

# Next US president should back Arab youth empowerment: survey

Sun, 2020-10-25 23:48

DUBAI: Youth empowerment has long been viewed as a key driver of global development. The new Arab News/YouGov pan-Arab survey shows that the issue is a priority for Arabs. Close to half (44 percent) of the respondents said they would like to see the next US president focus on “empowering young people.” Baria Alamuddin, an award-winning journalist and political commentator, said a long-term challenge for modern Arab states is developing economies capable of absorbing their growing youth populations.

This is especially true, in her view, of those countries that have failed over the past decade to increase the number of “wealth-creating” jobs in the private sector.

“This challenge is as immediate as ever and is a primary motivator behind Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 and equivalent initiatives in many other Arab states,” she said.

Alamuddin believes officials in the next US administration may need convincing of the value of investing in the region’s young people.

“The challenge will be to encourage these officials to prioritize the region from a perspective of economic growth and youth empowerment, rather than just from a narrow security and terrorism approach,” she said.

That youth empowerment is so widely cited as a key Arab priority does not surprise Hussein Shobokshi, a Saudi columnist and businessman, who said it reflected the Arab world’s young demographic.

“Right now the loudest voice in the Arab world on all fronts is the youth. They are controlling the rhetoric, they are establishing the priorities on the economic front, new jobs and the direction of these new jobs, and the topics that are engaging in the media and on social media platforms,” he said.

This “rhetoric or lingua franca” is to a large extent influenced by the US through technology and entertainment, he said, but also through higher education. “We were used to the engagement of the US in the field of investment, the economy, in education,” said Shobokshi, referring to the American universities in Beirut, Cairo, Dubai and Sharjah.

However, he thought that unless the US and its Western allies engage with the Arab world’s youth in more substantial ways, the resulting vacuum could soon be filled by Russia or China – causing a potential headache for US policymakers.



The survey also found that 44 percent of Arabs would like to see the next US president play a greater role in solving the Arab-Israeli problem, while 24 percent said containing Iran and Hezbollah ought to be a priority. In this context, Alamuddin said a large proportion of the Arab public wants to see a just solution to the Palestinian issue alongside an improved relationship with Israel. "These are two sides of the same coin," she said. "We are all fed up with a frozen conflict which has gone on for 70 years too long – exacerbated by a fragmented and weak Palestinian leadership, which has long since lost the initiative." The world must act together to reach and enforce a solution which does justice to both sides, she said. "There is no solution without the US, but we are likely to see a more balanced process when Arab states, the Europeans, and even Russia and China play a role in ensuring that all sides come to the table and make the necessary concessions." As for Iran, Alamuddin believed the Trump administration's "maximum pressure" strategy has certainly reined in Iranian ambitions. "Iran has already taken huge bites out of the Arab region, with its proxies in de facto control of much of Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon," she said. Although Democratic challenger Joe Biden appears to recognize that he cannot simply return to the more concessional Obama-era strategy on Iran, it is unclear whether a Biden administration would have the political will to quash Iranian influence in these troubled Arab states. "The challenge for Gulf states will be to force the threat from Iran to the top of the international agenda," Alamuddin said. Shobokshi also acknowledged the important steps taken by the Trump administration against Iran, but said the strategy lacked the required "universality" of including the Europeans, the Russians and the Chinese. Comparing the differing approaches of the Republican and Democratic parties with regards to the Iranian regime, he said: "One looks at Iran as a serious

national threat and the other looks at it in a much tamer fashion.”

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## [Palestinians in occupied territories want US to solve conflict with Israel: survey](#)

Sun, 2020-10-25 23:29

DUBAI, ERBIL: Palestinians in the occupied territories back US efforts to play a bigger role in mediation with Israel, according to the Arab News/YouGov pan-Arab survey, putting their view at odds with what a majority of Arabs across the wider region think is best for them. Of the 2,192 respondents polled across 18 Arab countries ahead of the Nov. 3

presidential election, 52 percent said they are against the US playing a bigger role in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians. Younger people across the region appear especially hostile to a bigger US peace-broker role, with 67 percent of 18-24-year-olds against. By contrast, 61 percent of people over the age of 45 support a bigger role for Washington, indicating a stark generational divide.

Opinions also appear to diverge based on marital status, with 62 percent of unmarried people rejecting more US involvement, while 56 percent of people who are married with children voice their support.

By contrast with the Arab region as a whole, 52 percent of Palestinians in the occupied territories support US efforts to play a bigger role in mediating between Israelis and Palestinians, with the remaining 48 percent against.

“One of the reasons why you see the Palestinians looking for US involvement is because they believe the US is one of the few countries in the world that has influence over Israel and can help pressure it in the context of the peace process,” Will Wechsler, director of Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council, told Arab News in response to the findings.

Many observers in the Arab world appear to blame the Palestinian leadership for the lack of progress, accusing them of failing to take advantage of opportunities when presented.



“The Palestinian leadership itself is also becoming less and less positively viewed, not just by the leaders in the Arab world, but by the Palestinians themselves,” Wechsler said.

“If you look at recent polls in Israel, what you see is widespread disillusion with the peace process. Similarly, with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world, there’s not a lot of hope that the process will improve anytime in the near future.”

In a three-part interview that he recently gave to Al Arabiya, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the former Saudi ambassador to the US, blamed the Palestinian leadership for a catalogue of failures and wasted opportunities through the decades, especially between 1978 and 2015.

One reason why wider Arab publics do not support US efforts to play a bigger role in Israeli-Palestinian mediation could well be President Donald Trump’s decision in 2018 to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Some 89 percent of respondents in the survey opposed the embassy move, while

just 11 percent approved.

The decision was widely seen as a blow to the Palestinian vision of establishing their own capital in East Jerusalem. Furthermore, the Trump administration has not explicitly condemned the construction of additional units in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, regarded by many as counterproductive to the goal of establishing a viable, independent Palestinian state.

Despite their apparent frustration with the glacial pace of mediation, a large proportion of those surveyed still believe the next US administration should consider finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict a high priority.

Equal numbers of respondents (44 percent) across the region said solving the Israel-Palestinian conflict and empowering young people should be the focus of the next US president.

These feelings were especially pronounced in North Africa, where 48 percent placed the Palestinian question at the top of their wish list of priorities for the next administration.

Nadim Shehadi, an associate fellow at Chatham House, said there is a strong appetite for peace, but not without "some form of justice" for the Palestinians. "It can be achieved very easily because a two-state solution is one step away," he added.

"A state of Palestine can be achieved very easily if there's no US veto, with preparation for some minimal negotiations with Israel. The state of Palestine already exists; it was declared in 1988 and recognized by 139 countries.

Kosovo was admitted into the (UN) General Assembly with a lot less."

Shehadi said the prospects for peace will depend on what is actually on offer – not on who sits in the White House or which party forms the next administration, as both the Democrats and Republicans have a "bad track record" on Palestine.

"The Trump administration achieved a huge step, but it will be wasted if it's not followed up with an initiative that gives a sense of overall solution,"

Shehadi added. "The key is the Arab Peace Initiative. It's within reach."

The Arab Peace Initiative, drafted by Saudi Arabia in 2002, offered the establishment of diplomatic ties in exchange for Israel making a statehood deal with the Palestinians and withdrawing to the pre-1967 borders.

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# Israel to send \$5 million of wheat to Sudan

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JERUSALEM: Israel will send \$5 million worth of wheat to Sudan, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Sunday, just days after an announcement that the two countries have agreed to normalize relations. "We are looking forward to a warm peace and are sending \$5 million worth of wheat immediately to our new friends in Sudan," Netanyahu's office said on Twitter.

Sudan has embarked on a rocky transition under a joint civilian-military administration since the April 2019 ouster of autocrat Omar Al-Bashir, but it has struggled with severe economic woes, including a sharp depreciation of the Sudanese pound and skyrocketing consumer prices.

A tripling of the bread price late in 2018 was the initial trigger for street protests against Bashir that led to his ouster.

The northeast African country consumes two million tons of wheat annually, according to official figures, relying heavily on imports.

"Israel will be working closely with the USA to assist Sudan's transition," Netanyahu added.

The United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed an accord at the White House last month to normalize ties with the Jewish state, but Sudan carries added symbolism as an Arab nation that has been at war with Israel.

News of the Sudan-Israel normalization came on Friday, shortly after US President Donald Trump declared that Washington was formally moving to delist Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism, a designation that strangled Khartoum's economy for decades.

Sudan will be only the fifth Arab country to forge diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

"Soon an Israeli delegation will meet in Sudan with a Sudanese counterpart in order to discuss cooperation in many fields including migration, which we are discussing," Netanyahu said, in remarks at the start of a cabinet meeting Sunday.

"We are expanding the circle of peace. Additional countries will yet join only if we consistently adhere to this policy."

The move to normalize ties has laid bare deep societal splits in Sudan, with some calling it a betrayal and others viewing it as a way to save the sinking economy.



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## [Breast cancer survivors urge women in the Middle East to seek timely screening](#)

Author:

Sat, 2020-10-24 23:13

DUBAI: Breast cancer is the most common form of the illness diagnosed in women worldwide. If caught early, the prognosis for survival is reassuringly high. But a lack of awareness, common myths and fear of bad news causes far too many women to delay getting checked.

In Arab countries, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed form of the disease. One recent study found 17.7 to 19 percent of all new cancer cases across the region in 2018 were breast cancer diagnoses.

That is why every October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, when experts meet to discuss the latest treatments, charities raise awareness and private clinics offer special discounts on tests and screenings.

Cancer survivors are frequently asked to share their experiences, whether in small private groups or at large public gatherings, and the distinctive pink ribbon synonymous with the cause proliferates on blouses and lapels the world over.

While pandemic restrictions have forced many events online, this year has been no exception. And the message is getting across. Oncologists, surgeons, radiologists and other medical practitioners in the field are often fully booked this time of year.

"I think the essence is to try and get the whole world to just refocus," Dr. Millicent Alache Bello, a renowned breast surgeon at King's College Hospital in Dubai, told Arab News.

"It is important all through the year that breast education and breast awareness continues. However, a specific month for people to just refocus and take stock is vital."

Women are recommended to begin getting annual mammograms from the age of 40, when the likelihood of developing breast cancer increases.

"In this part of the world, screening is not something done nationally. Screening is done ad hoc, meaning people go when they feel like it," said Bello.

In the UK, general practitioners working for the taxpayer-funded National Health Service keep detailed medical records on every patient and remind them when they are due to receive a screening exam. This is not the case in Arab countries, where health services are insurance-based.

King's College Hospital in Dubai wants to imitate the British system and to begin reminding its patients when they are due a check-up. It has already started compiling patient data and will soon offer mammograms at a cost of AED 350 (\$95).

Routine check-ups and on-time screenings pay off. "The point where a woman feels a lump in her breast is not the point when the breast cancer started," Bello warned. "Sometimes, it started before that period, anything up to 12, 14 or 24 months earlier."

That is why it is so important to get screened regularly before the trouble signs emerge.

Catherine, a British cancer survivor in her 40s, says she used to be disciplined with her screening appointments, often getting tested twice a year. But after having children, she began neglecting her checks. It was during this six-year window that she developed a lump.

"I was so busy being a mom, I just forgot about myself," Catherine told Arab News. By the time she was diagnosed, the tumor in one of her breasts already measured eight centimeters in diameter.

After a double mastectomy, the pathology report showed her other breast also contained three cancerous lumps. "I was very pragmatic about it. I didn't feel this massive emotional connection to my breasts. If they try to kill me, they have to go," she said.

Women should not make the same mistake and neglect their health, she says, even when other life pressures take over. Now Catherine devotes her time to charity work during Breast Cancer Awareness Month to raise funds and awareness.



Joining her is Ghozlan, an Arab woman and fellow survivor, who says she discovered a lump in her breast while exercising. She traveled to Europe for treatment and opted for reconstruction.

“I am a woman who cares about her femininity and I can’t live without it,” Ghozlan told Arab News, describing her breast implant, which must be replaced every 10 years. “It was not what I expected. It wasn’t a great result but it is better than nothing. I have been through hell, and now I accept what I have. I am living with it, but I have some side effects because of the implant.”

Ghozlan is now anxiously awaiting her next check-up with her doctor in Europe, which had to be pushed back due to coronavirus travel restrictions.

Another woman fundraising for Breast Cancer Awareness Month is Gina, a 58-

year-old who, like Catherine, underwent a double mastectomy. Unlike Ghozlan, she was unable to undergo reconstructive surgery.

“Due to my autoimmune disease, the chances of the prosthesis being rejected by my body was very high,” Gina said. “It was not my voluntary choice. It was a shock to me. I must admit, even today, after five years, I have not 100 percent accepted this situation.”

## **Breast Cancer**

- \* 2.1m Women diagnosed with breast cancer each year.
- \* 627,000 Estimated breast-cancer deaths in 2018 (WHO).
- \* 50 Age above which women are most at risk.
- \* 17.7-19% Share of all cancer cases in Arab world in 2018.
- \* 20% Drop in mortality due to regular mammograms (WHO).

Gina has since resigned from her job to commit herself entirely to charity work.

With the evolution of technology and other scientific advancements, doctors are getting even better at detecting potential problems – faster and more accurately.

The triple assessment – clinical examination, imaging and biopsy – has changed little over recent years, but equipment offering more sensitive scans has developed in leaps and bounds while surgery techniques have become more refined.



Participants take part in the Pink Caravan Ride in Dubai, a UAE breast cancer initiative. (AFP/File Photo)

“It is the oncology, the medicine we give for chemotherapy and the endocrine treatments – they have moved on in quantum leaps, which is fantastic news,” said Bello.

Scientists have come to understand that treatment plans are not always the same for all breast cancer patients and that the most effective surgeries and therapies are unique to the individual.

“No two women have the same breast cancer,” said Bello. “Every woman’s cancer is different because the genetic composition is different. This is why people are doing better now, because the treatment is tailored individually.”

But this can also mean reconstruction surgery is not an option for everyone, and is dependent on body type, the extent of the cancer, the patient’s medical history and personal preference.



A picture taken on October 1, 2020 shows the Eiffel Tower illuminated in pink to mark the start of “Octobre Rose” (Pink October) or Breast Cancer Awareness Month in Paris. (AFP/File Photo)

“Reconstruction is designed to improve your well-being; it is not supposed to interfere with cancer treatment,” Bello said.

High-income countries in Europe and North America appear to have much higher rates of breast cancer largely because screening and early detection are so prevalent. With a more limited testing capacity, the Arab world appears to have a lower rate of cases – but also a high mortality rate.

A retrospective epidemiological study conducted in 2012 found that breast cancer was the leading cause of death among Saudi women.

However, a paper published in 2018 by the Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health said: “Although the incidence of breast cancer in Arab countries is rising, it is still less than the global average and only one-fifth of that in Western Europe.”

But now is not a time for complacency. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a reminder to all women to get themselves checked and for governments to invest in clinics and vital research.

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Saudi Arabia's public spaces dotted with pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
Saudi health campaigners think pink for breast cancer awareness month

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## [Israeli envoys will travel to Sudan for normalization deal, Netanyahu says](#)

Author:

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JERUSALEM: An Israeli delegation will travel to Sudan in coming days after the two countries agreed to take steps to normalize ties, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday.

The agreement, brokered with the help of the United States and announced on Friday, made Sudan the third Arab government to set aside hostilities with Israel in the last two months.

"An Israeli delegation will leave to Sudan in the coming days to complete the agreement," Netanyahu said at a news conference.

It was unclear, however, how long it will take for an accord to be completed. The military and civilian leaders of Sudan's transitional government have been divided over how fast and how far to go in establishing ties with Israel.

The Sudanese premier wants approval from a yet-to-be formed parliament to proceed with a broader, formal normalization, and that may not be a quick process given the sensitivities and civilian-military differences. It is unclear when the assembly will be created.

US President Donald Trump's decision this week to remove Sudan from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism paved the way for the accord, marking a foreign policy achievement for the Republican president as he seeks re-election on Nov. 3, trailing in opinion polls behind Democratic rival Joe Biden.

Trump sealed the Israel-Sudan agreement in a phone call with Netanyahu and Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and Transitional Council Head Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, in which he said: "Do you think 'Sleepy Joe' could have made this deal?"

Netanyahu, reliant on bipartisan support for Israel in Washington, responded haltingly: "Well, Mr. President, one thing I can tell you, is ... we appreciate the help for peace from anyone in America."

Asked at Saturday's news conference whether he was embarrassed by Trump's question, Netanyahu said: "It is very difficult to embarrass me," and stressed he was grateful to Trump for his policy toward Israel. "I hope this policy will continue. I don't want to make any prophecies about the election results."



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US says Sudan to normalize ties with Israel, in new breakthrough for Trump  
Donald Trump says Sudan will be removed from terrorism list