

# Pandemic threatens livelihood of Turkish musicians, driving many to suicide

Author:

Thu, 2020-09-17 23:27

ANKARA: Around 100 musicians in Turkey have committed suicide since the country introduced preventive measures against the COVID-19 pandemic in March, according to statistics released by the Turkish Musicians and Performers Union (Muzik-Sen) early this month.

There are roughly 1 million registered musicians in Turkey, many of whom work without insurance and so have been unable to claim state benefits since events, including weddings, were cancelled or restricted to curb the spread of the virus.

Outside of the country's large entertainment venues – which have been shut down in the pandemic – many musicians rely on wedding bookings to make money, but dancing and music at weddings has been banned, with ceremonies limited to one hour, as the summer wedding season was seen as responsible for an uptick in COVID-19 case numbers.

Representatives of the entertainment industry have urged the government to introduce comprehensive aid packages for the sector in order to prevent a wave of social unrest and further suicides.

“State authorities haven't protected musicians under these harsh conditions,” Muzik-Sen's Hasan Aldemir told Arab News. “But when cultural and artistic works are under threat in a country, society cannot make any progress and will inevitably turn towards degeneration.”

According to Aldemir, the government must take “urgent steps” to offer social security to musicians who have already turned to the informal economy.

“These insecure conditions are already killing musicians even when they are alive,” he said.

Veteran musician Niyazi Buluet, one of 20,000 Roma residents in Turkey's southeastern Gaziantep province, said more than 2,000 musicians in the region have been seriously affected by the measures introduced to curb the pandemic.

“We need state support, especially these days,” he said, adding that many young musicians are “taking drugs to endure this economic hardship” while others are begging on the street, or have turned to prostitution in order to make some money. As poverty worsens in the country, the unemployment rate among those aged 15-24 has climbed to 26.1 percent.

“People are extremely hungry and they don't have any other option, because all they know is performing music to bring bread to their houses,” he told

Arab News.

Like many of his fellow musicians, Deniz Arslan, who plays the traditional Turkish baglama, has had to sell his instrument and equipment in order to get some cash, and has had to search for work outside of music since the pandemic began.

“My three brothers, who are also musicians, couldn’t pay their rent because they (have not been able to find) work in other places,” Arslan, who lives in the southeastern province of Sanliurfa, told Arab News. “Aren’t we also children of this country?”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coronavirus](#)

[Turkey](#)

Turkey begins Phase III trials of Chinese coronavirus vaccine  
New homes, highways boost flood risk on Turkey’s northern coast

---

## [Direct Cairo-Moscow flights resume after pandemic suspension](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-09-17 22:54

CAIRO: EgyptAir resumed flights to Russia on Thursday with its first flight

to Moscow after months of suspension due to the novel coronavirus.

The Russian airline Aeroflot resumed flights to Egypt last week.

Airline sources said the flag carrier's flight took off with 106 passengers on board.

The sources added that 102 passengers were booked for the first return flight of the Airbus 220/300 from Moscow.

EgyptAir will run three flights weekly between Cairo and Moscow, on Thursdays, Saturdays and Tuesdays.

All the COVID-19 precautionary measures are applied on passengers as soon as they arrive at the Cairo International Airport.

Among other health measures, EgyptAir required its passengers travelling to Moscow to have a medical statement written in English or Russian proving negative PCR test for COVID-19 from one of the accredited labs in Egypt.

A day earlier, EgyptAir announced that it would resume work "at full production capacity" after easing restrictions imposed to counter the spread of COVID-19.

"It has been decided that the Holding Company for EgyptAir and all its subsidiaries will resume working at full production capacity, as of Sunday, Sept. 20," Roshdy Zakaria, head of the EgyptAir Holding Company, said.

Zakaria stressed that the company's focus throughout the pandemic had been to "adhere to the precautionary measures and to practice social distancing in order to preserve the health of workers and limit the spread the virus" and added that work would be resumed will still following all the necessary safety precautions "while ensuring the regularity of work and raising performance rates."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Egypt](#)

---

## [Egypt to resume exports of anti-virus products as infection rate falls](#)

Author:

Zaynab Khojji

ID:

1600371392676988100

Thu, 2020-09-17 22:56

CAIRO: Egypt is to resume exporting alcohol products, facemasks, and other anti-coronavirus disease (COVID-19) medical supplies following a fall in the country's infection rate.

A decision to ban sales of the items used in fighting the virus pandemic was made in mid-March as the number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt surged.

But with new cases on the decline the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry has announced a lifting of the exports block.

A ministry statement said that Egypt's trade minister, Nevine Gamea, had given the green light for exports of the products to resume following comprehensive checks with the relevant authorities that the country had sufficient stocks of the items to cover its internal needs.

Gamea pointed out that the government was keen to ensure it had all the necessary supplies in place to continue dealing with the health crisis while also maintaining exports of Egyptian goods such as alcohol and its by-

products, medical items, and facemasks.

She said the state's decision was aimed at preserving the health and safety of citizens while enhancing national economic growth.

Companies producing anti-COVID-19 medical supplies including N95 masks, all types of alcohol and related by-products, facemasks, protective suits, latex gloves, and face shields and glasses, could now start selling abroad again, the minister added.

Immunology consultant, Dr. Amgad El-Haddad, said a high turnover of alcohol products and facemasks earlier in the year had declined in line with the drop in the number of COVID-19 cases in Egypt (which currently stands at 101,500), leaving a supply surplus.

He added that the fall in the infection rate suggested the virus was gradually getting weaker, which was the nature of any pandemic, but he said Egyptians should continue to follow social distancing rules when out and about and wear facemasks.

Dr. Sherif Ezzat, head of the Chamber of Engineering Industries' medical supplies unit, said Egypt's production of anti-coronavirus products had been stepped up with 750,000 facemasks being made every day in contrast to 250,000 before the pandemic, and a similar trend applied to alcohol products.

In order to help get infections down to zero, he added that it was important for people to still adhere to precautionary measures.

Egypt has been recording around 150 new cases of COVID-19 a day with the recovery rate and the number of patients being discharged from hospitals on the rise.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Coronavirus](#)

[Egypt](#)

Free tickets for life for baby born on board Cairo-London EgyptAir flight Jordan to allow stranded Egyptian workers return to the country and resume work

---

## [Bahrain crown prince volunteers in Covid-19 vaccine trial](#)

Wed, 2020-09-16 23:47

MANAMA: Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad on Wednesday took part in the third phase of COVID-19 vaccine trials underway in the kingdom.

The clinical trials are being conducted in collaboration with Abu-Dhabi based G42 Healthcare using a vaccine developed by Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinopharm CNBG, the sixth-largest producer of vaccines in the world.

Up to 6,000 volunteers will participate in the Bahrain trials, selected from those who meet the required medical criteria.

The trial involves administering a vaccine to the selected volunteers, in order to study the effectiveness of antibody production and its protection against the virus.

"Today I was privileged to stand together with our vaccine volunteers, each one of them determined to play their part in working to protect others, not just at home in our kingdom, but right across the globe" and "this global crisis requires a global response," the crown prince, said.

He added: "In Bahrain we are proud to say we have stepped forward and shouldered responsibility, first in sharing in treatment and testing best practice, and now in support of safe vaccine testing and development."



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Bahrain](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

[Bahrain' Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa](#)

UAE approves COVID-19 vaccine for health workers  
Turkey begins Phase III trials of Chinese coronavirus vaccine

---

# Why world leaders should listen to what Simon says

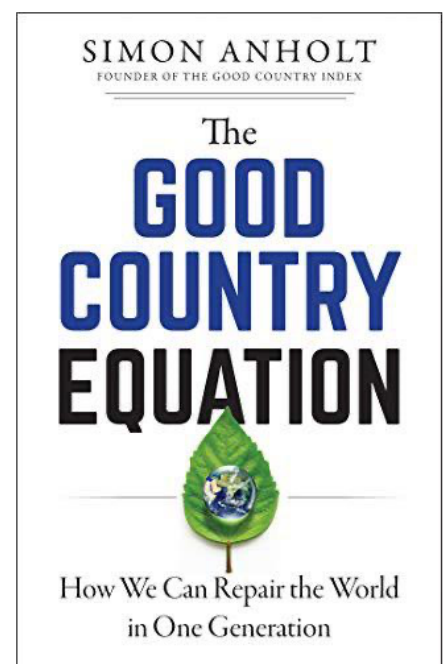
Wed, 2020-09-16 23:11

When I start to read a book, I follow a simple rule for deciding whether to continue; if it fails to grab my attention in the first 90 seconds, I put it down and never pick it up again.

That is why I briefly hesitated when my good friend, the internationally renowned government adviser Simon Anholt, asked me to review his new book, "The Good Country Equation." I have known Simon since 2008, when he was giving talks all over the world and being interviewed by major news outlets while I was still cutting my teeth as a junior section editor with Arab News's sister publication, the London-based daily Asharq Al Awsat. Simon was kind enough to offer to discuss his work.

The result was a page-long interview titled "The Man Who Sold the World" (I was a Nirvana fan growing up, though the title didn't sound quite so cool in Arabic). It was the first Arabic-language explanation of "nation brands," a term Simon himself had coined in 1998. By the time I met him he had also developed the Nation Brand Index (NBI), which scientifically measures public sentiment about country brands.

Of course, the topic itself is fascinating, and the interview gained much attention in the Arab world. But what has been more fascinating for me was to closely watch the evolution of this concept; something I was lucky enough to do at first hand, since Simon and I remained in touch, and became friends.



Thus my hesitation. What if I had to implement my rule and discard Simon's new book after 90 seconds? As a friend, I am delighted to report that I did not; in fact, it captured my attention almost immediately. "Have you noticed how much time we spend worrying about the state of the world these days?" the book's preface reads. As editor in chief of a major regional newspaper, a large part of my job is to worry about the state of the world.

Indeed, anyone who is not concerned with what is going on around us today is either naive or selfish. There has been a catastrophic global failure to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. This year's series of monstrous natural disasters included horrific fires in Australia and California, and Hurricane Sally in the eastern US. At any time in human history, have we ever been so confused about what is true and what is not? What about the international rise of far-right movements? Heck, even the Pentagon encouraged belief in extraterrestrial life by publishing videos of unidentified flying objects.

## **OTHER BOOKS BY SIMON ANHOLT**

**Another One** Bites the Grass Making Sense of International Advertising (2000).

**Brand America** The Mother of All Brands (2005).

**Brand New Justice** How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World (2006).

**Competitive Identity** The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions (2006).

"The Good Country Equation" does not offer a solution to all the world's problems, nor does it try. What it does, however, is give us an opportunity to reflect on how government thinking has evolved in the past two decades. What is fascinating, particularly if you have read Simon Anholt's previous books, is how his theories evolved, and not necessarily in the same way as many world leaders.

In this context, "good" is not the opposite of "bad," but the opposite of "selfish." For a country to be classified as "good" (and score high in the Good Country Index the author created), it needs to be good not just for its own people, but for others too. This is the polar opposite of the "my country first" wave that politicians in many established democracies (and non-democracies) have been riding for the past few years; and while this wave may win you popular support, it is not necessarily sustainable or healthy for global well-being.

If we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that we all need each other to survive. (You disagree? OK – but how would you feel if the country that created the first effective coronavirus vaccine refused to give it to anyone apart from their own citizens?)

### **An evolving concept**

In the wise words of the late Steve Jobs: "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." This crosses my mind every time Simon speaks of the first time he used the term "nation brand," in a marketing journal in 1998. Little did he – or anyone else – realize that those two words would have a lasting global impact, and take on a life of their own. The argument was simple; countries with a positive image (Japan and Switzerland, for example) can trade at a premium, and find it easier to

attract tourists, foreign investment, international events and consumers for its exports.



Anhold coined the term "nation brands" in 1998

In the years that followed, people who used to sell detergents and shampoo suddenly reinvented themselves as “nation branding” consultants. A whole industry was created, embracing international conferences, publications and annual awards, with the single purpose of teaching government officials the “art” of winning hearts and minds.

You may assume that Simon was proud of his original article and its impact, but if you read “The Good Country Equation” or listen to him speak you get the sense that he considers it his original sin!

He will tell you the term he used was “nation brand,” not “nation branding” – a concept he opposes.

Marketing tools such as advertising, PR and sales promotion have their place in positioning cities, bringing in foreign investment or promoting tourist destinations; but if you are a country, Simon believes actions speak louder than words.

“Bragging about your own country is like a standup comedian who goes on stage and tells the audience how funny he or she is,” he writes. “Don’t tell them to laugh. Be FUNNY. And likewise, for countries, don’t tell them to admire you. Be admirable.”

Soon after defining “nation brands,” Simon created a new term (and wrote a book about it too) called “Competitive Identity.” As you can read in his new book, the concept evolved to that of a “Good Country.” The heart and soul of this new argument is that what the world needs is cooperation, not competition, between countries.

## DEFINING NATION BRAND

According to Anholt, there are six pillars that define a brand of a nation



“All governments in the 21st century have two tasks: Taking care of their citizens and participating in a bigger community of nations,” he argues. And if you think this is unattainable, the author provides examples of how countries that want to be good can find ways to combine these two tasks and juggle priorities and interests, although it is far from straightforward.

There are several ways to read this book. One is to see it as a collection of personal experiences and memories of a veteran adviser to nearly 50 governments. Another is as if it were a manual for officials to reflect and learn from other countries’ experiences, and possibly implement what Simon says. A third way, perhaps the most interesting one, is for readers – whether marketing practitioners, academics or government officials – to challenge everything they think they know about “nation brands.”

And if you accept that challenge, be ready to be surprised to learn that spending on PR could make your image problem worse; that we have been using buzzwords such as “soft power” all wrong; and that contrary to what many think, global sport events don’t necessarily make a country more likeable.

• *Faisal J. Abbas is Editor in Chief of Arab News.*

•• “The Good Country Equation,” by Simon Anholt, is published by Berrett-Koehler and is available in online bookstores and Amazon worldwide.



Main category:

[books](#)

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Editor's Choice](#)