

Donations pour in to rebuild Gaza bookshop

Mon, 2021-06-21 19:54

LONDON: Cash and book donations have flooded in to help rebuild one of Gaza's largest and oldest bookshops, a two-storey building completely leveled by Israeli attacks.

The Samir Mansour bookshop was hit by multiple airstrikes on May 18, during 11 days of fighting between Israel and Palestinian militants that claimed the lives of around 150 Palestinians.

Founded over two decades ago, the Palestinian-owned shop was a much-loved part of the community.

It contained tens of thousands of books, covering genres from fiction to philosophy and everything in between.

Now a global movement has emerged to rebuild the Gaza treasure, with UK-based online children's bookseller Books2Door donating 1,000 books.

"Without any hesitation I knew we could help," said Books2Door founder Abdul Thadha. "We were kindly informed by the fundraisers that Samir had a diverse, eclectic collection, so we hope we have done him proud."

A fundraiser set up by human rights lawyers Mahvish Rukhsana and Clive Stafford Smith has raised over \$210,000, and tens of thousands of books from all over the world have been donated to Mansour's rebuilding effort.

"Dropping bombs on Samir Mansour's bookshop is not the worst tragedy to have hit the people of Gaza – but this particular airstrike targeted access to books," said Rukhsana.

"It was an attack on the knowledge and literacy of this community. Samir lost almost 100,000 books and served schoolchildren and adults alike," she added.

"I knew hospitals and roads would receive funding, but secondary cultural institutions such as libraries are often overlooked but equally critical to the community."

They are hoping to rebuild the bookshop, replace all of Mansour's 100,000 lost books and create a new project, the Gaza Cultural Center, which would be a new library next door, allowing readers to borrow books without paying.

Rukhsana said in Mansour's shop, "people were allowed to stay, have tea and read his books for as long as they wanted free of charge without an obligation to purchase ... He has decided to use all gently used and some new books to create a true library."

Mansour told The Guardian that his "heart was burning" when he realized

missiles had hit his bookshop.

“The Israeli airstrikes bombed half of the building and my bookshop was in the other half. I wished they would stop ... My feet took me a few steps forward, towards the bookshop. The last missile came and destroyed the building,” he said.

“It was six in the morning. I didn’t know what to do. I started searching among the rubble for anything related to my library. But everything was under the rubble,” he added.

“I sat thinking about why my shop was bombed. I did not publish, write, or attack any country or person in my life. I did not spread hatred but spread culture, science and love. I did not find answers to my questions.” But he vowed to “rebuild all over again, no matter what it took from me.”



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Samir Mansour’s bookstore](#)

[gaza city](#)

[Gaza Cultural Center](#)

Israel allows some Gaza exports, one month after truce
Palestinian-designed, self-build homes seen as key to Gaza’s recovery

Egypt to open complex for vaccine production

Mon, 2021-06-21 19:04

CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of Health and Population Hala Zayed inspected the factory complex of the Egyptian Holding Company for Biological Products and Vaccines (VACSERA) in the Sixth of October City.

The minister followed up on the final preparations being made on the new production lines for the manufacture of vaccines, with equipment costing about \$17 million, in addition to \$5.1 million in construction.

Khaled Mujahid, the spokesman for the Egyptian Ministry of Health, said that the minister confirmed that the VACSERA factories will be the largest vaccine production complex in the Middle East and Africa and will contribute to raising the production capacity of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines in cooperation with various vaccine-producing companies in the world.

During her visit to the complex, Zayed inspected the departments dedicated to the production of the vaccines, including a production line, eight central laboratories to monitor the vaccines and a central refrigerator that can store 150 million doses. The production capacity of the factories can reach 3 million doses per day, equivalent to six times the production capacity of the company's factories in Agouza.

The minister praised the readiness of the VACSERA factory complex, which is environmentally friendly and which was built according to the highest levels of quality and according to the standards of the World Health Organization (WHO). Last September, the WHO sent a delegation of experts to evaluate the production lines at the VACSERA factories and praised the designs and construction.

Zayed confirmed that the company is the state's strong arm in the manufacture of vaccines, which will put Egypt in the ranks of the leading countries in this field.

The factory complex is scheduled to manufacture polio vaccines of all kinds, as well as the pneumococcal bacteria vaccine in cooperation with European companies.

Mujahid added that the complex will work in parallel with the company's production lines in the Agouza area, which have already started manufacturing the vaccine in cooperation with the Chinese company Sinovac.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[_Egypt](#)

[Hala Zayed](#)

[COVID-19 vaccines](#)

[VACSERA factory complex](#)

Egypt vaccines ready for clinical trials
Egypt COVID-19 cases could be '10 times higher' than reported figures

[Not guilty pleas entered in Jordan sedition trial](#)

Mon, 2021-06-21 19:01

AMMAN – The suspects in Jordan's high-profile "sedition case," former minister Bassem Awadallah and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, appeared in court on Monday over their alleged roles in a plot to "destabilize the country."

Dozens of reporters had been outside the State Security Court (SSC) since the early hours on Monday waiting for permits to enter the heavily-guarded court but were told it was a closed-door hearing.

Images on social media showed Awadallah, a former royal court chief, and bin Zaid both wearing blue prison uniforms as they were escorted by security guards to the SSC building.

Sources who attended the session said that the judges read out the charge sheet against the defendants, who pleaded not guilty. The court also heard testimonies of two prosecution witnesses related to leaked audio clips.

The court is scheduled to hold another closed-door session on Tuesday.

Last week, the SSC prosecution office leveled sedition and incitement charges against Awadallah and bin Zaid and accused them of conspiring with former crown prince Hamzah to destabilize the country and fuel unrest against the monarch in collaboration with foreign parties.

Bin Zaid was also charged with possessing illegal narcotics (hashish).



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Middle East](#)

[Jordan](#)

[King Abdullah II](#)

Expelled Jordanian MP Osama Al-Ajarmeh arrested Jordan's former royal court chief charged in Prince Hamzah sedition case

Sharjah Honours Kenyan Humanitarian Outfit, RefuSHE, for Pioneering Contributions in Child and Girl-Focused Refugee Development

Author:

Associated Press

ID:

1624284776707107000

Mon, 2021-06-21 17:13

SHARJAH: RefuSHE, a Nairobi-based humanitarian agency, was conferred with the 2021 Sharjah International Award for Refugee Advocacy and Support (SIARA) at a virtual ceremony.

Founded in 2008, RefuSHE addresses the significant, unmet needs for child and girl-focused refugee services in Kenya.

The \$136,000 award, now in its fifth edition, is given annually by The Big Heart Foundation (TBHF), a UAE-based global humanitarian organization dedicated to helping refugees and people in need worldwide, in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

With the COVID-19 pandemic deepening the vulnerabilities of marginalized women and girls, the SIARA selection committee acknowledged the leading contributions of RefuSHE, a girl- and woman-centric humanitarian organization, for its efforts in protecting, educating, and empowering orphaned, unaccompanied, and separated refugee girls, children and young women aged 13 – 21 in the Great Lakes region of East Africa.

Through a holistic model comprising of trauma-informed and girl-centric interventions and long-term programs that address urgent safety, shelter and health care concerns to economic empowerment, vocational training, and mental health initiatives, among others, RefuSHE has enabled 5,000 individuals, and around 20,000 indirect beneficiaries build healthier and more resilient futures for themselves and their children.

Three entities shortlisted for SIARA 2021, namely, RefuSHE from Kenya, International Network for Aid Relief and Assistance (INARA), which works for forcibly displaced children and youth in Lebanon and Turkey, and Iraq's The Lotus Flower from Kurdistan which economically empowers vulnerable women and girls through innovative projects.

They are also recipients of a special grant this edition instituted by TBHF, in collaboration with UAE-based NAMA Women Advancement Establishment (NAMA). The \$300,000-grant will be divided evenly among the three non-profit organizations.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[The Big Heart Foundation](#)

[Sharjah](#)

[refugees](#)

[RefuSHE](#)

UN pressures UK over resettling Syrian refugees

[Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant shut down over 'technical fault'](#)

Author:

AFP

ID:

1624282131466930700

Mon, 2021-06-21 07:42

TEHRAN: Iran's only nuclear power plant has been temporarily shut down over a "technical fault," the country's atomic energy body said in a statement.

The Bushehr plant and its 1,000-megawatt reactor, on Iran's southern coast, were completed by Russia after years of delay and officially handed over in September 2013, raising regional concerns in what is an earthquake prone area.

The shutdown comes as Tehran and world powers attempt to revive a hobbled 2015 agreement on Iran's nuclear program in Vienna talks, which an EU negotiator said Sunday were moving "closer to a deal."

That agreement is staunchly opposed by Israel, which Tehran has accused in the past of sabotage against its nuclear enrichment efforts.

"Following a technical fault at Bushehr power plant, and after a one-day notice to the energy ministry, the plant was temporarily shut down and taken off the power grid," the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said on its website around Sunday midnight.

The statement said the plant will be reconnected to the grid and the issue will be resolved "in a few days," but did not elaborate further.

Iran's national electricity company had in a statement on Sunday called on Iranians to minimize consumption during peak hours due to a "predicted rise in temperature" and "limitations in power generation due to ongoing repairs" at Bushehr.

The company said that the repairs may continue until the end of the week, which is Friday in Iran.

In 2016, Russian and Iranian firms began building two additional 1,000-megawatt reactors at Bushehr. Their construction was expected to take 10 years.

Iran's Gulf Arab neighbors have often raised concerns about the reliability of the facility and the risk of radioactive leaks in the event of a major earthquake.

In April, Bushehr province was shaken by a 5.9-magnitude earthquake, leaving five people injured but causing "no damage" to the nuclear complex, according to authorities.

Also in April, Iran accused Israel of being behind a "terrorist" attack on its Natanz uranium enrichment plant, after a "small explosion" at that facility's electricity distribution center.

Iran started rolling blackouts in May this year after Tehran and several other cities were hit by unannounced power cuts that sparked complaints from consumers and an apology from the energy minister.

The shortages were blamed on heat, drought impacting hydropower generation, and surging electricity demand blamed in part on crypto-currency mining.

Power cuts in the peak summer months are not uncommon in Iran, but a government report last month said precipitation was down 34 percent compared to the country's long-term average, and warned of reduced water supplies for the year.

Since late May, the energy ministry regularly notifies citizens of "potential blackouts" lasting at least two hours, unless consumption in their area drops.

Iran's outgoing President Hassan Rouhani last month announced a ban on all crypto-currency mining until September to reduce the pressure on the power grid.

The Islamic republic has announced plans to construct 20 nuclear power plants in the long-term in order to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

The 2015 nuclear deal promised Iran sanctions relief in return for limits on

its nuclear program.

The deal was torpedoed in 2018 after the former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it and reimposed punishing sanctions on the Islamic republic.

But Trump's successor Joe Biden favors rejoining the accord and the remaining parties are engaged in negotiations in Vienna to try to salvage it.

On May 23, nine people were injured in a blast at a plant producing explosive materials in central Iran, local media reported, and three days later, a pipeline explosion at a petrochemical complex near Iran's Gulf coast left one dead.

Some in the Islamic republic see the various events as the result of attacks by Israel's security forces. Others consider US sanctions – which almost completely isolate Iran from the rest of the world, complicating the maintenance of industrial facilities – as a more likely cause.

In July last year, a "worn out transformer" was blamed by a provincial electricity company for an explosion that hit a thermal power plant in the central province of Isfahan.



Main category:

[Middle-East](#)

Tags:

[Iran](#)

[Bushehr](#)

[Nuclear plant](#)

Iran says upcoming round of Vienna talks could be the last