

Abdeen Palace – a witness to Egyptian history

Author:

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CAIRO: Abdeen Palace in Cairo is perhaps the most famous of Egyptian palaces. It witnessed many events from the royal era up till the emergence of the modern capital.

Khedive Ismail ordered the construction of Abdeen Palace in 1872. This palace was the headquarters of the government from 1872 till the revolution of 1952.

Today, the white, red and green salons are used to receive official delegations during their visit to Egypt. Its theater, with hundreds of gilded chairs, hosts special theater performances for visitors and guests. The palace's library contains 55,000 books.

In the palace there are many suites, such as the Belgian suite designed to accommodate the important guests of Egypt. It is named after the King of Belgium who was the first to reside there. It includes a bed that is considered a rare antique because of its decorations.

One of the palace's museums contains treasures acquired by the sons and grandsons of Khedive Ismail, who ruled Egypt after him and were fond of putting their personal touches to the palace that reflected each successive era.

The second museum is dedicated to the possessions of the family of Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Ottoman commander who ruled Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century. The exhibits include silverware, crystal, colored crystal, and other rare artifacts.

A delegation of Egyptian parliamentarians visited Abdeen Palace last week, after its latest renovation and restoration. The visit was to support archaeological and historical tourism and the important historical value of Egypt's presidential palaces.

Dr. Gamal Shakra, professor of modern history at Ain Shams University, told Arab News Abdeen Palace is an important historical property and reveals the extent of the civilized development that Egypt witnessed during that period. "Everyone knows the ancient civilization of Egypt, but we need to show the world what Egypt has achieved in the modern era through Abdeen Palace," he said.

"Abdeen Palace is part of Egypt's history. The renovation of the palace turned out much more beautiful than we expected," said Mr. Osama Heikal, chairman of the Information Committee at the Egyptian Parliament.

"The style of the furniture and architecture is not found in old European countries, and the skilled labor that carried out this piece of work

contributed greatly to its beauty,” said Heikal.

“Abdeen Palace is an important destination for foreign tourists, changing our image for the better. It is an opportunity for the West to learn the history of Egypt in the modern era,” said Amr Sidqi, head of the Committee of Tourism and Civil Aviation at the Egyptian Parliament.

The opening times of Abdeen Palace are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Tickets cost 100 pounds (\$6) for foreigners and 50 pounds foreign students, 20 pounds for Egyptians or Arabs, 10 pounds for Egyptian or Arab students.



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Mena House: Cairo's most legendary 'family hotel' A true taste of Egypt at Ramadan in Cairo's Midan Al-Husseini

[The win-win calculus of global family remittances](#)

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Sat, 2019-06-15 00:01

DUBAI: Irish Basco remembers all the occasions that her father was not around to attend; birthdays, family dinners, graduation ceremonies. He moved to Saudi Arabia 20 years ago when she was seven years old. At the time, the family was growing; working in the Philippines would not have been enough to meet its growing expenses. The solution was to find a job abroad and send money home regularly.

So when Basco's father packed his bags and flew to the Middle East with a heavy heart, he left behind his wife and three young children who had no idea of the adjustments they would have to go through in the years ahead.

As the world prepares to mark International Day of Family Remittances on June 16, it recognizes the sacrifices made by families such as the Bascos and the difference remittances have made in the lives of those receiving them while playing a major role in the economies of many countries.

The Middle East, especially the Gulf region, is full of stories of migration, separation from loved ones, and remittances. The narrative is as much of economic success as it is of human resilience. Economic migrants form the backbone of a flourishing remittance industry that is only projected to grow. The UN estimates there are more than 200 million migrants around the world who send money to their home countries, supporting more than 800 million family members, most of whom are in low- to middle-income countries (LMICs). World Bank data show that in 2018 remittance flows to LMICs reached \$529 billion, an increase of 9.6 percent compared to 2017 figures. This is expected to grow this year to \$550 billion, making it larger than foreign direct investment and official development assistance flows. According to the bank: "In the coming decades, demographic forces, globalization and climate change will increase migration pressures both within and across borders." One expert says the movement of people across international boundaries for work is a natural occurrence in a world where skill sets differ from one country to another.

"There are defined borders in the world, but human beings are transferring from one place to another, so it's an inherent consequence that they will have to send money to their homeland," Mahmood Bangara, chairman of the Dubai chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), told Arab News.

Global remittances have a lasting impact on the lives of families. Irish Basco, who graduated from a private university in the Philippines in 2013, said she could not have got her degree without her father's support.

"We can't deny that we experienced the good side of (migration). My father was able to provide something that the Philippines couldn't. My father worked in a factory. He pursued different side jobs just to earn more," she told Arab News by phone from Manila.

"If he hadn't gone to Saudi Arabia, we wouldn't have survived. I wouldn't have been able to finish my education."

But Basco said her family would never have wanted her father to leave the country "if there had been options other than migrating for work." She said families are often pushed to the wall by circumstances.

Basco also said her father's remittances allowed them to make a few

investments.

“Expats remit money back home for a number of reasons; to support families, to earn higher rates of interest on local bank deposits, to invest in local real estate, stocks and other assets, to manage inheritance and build retirement funds,” Ambareen Musa, a UAE-based financial expert and CEO of the financial comparison website Souqalmal, told Arab News.

The benefits of remittances go beyond tending to the needs of families. For many developing countries, money derived from overseas transfers make up a significant chunk of their foreign-exchange earnings. “India, China, Mexico, Philippines and Egypt were the biggest remittance recipients in 2018 (in that order),” Musa said, citing World Bank data.

“India received over \$78 billion in remittances in 2018, which made up 3 percent of the country’s GDP while the Philippines received over \$33 billion, which formed a sizable 10 percent portion of GDP. These countries, like many others, rely on remittances to support their economic growth.”

The ICAI’s Bangara said remittances are a form of income for countries that can be used for domestic consumption.

GLOBAL REMITTANCES

Top sources of global remittances (2017) ●
Top recipients of global remittances (2018) ●



“They can become savings in the bank. They can be used for certain purposes including investments and property purchases,” he said. “The money benefits the receiving countries by enabling them to meet project expenses. As long it is invested in some form, the money will be available for national development.”

Although the benefits of remittances are more apparent for the receiving countries, the sending countries are also reaping rewards through the services provided by foreign workers who choose to work there, to say nothing of the remittance business itself, which is now a multibillion-dollar, transnational industry.

“Nobody will employ overseas labor to incur losses. Nobody is forced to employ foreign labor,” Bangara said, adding that the remitting countries, such as those of the Gulf, benefit from labor migration in many ways. As to whether the nationalization programs under way in several Gulf states will affect the prospects of migrant workers and consequently the remittance industry, Bangara said: “The elimination of foreign workforce is not going to happen in the near future.”

“It is true that there is a growing preference for employing domestic labor in almost all countries. But given the growth of these economies, they may continue to need the services of expatriate workers. Employment rates might be slightly affected, but there will be more projects coming up that will drive economic growth and require more manpower.”

It wasn't easy growing up without a father figure, Basco said. No amount of money can replace a father's presence, she said. “I feel that even if he finally decides to retire and come home, it will be difficult to get back all those moments,” she said. “But we will try.”







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Oman bans expats in certain private higher education jobs
Expats welcome Saudi 'green card' but say questions need to be answered

[US calls for 'independent and credible' investigation into violence against protesters in Sudan](#)

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Fri, 2019-06-14 20:40

LONDON: An "independent and credible" investigation into acts of violence committed by authorities against protesters in Sudan is essential for political progress to be made in the country, according to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Tibor Nagy.

Speaking to the media from Addis Ababa on Friday, Nagy also reaffirmed the US

position in Sudan – namely a civilian-led government which is acceptable to the Sudanese people.

Thousands of protesters who were demonstrating outside the army headquarters in central Khartoum for several weeks were dispersed, in violent clashes, on June 3.

“The US believes very strongly there has to be an investigation which is independent and credible which will hold accountable those committing the egregious events,” Nagy said.

At least 120 people were killed and hundreds more were wounded in the clashes, and Nagy said the crackdown by the country’s military had crushed all hope of a transition to civilian government which had existed before June 3.

“The events of June 3rd constituted, in our point of view, a 180-degree turn in the way events were going, with murder, rape, by members of the security forces.

“Until June 3rd, everybody was so optimistic. Events were moving forward in such a favorable direction after 35 years of tragedy for Sudan,” he added.

Nagy and Donald Booth, who was appointed as Special Envoy for Sudan last week, visited Khartoum on earlier this week and spoke to Transitional Military Council chairman Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, leaders of the opposition as well as victims of the violence – including a US citizen who had been shot.

While in Khartoum, Nagy met opposition groups and civil society as well as military council head Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan.

The conversation with Burhan “was about as frank and direct as possible ... it was quite an exchange of views and obviously we did not agree on some of the key points,” Nagy said.

“Why mediation, why not direct negotiation between the parties? The two parties absolutely do not trust each other in any way,” Nagy said.

Sudan’s ruling military has acknowledged that security forces committed violations when they moved in to disperse a protest sit-in camp outside the military headquarters in Khartoum last week.

The spokesman of the ruling military council, General Shams Eddin Kabashi, said an investigation is underway and several military officers are already in custody over the violations.

He didn’t elaborate on the violations beyond saying they were “painful and outrageous.” He also rejected all calls for an international investigation into the incident.

In addition, earlier on Friday, Sudanese opposition leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi called for an “objective” international investigation.

Mahdi's elected government was toppled in 1989, in a coup led by former president Omar Al-Bashir.

After thirty years of rule, Al-Bashir was ousted in April following mass protests.

Al-Bashir was replaced by a military council, but protesters carried on with a sit-in outside Khartoum military headquarters to demand a transition to civilian rule.



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Sudan military acknowledges violations in sit-in dispersal
Sudan's state prosecutors charge former president Omar Al-Bashir with corruption

[Algerians rally even after ex-premiers](#)

detained

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Abdellah Cheballah with Aymeric Vincenot in Paris | AFP

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Fri, 2019-06-14 16:19

ALGIERS: Demonstrators rallied in the Algerian capital Friday to keep up their demands for the ouster of all officials linked to the former president, unappeased by the detention of two ex-premiers.

The protest came a day after former prime minister Abdelmalek Sellal joined a long list of prominent politicians and businessmen who have been detained as part of investigations into corruption.

"Thieves, you have pillaged the country," the crowds of protesters marching in Algiers chanted.

"They deserve what they got... and they must be held accountable by the people for their actions," said protester Mohammed, who declined to give his surname.

Thursday's supreme court decision against Sellal, an ally of ex-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, came a day after another former premier, Ahmed Ouyahia, was also remanded in custody as part of a graft probe.

"Jailing Ouyahia and Sellal is an excellent thing," said Cherif Tigrin, a 40-year-old carpenter taking part in the massive rally in the center of Algiers. "But we must continue" to protest as long as Bouteflika's cronies remain in power, he said.

Algerians have been holding massive protests since February, after an ailing Bouteflika announced plans to seek a fifth term in office.

The veteran leader resigned on April 2 as the pressure against him to quit mounted from all sides, only hours after army chief and close ally General Ahmed Gaid Salah demanding impeachment proceedings against him.

Gaid Salah has since emerged as a key power broker in the North African country.

Although the army chief has ordered anti-corruption investigations in the country, according to observers, he has not won favor with the demonstrators who are also calling for his departure.

"Gaid Salah to the (rubbish) bin," protesters chanted on Friday, according to footage posted online by local journalists.

They also called on interim president Abdelkader Bensalah and his prime minister, Noureddine Bedoui, to step down.

Several demonstrators also held up signs to mark the 18th anniversary of the "Black Spring" bloody riots of 2001, sparked by the death of a high school student in a police station in the Kabylie region.

The mountainous Kabylie region east of Algiers is home to the largest Berber community in Algeria who have long suffered marginalization.

"April 2001 and February 2019... the struggle continues," read one of the signs.

Demonstrations also took place Friday in several other Algerian cities and towns, according to social media reports.

It was not immediately clear, however, how many protesters took to the

streets nationwide as official figures were unavailable.





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Algerian ex-PM Sellal remanded in custody over graft allegation
Algeria's ex-PM Ahmed Ouyahia appears in court in corruption probe

[Blood donation in the Middle East: The gift of life that is easy to give](#)

Fri, 2019-06-14 01:10

DUBAI: Blood donations in the Middle East have been described as “the gift of life” as the region struggles to cope with the demands posed by conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and the medical needs of a growing population.

International health experts have called on regular donors to step forward to mark World Blood Donor Day on June 14.

This year's campaign focuses on blood donation and universal access to safe blood transfusion, and according to the World Health Organization (WHO), more donors are needed “to step forward to give the gift of life.”

Those who benefit most from blood donations include people suffering from thalassaemia, a blood disorder that affects hemoglobin and the red blood cell count, as well as victims of road accidents, cancer patients and sickle-cell disease patients.

Experts say while the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have launched numerous initiatives to raise awareness of the lifesaving importance of blood donation, there is an increasing need across a wider region for regular donors.

“Many countries in the region face challenges in making sufficient blood available while also ensuring its quality and safety, especially during humanitarian emergencies and conflicts,” Dr. Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean, told Arab News.

The GCC countries say they collect in total more than 10 whole blood donations per 1,000 population per year, or about 1 percent, Al-Mandhari said.

According to WHO, blood donations by 1 to 3 percent of the population are sufficient to meet a country's needs. Even so, achieving self-sufficiency is a daunting challenge for many countries.

Al-Mandhari said that more than 90 percent of the blood is collected from voluntary, unpaid donors, aged from 18 to 44, with an increasing proportion of repeat donors. What is more, blood demand is unpredictable and even differs with each blood type. “For example O- blood can be given to patients with all blood types. But AB+ can only be given to patients with AB+,” he said.

Then there is the issue of short shelf life.

“To be ready to help patients in all hospitals, countries aim to stock usually six days’ worth of each blood type at all times,” Al-Mandhari said. “Since blood has a short shelf life – a 42-day window – and cannot be stockpiled, blood banks are forced to depend on donors to help maintain stocks.”

WHO’s most recent report on blood safety and availability points to “gaps in the key elements of national blood systems” in the Middle East.



A Saudi donor flashes the v-sign for victory as he gives blood in Jeddah. The Kingdom has one of the highest rates of repeat donors in the region. (AFP)

While GCC countries have taken steps to keep stocks at optimum levels, other countries in the Middle East are lagging behind international standards. The WHO report shows wide variations in annual blood-donation rates among countries, ranging from 0.7 per 1,000 population in Yemen to 29 per 1,000 population in Lebanon.

Al-Mandhari laid out the solution in a few easy steps: “Governments need to provide adequate resources, and put in place systems and infrastructure to increase the collection of blood from voluntary, regular unpaid blood donors, provide quality donor care, promote and implement appropriate clinical use of

blood; and set up systems for oversight and surveillance across the blood-transfusion supply chain.”

On the positive side, Saudi Arabia recorded a rate of 13.8 per 1,000 population, with a healthy spread across all age groups. The country also has one of the highest rates of repeat donors (91 percent) in the region. According to the WHO report, the proportion of repeat, voluntary, non-remunerated blood donation in the Kingdom is 65.3 percent, which “will keep the prevalence of transfusion-transmissible infections among blood donors at much lower levels than in the general population.”

In recent years, Saudi health officials have introduced a number of measures to ensure adequate stocks in blood banks, including those run by the Ministry of Health and dedicated centers. These include a large facility at King Fahad Medical City (KFMC) and the country’s Central Blood Bank.

In the Kingdom, to be eligible for blood donation, donors must be aged over 17, weigh more than 50 kg, and have passed a brief medical examination. The health ministry recently launched Wateen, an app designed to ease blood-donation procedures and help ensure facilities across the Kingdom have adequate quantities of blood by 2020.

KFMC officials say that every day at least 2,000 units of blood components are needed to sustain a minimum supply for patients at the facility and other governmental and non-governmental hospitals in Riyadh. Donated blood components are essential for the management of cases involving cancer, sickle-cell disease, organ transplant, surgery, childbirth and trauma, to name just a few.

The situation is not very different in the other GCC countries, which also need more donors.

In the UAE, Dubai Blood Donation Center, which accounts for roughly half of the total blood collected in the emirates, frequently highlights the urgent need for donors. In 2018 alone, it ran 635 blood-donation campaigns, which resulted in 63,735 donors and a collection of 50,456 blood units.

While all blood types are needed, negative blood types are in greater demand due to their rarity. “There is a continuous demand for all blood types as blood lasts for only 42 days. So donors are always needed to come forward to replenish these stocks,” Dr. Mai Raouf, director of Dubai Blood Donation Center, said.

“People can donate blood every eight weeks, with each donation potentially saving up to three lives,” she told Arab News.

Given that transfusion of blood and blood products save millions of lives every year, and the fact that “regular donors are the safest group of donors,” the importance of encouraging people to return to donate blood, rather than be one-time donors, can hardly be overemphasized, experts say.

“Without a system based on voluntary, unpaid blood donation, particularly regular voluntary donation, no country can provide sufficient blood for all

patients who require transfusion,”
Al-Mandhari said.

“WHO is calling on all countries in the region to celebrate and thank individuals who donate blood – and to encourage those who have not yet donated blood to start donating,” he said.



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Health Ministry honors Najm for blood donation drive
Saudi health ministry organizes blood donation campaign for Hajj pilgrims