

# Egyptian, South Sudanese ministers in talks to enhance ties

Tue, 2022-03-08 15:31

CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation Mohammed Abdel-Aty and his South Sudanese counterpart Manawa Peter, who is currently visiting Cairo, discussed issues of common interest and ways to enhance bilateral relations.

Among the topics of discussion was the status of projects in South Sudan to provide drinking water and protection against floods.

Abdel-Aty said that Egypt was implementing the projects requested by South Sudan, citing the history of cooperation between the two countries, during which several development initiatives benefitting the South Sudanese people have been implemented.

He explained that the ministry has established six underground wells, while seven underground drinking water stations equipped with solar energy in and around vital areas of South Sudan's capital, Juba, are currently being constructed to provide clean drinking water to residents.

A lifting unit, the minister added, was installed to transfer river water to population centers near the waterways in the city of Wau in South Sudan to provide clean drinking water for citizens, and river sidewalks connecting the main cities and villages of the country were constructed. A project to purify waterways in the Bahr Al-Ghazal basin was also implemented.

The minister referenced a number of other initiatives aimed at benefitting South Sudan, including the protection of villages and agricultural lands from high water levels and the establishment of a water quality analysis laboratory, which is currently carrying out analyses for government agencies in the country.

Abdel-Aty added that a joint memorandum of understanding had been signed between the two countries to realize a project to reduce flood risks in the Bahr Al-Jabal basin.

The South Sudanese minister expressed his hope in achieving increased cooperation between the two countries in the field of water management.



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## [Activists assaulted after trying to remove Soleimani poster at Beirut Book Fair](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-07 22:20

BEIRUT: A scuffle broke out on Monday at the Beirut International and Arab Book Fair taking place at the Seaside Arena after activists demanded that the displayed pictures of Iranian Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani be taken down. The activists, among whom were Shafiq Badr and Nelly Qandil, were severely beaten up after chanting "Beirut Free, Iran Out!"

Soleimani's huge picture was displayed at one of the book fair's pavilion that kicked off last Thursday, angered social media activists and mocked the exhibition as the "Tehran Book Fair."

A squad from the Internal Security Forces Intelligence Branch later arrived on the scene and launched investigations as a number of other activists arrived in solidarity.

Badr is part of the "Lebanon Rises Up" group, while Qandil is part of the "Lebanese sovereign opposition" group.

The book fair, organized by the Arab Cultural Club, was launched in its 63rd session under the slogan "Beirut cannot be broken" after a three-year forced hiatus due to the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Beirut port's explosion.

Traditionally, the exhibition takes place in January each year, which has confused some participating publishing houses.

Ninety Lebanese publishing houses – from Syria and Egypt and 10 from Iran – are taking part in the exhibition.

Activists circulated pictures of books displayed in the participating pavilions, noting the large number of books with photographs of Soleimani and other Iranian figures. This scene seemed sufficient to criticize the exhibition and dig up political sensitivities of what Soleimani represented in Iranian politics and its hostilities in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, especially since Hezbollah is keen to raise pictures of Soleimani on every occasion. Soleimani's pictures are also placed on the road leading to Beirut airport and in the south and the Bekaa.

Meanwhile, the Arab Publishers Association missed the exhibition. The exhibition's permanent goers noted "radical changes in its pavilions and books, amid the absence of Gulf publishing houses that used to be present in each edition of the exhibition as a kind of support, due to the diplomatic and economic crisis between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia and a number of Gulf countries.

Two days ago, when the exhibition hosted a concert, protests erupted in the Iranian pavilions, according to activists and eyewitnesses. "People broke into the place and shouted in protest at the loud voice of the music," said a girl who was attending the concert.

Prime Minister Najib Mikati, during the inauguration of the exhibition last Thursday, said that "it is one of the many pillars to immunize the Lebanese and Arab people against patterns alien to our nature, culture, traditions and heritage, which we cherish."

Former justice Ashraf Rifi said in a tweet that "Soleimani's image in the exhibition is provocation to the Lebanese people who were stung by the Iranian occupation," and that whoever put it "wants to bully the Lebanese, but the youth of Lebanon are stronger than this arrogance."

MP Fouad Makhzoumi said: "Even the Beirut Book Fair did not escape unscathed from Hezbollah, which is working to paint this ancient cultural destination with an Iranian identity that does not resemble it, and with the ideology of death that has nothing to do with the Arabism of Beirut, its coexistence and diversity."

The deteriorating living conditions in Lebanon reflected in a decline in the purchase of books at the fair. Some publishers said "demand for books has fallen by up to 70 percent in libraries."

"The cost of any book is at least \$10, that is, more than 200,000 Lebanese pounds," Mona Ismail, one of the permanent exhibition goers told Arab News, adding "getting into the show tempts me a lot, but at the same time it is going to hit me financially."

This year, according to one of its curators, the Arab Cultural Club rented pavilions to publishers at reduced prices to encourage them to offer discounts to customers. However, the high prices of books are due to the high cost of publishing and printing supplies, all of which are paid in dollars at a time when publishers sell their books in Lebanese Liras.



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Gas queues in Lebanon as fears mount over food security  
State losing stature, crime rising as economic gloom envelops Lebanon

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## Palestinian women struggle to improve social position

Mon, 2022-03-07 22:23

RAMALLAH: Palestinian women in the West Bank and citizens of Israel have achieved tangible and remarkable success in recent years – it is easy to see them assuming positions such as deputy foreign minister, governor of a large city, minister, ambassador, judge, company director, or high-ranking officer in the security services.

However, these achievements do not necessarily reflect society's conviction over women's roles, efficiency, status, or equality with men.

Activist Rula Salameh, for one, is dissatisfied with the situation of Palestinian women.

She told Arab News that Palestinian women have not obtained their rights despite engagement in the struggle alongside men against the Israeli occupation, and that their lot does not reflect the fact they make up half of society.

"Women reach high positions in two ways; if the political party to which she belongs is strong and connects her, or if she has highly influential relatives, they may make her occupy a senior position," Salameh, from East Jerusalem, said. "However, if she does not belong to a strong political faction and does not have influential relatives, she will not get high positions."

Statistics indicate that the percentage of educated women exceeds the percentage of educated men among Palestinians, yet men continue to hold critical senior positions.

Salameh is also angry at female leaders within the community, as she says many refuse to leave positions of power when they attain them for younger female leaders when the time is right, while several occupy multiple senior positions concurrently, which does not allow for others to progress.

Palestinian women's organizations also struggle with all manner of gender-based issues in society, not least efforts to enact deterrent laws against so-called honor killings. The disruption of the Palestinian Legislative Council means that no real progress is being made on this issue.

Ghassan Khattib, vice president of Birzeit University, believes that the situation of Palestinian women is worse than those of their counterparts in other Arab countries, and says the main approach to strengthening their position is economic independence and increased participation in the labor market, which enhances their position within their family and society.

Currently, Palestinian women involved in the labor market number around just 19 percent of their total.

"Without women being economically independent, it is difficult for them to have a role, status and weight in decision-making and contribute to public life," said Khattib. "How many women directors of companies (are there) and how many university presidents? Society marginalizes women for cultural reasons because it is a patriarchal society.

"The best way to enhance women's status in Palestinian society is an increase in education and greater involvement in the labor market," he said.

Safa Hassaneh, an activist, told Arab News that Palestinian women whose husbands are arrested or killed found themselves forced to bear great family responsibility.

Hassaneh agrees with Salameh that laws do not do justice to women, and women must struggle to improve their social position and obtain representation.

Alia Sobh, another activist from Bethlehem, believes that despite the involvement of Palestinian women in many aspects of society, their position is still weak, referring to the first round of municipal elections that were held in the West Bank last December, when some female candidates for municipal council seats were unable to place their pictures on the electoral campaign posters, and instead had pictures of a rose because their husband forbade them from sharing their images.

In some families and regions, women's names are indicated on wedding invitation cards without mentioning their full name.

Sobh says that political parties' control over women's unions is an obstacle to enacting laws that do justice to women and advance them in society.

Meanwhile, the situation of Palestinian women living in Israel seems a little different from that in the West Bank, as activist Samah Diab from Tamra in Galilee told Arab News that women's associations raise their voices against the Israeli government.

"Women can change better than men because we do not deal with figures, but rather overcome the human side so that we can bring real and actual change; the Arab woman in Israel has made progress, but she aspires to achieve more," Diab said.

Maqbola Nassar from Arrabeh in Galilee told Arab News that the adoption of the doctrine of survival by Arab women inside Israel has led to their achievement of multiple successes, noting that 60 percent of Arab university students are women, as Arab women consider education a vital strategy to reach their goals, and that women have succeeded in reducing the phenomenon of early marriage and polygamy.





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Thousands of Palestinian women rally on Gaza-Israel border

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## [UAE, Qatar to become members of Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-07 19:56

ROME: The parliaments of the UAE and Qatar will become full members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, an international forum comprising representatives of the national parliaments of the Euro-

Mediterranean region.

The inclusion of the UAE's Federal National Council and Qatar's Shoura Council will be formalized at PAM's 16th plenary session on March 9-10.

It will be held in Dubai under the presidency of Italian MP Gennaro Migliore and hosted by the FNC.

PAM supports the work of other international bodies entrusted with fostering security, stability and peace in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

It will be the first time that PAM will meet in the Arabian Peninsula since the organization, which has observer status at the UN General Assembly, was established in 2005.

"Our vision is that peace, dialogue and cooperation in our Mediterranean region isn't divisible, and the Gulf region isn't far away from us," Migliore told Arab News before traveling from Rome to Dubai.

In the past few years, both the FNC and the Shoura Council "have been very active in all the activities of the assembly, especially regarding initiatives on counterterrorism and de-radicalization, as well as women's empowerment and energy transition," he added.

Developments in the Middle East and North Africa – including Libya, Syria, Lebanon and Western Sahara – as well as those in Europe – such as Ukraine and Bosnia and Herzegovina – will be on the session's agenda, as will water scarcity, said Migliore.

"PAM has always been convinced that international parliamentary cooperation is the key to encourage national and international policymakers to harmonize legislative frameworks," he added.

"This assembly is a unique platform for parliamentary diplomacy, promotes constructive dialogue and support initiatives."

The role of parliaments, he added, "is every day more crucial for Mediterranean stability and cooperation because they can help to overcome issues and points of friction paralyzing governments in conflict or limiting their scope of action."





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## [Russia-Ukraine conflict could prompt Mideast food riots: Analysts](#)

Author:

Mon, 2022-03-07 15:24

The Russia-Ukraine conflict could have a knock-on effect in the Middle East due to the rapidly increasing prices of wheat and disrupted supply of other goods, the Daily Telegraph reported on Monday.

Analysts warn that violence could break out amid a 25 percent spike in the price of wheat, with Russia and Ukraine representing 14 percent of the global export market for the grain, and a similar percentage of the world's corn

market.

Wheat prices are up 37 percent since the start of the year, to levels not seen since 2008 and the last great global financial crisis.

BCA Research said the supply line from the Black Sea to the Middle East has become strained.

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are also among the world's leading fertilizer exporters. With sowing normally beginning in late February, harvests in Ukraine could be severely disrupted.

BCA said state reserves abroad could quickly become depleted, and developments "could lead to civil unrest similar to the food riots that occurred during the Arab Spring in 2011."

Lebanon imports 40 percent of its wheat from the region, and is currently in the grip of an unprecedented series of economic, social and political crises.

Risk advisors Dragonfly warned that the country has just one month of wheat reserves, and "hardship-related protest and unrest are likely."

War-torn Syria and Yemen are also likely to feel the knock-on effects of increasing prices and reduced supply.

Ukrainian authorities have talked up the prospect of using the country's still largely functioning railway network to transport vital goods to other European ports for export.



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