia. (See Saudi Aramco World, July/August 2000.) In Saudi Arabia today, 'ud kambudi—Cambodian aloeswood—is still usually the most treasured and costly variety.

Isaac H. Burkill, in his 1935 Dictionary of the Economic Products of the Malay Peninsula, described 'ud in scientific terms. It is an aromatic resin deposit found in certain species of Aquilaria trees, especially Aquilaria malaccensis, whose species name recalls the days when the 'ud trade was centered in Malacca and dominated by the Portuguese. Burkill explains that the resin is produced by the tree as an immune response to a fungus (Phialophora parasitica) that invades the tree and, over many years, spreads through it. It is these diseased sections of the tree that are collected by people in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

To better understand the modern trade cycle from Southeast Asia to Middle Eastern homes and mosques, I returned to Borneo and traveled upriver to talk again with the Penan tribesmen who make their living collecting 'ud, which they call gaharu.

The Penan, I learned, recognize seven types of gaharu. To collect it they paddle up small tributaries by dugout canoe, and then climb the slopes of remote mountains to locate the best trees. A gathering journey can take a week or more. Once a likely looking

pohon kayu gaharu (a "gaharu-wood tree") has been found, they make a series of shallow, exploratory cuts into its trunk, branches and roots; they cut it down only when they are persuaded the tree has the fungus and will yield a reasonable amount of good gaharu. If the tree contains only low grades of gaharu, they will often let it grow for another few years before re-testing it. If they do decide to cut it down, they will spend days extracting the gaharu and cleaning it with smaller knives. Traditionally, the Penan used gaharu themselves to treat stomach aches and fevers, and as an insect repellent, but now they sell or trade all they find.

In the backwaters of Borneo, the Penan sell the very best gaharu for about \$400 a kilogram, or approximately \$12 an ounce. They usually sell to local Chinese traders who stockpile it until they have enough to send to wholesalers and bigger middlemen in Singapore. The

Penan claim that gaharu is getting more difficult to find because large-scale logging operations have destroyed many of the hill forests where the gaharu trees are found. If a Penan group has good luck, it might collect a kilo (35 oz) of average-quality gaharu in three or four days—but it is increasingly common for them to return with nothing, or with only the lowest grades.

Thirty years ago Hong Kong played an important role in the 'ud trade, but today the international hub is Singapore. There, the wholesale business is dominated by Chinese traders who receive 'ud from agents scattered across Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand, Borneo, Hainan Island and, most recently, Irian Jaya, Indonesia. C. P. Ng, owner of Buan Mong Heng, an emporium on North Bridge Road, is Singapore's undisputed 'ud king. He tells me that his best 'ud sells for \$5000 to \$10,000 per kilogram (\$2275-\$4545/lb). At present, the rarest and most expensive type, known as Keenam, comes from Vietnam; it must be stored in a cool place to keep its scent from deteriorating. In Irian Jaya alone, he says, more than 50,000 part-time collectors supply some 30 collection centers. Throughout the Chinese community in Singapore, he says, people use 'ud as incense in the home, for worship and during marriage ceremonies.

He also explains that it can be taken with herbs to cure a stomach ache, and that the sweet smell is a cure for insomnia. "A tea made from 'ud will warm the body and restore youthful vigor to older men," he says.

In Singapore, 'ud is graded in descending quality from Super AA, which is weighed out on a jeweler's scale, to Super A, Super, and lesser grades numbered 1 through 8. The lowest quality, called kandulam in Malay, is used to make incense sticks; it sells for roughly three cents a gram (\$1 per oz). The value of 'ud shipped out of Singapore each year has been estimated to exceed \$1.2 billion.

In the Middle East and in Borneo I never

saw more than small amounts of 'ud, amounting to a few pounds at most, but Singapore was different. There I visited the Nk Kittai warehouse, where cardboard boxes packed with 'ud reached tall ceilings and wheelbarrows and shovels were the tools of choice to move quantities that perfumed the entire surrounding neighborhood. The owner, C. F. Chong, waited on buyers from India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and even Japan. In Japan, 'ud is used in a complex fragrance guessing game called koh-do, part of the ceremonial appreciation of incense adopted from the Chinese, who still use the expression wenxiang, "listening to the incense."

The fragrance in the hot warehouse was overpowering, and as I wandered the narrow aisles surrounded by a fortune in scented wood, I saw 'ud logs as thick as my thigh and nearly three meters (10') long. Workers sat on the floor cleaning up pieces of 'ud with modified rubber-tapping knives. When I remarked that it must be a risk to store so much 'ud in one place, Chong replied that he, like other dealers, kept his very best 'ud locked up in vaults.

Out on the warehouse floor, buyers specified the type of 'ud they wanted by region and quality, and then a worker would dump a pile at the buyer's feet so that he could hand-select the individual pieces. "This is an on-the-spot business," said Chong. "Each piece has to be evaluated."

Each buyer's selection was weighed, and as all of the buyers that morning were old customers, only a minimal amount of haggling led to an agreement on a price. Nobody, it seemed, bought more than he could easily carry by hand, and each parcel was tied up for stowage as in-flight baggage. The visits concluded with tea and soft drinks in Chong's air-conditioned office.

Before leaving Singapore, I went to visit Haji V. Syed Mohammed. His shop, V. S. S. Varusai Mohamed & Sons, is just across the street from the Sultan Mosque. The store sells 'ud, perfume, money belts, cassette tapes, shawls, skull caps and highly decorative incense burners made in Bangladesh. While we were talking, he told me of one of the most renowned 'ud dealers in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates: Ajmal's Perfume Manufacturing & Oudh Processing Industry. It was a fortuitous meeting, for Dubai was my next stop.

In Dubai, there are entire streets lined with shops selling 'ud. Among them, the family-run Ajmal company is one of the largest dealers in pure and blended 'ud perfumes in all of the Middle East. From their 22 shops throughout the Arabian Peninsula, they sell 'ud oils from Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and their most extravagant creation is a blend of aged 'ud oils called Dahnal Oudh al-Moattaq. The price: \$850 for a 30-gram (1-oz) bottle. This is out of the reach of all but the most affluent, but nearly everyone can afford to buy modest amounts of 'ud chips for daily use, rituals and ceremonies—which might include driving, for Dubai automotive shops sell clip-on electric braziers that plug into a car's cigarette lighter.

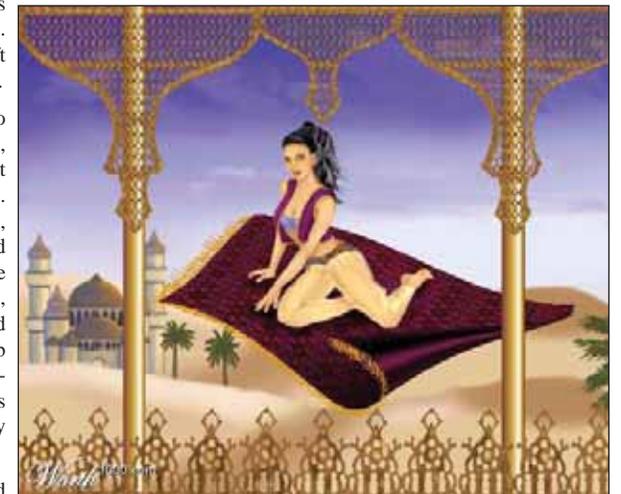
Because of the popularity of 'ud, its high price and the difficulty of collecting it from the wild, several



companies in peninsular Malaysia and India have begun to look into the possibility of artificially introducing the 'ud fungus into Aquilaria trees in hopes of creating commercial 'ud plantations. Thousands of trees have been inoculated with the fungus and people are waiting to see if the 'ud will start to grow, and if perhaps they can even harvest it without cutting down the tree.

Nearly a year after my visits to Singapore and Dubai, another trip took me back to Borneo. I ran into a group of Penan friends at the riverside shop of Towkay Yong Khi Liang, a Hakka Chinese trader on the upper Limbang River in Sarawak. The Penan had just traded a kilo of low-quality 'ud for a few sacks of sago flour, a replacement part for a chainsaw, some cartons of tinned food, some rolling tobacco, several pairs of cheap tennis shoes and soft drinks for everyone present.

As we stood on the dock, the Penan asked me if I



had ever found out what the people in the Middle East did with the gaharu. I told them what I had discovered about the history of its trade, and then I explained the long and complicated journey it makes before arriving on the other side of the world. I described the networks of middlemen, the refined grading techniques and the marketing efforts that multiplied the price 25 times or more before it reached the final customer. They listened patiently to these facts, but what they really wanted to find out was what people did with the wood after spending so much money on it.

I suspected that they wouldn't believe me, but I had to reveal the astonishing truth: I told them people buy 'ud so that they can take it home and burn it.



Eye On Middle East

French Pres. Jacques Chirac retires

After 4 decades, French President Jacques Chirac retires from Elected office

PARIS (AP) - Jacques Chirac, admired during 12 years as president of France, leaves a legacy as mixed and ambiguous as the man himself.

As widely expected, the French leader announced that he will not seek a third term in presidential elections in 4

weeks. In a televised address, Chirac said he would find new ways to serve his country after leaving office: "Serving France, and serving peace, is what I have committed my whole life to."

Over the years, Chirac has pulled some surprises and has kept France guessing as long as possible about whether he will run again - seemingly to avoid becoming a lame duck too soon.

* To the Lebanese, President Jacques Chirac will always be remembered as close strong friend of former Lebanese Prime Minister Shaikh Rafiq Al-Hariri. Hariri was well regarded among international leaders, counting Chirac as his close friend, and enjoying the record of being the political figure most often received by the French President. Chirac was one of the first foreign dignitaries to offer condolences to Hariri's widow in person at her home in Beirut, after the shocking assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri.



Making a Difference In Palestine, Israel and the Middle East - Part II

By Joanne McKenna

In the March issue of Al Sahafa we reported on comments made by some of the speakers at the conference which took place on February 16 and 17, 2007 at the St. Joseph Center in Cleveland, Ohio. Coordinated by Jeff Abood of the Interfaith Council for Peace in the Middle East and by Brian Fry of the Congregation of St. Joseph, the conference was hosted by Sabeel and 28 cosponsoring organizations.

The word "Sabeel", we explained, is Arabic for "the way, a channel, or a spring of life-giving water." Sabeel is the "Voice of Palestinian Christians, an ecumenical liberation theology movement which strives to develop a spirituality based on love, justice, peace, nonviolence, liberation and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities."

The Interfaith Council for Peace in the Middle East is a faith based nonprofit organization which believes that "all three Abrahamic faiths - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - affirm the sanctity and equal value of all human life...believe in the universality of human rights which are endowed by God regardless of color, race, religion or nationality...and affirm that any true, lasting and just peace must be based on these common principles."

The conference was sold out with a waiting list of over 130 people who also wanted to attend but found the seating limited to about 300 participants. There were nearly two dozen panelists from the U.S., Palestine and Israel who took part in nearly two dozen panels, workshops and addresses.

The conference was so large and so important that it was impossible to cover it all in one article. This month we will report on comments made by three additional speakers and panelists.

Brother David Carroll, F.S.C., Ph.D., Under-Secretary General of Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), the Papal Relief Agency in the Holy Land, noted that CNEWA was founded in 1926 by Pope Pius XI with the mandate to support the Eastern Catholic churches and to provide humanitarian assistance to those in need, without regard to nationality

or creed.

Brother Carroll said that the Vatican pays special attention to the Holy Land and favors religious co-existence. He noted, "The holy places are monuments which exist because living communities keep their meaning alive."

"The Church is not involved in the conflict and does not take sides but seeks justice in order to find God's peace."

He said, "Christians are a minority in our birthplace. Of Israel's 7 million people, 144,000 are Christians and, of them, 118,000 are indigenous Christians. The population of the West Bank is 3 million, of whom 50,000 are Christian."

Brother Carroll spoke of the suffering of the Palestinians and reported that the separation wall keeps Palestinians from employment, medical care, schools and churches. Unemployment in the West Bank ranges from 40-60% due, in large measure, to the economic embargo on the Palestinians because of their vote for Hamas in the recent elections.

"Two-thirds of the Christian Palestinians have fled the area. At Bethlehem University there are 2500 students but there are no jobs for graduates."

He reported on the destitution of Gaza and said that the population of Gaza doubles every six years and that the water in the aquifers is spoiled, contributing to ill health. There are no natural resources in Gaza and Israel controls the air, land and sea.

Brother Carroll said, "The issues raised are symptoms of the larger issues. The international community must use its good offices for a balanced approach to peace based on the two-state solution, but the 'bantustans' Israel has created in the West Bank make the two-state solution difficult."

Dr. Donald E. Wagner, Professor of Religion and Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University in Chicago, explained that Evangelical Christians are the fastest growing movement globally. The Fundamentalists are the right-

wing of Evangelicals and are creating new churches in the Middle East which are not connected to mainstream Christianity and which practice extreme Islamophobia. The Fundamentalists continue to organize across the U.S. to lobby for arms for Israel against the Lebanese and Palestinians. "To them, Islam is the enemy."

Dr. Wagner remarked that, although he is an Evangelical Christian, he is "from the Jimmy Carter school of Evangelicals."

He reported that 50% of Iraq's Christians have fled their homeland due to the continuing violence.

Corinne Witlatch, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), a Washington-based coalition of 21 Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant denominations and church organizations, stated that CMEP began in 1984 out of the conviction that the "policy perspectives and long Middle East experience of our member bodies should be more widely known in the public policy arena." CMEP therefore seeks to "maintain an on-going dialogue with Congress, the Administration and the diplomatic community to advance our concerns, assessments and advocacy positions."

CMEP "seeks to help the members of our organizations advocate, in a knowledgeable, timely and effective way, their concerns about justice and peace for all people and countries in the region." Among those concerns are "the avoidance and resolution of armed conflicts, human rights, arms control, foreign aid, and the unique nature of Jerusalem " sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims."



Ms Witlatch spoke of the need to meet regularly with legislators about the concerns of peacemaking and said that the status of Jerusalem was "central to peace and reconciliation because of what it means to three religions."

SOME RESOURCES FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE
Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA)
1011 First Avenue
New York, NY 10022-4195
Telephone 212-826-1480 800-442-6392 (toll free)
Fax 212-826-8979
<http://www.cnewa.org>

Churches for Middle East Peace
110 Maryland Ave., NE #311
Washington, DC - 20002
Telephone 1-202-543-1222
<http://www.cmeop.org/>

Friends of Sabeel - North America
P.O. Box 9186
Portland, Oregon 97207
[http:// www.Fosna.org](http://www.Fosna.org)

Interfaith Council for Peace in the Middle East,
Northeast Ohio
<http://www.middleeastinterfaith.org>

Eye On Middle East

Iraqi Planning Minister Discusses the Proposed Oil Law and National Reconciliation

“The will of Iraqis to live is stronger than the will of the terrorists to die.”

Washington, DC — At a private luncheon hosted by the National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC), H.E. Ali Baban, Iraq’s Minister of Planning, received a warm welcome from high-level representatives of the U.S. business community and the U.S. Government.

Baban’s remarks were candid, yet upbeat. “We don’t want to hide the fact that we are living in hard times now,” he said, “but I want to emphasize that despite these hard times, we are continuing our work.”



Baban discussed issues affecting the progress of the government’s initiatives, including the delay in forming a government in 2006 and the security challenges impeding implementation of certain projects. He said, “I think our success in security will reveal success for our projects and our political and economic future.”

On the minds of many in the oil industry has been Iraq’s proposed oil law. Baban noted, “We have good news: we are about to approve a new oil law that will play a great role in national reconciliation. The law states that the oil revenues will be distributed to all

Iraqis according to the population numbers and not by any other criteria. This law encourages Iraq unity, and if the law is ratified by Parliament, it will be a great achievement.”

Addressing concerns about the U.S. military presence in Iraq, the minister noted, “We are very proud to have such friends who understand our situation. While there are differences about the military presence of the U.S. in Iraq, I think that human and business relations can replace the military presence.” He continued, “We have a great opportunity to strengthen our relations, and gatherings like this one of Iraqi and U.S. businessmen is the best means.”

David Hamod, President and CEO of NUSACC, praised Minister Baban for his candor about how the Iraqi government is intending to overcome security problems. “He gave us hope today that there is light at the end of the tunnel,” said Hamod. “It is clear that there is a very important role for our two business communities to play in Iraq’s reconstruction, and we look forward to supporting our Iraqi counterparts in their efforts to rebuild the nation through commerce.”

Concluded Baban, “The will of Iraqis to live is stronger than the will of the terrorists to die.”



Halliburton Moving to Dubai

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Oil services giant Halliburton Co. will soon shift its corporate headquarters from Houston to the Mideast financial powerhouse of Dubai, chief executive Dave Lesar announced.

“Halliburton is opening its corporate headquarters in Dubai while maintaining a corporate office in Houston,” spokeswoman Cathy Mann said in an e-mail to The Associated Press. “The chairman, president and CEO will office from and be based in Dubai to run the company from the UAE.”

Lesar, speaking at an energy conference in nearby Bahrain, said he will relocate to Dubai from Texas to oversee Halliburton’s intensified focus on business in the Mideast and energy-hungry Asia, home to some of the world’s most important oil and gas markets.

“As the CEO, I’m responsible for the global business of Halliburton in both hemispheres and I will continue to spend quite a bit of time in an airplane as I remain attentive to our customers, shareholders and employees around the world,” Lesar said. “Yes, I will spend the majority of my time in Dubai.”

Lesar’s announcement appears to signal one of the highest-profile moves by a U.S. corporate leader to Dubai, an Arab boomtown where free-market capitalism has been paired with some of the world’s most liberal tax, investment and residency laws.

“The eastern hemisphere is a market that is more heavily weighted toward oil exploration and production opportunities and growing our business here will bring more balance to Halliburton’s overall portfolio,” Lesar said.

In 2006, Halliburton — once headed by Vice President Dick Cheney earned profits of \$2.3 billion on revenues of \$22.6 billion.



More than 38 percent of Halliburton’s \$13 billion oil field services revenue last year stemmed from sources in the eastern hemisphere, where the firm has 16,000 of its 45,000 employees.

Cheney was Halliburton’s chief executive from 1995-2000 and the Bush administration has been accused of favoring the conglomerate with lucrative no-bid contracts in Iraq.

Federal investigators last month alleged Halliburton was responsible for \$2.7 billion of the \$10 billion in contractor waste and overcharging in Iraq.

Halliburton last month announced a 40-percent decline in fourth-quarter profit, despite heavy demand for its oil field equipment and personnel.



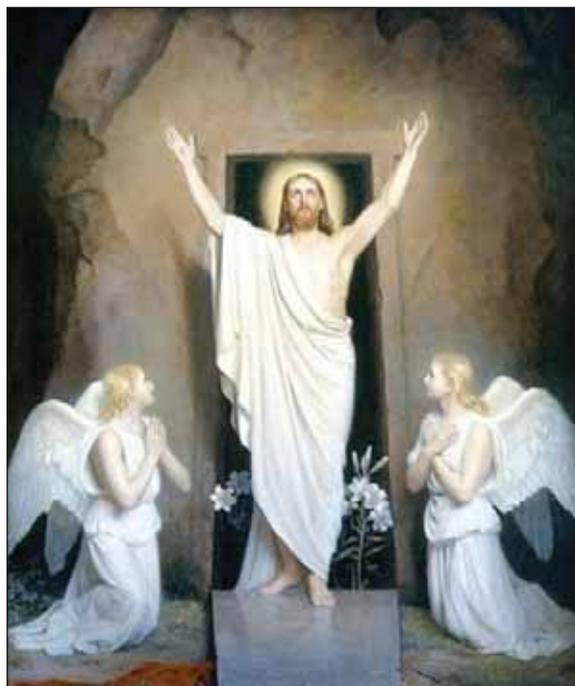
History Of Easter

Easter, the principal festival of the Christian church year, celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion. The origins of Easter date to the beginnings of Christianity, and it is probably the oldest Christian observance after the Sabbath (originally observed on Saturday, later on Sunday). Later, the Sabbath subsequently came to be regarded as the weekly celebration of the Resurrection.

Meanwhile, many of the cultural historians find, in the celebration of Easter, a convergence of the three traditions - Pagan, Hebrew and Christian.

According to St. Bede, an English historian of the early 8th century, Easter owes its origin to the old Teutonic mythology. It was derived from the name Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring, to whom the month of April was dedicated. The festival of Eostre was celebrated at the vernal equinox, when the day and night gets an equal share of the day.

The English name "Easter" is much newer. When the early English Christians wanted others to accept Christianity, they decided



to use the name Easter for this holiday so that it would match the name of the old spring celebration. This made it more comfortable for other people to accept Christianity.

But it is pointed out by some that the Easter festival, as celebrated today, is related with the Hebrew tradition, the Jewish Passover. This is being celebrated during Nisan, the first month of the Hebrew lunar year. The Jewish

Easter Sunday April 8, 2007

Ash Wednesday is February 21st

Palm Sunday is April 1st

Good Friday is April 6th

Easter Sunday is April 8th

Passover under Moses commemorates Israel's deliverance from about 300 years of bondage in Egypt.

It was in during this Passover in 30 AD Christ was crucified

under the order of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate as the then Jewish high priests accused Jesus of "blasphemy". The resurrection came three days later, on the Easter Sunday. The early Christians, many of them being brought up in Jewish tradition regarded Easter as a new feature of the Pascha (Passover).

It was observed in memory of the advent of the Messiah, as foretold by the prophets. And it is equanimous with the proclamation of the resurrection. Thus the early Christian Passover turned out to be a unitive celebration in memory of the passion-death-resurrection of Jesus. However, by the 4th

century, Good Friday came to be observed as a separate occasion. And the Pascha Sunday had been devoted exclusively to the honor of the glorious resurrection.

Throughout the Christendom the Sunday of Pascha had become a holiday to honor Christ. At the same time many of the pagan spring rites came to be a part of its celebration. May be it was the increasing number of new converts who could not totally break free of the influence of pagan culture of their forefathers.

But despite all the influence there was an important shift in the spirit. No more glorification of the physical return of the Sun God. Instead the emphasis was shifted to the Sun of Righteousness who had won banishing the horrors of death for ever.

The Feast of Easter was well established by the second century. But there had been dispute over the exact date of the Easter observance between the Eastern and Western Churches. The East wanted to have it on a weekday because early Christians observed Passover every year on the 14th of Nisan, the month based on the lunar calendar. But, the West wanted that Easter should always be a Sunday regardless of the date.

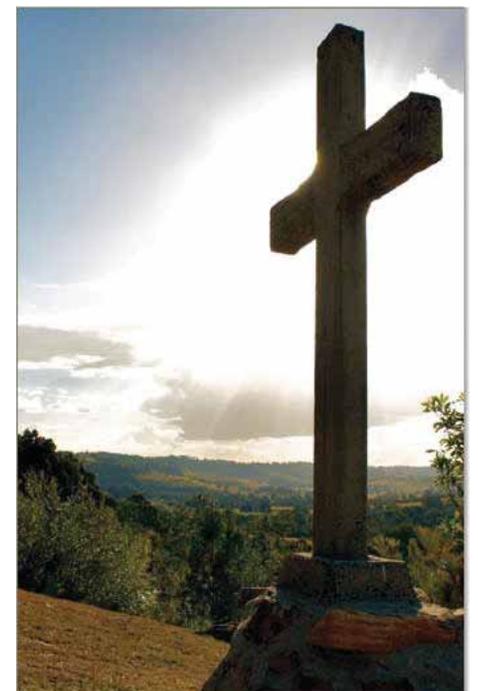
To solve this problem the emperor Constantine called the Council of Nicaea in 325. The question of the date of Easter was one of its main concerns. The council decided that Easter should fall on Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. But fixing up the date of the Equinox was still a problem. The Alexandrians, noted for their rich knowledge in astronomical calculations were given the task. And March 21 was made out to be the per-



fect date for spring equinox.

The dating of Easter today follows the same. Accordingly, churches in the West observe it on the first day of the full moon that occurs on or following the Spring equinox on March 21., it became a movable feast between March 21 and April 25.

Still some churches in the East observe Easter according to the date of the Passover festival. The preparation takes off as early as on the Ash Wednesday from which the period of penitence in the Lent begins. The Lent and the Holy week end on the Easter Sunday, the day of resurrection.



Secret Talks with Syria: Just the Beginning

Contributed from The Israel Policy Forum
By Dr. Alon Liel.

Dr. Alon Liel is the former Director General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Israeli Ambassador to South Africa. In a series of secret meetings between September 2004 and July 2006, Israelis – led by Dr. Liel – and Syrians, led a Syrian-American businessman Ibrahim (Abe) Soliman, formulated understandings for a peace agreement between the two countries. Laying out the “unofficial” framework in a “non-paper”, Dr. Liel, and his counterparts recommended that:

1. Israel will withdraw from the Golan Heights to its pre-1967 borders within 5-15 years;

2. A large portion of the Golan Heights will become a demilitarized “peace park” under Syrian sovereignty; no one will live in the park, but Israelis can visit without visas or Syrian approval.

3. Syria will stop supporting Hamas and Hezbollah, distance itself from Iran, and make efforts to bring peace to Iraq.

Since the details of the “non-paper” were released to the press last month, no progress has been made to revive the talks on an official level.

The following is a summary of Dr. Liel's conversation with an IPF audience.

I think Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is making a mistake in not pursuing talks with Syria.

In today's Israeli political scene, it is possible for a Prime Minister to stand up and say: “I'm going to test the Syria option and see if Assad is ready to make a deal.” The “Golan lobby” that will resist a deal with Syria is not as overpowering as everyone thinks (for ideological settlers, the real goal is to prevent a withdrawal from the West Bank), and there is a real desire for political movement on peace talks.

I don't think an initiative will cause a lot of political damage to the Prime Minister. So it's very difficult to understand the Prime Minister's real reason for resisting talks with Syria based

on our proposals. It could be a request from the United States asking Israel to further isolate Syria, or it could just be that Olmert does not believe Syria is serious.

Nevertheless, if Ehud Olmert decides that he is ready to test Syrian intentions, the meeting can take place tomorrow. As far as the content of the meeting, that will be a bit trickier. The Prime Minister needs to understand that Israel can be the big winner in a deal that breaks the Syria-Iran marriage of convenience. He must be strong enough to walk into the meeting and tell the Syrians: “We are ready to negotiate if you are ready to dramatically change your strategic orientation [away from Iran]. And if, at the end of the process, you have changed camps, the sovereignty of the Golan will be yours.”

Under these conditions, I believe we can conclude an agreement with Syria within four to six months. But it requires political courage, and I don't know if Olmert is willing to do it.

The Prime Minister is overwhelmed with a slew of internal investigations – on issues from criminal malfeasance to military incompetence in the war in Lebanon – and he does not have former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's ability to forge new diplomatic initiatives while mired in domestic scandal. Olmert doesn't have an agenda at the moment.

As a result, I don't see him testing Syria's willingness to talk, but, ironically, I think it would work in his favor politically if he did. The Israeli

public is eager to have a foreign policy agenda, and no one likes the way Israel is perceived abroad. The recent BBC poll that found that Israel was the most negatively-viewed country in the world was disturbing to people here.

We are losing the international goodwill that Sharon accumulated with the disengagement from Gaza almost two years ago. I expect that Europe will soon start dealing with the new Palestinian unity government, and the pressure on Israel to take diplomatic steps will rise. If Olmert has the vision to do something about it, he can preempt any pressure by opening up a process to test Syria's intentions.

Syria's Motives

It's easy to question Syria's motives in talks, and they don't hide the fact that one of the main reasons they want to talk to us is to relieve the pressure on them from Washington. President Assad wants to change the American position on Syria; the American pressure on Syria – in the form of economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure from the UN, downgraded political relations, etc – is very painful, especially in conjunction with added pressure from France after the Hariri assassination.

But Israel has a lot to gain from successful negotiations. The Syrian representatives told us time and again that their alliance with Iran is unnatural, but they maintain friendly relations with the Islamic Republic because they feel they don't have an alternative. If an alternative would be created in the form of the west, they would be happy to prove that their alliance with Iran is only a temporary expedient.

One problem with the negotiations is that the Syrian government is opposed to making any of the good-faith gestures that Israeli diplomats and international observers are looking for. They fear that if they start making gestures that are important to the United States and Israel, like returning the remains of the captured Israeli spy Eli Cohen or cracking down on Hamas and Hezbollah, they would have given up their chips in advance.

Another problem is the American perception that Syria is a terror-state that should be further isolated until it is backed into a corner and either changes its policies or changes its regime. Not everyone in the US government feels this way, but Israel is very sensitive to White House and Pentagon opinion on this subject, especially in light of the assistance the US provided us during the war with Hezbollah over the summer.

Regional considerations

Still, I think that the Syrian or Syrian-Lebanese option is viable at the moment, especially because the possibility of launching official peace negotiations with the Palestinians is very low, and secondly, the possibility of moving unilaterally in the West Bank a la Sharon's disengagement, faces too many obstacles.

The situation inside the Palestinian territories is extremely complicated. They are split down the middle, 50-50, between the secular PLO that recognized Israel and the fundamentalist Hamas that is not even close to doing so.



And the rift is so deep that serious people are suggesting that talks to the Syrians are even more important right now than talks with the Palestinians.

The PLO people believe that if Syria can be induced to change camps - from Iran to the moderate Arab states and the US and Europe - it would be a huge blow to Hamas. Syria's decision to expel Hamas leader Khaled Mashal from Damascus and to close militant training camps in Syria would be a bigger blow to the organization than Israel is likely to inflict on its own. So progress on the Syria track can be a way to improve the prospects for action on the Palestinian front, as well.

Furthermore, an agreement with Syria could dramatically improve Israel's regional diplomatic position. Several countries in North Africa and the Gulf have indicated that if Israel can solve its problem with Syria, it will enable some of them to resume the diplomatic relations with Israel that were severed when the Intifada broke out in 2000. Others might be willing to establish diplomatic relations for the first time. In addition, a peace agreement would probably trigger peace talks with Lebanon.

This view has not gone unchallenged in Israel. Some fear that progress with Syria will further complicate the situation with the Palestinians because, with the Syrian threat neutralized, Israel would be less likely to move forward towards a two-state solution to the conflict. Without a peace agreement with Palestinians, the Arab-Israeli conflict will continue.

But, in my view, the situation with the Palestinians is much more complicated than the situation with Syria. With Syria, we are dealing with a simple territorial conflict. It's not a matter of recognizing Israel (Syria has already done this via their approval of the Arab League Initiative), and unlike in the Palestinian territories, the government is relatively stable (it was able to survive the incredible pressures brought about by the Hariri crisis). A deal with Syria is a relatively simple project.

How it will affect the region is hard to tell, but there is little doubt that it would further isolate Iran. And it will create the possibility of expanding the moderate camp in the Arab world and of resuming or establishing diplomatic relations with three to five more Arab States.

I have no doubt that it's worth trying.

Editorial

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From Our Readers:

Dear Editor,

Thank you for discussing the issue of Jerusalem in a very well thought-out strategy on how Jerusalem should be a part of the world to run, through the United Nations. You made some excellent points in your editor's thoughts section (March 2007 issue) - and I will do my best to spread this idea through my church and my friends and encourage all the readers of Al-Sahafa to do as well, until our voices are heard loud and clear. Peace in the Middle East can only be achieved with compromise and with the world sharing this Holy City and not through violence.



* Annie Lindsdale (Youngstown, Ohio)



Arab League Summit Meeting

The expression after all the top Arab leaders meeting was and still is" We have agreed not to disagree " ...Looks like Arabs will never agree among themselves..not just the leaders !

Do some home work and search yourself to see when ever the United Arab League has agreed on ANYTHING in any of their many meetings. Who do you blame?.. this is the million dollar question!

(Egyptian-American Washington DC)

Dear Editor,

Thank you for highlighting a woman's natural curves, with your "big hips are in for this season" article in your February 2007 issue, in the Fashion Pages. I am a Latina woman who loves to express my curvy-licious self, when I go out and join the Cleveland scenes on the weekends. Men don't like skinny women, how much longer do we have to put up with the world's runway fashion models??? They're not real bodies, and they don't represent the majority and diversity of women and their body shapes and curves. Thanks Al-Sahafa, I love your fashion pages.



*Leslie Ramoz (Cleveland, Ohio)



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Dear Cuz'n Kadin

Each month, Al-Sahafa Newspaper will be presenting a sort of "Dear Abby" column, but with an Arab American twist. Our very own, Cuz'n Kadin (whom we will leave up to the readers' imagination as to the gender of Cuz'n Kadin) will be answering and discussing many sensitive topics that are rarely talked about, and deemed unworthy to discuss within the Middle Eastern heritage. Each month, Cuz'n Kadin will be answering back readers' cultural questions on "taboo topics" that are so often "shushed" within Arabic households.

Readers, we encourage you to join our monthly "Dear Cuz'n Kadin" discussions by sending in your questions and issues that you or a friend may be going through. Whether it's an interracial dating or arranged marriage issue, or a topic centering on sexual orientation, religious or cultural differences, gender inequality in treatment- our very own Cuz'n Kadin will be here to give you an ear and hopefully enlighten the issue with a fresh perspective.

Dear Palestinian:

Well, it seems as if you haven't been with your girlfriend for nearly 8 years for nothing. And I honestly understand the tension between you and your family members, but please don't rush into things. There is nothing better than having someone's blessing and being in love, at the same time. But this will be a group effort, in order for this relationship to work.

First of all, you need to understand that you have shocked your family in a way you probably didn't realize. You told your family members about Jennifer, only five months ago and went straight to the issue of marriage. Of course they will be shocked and initially speak what is on their minds. After an eight year relationship, you didn't choose to be gradual when introducing Jennifer to your family. What does this mean? Start now.

Basically, welcome Jennifer into your family, without giving

her the title of "future wife." You have known her for a while, but your parents have not. Give some time for dialogue, gift-giving, conversation, and maybe even heart-to-heart talks. Let Jennifer start off as a family friend and let things grow from there, even though you know in your heart that you deeply love her. Have her make an ethnic dish for all of you to eat or something of that sort, and see what happens. Or as you put it, describe how similar Latin-American and Arab cultures are.

Historically speaking, Latin-American and Arab culture dates back to the eight century when the Moors conquered the Iberian Peninsula. There, Muslims, Berbers, and Arabs influenced the area which made it evident through the Spanish language, music, food, and even architecture. Then in 1492, a year well-known to many people, Christians re-conquered their land, being Granada as the last Islamic stronghold. And that was the same here that famous explorer, Christopher Columbus sailed to the new world and discovered what later became, Latin-America. The "back and forth" conquering of land may have changed things, but custom and culture never did.

Even today, think about how Arabs and Latinos share similar values and traditions, especially domestically. Both cultures value a tight-knit family, the father is usually the authoritative figure, and the mother passes down language, culture, and the art of cooking from one generation to the next. So, we may speak different languages and live in different hemispheres of the world, but our values seem to be close and consistent.

Let us say that your family becomes in love with your girlfriend and things work out. Great. But let us also say that things may not be as smooth as silk. This is when you may have to nudge a bit and explain that an "arranged marriage" is not for you. Trust me, many people cringe when they hear "arranged marriage." Anyways, be tactful and respectful. Let your parents know that your happiness means your deeper love and respect for your family. And tell them that no one deserves to feel miserable years into a marriage, let alone an arranged one. If they get it, they get it. If not, again, the ball is in your court. You know your family better than I do, so work accordingly. Make the right decision, but don't overwhelm yourself. One day at a time, one decision at a time. Best of luck.

Kadin

Readers, if you or someone you know are in a situation, that is too sensitive to speak about with friends and family – and are looking for a bit of "cousinly advice", please feel free to email me; In Attention to: KADIN at office@al-sahafa.us. And for your confidentiality, address yourself whichever way you choose. You don't have to give us your name. I'll be the person who is willing to listen, when others are not. And remember, you're never alone.



Dear Cuz'n Kadin:



I am a Christian Palestinian guy, who is only 24 years old. I have been in love with my American girlfriend (Puerto Rican), since our sophomore year in High school. My parents and I have fought intensely over the last 5 months, because when I brought up the idea of marrying my girlfriend Jennifer, they outright refused to support me. They have even went so far as talked to this family friend about me, and described me as "ready for marriage" and are looking for a nice Palestinian "good girl" for me to marry! What can I do to convince them that I am not going to marry into an "Arranged Marriage". I don't want to hurt my parents, and at the same time I want their blessing for me and Jennifer. I tried to explain to them that Jennifer is a Latina, and has a great family that she is very close to and that she would make a great wife. Arabs and Latinos have extremely similar cultures and I don't get why my parents (and every Palestinian family I know) can't see a great future with mixed marriages!

-Help me out, sincerely; "Palestinian guy in love with the wrong girl"

On Israel, America and AIPAC

By George Soros
(Well-known investor, philanthropist,
and political activist. Net worth: \$8.5
billion/ Forbes Magazine)

The Bush administration is once again in the process of committing a major policy blunder in the Middle East, one that is liable to have disastrous consequences and is not receiving the attention it should. This time it concerns the Israeli-Palestinian relationship. The Bush administration is actively supporting the Israeli government in its refusal to recognize a Palestinian unity government that includes Hamas, which the US State Department considers a terrorist organization. This precludes any progress toward a peace settlement at a time when progress on the Palestinian problem could help avert a conflagration in the greater Middle East.

The United States and Israel seek to deal only with the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, in the hope that new elections would deny Hamas the majority it now has in the Palestinian Legislative Council. This is a hopeless strategy because Hamas has said it would boycott early elections, and even if their outcome would result in Hamas's exclusion from the government, no peace agreement would hold without Hamas's support.

In the meantime Saudi Arabia is pursuing a different path. In a February summit in Mecca between Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, the Saudi government worked out an agreement between Hamas and Fatah, which have been clashing violently, to form a national unity government. According to the Mecca accord, Hamas has agreed "to respect international resolutions and the agreements [with Israel] signed by the Palestinian Liberation Organization," including the Oslo Accords. According to press reports on March 15, the new government, like the present one, will be headed by Ismail Haniya, the Hamas prime minister, but Hamas will get nine of the government's twenty-four ministries, as well as an additional minister without portfolio; President Abbas and his Fatah party will control six ministries, and independent representatives—some said to be under the control of Hamas or Fatah—and other political factions will fill the nine remaining ministries. The Saudi government views this accord as the prelude to the offer of a peace settlement with Israel, along the lines of the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, a settlement to be guaranteed by Saudi Arabia and other Arab coun-

tries, based on the 1967 borders and full recognition of Israel. The offer was meant to be elaborated by Saudi King Abdullah at the Arab League meeting to be hosted by Saudi Arabia at the end of March. But no progress is possible as long as the Bush administration and the Ehud Olmert government persist in their current position of refusing to recognize a unity government that includes Hamas. The recent meeting between Condoleezza Rice, Abbas, and Olmert turned into an empty formality.

Many of the causes of the current impasse go back to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip unilaterally, without negotiating with the then-Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority. This strengthened the position of Hamas. In the run-up to the January 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, Sharon refused to lift a finger to help Fatah's prospects. At the behest of the Quartet—the European Union, the United States, Russia, and the United Nations—James Wolfensohn worked out a six-point plan to assist the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip; among other things, it called for facilitating traffic between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and opening a port and an airport in the Gaza Strip. But not one of the six points was implemented. The Bush administration's official in charge, Elliot Abrams, sabotaged the six-point plan from its inception. Partly as a consequence, Hamas won the elections in an upset victory.

Then came the blunder I am talking about. Israel, with the strong backing of the United States, refused to recognize the democratically elected Hamas government and withheld payment of the millions in taxes collected by the Israelis on its behalf. This caused great economic hardship and undermined the ability of the government to function. But it did not reduce popular support for Hamas among Palestinians, and it reinforced the position of Islamic and other extremists who oppose negotiations with Israel. The situation deteriorated to the point where Palestine no longer had an authority with whom it would have been possible for Israel to negotiate.

This was a blunder because Hamas is not monolithic. Its inner structure is little known to outsiders but according to some reports it has a military wing, largely directed from Damascus, which is beholden to its Syrian and Iranian sponsors and a political wing which is more responsive to the needs of the Palestinian population that elected it to power. If Israel had accepted the results of the election, that might have strengthened the more moderate political wing. Unfortunately the ideology of the "war on terror" does not permit such subtle distinctions. Nevertheless, subsequent events provide some ground for believing that Hamas has been divided between different tendencies. It was not willing to go so far as to recognize the existence of Israel but it was

prepared to enter into a government of national unity which would have abided by the existing agreements with Israel. No sooner was agreement reached than the military wing engineered the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, which had the effect of preventing such a government from being formed by provoking a heavy-handed military response from Israel. Hezbollah then used the opportunity to stage an incursion from Lebanon across the internationally recognized border, kidnapping several more Israeli soldiers. Despite a disproportionate response by Israel, Hezbollah was able to stand its ground, thereby gaining the admiration of the Arab masses, whether Sunni or Shia.

It was this dangerous state of affairs—including the breakdown of government in Palestine and fighting between Fatah and Hamas—that prompted the Saudi initiative, which holds out the prospect of a peace settlement. Such a settlement would be very much in the interests of Israel and the United States.

Defenders of the current policy would argue that Israel cannot afford to negotiate from a position of weakness. But Israel's position is unlikely to improve as long as it pursues its present course of military escalation. Fortunately Saudi Arabia, whose position is also precarious, has a genuine interest in promoting a settlement based on two states. It would be tragic to miss out on that prospect, which would mean both withdrawal from large parts of the West Bank by the Israelis, so that a workable Palestinian state can take power, and acceptance of Israel's existence by Hamas. The outlines of such a settlement are quite well defined. The underlying concepts are not materially different from what they were during President Clinton's time.

The most potent threat comes from Iran. Movement toward a settlement in Palestine would be helpful in confronting that threat. But both Israel and the United States seem to be frozen in their unwillingness to negotiate with a Palestinian Authority that includes Hamas. The sticking point is Hamas's unwillingness to recognize the existence of Israel; but that could be made a condition for an eventual settlement rather than a precondition for negotiations.[1]

The current policy is not even questioned in the United States. While other problem areas of the Middle East are freely discussed, criticism of our policies toward Israel is very muted indeed. The debate in Israel about Israeli policy is much more open and vigorous than in the United States. This is all the more remarkable because Palestine is the issue that more than any other currently divides the United States from Europe. Some European governments, according to reports, would like to end the economic boycott of Hamas once a unity government is successfully established. But the US has said it would not.

One explanation is to be found in the pervasive influence of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which strongly affects both the Democratic and the Republican parties.[2] AIPAC's mission is to ensure American support for Israel but in recent years it has overreached itself. It became closely allied with the neocons and was an enthusiastic supporter of the invasion of Iraq. It actively lobbied for the confirmation of John Bolton as US ambassador to the United Nations. It continues to oppose any dialogue with a



Reuters

I pledge allegiance to the United States of... Israel??

Palestinian government that includes Hamas. More recently, it was among the pressure groups that prevailed upon the Democratic House leadership to drop the requirement that the President obtain congressional approval before taking military action against Iran. AIPAC under its current leadership has clearly exceeded its mission, and far from guaranteeing Israel's existence, has endangered it.

The Palestine problem does not have a purely military solution. Military superiority is necessary for Israel's national security, but it is not sufficient. The solution has to be political, as President Clinton recognized. He exerted enormous energy to bring about a peace settlement and his efforts were so successful that it took the murder of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by an Israeli extremist to prevent an Israeli peace initiative with Arafat from being implemented. Even after Ariel Sharon's walk on the Temple Mount in September 2000 set off new violence, Clinton offered a peace deal several months later that was rejected by Arafat but probably suggests the shape of a future settlement.

President Bush has never tried. He has adopted the misleading metaphor of the war on terror and allowed Ariel Sharon to have his way. Sharon did not want a negotiated settlement. He came to realize that the military occupation could not be maintained forever and withdrew from Gaza, in part, it has been argued, to strengthen the Israeli position on the West Bank. But unilateral withdrawal led to the current chain of events. The Bush administration did not just passively acquiesce in the Sharon/Olmert government's policies; it actively encouraged them. AIPAC must bear its share of responsibility for aiding and abetting policies such as Israel's heavy-handed response to Hezbollah last summer and its insistence on treating Hamas only as a terrorist organization.

The current policy of not seeking a political solution but pursuing military escalation—not just an eye for an eye but roughly speaking ten Palestinian lives for every Israeli one—has reached a particularly dangerous point. After the Israel Defense Forces' retaliation against Lebanon's road system, airport, and other infrastructure one must wonder what could be the next step for the Israeli forces. Iran poses a more potent danger to Israel than either Hamas or Hezbollah, which are Iran's clients. There is the growing danger

Israel, cont'd on page 23



Reuters

The bygone years of America being the peace broker between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Editorial

Israel, cont'd from page 23

of a regional conflagration in which Israel and the US could well be on the losing side. With the ability of Hezbollah to withstand the Israeli onslaught and the rise of Iran as a prospective nuclear power, Israel's existence is more endangered than at any time since its birth.

Supporters of Israel have good reason to question AIPAC's advocacy and they have begun to do so. But instead of engaging in critical self-examination, AIPAC remains intransigent. Recently, the pro-Israel lobby has gone on the offensive, accusing the so-called progressive critics of Israel's policies of fomenting anti-Semitism and endangering the very existence of the Jewish state.



Arab League Summit Meeting

The case against those who disagree with Israel's current policy is spelled out in detail by Alvin H. Rosenfeld in a pamphlet published by the American Jewish Committee.[3] After reviewing the rise of new anti-Semitic currents, particularly in the Muslim world and Europe, Rosenfeld equates anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism and asserts that Jewish critics of Israeli policies reinforce both. He acknowledges that criticism by itself is not anti-Semitic; indeed, he writes, "the biblical prophets stood on the side of justice and were never hesitant to denounce their people's behavior when they saw it deviating from the standards of justice." But, he contends, "to condemn Israeli actions and, at the same time, to forego any realistic historical and political frameworks that might account for such actions" is not acceptable. The use of "exaggerated and defamatory terms," he writes, renders Israel indistinguishable from the "despised country regularly denounced by the most impassioned anti-Semites."

To call Israel a Nazi state...or to accuse it of South African-style apartheid rule or engaging in ethnic cleansing or wholesale genocide goes well beyond legitimate criticism.

To talk about victims turning into aggressors falls in his view in the same category.

To buttress his case, Rosenfeld examines the writings of a number of critics. In particular, he focuses on a collection of essays whose authors, in his own judgment, make Noam Chomsky appear as an "almost conservative thinker," but the list also includes Tony Judt, a distinguished historian, whose crime consists of suggesting a possible binational solution for Israel, and Richard Cohen, a Washington Post columnist, who wrote, among other things, that the "sanest choice for Israel is to pull back to defensible—but hardly injurious—borders" and to get out "of most of the West Bank"—a policy often advocated in Israel itself. Rosenfeld resorts, without any personal knowledge of the people he attacks, to primitive accusations of self-hatred, lumping all these critics together as people who are "proud to be ashamed to be Jews." He concludes that "the cumulative effect of these hostile ideas, which have been moving steadily from the margins to the mainstream of 'progressive' opinion, has been to reenergize ugly ideas and aggressive

passions long considered dormant, if not dead," i.e., anti-Semitism.

Rosenfeld's argument suffers from at least three elementary errors in reasoning. The first is guilt by association. The fact that constructive critics of Israel say things that, when taken out of context or para-

phrased in provocative ways, can be made to sound similar to the comments of anti-Semites does not make them anti-Semitic or supporters of anti-Semitism in any way. Second, there is a lack of factual evidence. Are the expressions used by the critics really "exaggerated and defamatory"? That depends on the facts. What is the more appropriate term,

"Israel's still incomplete security fence" or "an Apartheid Wall?" That can be determined only by considering the actual impact the wall is having on the lives of the Palestinians, a subject ignored by Rosenfeld and AIPAC.

Third, the professed respect for criticism is a sham when it is not permitted "to condemn Israeli actions and, at the same time, to forego any realistic historical and political frameworks that might account for such actions." As presented by Rosenfeld, this formula implies that Israel's actions have to be justified, right or wrong. The appeal to a "realistic framework" aims to rationalize the Israeli position. Criticism ought to be considered on its merits and not by any other yardstick. Suppressing criticism when it is deemed to be unpatriotic has been immensely harmful both in the case of Israel and the United States. It has allowed the Bush administration and the Sharon/ Olmert government to pursue disastrous policies.

The pro-Israel lobby has been remarkably successful in suppressing criticism.[4] Politicians challenge it at their peril because of the lobby's ability to influence political contributions. When Howard Dean called for an evenhanded policy toward Israel in 2004, his chances of getting the nomination were badly damaged (although it was his attempt, after his defeat in Iowa, to shout above the crowd that sealed his fate). Academics had their advancement blocked and think-tank experts their funding withdrawn when they stepped too far out of line. Following his criticism of repressive Israeli policy on the West Bank, former president Jimmy Carter has suffered the loss of some of the financial backers of his center.

Anybody who dares to dissent may be subjected to a campaign of personal vilification. I speak from personal experience. Ever since I participated in a meeting discussing the need for voicing alternative views, a torrent of slanders has been released including the false accusation in The New Republic that I was a "young cog in the Hitlerite wheel" at the age of thirteen when my father arranged a false identity to save my life and I accompanied an official of the Ministry of Agriculture, posing as his

godson, when he was taking the inventory of a Jewish estate.[5]

AIPAC is protected not only by the fear of personal retaliation but also by a genuine concern for the security and survival of Israel. Both considerations have a solid foundation in reality. The same two factors were at play in the United States after September 11 when President Bush declared war on terror. For eighteen months thereafter it was considered unpatriotic to criticize his policies. That is what allowed him to commit one of the greatest blunders in American history, the invasion of Iraq. But at that time the threat to our national security was greatly exaggerated by the Bush administration. Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney went so far as to warn that the threat would manifest itself in the form of a mushroom cloud. In the case of Israel today the threat to national security, even national survival, is much more real. Israel needs the support of the United States more than ever. Is this the right time to expose AIPAC's heavy influence in American politics? I believe this consideration holds back many people who are critical of the way AIPAC conducts its business. While the other architects of the Bush administration's failed policies have been relentlessly exposed, AIPAC continues to be surrounded by a wall of silence.

I am not insensitive to this argument. It has held me back from criticizing Israeli policies in the past. I am not a Zionist, nor am I a practicing Jew, but I have a great deal of sympathy for my fellow Jews and a deep concern for the survival of Israel. I did not want to provide fodder to the enemies of Israel. I rationalized my position by saying that if I wanted to voice critical views, I ought to move to Israel. But since there were many Israelis who held such views my voice was not needed, and I had many other battles to fight.

But now I have to ask the question: How did Israel become so endangered? I cannot exempt AIPAC from its share of the responsibility. I am a fervent advocate of critical thinking. I have supported dissidents in many countries. I took a stand against President Bush when he said that those who don't support his policies are supporting the terrorists. I cannot remain silent now when the pro-Israel lobby is one of the last unexposed redoubts of this dogmatic way of thinking. I speak out with some trepidation because I am exposing myself to further attacks that are likely to render me less effective in pursuing many other causes in which I am engaged; but dissidents I have supported have taken far greater risks.

I am not sufficiently engaged in Jewish affairs to be involved in the reform of AIPAC; but I must speak out in favor of the critical process that is at the heart of our open society. I believe that a much-needed self-examination of American policy in the Middle East has started in this country;

but it can't make much headway as long as AIPAC retains powerful influence in both the Democratic and Republican parties. Some leaders of the Democratic Party have promised to bring about a change of direction but they cannot deliver on that promise until they are able to resist the dictates of AIPAC. Palestine is a place of critical importance where positive change is still possible. Iraq is largely beyond our control; but if we succeeded in settling the Palestinian problem we

would be in a much better position to engage in negotiations with Iran and extricate ourselves from Iraq. The need for a peace settlement in Palestine is greater than ever. Both for the sake of Israel and the United States, it is highly desirable that the Saudi peace initiative should succeed; but AIPAC stands in the way. It continues to oppose dealing with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas.

Whether the Democratic Party can liberate itself from AIPAC's influence is highly doubtful. Any politician who dares to expose AIPAC's influence would incur its wrath; so very few can be expected to do so. It is up to the American Jewish community itself to rein in the organization that claims to represent it. But this is not possible without first disposing of the most insidious argument put forward by the defenders of the current policies: that the critics of Israel's policies of occupation, control, and repression on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem and Gaza engender anti-Semitism.

The opposite is the case. One of the myths propagated by the enemies of Israel is that there is an all-powerful Zionist conspiracy. That is a false accusation. Nevertheless, that AIPAC has been so successful in suppressing criticism has lent some credence to such false beliefs. Demolishing the wall of silence that has protected AIPAC would help lay them to rest. A debate within the Jewish community, instead of fomenting anti-Semitism, would only help diminish it.

Anticipating attacks, I should like to emphasize that I do not subscribe to the myths propagated by enemies of Israel and I am not blaming Jews for anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism predates the birth of Israel. Neither Israel's policies nor the critics of those policies should be held responsible for anti-Semitism. At the same time, I do believe that attitudes toward Israel are influenced by Israel's policies, and attitudes toward the Jewish community are influenced by the pro-Israel lobby's success in suppressing divergent views.

—March 15, 2007

Notes

[1] As the highly respected Israeli writer David Grossman, whose son was killed fighting in Lebanon, commented on March 11, "In the present situation any sort of dialogue between Israel and Palestinians is positive and has the potential to change the state of mind of both societies."

[2] It is not the only one. In a letter to the Jewish citizens in America, Jimmy Carter wrote that "the overwhelming bias for Israel comes from Christians like me who have been taught to honor and protect God's chosen people from among whom came our own savior, Jesus Christ."

[3] Alvin H. Rosenfeld, "'Progressive' Jewish Thought and the New Anti-Semitism" (American Jewish Committee, 2006).

[4] See Michael Massing, "The Storm Over the Israel Lobby," The New York Review, June 8, 2006.

[5] See the article by Martin Peretz, "Tyran-a-Soros," The New Republic, February 12, 2007.

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