

Information Statement

10th June 2024

Fellowship Meeting, Cairo



Mr Gabr & Fellows at ARTOC Headquarters, Cairo

On the 10th June 2024, at the invitation of the Chairman of the Shafik Gabr Foundation, Mr. Shafik Gabr and the Gabr Fellows met in Cairo at the ARTOC Headquarters.

The fellows shared their latest news and updates, followed by open discussion and addressing questions posed to Mr Gabr. The topics of the meeting raised by the Fellows included the following

- Thoughts on the economic situation in Egypt
- Global dynamics
- How far are we from the idea of WWIII?

Fellows updated news:

MTL 11/06/2024

1. Amr Seda - Amr has embarked on a significant project spanning six to eight months thus far which has seen the collaboration of Manchester Metropolitan University and the Ministry of Sports and Youth in Egypt. The core objective of this project is to enhance the skills of national coaches. This led to a strategic partnership with MMU, renowned for its connections with prestigious football clubs like Manchester United and Manchester City. Former footballers from the English Premier League have also joined the scheme, highlighting the depth of talent involved. The project will kick off with an initial focus on assessing the needs and identifying gaps in the capabilities of national coaches. This comprehensive approach underscores the commitment to elevating the standards of coaching in Egypt and fostering long-term success in sports development.

2. Mohamed Hassan - Balancing multiple roles and passions, he primarily dedicates himself to his position as a property consultant, leveraging his expertise to navigate the Egyptian real estate market. However, he doesn't limit himself to one domain; he also immerses himself in the vibrant world of Egyptian street food walking tours, where he serves as a knowledgeable guide catering to foreign tourists, conducting tours in fluent English. Beyond his professional endeavours, he also nurtures creative interests as an art director, web designer, and social media creator.

3. Zeyad Kelani - Amidst the joyous occasion of tying the knot, Zeyad embarks on a new chapter in his professional journey, now positioned at the Central Bank. His timing aligns with the institution's restructuring phase, presenting him with a unique opportunity to contribute significantly to its evolution. Entrusted with a core mandate of ensuring financial stability on a broad scale, Zeyad finds himself engaged in captivating work. The involvement of the Governor of the Central Bank in a myriad of initiatives underscores the complexity of his role, often requiring collaboration with various other banks.

4. Yasser ElZahhar - Yasser continues to excel in his role as Chief Operating Officer for Abjjad, a prominent platform dedicated to Arabic Ebooks, maintaining a steadfast focus on a particularly impactful project amidst challenging times. His latest endeavour involved facilitating free accounts on the platform for individuals from Gaza, offering a lifeline during the crisis. Initially uncertain about the response, Yasser and his team have been pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming demand. With over 3000 Palestinians signed up and collectively spent 35,000 hours of reading, the project has surpassed expectations. The rollout has garnered widespread appreciation, with direct expressions of gratitude from users via Twitter. The whole team knew they achieved their mission when a user from Gaza Tweeted "Thank you for turning down the sound of war".

5. Amr Hashem - Amr maintains his position at the Central Bank of Egypt while also delving into the dynamic realm of event management with "Bellies en route." Recently, he played a pivotal role in the establishment of their new headquarters situated in the iconic building of The GrEEK Campus in Cairo. Amidst his professional commitments, Amr is also channelling his creative energy into developing a documentary proposal focused around building bridges between East and West mirroring the core objective of The Shafik Gabr Foundation. Despite his demanding schedule, Amr finds time to represent the Central Bank in sporting endeavours, recently he was

chosen to represent the organisation in both basketball and squash. However in the end he had to choose one. Having chosen squash his team went on to qualify for the national competition and secured an impressive third place.

6. Omar Raafat: Omar Raafat has taken on a significant role as the manager of the Mediterranean Foundation, an NGO working in close collaboration with the Minister of Interior and funded by the European Union. Under his leadership, the foundation has been actively involved in various initiatives aimed at social and economic development. One notable effort has been the rehabilitation and reintegration of recently released prisoners, providing them with opportunities to rebuild their lives through small grants to start their own projects. Additionally, Raafat has been instrumental in maintaining a strong connection with the Economic and Social Council, ensuring effective communication and collaboration with the committee on NGOs. Through these efforts, the Mediterranean Foundation, under Omar Raafat's guidance, continues to make a positive impact on the community and foster sustainable development in the region.

Mr. Raafat took the opportunity to highlight a pivotal decision he is facing regarding a potential opportunity at the University of Illinois. The government-affiliated institution has a professor who has expressed interest in hiring him as an assistant researcher. Seeking guidance, Raafat turns to Mr. Gabr, who advised him to proceed with the offer should it materialise. Mr. Gabr assured him of his support, offering assistance in establishing a network in Chicago.

7. Ahmed Radwan is deeply immersed in the world of improvisational theatre, and is actively involved with an improv group that regularly performs shows. His dedication to the craft extends beyond the stage, as he actively seeks to expand the reach of his performances and engage with a wider audience which he hopes will include Gabr fellows & Mr Shafik Gabr himself. Furthermore, Radwan has secured roles in television, showcasing his versatility and talent in different mediums. He is currently forging a partnership with a university campus to have his own small venue to convert into performance space.

8. Bassma Fahim: Bassma, based in Egypt, just returned from Riyadh, where she was engaged with a task force in Saudi Arabia responsible for managing the ribbon cutting ceremony of the regional headquarters of Sandoz in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The firm has shifted its regional headquarters from Dubai to Saudi Arabia. Bassma has played a crucial role in signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with tender specialists in Saudi Arabia which underlines her pivotal responsibilities encompassing internal and external communication. Her role ensures the effective dissemination of information across the organisation and beyond.



Mr Gabr addressing the Egyptian Fellows

Discussion:

Economic Outlook of Egypt

Mohamed Hassan provided his view on the current economic situation in Egypt, initiating a discussion on potential impacts and strategies. While many expressed optimism, Mr Hashem remained cautious, expressing doubts about the swift recovery of the currency. He emphasises the need for stability as a priority.

Conversely, Mr Raafat suggested that the current regime possesses updated information and is adapting, leading to better macroeconomic control and tighter management of foreign exchange. Amr Hashem offers insights into the UAE's approach, highlighting their strategic investments and emphasising the benefits of partnerships, such as port operations, where Egypt can earn a significant revenue.

However, Mr. Gabr pointed out the agenda of such a deal is not merely economic but significantly political, Egypt potentially defaulting would hurt the region as a whole, and this deal with UAE provides some leeway. He underscored Egypt's strategic significance as a result of its geographic location and size but warns that true progress requires a shift in internal dynamics, citing issues with efficiency, discipline, and bureaucracy. Mr Gabr advocates for increased foreign direct investment (FDI) and streamlining of regulations to foster entrepreneurship. He laments Egypt's underutilised tourism sector and emphasises the transformative potential of loans for infrastructure development accompanied will focus on human development.

Global Dynamics

In the age of social media, the landscape of news dissemination has undergone a significant transformation, making it more challenging to manipulate information according to political agendas. With stories unfolding in real-time and being shared instantaneously, Gen Z's preferences for content, particularly concerning conflicts like the ongoing wars, lean towards

platforms like TikTok over traditional ones like Instagram and Facebook which are more prone to censorship. Influenced by what they see, there's a notable pro-Palestinian sentiment among this demographic. Dalia prioritises the cessation of the war, while Hassan advocates for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

Amidst these discussions, concerns about the potential for a third world war loomed large, fueled by the perceived lack of global leadership evident in ongoing conflicts across various regions - Gaza, Sudan, Ethiopia, Congo, Myanmar, Ukraine. Speculation arose regarding Netanyahu's intentions, with suggestions from Mr Gabr that he sought to provoke Iran into conflict, a move potentially thwarted by US intervention. It's posited that once the immediate conflict subsides, Netanyahu's political trajectory may face its end.

Amr Hashem's Production Proposal: The American Dream In the Land Of The Pharaohs: An Exploration of Egyptian and American Cultural Perspectives

Fellow Amr Hashem presented a production proposal centred around leveraging the abundance of footage from the reunion, with a focus on facilitating cultural exchange and eliciting personal reflections from participants

Despite lacking professional direction and editing resources, the proposal highlighted potential avenues for support. Amr Seda offered access to the faculty of mass media, providing valuable planning, editing, and studio resources. Additionally, connections were made with Aaron Lobel, president of American Abroad Media, facilitated by Mr. Gabr, who expressed readiness to assist.

Furthermore, there was mention of an ongoing movie project in Cairo, depicting the life of renowned belly dancer Badia Masabni and directed by Fancy from London, offering opportunities for involvement in the film industry to interested individuals. However, complications arose as Dale Buxton informed Fellows that the intention to film in Egypt had been redirected elsewhere due to regional complications.

New Cohort Recruitment for 2024 Gabr Fellowship

The discussion on outreach strategies and selection criteria revolved around the upcoming launch of the 2024 Fellowship Program, spearheaded by Mr. Gabr, with Amr Seda enlisted to aid in recruitment efforts. Seeking assistance from other Fellows, particularly in administrative tasks, was identified as beneficial to the process. While suggestions were made to streamline the application process by shortening it, Mr. Gabr expressed disagreement, emphasising the importance of thoroughness in selection criteria.

Apart from outreach to universities, Amr would like to hear other strategies for recruitment from Fellows, please contact Mr Amr Seda (amrseda@gmail.com) or Mr Alen Amini (alenamini@gmail.com) should you have any thoughts.

The applications are now open here <https://www.eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/how-to-apply/> through to July 15th.

Mr Gabr would also like to hear from Fellows if there is any interest in relation to hosting webinars led by industry experts - if so kindly submit to Mr Seda & Mr Amini your feedback. The first of its kind webinar will be hosted by Stephen Olson globally-recognized trade and geopolitical expert with a Focus on Asia.