



UN Alliance of Civilizations FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME Press articles 2011 & 2012

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arab news

OIC hosts delegation from UN Alliance of Civilization



Author: Jeddah: Arab News
Saturday 14 April 2012

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) hosted fellows from the **United Nations Alliance of Civilization** (AoC) for a three-day visit to Jeddah, the first such visit by the **AoC Fellowship Program**.

The OIC organized a program for the 12-member European and North American delegation, from April 11-13. It included visits to NGOs, economic and business institutions, higher education and media institutions as well as arts and cultural activities.

The **fellowship program** is one of several launched by the AoC as part of its efforts to facilitate intercultural dialogue at the grass-roots level, one of the OIC's activities to foster better understanding among people of different cultures and break through stereotypes and misconceptions.

The delegation was headed by Jean Christophe Bas, the AoC director, and included 12 fellows with different professional backgrounds from Europe and the US. Bas met Ambassador Vefahan Ocak, director general of Cabinet at the OIC, before both opened the discussion between the fellows and OIC staff.

The delegation was given a brief overview of the OIC, its departments and activities. This was followed by a long discussion and exchange of views on current political issues in OIC member states, and included economic issues, women's issues, the media and the youth.

The group visited the Islamic Development Bank, an affiliate of the OIC, where they also received a briefing on the different programs and projects undertaken by the IDB and its subsidiary institutions.

The delegation visited the Help Center NGO for disabled children and Injaz for empowering youth. There they met the founders and directors of these two pioneering institutions and were introduced to the work and activities they do.

The group also visited Dar Al-Hekma College for girls where they were impressed by the students and their level of awareness and aspiration. Later they toured Tashkiel, an arts, design and marketing company founded by Sofana Dahlan, herself an AoC fellow. They were completely taken by what they saw of paintings and traditional outfits and jewelry by artist Safiya Binzagr at her Dar Safiya Binzagr Art Gallery.

Arab News newspaper and Sayidaty magazine hosted a working lunch for the delegation where there was a lively discussion about media and women's issues. The questions and issues raised opened the door for an interesting exchange of points of view.

The energetic tone of discussion was carried over to a later meeting with officials at King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue, which invited a group of university students. The debate touched on many controversial issues and topics of national and international concern and impacted the delegation.

Official meetings over, the delegation was given a tour of Jeddah's historic Balad area.

There the group enjoyed a guided walking tour provided by Jeddah municipality, in the narrow alleys, to the souk and inside the landmark Naseef House with its traditional architecture. The group also visited Beit Sami Angawi, the well-known architect who designed his house, which reflects the traditional style of the Kingdom's architectural heritage.



Television: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjyN3fWjN0E>

UNAOC Middle East Fellowship

Reporter: Silvia Anglin
Camera: Christie C. Takahashi
Editor: Christie C. Takahashi

TRT: 2:44;23

(C) 2011 BronxNet Community Television

0:03 / 2:55

CC Settings Clock Full Screen

The image shows a video player interface. The main content area is black with white text. At the bottom, there is a grey control bar with a play button, a volume icon, a progress bar showing 0:03 / 2:55, and icons for closed captions (CC), settings (gear), a clock, and full screen.

ISLAM | Dentro del corazón de La Meca, **Amanda Figueras (Enviada especial)** | La Meca
Actualizado **domingo 24/06/2012 04:31 horas**

"Lo siento, no os puedo prestar mi conductor mañana, lo mejor es que vayáis en taxi, si Dios quiere no tendréis ningún problema, pero salid temprano". Era el consejo de un alto directivo saudí la tarde anterior, ante la insistencia por ir a conocer la ciudad santa de **La Meca, prohibida para todo aquel que no es musulmán.**

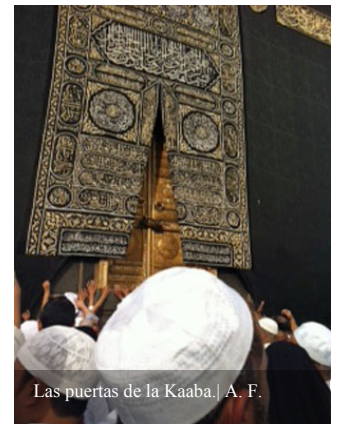


La hora de salida pactada, **las 5.30 de la madrugada**, tenía como objetivo evitar aglomeraciones, el calor y tratar de sortear los controles policiales. Tan temprano habría menos probabilidad de que alguien nos detuviera para pedirnos la documentación. Viajábamos **dos hombres y dos mujeres**, pero entre nosotros no había otra relación que la de compañeros como **becarios del programa de Alianza de Civilizaciones** de la ONU, y temíamos estar infringiendo alguna norma de las que restringen la libre circulación en el país.

Tampoco todos llevaban un **documento que acreditara su condición de musulmanes** y que las autoridades podrían exigir al entrar en la ciudad, al

no haber nacido en países donde esta religión es mayoritaria.

Sólo **una hora en coche** separa una mundanal -al estilo islámico- Yeda de la idealizada ciudad sagrada. Para los musulmanes, pisar la **tierra natal del profeta Mahoma** y estar frente a la **Kaaba**, en la mezquita Al Haram, hacia la que cada día dirigen sus cinco oraciones es un privilegio y desata un gran torrente de emociones. **"La mayoría de la gente que viene por primera vez rompe a llorar en el mismo momento en que ven la mezquita de la Meca**, es muy emocionante ver cuánto se conmueven... yo estoy más acostumbrada", dice una joven mequí residente en Yeda.



Las puertas de la Kaaba. | A. F.

Los hombres del grupo, un estadounidense de origen cachemir y un francés de padres argelinos, habían logrado hacerse el día anterior en el mercado de la parte vieja de Yeda con la ropa necesaria para realizar los **actos rituales** islámicos de la **visita a La Meca ('Umrah', como se dice en árabe)**. "¿Está bien puesto?, ¿No se me caerá?", se preguntan mientras ajustaban los imperdibles. El 'uniforme' se compone de **dos telas sin costuras**, por lo general se usa una especie de toalla o pieza de algodón de color blanco. Las mujeres pueden ir como deseen, siempre cumpliendo con la modestia y pudor que se les presupone a los musulmanes y, eso sí, siempre con el velo islámico.



Rezando en la mezquita de La Meca. | A. F.

El taxista, un inmigrante indio, hizo amablemente de guía. Durante el camino, mientras unos dormían y otros iban **concentrándose en el propósito religioso** con el que afrontaban la experiencia, él daba las claves. "Estaréis dos horas dentro de la mezquita, con ese tiempo podréis hacerlo todo: las **siete vueltas a la Kaaba** y los **recorridos entre los montes de Safa y Marwa**. Nos vemos debajo de la Torre del Reloj cuando terminéis, allí os espero 'inshallah' [si Dios quiere]".

"Labbayka la sharika laka labbayk. Inna al-hamd wa-l-ni'amata laka wa-l-mulk. La sharika laka Labbayk", se escuchaba de fondo en el taxi. O lo que es lo mismo: "Dios mío he escuchado tu llamada y he respondido a ella. No tienes igual. Ciertamente Tú eres el único que merece la alabanza. La gracia y el poder únicamente te pertenecen a Tí"... como repiten quienes emprenden este viaje.

La ampliación, en entredicho

Aparcar fue complicado, hubo que dejar el coche lejos de Al Haram. Desde aquel improvisado aparcamiento, como sucede ya a kilómetros de La Meca, se ve imponente el altísimo edificio del Reloj -mide siete veces más que los minaretes de la mezquita-.

En los últimos años, la ampliación de la mezquita así como las ostentosas construcciones circundantes han suscitado encendidas críticas. El peso de la construcción ha corrido a cargo del Saudi Binladin Group, la empresa de la familia del fallecido líder de Al Qaeda. Primero, allá por 1950, se encargaron de la extensión de la mezquita del Profeta en Medina -otra de las paradas de la peregrinación ['Haj']-; y cinco años después comenzaron con las obras en La Meca.



La Torre del Reloj, en La Meca. | A. F.

Se cuestiona que históricas columnas de mármol fueran reemplazadas por otras de piedra artificial, la destrucción de las colinas cercanas y de edificios y con importancia histórica.

"Han arrasado de manera innecesaria. Había que ampliar La Meca para dar cabida al creciente número de peregrinos musulmanes, pero lo han hecho sin respetar el entorno y la naturaleza. Era posible hacerlo mucho mejor", dice el prominente arquitecto y filósofo saudí **Sami Angawi**, en una entrevista en su casa de Yeda.

Acusa a los líderes religiosos, **wahabíes** -una de las ramas más rigoristas del islam-, de no haber permitido la conservación de construcciones antiguas, especialmente las relacionadas con el Profeta, para **evitar la idolatría**.

Como dice el arquitecto, la sombra de la Torre del Reloj, que alberga un lujoso hotel y está rodeado de otras edificaciones comerciales, empequeñece a la Kaaba. "No han aprendido de los errores de otras grandes ciudades de Occidente y **están haciendo como si se tratara de un lugar cualquiera cuando en realidad se trata de un santuario, de la casa de Dios**".

El reino de **Arabia Saudí** se enorgullece de su tarea como guardián de dos de los lugares de culto más importantes para los musulmanes y, gustos aparte, nadie discute su importante **esfuerzo económico**. En 2008 dieron un último impulso. Se emprendió la ampliación para permitir elevar de 44.000 hasta 118.000 el número de peregrinos que podrían hacer los ritos por hora y para que en la zona central de la mezquita, en la que se encuentra la Kaaba, **115.600 personas pudieran rezar a la vez**.

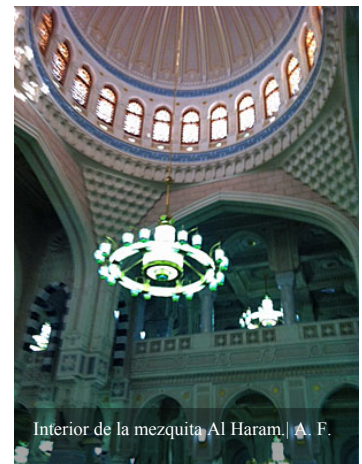
El reto de tocar la Piedra Negra

"¡No me creo que esté aquí! Mi madre empezó a llorar cuando le conté que venía" -dice mi compañera, de origen argelino pero residente en EEUU, y musulmana "poco practicante", según se describe-. Su madre es una de los millones de musulmanes en el mundo que no han podido ir a La Meca por no haber conseguido el visado.

El gobierno saudí, a través de su **Ministerio de la Peregrinación**, gestiona los cupos de visitantes para la peregrinación anual. De media, en los últimos años han recibido 1,7 millones de peregrinos.

El **mármol blanco** refleja la magnificencia de la mezquita, que tiene tres niveles y en la que se ha pavimentado también el techo para aumentar su capacidad. Al entrar, **una mujer policía vestida de negro y con el rostro también tapado revisa los bolsos**. Un poco más adelante nos indican que hay que dejar los zapatos. Para ello hay cientos de estantes numerados a los lados de los pasillos que desembocan en el patio central. "Allah akbar" [Dios es grande], se oye sin cesar.

Con los pies descalzos, **el calor del suelo se transmite a todo el cuerpo**. Tras unas primeras oraciones, los peregrinos circunvalan alrededor de la Kaaba, el pequeño edificio rectangular que es considerado de manera simbólica como la casa de Dios. Las tres primeras vueltas se deben hacer de modo apresurado y las cuatro restantes, andando normalmente.



Interior de la mezquita Al Haram. | A. F.

"¡Bismillahi wa Allahu Akbar!" [En nombre de Dios y Dios es más grande] gritan los peregrinos **levantando la mano como un saludo, cuando pasan por las puertas doradas de la Kaaba**, justo al lado de la Piedra Negra. Muchos serpentean con fuerza para **intentar besar el supuesto meteorito tal como hizo Mahoma**.

"**Ahora dentro de ella no hay nada, aparte de unas columnas, pero estar allí es muy emocionante**", explica un joven saudí, de las pocas personas que han tenido el privilegio de entrar. Él estuvo limpiando su interior, como se hace en contadas ocasiones al año, igual que se cambia la **tela negra con versículos del Corán bordados a mano con hilo de oro**. En las paredes de las casas de las personas influyentes del país suelen lucir sus retales enmarcados. Y para los anfitriones es un orgullo mostrarlos a sus invitados.

'Fue liberador'

A medida que se realizan las vueltas a la Kaaba sube la emoción. En el camino uno se encuentra con gentes de muy diversas nacionalidades. **Sollozos, esperanzas y suspiros en todos los idiomas fluyen como los pasos**. "Sientes la 'Ummah' [comunidad] como en ningún otro sitio, **todos somos unos, somos iguales. Nosotros y Dios, nada más importa, ni lo que tenemos ni lo que nos falta**. Fue liberador", reflexiona un compañero.

Casi irremediabilmente, el grupo se dispersó durante las circunvalaciones. El siguiente ritual es completar **siete veces el recorrido que separa las colinas**, y que está cubierto dentro del mismo perímetro de la mezquita. Son **unos 400 metros, hay desnivel, los pies descalzos acaban doloridos**. Algunos andan casi a ciegas **con la vista puesta en pequeños libros de oraciones**. Entre las imágenes más impactantes está la de los ancianos que hacen el trayecto en carros o sillas de ruedas **empujados bien por familiares más jóvenes** o por personas a las que pagan -alrededor de 21 euros- para tal servicio.



Los peregrinos recuerdan así cómo **Agar, la esposa de Abraham, hizo el mismo recorrido** en busca de agua para su hijo **Ismael**. Tras ir de Safa a Marwa siete veces para ver si hallaba ayuda, dice la tradición que la mujer encontró que en el lugar **donde el niño tenía su pie manaba un manantial**, el famoso **pozo de ZamZam**. Así fue cómo el valle árido tuvo vida y permitió que la gente habitara estas tierras, donde se fundó la ciudad de La Meca.

La gente usa el agua de ZamZam **a modo de medicina**, es el mejor recuerdo que uno puede llevarse de la visita. Dentro de la mezquita hay varios puntos en los que beberla, tanques y vasos de plástico dispuestos para el peregrino. También pensando en su comodidad y seguridad, los equipos de limpieza trabajan sin cesar, **literalmente corriendo, acordonan el espacio por áreas y limpian**, mientras los caminantes los esquivan como pueden.

El mismo esmero con la limpieza lo hay en los aseos públicos, un enorme espacio en el subsuelo al que se accede mediante escaleras mecánicas: hay **cientos de retretes, hileras de grifos** en los que hacer las abluciones [limpieza ritual del cuerpo necesaria para rezar]. "Hasta esto parece especial, es increíble que esté tan limpio", dice mi compañera.

Como estaba previsto, el grupo se reencontró con el taxista a la hora fijada, debajo de la Torre del Reloj. Ahí afuera todo seguía igual, pero en el grupo había quien se sentía renacido.

EL PAIS

La revolución saudí es de las mujeres by Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos 19 ABR 2012

En Arabia Saudí las mujeres van cubiertas de cuerpo entero y con velo, pero sus mentes son libres

Hace poco tuve la oportunidad de viajar a Arabia Saudí gracias a una beca de la **Alianza de Civilizaciones de las Naciones Unidas** (UNAOC). Admito que antes de este viaje jamás había escuchado nada bueno sobre este país. Mujeres oprimidas, violaciones de los derechos humanos, policía religiosa, condenas de muerte. En fin, nada positivo. Para colmo a uno de nuestros becarios le negaron el visado y tuvimos que despedirnos de él antes de lo planeado. Ya en Yeda, las mujeres del grupo no pudimos salir del hotel hasta que nos trajeron nuestras **abayas**, vestido negro y largo que cubre todo el cuerpo. Atrapadas en una jaula de oro, así es como nos sentimos. Las ganas de conocer más de este país eran mínimas. Mientras tanto, los hombres del grupo pudieron moverse libremente y salir de paseo. El escenario confirmaba nuestros prejuicios, sobre todo, en cuanto a la segregación de las mujeres.

¡Como cambió nuestra opinión al día siguiente! Visitamos varias organizaciones, organizaciones no gubernamentales, instituciones y universidades. Conocimos a gente joven, a artistas, periodistas, representantes de la Organización de Cooperación Islámica y del Banco de Desarrollo Islámico. Y siempre, a donde íbamos, las personas que más nos impactaban eran las mujeres. Sí, van cubiertas de cuerpo entero y con velo, pero sus mentes son libres.

Cuando visitamos la universidad para mujeres Dar al-Hekma, que significa **casa de la sabiduría** en árabe, conocimos a estudiantes y profesoras seguras de sí mismas, con mentes brillantes y personalidades fuertes. En esta universidad les enseñan a ser dueñas de su propio destino, a ser empresarias. “Las chicas que salen de esta universidad no buscan trabajo, lo crean”, nos explicaron. Las estudiantes también incorporan su cultura en los proyectos que diseñan. Por ejemplo, cuando bosquejaron casas de bajo coste, la cocina estaba incorporada de tal forma que las mujeres podían moverse libremente en ella sin ser vistas desde otras habitaciones. En esta universidad generan a un nuevo tipo de mujer, uno que está acostumbrado a hablar con jefes de Estado y que no tiene miedo de decir lo que piensa.

Más tarde, en un almuerzo con periodistas de Arab News, nos preguntaron qué pensábamos de las mujeres de Arabia Saudí. Respondí que a lo largo de todo el viaje que nos llevó por tres países, Marruecos, Jordania y Arabia Saudí, siempre hubo una conexión instantánea entre las mujeres de nuestro grupo, de origen europeo y estadounidense, y las mujeres del lugar. Y entre todas las mujeres que conocimos, las que más nos impresionaron fueron las saudíes. Tal vez porque no coincidían para nada con nuestra imagen de la mujer oprimida, tímida y sin voz ni voto. Al contrario, las mujeres que conocimos son fuertes, orgullosas, francas y luchadoras.

“Esta es una edad de oro para las mujeres saudíes. Cualquier cosa que hagamos, seremos las primeras mujeres saudíes en haberlo hecho”, nos explicó una chica en una reunión con jóvenes del centro Rey Abdulaziz para Culturas del Mundo. Expresaron que ven más oportunidades de éxito para ellas en su país que en Occidente, a pesar de que es más difícil. Las felicitamos por ser tan activas y notamos cuán poco, en cambio, habían dicho sus colegas hombres. “Nos han dejado de lado demasiado tiempo, ahora nos toca hablar”, nos dijo una joven.

No crean que este viaje me ha lavado el cerebro, que ya no veo los problemas. Estas mismas mujeres nos hablaron sobre cómo aún necesitan el permiso de un hombre para trabajar o viajar, como no pueden conducir ni hacer deporte abiertamente o lo difícil que es tener citas con hombres. Los retos a los que se enfrentan son varios y complejos. “Ten en mente siempre el impacto y el momento adecuado para los cambios”, nos aconsejaron. Mientras tanto, las mujeres saudíes se mueven como el agua: cuando se topa con un obstáculo, lo bordea y sigue su camino.

Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos es periodista boliviana/alemana, co-fundadora y miembro de la junta directiva de International Young Women Partnership, una red que impulsa las carreras de mujeres, y becaria de UNAOC 2012

THE HUFFINGTON POST

The Morning After -12 September 2011 by Christopher Holshek

“That means any discussion of 9/11 must be a globalized discussion between people and not just governments. That's why programs like the [United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Program](#) and other such people-to-people exchanges go further to promoting security than billions of dollars of military hardware. Rather than relying on the media, dozens of international fellows from around the world gain a more thorough understanding of attitudes, politics, business, culture, and society by meeting a variety of people, participating in their way of life, and applying the lessons learned in the their capacity of leadership in their home countries. In today's networked world, it's more about the power of ideas - but more importantly, how ideas could be communicated and made to work in people's lives. Moral power.”

THE HUFFINGTON POST

In Search of an Alliance of Civilizations: Part I by Mohsin Mohi-Ud Din

29 June 2012 "Earlier this year, myself and 11 other young leaders from North America and Europe were invited by the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations** to travel to three countries in the Middle East and North Africa to meet with government officials and youth leaders in order to develop networks and partnerships aimed at improving East-West relations. In the following 4 part series, I will share take-aways from each of the countries we recently visited. Part I will be Morocco; Part II: Jordan, Part III: Saudi Arabia; Part IV will be an analysis of US and MENA relations".

Part I, Morocco: 'Lions for Apples'

RABAT/NEW YORK: Sitting at the Balima Café, across from the Parliament, I realize that not much has changed on the street, at least on the surface. The same 70 year-old man asked me, as he did three years ago, if I wanted to buy peanuts from him. It was this same café where years before I witnessed weekly protests by angry unemployed youth playing 'catch me if you can' with riot police. Days later, on this present trip, myself and the other UNAOC Fellows would be sitting inside the parliament, meeting with female politicians of the opposition party as youth were protesting and chanting relentlessly outside the parliament's walls.



"The Arab Spring in Morocco began well before 2011 and in fact began in 1996," according to one professor from ISESCO. Morocco represents an incremental democracy movement where actual devolution of power was initiated by the current King Mohammad the VIth. Morocco, since the 'Family Code' was reformed in the early 2000s, has seen increased economic development and social reform under King Mohammed VI. Yet, the Arab Spring certainly catalyzed actual implementation of some robust reforms, such as the new constitution, which was reformed via a referendum and new parliamentary elections at the end of 2011, as well as, more public discourse on improving women's rights. Morocco was quick to adapt to the Arab Spring, yet full implementation of reforms remains to be seen. It has been alleged that full implementation is being blocked by the Saudi monarchy, who represent the most powerful monarchy in the region and who are concerned of fellow monarchies giving in too much to calls for removing monarchical powers.

This 'incremental movement' according to some, is still in action today being that "Moroccans believed in peaceful change, not a violent one," according to one youth I spoke with. An example of this peaceful change has been the victory of Islamist PJD party in elections of November 2011.

Be it in our conversations with journalists, university students, artists, or government representatives, the 'cement' or 'glue' of Morocco, to take from Moroccans terminology, are the King and Islam. These are untouchable. The press and artists enjoy limited freedoms as long as they do not cross red tape for either the monarchy or religion. Yet, one will find that no one speaks ill of the king. The king is the unifying force, and more importantly, the stabilizing force of the country. Those challenging the king, or fully expressing themselves, often face prosecution or jail time, as was the case with one magazine creator we met with in Casablanca.

Arab Spring Debate

In America, I had never been in a room of 50 young Arab leaders to engage in debates about key issues of the day. In Morocco, the **UNAOC Fellows** were granted such an opportunity by the British Council. The young leaders debated on topics such as technology, women's rights, Islamists, the terminology of socio-political issues, and the need to reform from within. The main topic of the evening was the Arab Spring. There is visible disagreement amongst the youth on whether the Arab Spring is in fact a positive event. To start, there is widespread discontent with the term 'Arab Spring,' an exhausted term in the media that assumes that there are immediate positive outcomes with democratization, when in actuality there is fear and concern about what the outcomes will be. There is also debate on whether the Arab Spring was an organic movement or manufactured. Overall, young leaders agree that pluralism and tolerance are needed in order to increase partnerships to build a better future for Morocco. Almost all people support King Mohammed VIth and have a moment of hope in the new constitution which, according to liberal opposition groups we met with, creates a clear separation of the judiciary, the legislature, and the monarchy. There is still deep concern about youth unemployment and joblessness among the young educated class. The young leaders I was with expressed their commitment to not leave Morocco and to remain

dedicated to improving their homeland. Many youth stated a desire to "grow something here, at home. Things tailor made in the US and France are not representative of the world," said one youth at the British Council debate.

True to the shadow of contradictions that make the MENA region difficult to navigate, optimism in progress and youth activism is tethered to a fear that violence in Egypt and Syria may spread to other Arab nations and set back any gains recently achieved.

Liberal intellectual elites and secular opposition politicians we met inside parliament find that the current Islamist led government, (PJD party), will create barriers for women's empowerment and may impose social conservatism as power grows. One politician tells me that "there is no such thing as a moderate Islamist ... Morocco does not need to import Wahhab models of Islam, we don't need to look Turkey or Iran." From the perspective of the liberal opposition groups, any gains made in the last 10 years may be eroded by the Islamist party, PJD the longer they are in power. However, the PJD won the most amount of votes, which is telling of either a growing conservatism in society, or, more popular trust in the anti-corruption and economic reform agendas of the PJD.

Female politicians inside parliament expressed to us the view that the Arab Spring is not easily applicable to the Moroccan context. Amidst the chants of protesters frustrated by high youth unemployment, a female politician raised her voice and said "they (Egypt and Tunisia) had a revolution, we (Morocco) had an evolution, a long one." The protests demanding more jobs have been going on 10 years before the Arab Spring. Opposition members also expressed faith in the new constitution which has since last July, called for separation of powers legislative and judiciary and monarchy and calls for increased women's equality and education reform and increased political parties representation in parliament. Yet according to one parliamentarian, "the problem is not the constitution but its implementation, which relies on changing the old mentalities." It is such 'old mentalities' that continue to block full women's rights and full freedom of the press and political expression. But these battles are happening within and the youth made it clear that no outsider should impose its own definitions of what full civil rights and democracy mean.

Education vs. Critical Thinking

The youth and educators are open and eager to develop stronger bonds with Europe, while still maintaining their traditions of the King and Islam. In meetings with the president of the Sidi University in Fez, partnerships and technology transfers from U.S universities to Moroccan universities, especially with regards to sciences and entrepreneurship, was a major priority. Yet, I observed that an unchallenged barrier to educational partnership and reform in the education sector stems from the lack of encouragement for critical thinking within academics and lack of space for open debates that foster pluralism and a diversity of perspectives.

I encountered an example of this barrier with one Quran teacher in Casablanca who seemed to differentiate between education and critical thinking. In their logic, one needs to first memorize and learn everything before being allowed to debate and form critical thought. In the West, critical thinking and open debate are embedded in education. This gap between education and reflexivity is not limited to how the Quran is taught, but in how educators teach material in many schools in some Arab countries. Critical thinking and reflexivity, which are needed for the conditions of pluralism and cooperation to flourish, seem to be lacking due these mentalities that differentiate critical thinking and education.



Concerns with the West

Moroccans are well aware of growing Islamophobia in the West and abhor America's foreign policies in the Muslim world. They feel that it is time the West listen and support whatever is coming out of Morocco, and not dictate or judge Morocco's incremental changes and period of transition. An often referenced barrier to improving East-West relations is the unresolved question of Palestine.

Being that the Palestine question remains firmly tied to the status quo, the West, in particular Europe, can most improve relations with Arabs in Morocco by facilitating economic development, aiding in job creation and training, and sending technological capital to universities in the Arab-Muslim societies. International university partnerships and East-West city development public private partnerships between Europe, America, and Morocco are likely to improve East-West relations. Yet, beyond the dialogue and words of partnership, there needs to be concessions on both sides. For the West, there has to be acceptance with the need for letting go of control of how partnerships should be managed in the MENA region. The pace to partnerships is slower and terminology that in the West is normal, may need reformulation in MENA societies. And in Morocco, there needs to be a willingness to intellectually

stimulate critical thinking as a means of generating innovation that in the long run will create economic development and employment. Civil dissent is a necessary price to pay for development and innovation.

Reflections from Morocco

An important ingredient for MENA's progress is to first foster spaces of innovation guided by reflexivity. Democratization, simply defined in the West as free and fair elections, is in and of itself an inadequate tool for changing the status quo in MENA societies. If the players change but the system does not, then there will be no 'Spring.' On the other hand, if the youth of the Arab Spring are to be listened to, then what needs more resources and international support is the local civil society, which already maintains a strong tradition and routine in Moroccan society, unlike democracy.

In Morocco's youth, I saw several youth led projects for activism and development. Things are not as black or white as we often are lead to believe in the America. Democracy has no one meaning and one path. Neither is Arab-Islamic culture defined by one road. What is for certain however, is that the Arab youth of today are building new roads. The youth feel change, they feel empowered, and realize the need to reform from within first, before taking on the outside world. Next stop, Jordan.



INTER PRESS SERVICE

News Agency

“Identities Do Not Have Borders” by Christian Papesch

UNITED NATIONS, Sep 21 2011 (IPS) - Sep. 11, 2001 deeply affected the relations between the United States and Europe on one hand and North Africa and the Middle East on the other.

Exactly 10 years after the attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, six young women and six young men from Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait and several other Arab countries started a two-week trip through the United States and Europe. They are part of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations’ (UNAOC) fellowship programme** that was first launched last year.



Six young women and six young men from Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait and other Arab countries are on a two-week trip through the United States and Europe. Credit: Christian Papesch/IPS

“After Sep. 11, as a Saudi, I was affected as much as Americans were affected due to the actions of certain individuals and the reactions of most governments,” said Sofana Dahlan, founder of Tashkeil, a multidisciplinary centre for culture and design in Saudi Arabia, and one of the UNAOC fellowship holders. “The bridges that were connecting our cultures in the past were demolished. It is time for us and the people from the United States to reconstruct these bridges and to re-establish new, fundamentals of exchanging cultures and accepting each others’ ideas,” she told IPS.

This is also the goal of the UNAOC, founded 2005 as a platform for dialogue and cooperation and to prevent demonising and stereotyping on both sides. “The alliance has been created in the aftermath of 9/11,” said

Jean- Christophe Bas, senior advisor for strategic development and partnerships with the UNAOC. “The objective was to create understanding and trust between the Western world and the Muslim world,” Bas continued. “The reason why there is so much fear and tension and conflict between cultures in most cases is by pure ignorance. It’s because people just don’t know each other.”

Getting to know each other’s culture, not through the media but through face-to-face dialogue with decision-makers, is also a key goal of the **fellowship programme**. Twenty-four women and men ranging in age from 26 to 38, who are considered emerging leaders in their societies, participate – 12 from the United States and Europe, 12 from North Africa and the Middle East.

Some of the fellows who were visiting New York last week – and continued on to Washington D.C., Philadelphia, London, Paris and Brussels – have never been to the U.S. before. Nevertheless, Anas Dharweesh from Syria already felt familiar with the country.

“It was too familiar, actually,” said the acting project manager of SHABAB, the executive arm of the Syria Trust for Development. “American culture is spread all over the world. If you want to see America, it’s two metres away from you. You got the TV, any movie, Hollywood (film) industry, sitcoms, songs.”

But some parts of New York City that the fellows saw during their stay are usually absent from the media. “Yesterday, I went to the Bronx and it was revealing,” Lebanese lawyer Dala Ghandour, who has been to the United States before, told IPS.

“I did not know that the most powerful country in the world has this kind of poverty. I was just amazed by the gap between the very rich and the very poor. You could see this trend all over the world. Some people are getting richer and some people are getting poorer. And I think this is a big danger to the whole world – because this problem also causes terrorism.”

Another thing the 12 fellows could not get from the media was the personal contact and the opportunity to get to know local communities and decision-makers personally – to shake hands, to ask questions, to interact.

“Nothing can replace the opportunity to talk and to see by themselves the other world,” Bas said. “They can meet and talk with whoever is relevant and would give them a sense of their view of the society, their values, their beliefs. That’s the principle of this fellowship programme.”

For example, the trip included meetings with Jeffrey Sachs from Columbia University’s Earth Institute and a visit to the United Nations headquarters. “You always tend to think that these people are really living in a tower and they’re not really human beings and you just get them in emails,” said Sarah Zaami, a Moroccan journalist and author of the award-winning blog Words for Change.

“But I think the point of this fellowship is to make decision makers accessible to this young generation, because we don’t have this accessibility every day. In our countries you couldn’t believe how complicated it is to get to the decision makers,” she told IPS.

The fellowship programme is not only an opportunity to get to know the United States and Europe, but also to learn more about young leaders from the Middle East region. “Even interacting with my fellow colleagues gave me a new perception about life and about their cultures,” said Sofana Dahlan. “We are not all the same. We cannot be treated all the same just because we are Arab or Muslims. And therefore we have to focus on individuals rather than stereotyping the West or the East.”

In a time of political change, reforms and revolutions, especially in North Africa, the interaction between emerging leaders, global decision makers and each other could become a key to create new, stable societies. Some of the fellows participated actively in the so-called Arab Spring, although they would not all call it that.

“To just say that we are Arab is very stereotypical,” Sarah Zaami explains. “Because identities do not have borders. Identities are very complex spheres that you cannot divide. These are all constructions that politics do, not that humans do.”



INTER PRESS SERVICE

News Agency

SYRIA: Conscience Is Their Only Armour by Mathilde Bagneres.-29 Juin 2012

(...) “The violence is drastically escalating and the sectarian strife has become unavoidable with the mounting numbers of explosions, torture, and massacres in many areas in the country,” Jasmin Roman, a Syrian youth activist, told IPS.

Roman recently visited New York as a member of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC) fellowship programme, which seeks to improve trust and cooperation between the Muslim world and the West.

She told IPS that amid the violence, Syrians remained resilient in their efforts to rebuild their lives within the crumbling state.

“The hyperinflation, rising unemployment, scarcity and skyrocketing prices of essential food and non-food items are exhausting the Syrians and exacerbating their struggle to afford their daily basic needs,” Roman said.

Though the media spotlights the male militant aspect of the conflict, “Throughout the uprising, women in Syria have been significantly participating and contributing at various levels, organising themselves, distributing assistance, supporting the affected families, securing funds to help people, and even providing psychosocial support to the children,” Roman told IPS.

For the moment, Syria’s future tilts in the balance, resting on the implementation Annan’ peace plan. The plan remains the centrepiece of international intervention, pushed forward by the loosely defined consensus of the international community to increase pressure on the Syrian government and threaten consequences in the event of non-compliance. What form the escalated intervention will take is yet to be defined, but Annan is resolute in his calls for unity, “For the sake of the people who are living through this nightmare, the international community must come together and act as one.”



اتفاق ثلث او بوعشلا ني ب مهافتلا زي زعتل الكري ماً نوبوجي شاباً قيادياً 12 نمض نازولا ١١ دحل - 2011 ربه مئبس 11 دحل

- الرحلة ستشمل واشنطن وفيلادلفيا وباريس وبروكسل ولندن في الولايات المتحدة وأوروبا
- المشاركون سيجتمعون مع تشكيلة واسعة من الأفراد والجماعات بمن فيهم قادة المجتمعات المحلية والمنظمات غير الحكومية والصحافيون وصانعو القرار والمؤسسات البارزة في أميركا

وصل أمس الى مدينة نيويورك 12 من القادة الشباب بينهم من الكويت ضاري الوزان وذلك في سياق الذكرى السنوية العاشرة لاحداث الحادي عشر من سبتمبر وذلك بهدف التواصل واكتساب المعرفة وايجاد فهم متوازن للولايات المتحدة واوربا وسيكون المشاركون جزءا من برنامج مدته اسبوعان تم تنظيمه تحت رعاية برنامج الأمم المتحدة لتحالف الحضارات (UNAOC) وتمويل من المجلس الثقافي البريطاني وبالشراكة مع جامعة الدول العربية ومنظمة الايسيسكو ومعهد التعليم الدولي واللجنة القطرية لتحالف الحضارات.

وتم اختيار المشاركين الاثني عشر من بين مئات الطلبات المقدمة وتشمل الى جانب الوزان صحافيا من الجزائر ومدونين من المغرب ومصر وسيدة اعمال اجتماعية من المملكة العربية السعودية ومحاميا من لبنان ومدير برامج في «06N» وهي منظمة غير حكومية للشباب.

ونظرا لاهمية هذه الذكرى (11 سبتمبر) فان الزيارة جاءت في وقتها حيث ان العالم يسعى الى ايجاد سبل للتوصل الى السلام الدائم بين الأمم والثقافات والمجتمعات وفي سياق الاحتفالات فان منظمة (UNAOC) والتي تعمل جنبا الى جنب مع شركائها من اجل تعزيز التفاهم بين الشعوب والثقافات تتخذ اجراءات ملموسة لتأسيس قادة لبناء الثقة والتفاهم.

وبرنامج الزمالات هو الاول والوحيد لتبادل المحترفين الشباب في العالم العربي واوربا والولايات المتحدة ومن خلال الدعم المادي والعيني من مصادر عربية واوربية واميركا الشمالية وكمبادرة لتبادل خبرات الشباب يعتبر هذا البرنامج هو الوحيد من نوعه في هذا الصدد.

وستشمل الرحلة التوقف في العاصمة واشنطن وفيلادلفيا وباريس وبروكسل ولندن، في الولايات المتحدة واوربا وسيجتمع المشاركون مع تشكيلة واسعة من الافراد والجماعات بمن في ذلك قادة المجتمعات المحلية والمنظمات غير الحكومية والصحافيون وصانعو القرار والمؤسسات البارزة في الولايات المتحدة.

والهدف من الاجتماع خلق فرصة لهؤلاء القادة الشباب الناشئين ليروا بانفسهم واقع المجتمعات الاخرى لتفكيك الصور التقليدية وليصبحوا رسل علاقات جديدة بين الغرب والعالم الاسلامي على اساس التعاون والثقة كما قال جان كريستوف باس مستشار (UNAOC).

ان الهدف من المشاركة والمنحة هو تعزيز المعرفة المتبادلة والتفاهم بين الشعوب والمجتمعات من البلدان ذات الاغلبية المسلمة من دول العالم العربي بشكل اساسي ومن اوربا وأميركا الشمالية وخلق فرصة لدمج هؤلاء القادة من تلك المجتمعات لمعرفة الحقائق والبيئة الثقافية والسياسية والدينية للآخرين وجزءا من المشاركة سيقوم 12 من المشاركين من الولايات المتحدة واوربا لاحقا في فصل الخريف بالسفر الى شمال افريقيا والشرق الاوسط: المغرب ومصر وقطر في رحلة مماثلة وسيقومون بالاجتماع مع هيئات حكومية ومدنية واجتماعية ومجموعات اخرى ذات علاقة بهذا الموضوع.

Maroc - La victoire de l'islamisme modéré ?

Jean-Frédéric Légaré-Tremblay 14 juillet 2012 Actualités internationals



Photo : Agence France-Presse Abdelhak Senna

Le 10 juin dernier, à Rabat, des milliers de manifestants ont dénoncé l'inaction du gouvernement face au coût de la vie.

Il n'y a pas qu'en Tunisie et en Égypte que les islamistes accèdent aux commandes de l'État. Lui aussi entraîné par la vague de contestation du Printemps arabe, le Maroc a procédé à des réformes qui ont pavé la voie aux islamistes, aujourd'hui au gouvernement. La modération et le pragmatisme dont ils ont fait preuve dans un premier temps dureront-ils ?

Assise au bout de la table dans un restaurant d'hôtel, la journaliste et photographe dans la jeune trentaine Leïla Gandhi répond sans ambages aux questions des Nord-Américains et des Européens sceptiques devant l'appel au port du voile obligatoire lancé par des députés islamistes du Parlement marocain. « Je n'ai pas peur du tout que cela soit imposé. Ce n'est pas une idée répandue chez les élus, même islamistes. Ce ne sont que des voix minoritaires. »

La globe-trotter, dont la tenue vestimentaire ne pourrait être plus occidentale, va plus loin pour dissiper les doutes de ses interlocuteurs. « Le PJD [Parti de la justice et du développement, islamiste] a été élu par le peuple. Si les Marocains sont insatisfaits, ils retourneront dans la rue comme ils le font presque tous les jours depuis des années ! »

Toujours habités par l'esprit contestataire du Printemps arabe, bien des Marocains sont en effet impatients de voir le nouveau gouvernement tenir les promesses qui l'ont porté au pouvoir lors des législatives de novembre dernier. Or, celles-ci ont très peu à voir avec la religion.

À l'instar des autres pays arabes secoués par la contestation populaire, ce sont le manque d'emplois et la corruption au sommet de l'État qui ont surtout animé les Marocains. Le Mouvement du 20 février (M20), fer de lance de la contestation populaire au Maroc, s'est mobilisé dès 2011 pour réclamer « plus de réformes et de justice sociale », de même que de meilleures perspectives d'emploi pour les jeunes diplômés. Sur les 200 000 diplômés qui arrivent sur le marché chaque année, seuls 80 000 parviennent à se dénicher un emploi. Le roi du Maroc, Mohammed VI, a longtemps signé des lettres personnalisées sommant l'administration publique de trouver un emploi aux jeunes diplômés. Document en main, ceux-ci sonnent aujourd'hui à la porte du gouvernement pour obtenir leur dû...

Au lendemain de son élection, le leader du PJD et chef du gouvernement, Abdelillah Benkirane, a appelé au dialogue « au plus tôt » avec le M20. Et parmi ses principaux engagements, on compte celui de ramener le chômage de 9,1 à 8 % d'ici 2016. Le défi est

encore plus grand chez les jeunes résidant en ville, ceux-là mêmes qui forment le coeur du mouvement de contestation : le taux de chômage dans cette tranche de la population frise les 25 %.

Lourde commande pour un parti au pouvoir pour la première fois de son histoire, qui doit de surcroît satisfaire la majorité de la population s'il veut remporter à nouveau les élections. Ce qui laisse a priori bien peu de place dans l'ordre du jour gouvernemental aux questions de valeurs et de religion et à un programme extrémiste.

Contrairement à leurs homologues tunisiens ou égyptiens, les islamistes du Maroc voient leur marge de manoeuvre limitée par une figure politique quasi sacrée : le roi.

Le roi, un rempart

Face au mouvement de contestation qui agitait le royaume, Mohammed VI a certes procédé à des réformes qui ont culminé avec l'adoption d'une nouvelle constitution en juillet 2011. L'élection du PJD et la détention d'un pouvoir réel par le premier ministre en sont d'ailleurs des conséquences directes. Mais le roi, dont la critique reste formellement interdite, conserve l'essentiel du pouvoir exécutif, outre un pouvoir religieux, que lui confère son titre de « commandeur des croyants ». Il garde ainsi la main haute sur le Conseil supérieur des oulémas, seule institution marocaine habilitée à prononcer des fatwas (avis religieux).

« Le roi est un véritable ciment national », résume la députée Fatiha Layadi, du parti Authenticité et modernité, proche de la monarchie. Bien que des critiques à l'égard du monarque se fassent parfois entendre dans l'intimité des salons - nous l'avons constaté à quelques reprises lors de notre séjour -, la démission du roi ou la fin de la monarchie n'a jamais été exigée par les manifestants. « C'est quelque chose que personne n'oserait demander », confirme Leïla Gandhi.

Malgré ce garde-fou, l'arrivée des islamistes au pouvoir ne manque pas de soulever des craintes à long terme. Leur bilan reste mince, mais certains voient poindre les indices d'une éventuelle radicalisation.

Dans son numéro de fin juin, l'hebdomadaire Jeune Afrique faisait d'ailleurs sa manchette d'un dossier intitulé « Vers un "ordre halal" au Maroc ? » Des artistes tirent en effet la sonnette d'alarme, alors que des membres du PJD appellent à un « art propre » et jugent certains spectacles immoraux. Le ministre de la Communication a soulevé un débat national en avril en annonçant que les deux chaînes de télévision nationale étaient désormais obligées de passer quotidiennement l'appel à la prière, de retransmettre la prière du vendredi et de diffuser 52 minutes par semaine d'émissions religieuses, en plus de s'abstenir de mettre en ondes des publicités faisant la promotion des jeux de hasard.

Les dérives

Autre sortie fracassante en fin de semaine dernière : après qu'un imam radical eut demandé la peine de mort pour un journaliste ayant défendu la liberté sexuelle, un député du PJD a déclaré que « tout acte sexuel à l'extérieur du mariage est considéré comme un acte de débauche, un crime » (l'adultère est interdit par la loi marocaine, mais il est en réalité assez toléré). « Les philosophies permissives qui sont nées en Europe ont-elles amélioré les relations familiales et sociales là-bas ? Je ne pense pas », a-t-il ajouté.

C'est justement cette « dérive » qui inquiète Rafid Abdu, un jeune diplômé de sciences politiques récemment rentré des États-Unis. « Je crains que petit à petit, les actions ou les exigences du PJD ne finissent, à la longue, par être envahissantes et n'islamisent la société de façon trop conservatrice, confie-t-il. Je ne veux pas que l'on décide pour moi et pour les autres quoi faire. »

D'autres Marocains aux penchants libéraux sont encore plus catégoriques. Pour la députée Layadi, le temps n'y changera rien, puisque le radicalisme serait dans la nature même de l'islamisme. « L'islamisme modéré, ça n'existe pas, clame-t-elle. Nous avons notre propre islam [au Maroc]. Nous n'avons pas besoin d'en importer d'autres types. »

L'auteur est allé au Maroc en tant que fellow de l'Alliance des civilisations, un organisme des Nations Unies



Deux Marocains engagés dans l'échange interculturel- Par Selma T. Bennani – 5 Septembre 2011



Organisé en automne, l'Alliance des civilisations des Nations Unies permet la rencontre entre des jeunes âgés entre 26 et 38 ans.

Cet automne, l'Alliance des civilisations des Nations Unies (UNAOC) lance pour la deuxième année consécutive, son **Fellowship Programme**, qui permet à des jeunes d'aller à la découverte de nouvelles cultures. Cette année, deux Marocains figurent sur la liste des sélectionnés. En automne, l'Alliance des civilisations des Nations Unies permet la rencontre entre des jeunes âgés entre 26 et 38 ans.

L'entente mutuelle n'est pas une mince affaire. Et quand les différences culturelles entrent en ligne de compte, tout se complique davantage ! En automne 2010, l'Alliance des civilisations des Nations Unies (UNAOC) a tenté d'alléger le poids des différences en mettant sur pied son « **Fellowship Program** ».

Organisé en automne, il permet la rencontre entre des jeunes âgés entre 26 et 38 ans, en provenance de pays à majorité musulmane, aussi bien du monde arabe, d'Europe, que d'Amérique du Nord. Comme l'indique l'Alliance sur son site Internet, « les jeunes leaders en provenance de la région MENA (Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord) se rendront à New York, Washington DC, Philadelphie, Paris, Bruxelles et Londres. Quant à ceux originaires d'Europe ou d'Amérique du Nord, ils visiteront successivement le Maroc, l'Égypte et le Qatar ». L'échange est donc le maître mot du programme. Durant 15 à 18 jours, les candidats sélectionnés (entre 12 et 15) iront à la rencontre de décideurs politiques, responsables des médias, collectivités locales, ainsi que de groupes religieux au sein des pays visités. Des discussions fructueuses émaneront de ces rencontres.

Ambassadeurs émérites : Le Maroc compte cette année deux ambassadeurs. Et pas des moindres ! A lire leur parcours, on constate d'emblée que la sélection a été finement menée. « Les boursiers sont sélectionnés par un processus concurrentiel à l'échelle nationale et régionale et proviennent de la politique, du monde de l'entreprise et du secteur sans but lucratif », avait annoncé d'emblée UNAOC.

Sarah Zaaimi et Yassine Abdellah Boukourizia sont tous deux de grands acteurs dans la société civile marocaine, et ce depuis plusieurs années. Yassine Abdellah est expert dans le leadership et entrepreneuriat social. Il est fondateur et président de l'association « Coup de chance » pour le leadership des jeunes. Sarah Zaaimi, quant à elle, a débuté son parcours professionnel dans le journalisme avant de devenir successivement ambassadrice de la jeunesse de l'Initiative jeunesse du Moyen-Orient, ou encore membre du Comité consultatif des jeunes de la Ligue des États arabes. ♦

3 QUESTIONS À ...



Yassine Abdellah Boukourizia, président-fondateur de l'association Coup de chance, et représentant du Maroc au **Fellowship Program** de l'UNAOC.

« C'est la diversité qui m'a encouragé »

Vous allez représenter le Maroc à la 2e édition du **Fellowship Program cet automne. Qu'est-ce qui vous a encouragé à vous joindre à cette équipe multiculturelle ?**

C'est la diversité qui m'a encouragé à faire partie de cette équipe multiculturelle. C'est une bonne opportunité pour apprendre sur les autres cultures. Par ce mot, on entend plus précisément des idées, des habitudes, coutumes ou traditions qui sont acceptées et développées collectivement et symbolisent un sentiment d'appartenance. Joindre cette équipe multiculturelle va me permettre de travailler avec

d'autres jeunes sur des questions et des thématiques qui concernent plusieurs pays.

En parcourant votre biographie, on constate que le travail associatif constitue une part importante de votre vie. Que peut-il apporter à nos sociétés ?

Ma contribution modeste dans le travail associatif n'est qu'une petite tentative de participer à la prospérité et au progrès de mon pays, qui m'a toujours ouvert les portes afin de me développer. Mon apport à la société s'est fait par les programmes de jeunes que j'ai conduit, et avec l'effort de plusieurs personnes qui ont fait confiance à mon expertise, expérience et à mon leadership.

Les organisateurs prétendent que cette édition vient au moment opportun. Après le Printemps arabe, la nécessité d'échanges entre une «nouvelle génération de leaders» était nécessaire. Quel est votre avis là-dessus ?

Les échanges entre une « nouvelles génération de leaders » sont nécessaires afin d'en savoir plus sur leurs projets, leurs espoirs et leurs craintes. Ce dialogue interculturel entre jeunes leaders va construire une véritable compréhension mutuelle qui pourra faciliter l'échange des expériences de développement et de progrès des pays arabes. Ce « Printemps arabe » est un immense espoir. Mais c'est aussi un immense défi, il peut offrir une bonne opportunité à l'échange des leaders dans une perspective de renouveau et de progrès.

Metropolis

LE MAGAZINE CHIC ET URBAIN

Par Yasmina Lahlou, Fellow De L'Alliance Des Civilisations De L'ONU

Deux continents (l'Amérique du Nord et l'Europe), quatre pays (les États-Unis, l'Allemagne, la Belgique et la France), six villes (New York, Washington, Philadelphie, Berlin, Bruxelles et Paris). Le tout en 18 jours seulement ! Un périple épuisant, mais intense et passionnant, achevé le 22 mai 2012 et organisé par l'Alliance des civilisations de l'ONU (UNAOC) à destination d'un groupe de jeunes leaders du monde arabe et musulman.

L'UNAOC est une initiative du Secrétaire général des Nations-unies qui a pour mission d'améliorer la compréhension et les relations entre les peuples de cultures et de religions différentes. Son programme phare, le fellowship, sélectionne parmi des centaines de candidatures douze fellows issus de la région Moyen-Orient / Afrique du Nord et les invite dans les plus hautes institutions internationales afin qu'ils y rencontrent les personnalités-clé et discuter avec elles des questions d'actualité, des crises, conflits et convulsions qui agitent notre planète. Objectif : chercher les moyens d'œuvrer ensemble au rapprochement entre l'Orient et l'Occident. Les douze membres du groupe invité ont pour dénominateur commun d'être tous activement engagés au sein de la société civile de leur pays.

C'est ainsi que la blogueuse syrienne Kholoud Mansour, le diplomate jordanien Muaz Abudalo, le responsable environnemental algérien Abdallah Brahimi, l'écrivain palestinien Yousri Alghoul, le cyber activiste tunisien Achraf Aouadi et les représentants de diverses fondations ou ONG - Bashara Dougaish et Mohammad Alshami (Yémen), Roya Farmani (Iran), Saif Al-Sharji (Oman), Haythem Kamel (Egypte), ainsi que Nayla Hajjar (Liban) et votre humble journaliste (Maroc), ont été reçus par des membres de

gouvernement, acteurs de la société civile, diplomates, leaders religieux, et autres hauts responsables au sein d'organismes majeurs tels que la Banque mondiale à Washington, l'Organisation des Nations unies à New York, l'OTAN à Bruxelles, le Quai d'Orsay à Paris, etc. Dirigé par le senior advisor de l'UNAOC Jean-Christophe Bas et coordonné par Karima Zerrou - qui est à elle-même un symbole de l'alliance des civilisations et du dialogue des cultures, étant tout à la fois New-yorkaise, Française, Algérienne et Kabyle -, ce programme offre aux fellows l'opportunité de voir concrètement et de l'intérieur comment fonctionnent des institutions qui influent incontestablement sur la marche du monde, et de participer à de nombreuses réunions pour échanger et débattre de la montée de l'islamisme après les révolutions arabes, l'Iran d'Ahmadinejad, la démocratie et les droits de l'homme, le dialogue inter-religieux et bien d'autres questions cruciales... Ce 22 mai dernier, au terme du programme de l'UNAOC, voyant les fellows retourner dans leurs pays respectifs, je fis un rapide inventaire : Yousri retournait à Gaza auprès de son épouse et de ses quatre enfants pour retrouver un quotidien fait de coupures d'eau et d'électricité fréquentes, de 20 km de marche à pied par jour pour se rendre à son travail et en revenir, d'embargo sur les produits de première nécessité... Mais avant d'arriver à Gaza, Yousri devait aussi d'abord transiter par le Caire où les autorités policières l'obligeraient à rester enfermé trois jours durant dans une chambre d'hôtel près de l'aéroport pour raisons sécuritaires (fermeture des frontières entre l'Égypte et la Palestine en ce week-end tendu de vote des Égyptiens au premier tour de l'élection présidentielle). Sur le chemin de Damas, Kholoud appréhendait son arrivée en envisageant les pires scénarios pour son peuple et pour elle-même sous la tyrannie de Bachar-el Assad. Bashara et Mohammad s'envolaient tous deux pour le Yémen secoué par un dramatique attentat la veille-même de leur départ. De son côté, Abdallah risquait d'être mis à la question par les services de renseignements algériens. Quant à Nayla, elle retrouvait un Liban sous haute tension depuis les violents affrontements confessionnels survenus également quelques jours auparavant.

Le tour du monde en 20 jours



Bref, des contextes politiques, économiques et sociaux guère enviables, où les principes de paix, de sécurité et de liberté étaient à l'évidence malmenés... J'ai alors comparé, relativisé et réalisé que, à la différence des autres fellows, mon avion décollait peut-être bien pour « le plus beau pays du monde ». Toute chose étant égale par ailleurs.

PAKISTAN
OBSERVER
 EYES & EARS OF PAKISTAN WIDELY READ & TRUSTED DAILY

Youth hail AoC activation as cultural nursing by Hameed Shaheen- April 2012

Islamabad—The national youth of Pakistan on Sunday fervently welcomed activation of the global fraternity forum of UN - Alliance of Civilization (AoC) - as a much needed transnational panacea-initiative for expanding inter-cultural understanding and nursing civilizational tolerance. A group of youth talking to Pakistan Observer here urged the Secretary General of the Jeddah-based OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu to arrange for the inter-state visits of AoC among OIC community of states as it did in hosting a 3-day visit of the AoC delegation to Saudi Arabia from April 13-15, 2012. ‘AoC visits help enlighten the youth minds and expand scientific intellectualism’, an archeology student Zameer said.

OIC hosted recently fellows from the **United Nations Alliance of Civilization** (AoC) for a three-day visit to Jeddah, described the first such visit to the Kingdom. The AoC delegation consisted of 12-member European and North American delegation. It visited NGOs, economic and business forums, higher education and media institutions as well as arts and cultural activities there.

The AoC initiative aims at opening avenues for “intercultural dialogue at the grass-roots level, one of the OIC’s activities to foster better understanding among people of different cultures and break through stereotypes and misconceptions”, a media report said. It was headed by Jean Christophe Bas, AoC Director, and included 12 fellows with different professional backgrounds from Europe and the US. Bas met Ambassador Vefahan Ocak, Director General of Cabinet at the OIC, before opening of formal discussion between the fellows and OIC staff.

Qantara.de **قنطرة**



Woman in Saudi Arabia

23.07.2012

"A Golden Age for Saudi Women"

Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos recently visited Saudi Arabia on a UN fellowship. What she encountered there surprised her and completely changed her views on the lives of women in the kingdom. This is a personal account of her experiences

For the first time this summer, women from Saudi Arabia will be allowed to take part in the Olympic Games. The fact that this subject is even being debated in the twenty-first century is a sign of just how closed the Gulf kingdom has been. Indeed, before I went there recently on a fellowship from the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**, I had never heard anything good about the place. Nothing, niente, nada.

Oppressed women, gruesome beheadings, human rights violations: you name it. The fact that one of our fellows was denied a visa and we had to say good-bye to him in Amman did not improve my opinion. To top it all off, the women in our group had to spend the first evening "locked" up in a hotel, as we didn't have black head-to-toe abayas to cover up with. Needless to say, after that great start, we weren't exactly looking forward to our visit.

But then things turned around 180 degrees; not just because we, the women of the group, finally got abayas and could leave our "gilded cage", but also because we were lucky enough to visit the Dar al-Hekma College for women. Dar al-Hekma means "the House of Wisdom", and that is just what we encountered. We met impressive young women and their female professors, who explained the college's ideology and introduced us to some extraordinary young ladies.



Before travelling to Saudi Arabia, Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos' impressions of the Gulf kingdom were restricted to images of oppression, cruelty and human rights violations. But during her trip, she met a series of strong, confident and inspiring women from whom she says 'Western women can learn a thing or two'

Teaching women to be confident

At the college, they teach women to be confident about their knowledge, cultural background and roots. When the students designed affordable houses for a project, they not only took into account the fact that the houses needed a maid's room, something normal in Saudi Arabia, but also that the kitchen must be constructed so that women can move around freely without being seen from other rooms.

Our next stop was a working lunch with Arab News. One of the first questions we were asked was about our perception of Saudi women. That answer was simple enough. Throughout our entire trip, which also took us to Morocco and Jordan, the women in our group connected very easily to the local women, but especially so in Saudi Arabia. There are certain values, concerns, challenges and experiences that are universal among women. It does not matter what culture we come from, there are more similarities than differences between us.

We were impressed by all the women we met, but the Saudi ones impressed us the most. They were nothing like the stereotypes we had expected. Far from being oppressed, silent and shy, they were confident, intelligent and outspoken. They were brave enough to take on challenges and fight for their dreams.



Breaking new ground at the London Games: for the first time ever this summer, women from Saudi Arabia will be allowed to compete in the Olympic Games

Saudi women driving change

Change in this Gulf country is well underway, and Saudi women are a driving force. It is not a quick and violent revolution, but rather a smart, tactical one. "Always evaluate the impact and timing of changes", we were counselled. At the college, they are breeding a new kind of woman, one who is comfortable meeting heads of state and discussing issues on the same level. How much we in the West can learn from this approach, especially when it comes to women's education.

Later, during a visit to the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture, yet another bright, young lady said: "This is a golden age for Saudi women. Whatever we do, we will always be 'the first Saudi woman who did this or that'". She said that there are more opportunities to succeed in Saudi Arabia than in the West, even though life might not necessarily be easier. We congratulated them for being so active. In contrast, the men in the meeting said very little. "We have been shoved aside for so long, now it's our turn to speak up", the young woman said.

It might be easy to think that I was brainwashed and remain ignorant about the problems that persist. But Saudi women themselves pointed out that they still need permission from a male guardian to take up a job or travel, that they are not allowed to drive or openly take part in sports. Their challenges are many and complex.

Still, my perception of this country has changed entirely, having seen it from the ground. Saudi women are inspiring, and Western women can learn from them: learn that change is possible, even in the most closed and patriarchal societies. Who knows, some of these brave women may even inspire in the sporting arena in London this summer.

Gabriela Keseberg Dávalos



FOCUS / Vivendi and the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations partners

Vivendi and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations share the ambition of making the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue part of the worldwide sustainable development agenda. Throughout its sphere of influence, Vivendi is committed to promoting human rights through its content production and distribution activities and through the services it offers. The Group's businesses play a major role in strengthening mutual understanding and social ties. In choosing to promote cultural diversity on the continents where the Group operates, by investing massively in content and in networks, Vivendi's ambition is to encourage its customers to participate in cultural life, facilitating their communication through technology and encouraging a spirit of openness between peoples and generations.

Vivendi presented its strategic orientations in the area of sustainable development to two groups of some 15 young leaders from the Middle East and the Maghreb who came to Paris in September 2011 and in May 2012 as part of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations Fellowship Program**. The Program's goal is to build ties between young professionals from the Middle East, the Maghreb, Europe, and the Americas by organizing encounters with economic, cultural and institutional actors in these different regions of the world. The direct and informal nature of the exchanges gives participants in the program an opportunity to discover other socio-cultural environments with differing outlooks, contributing to combating stereotypes and encouraging mutual understanding.

The United Nations invited Vivendi to the fourth Alliance of Civilizations Forum held between December 11 and 13, 2011 in Doha (Qatar). During the plenary session devoted to the theme "New Strategies for Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation," Vivendi explained how promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue are strategic issues in its sustainable development policy and accompany the Group's business challenge – to innovate continuously in order to continue to satisfy its tens of millions of clients on all continents in the era of the digital revolution. This session, attended by representatives of academic, institutional, and business communities in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East, produced proposals for best practices that can be replicated. Among these were Vivendi's description of the initiative taken by its Senior Executives that consists in integrating sustainable development criteria related to the promotion of culture and dialogue between cultures in their bonuses.

Jean-Christophe Bas: "Intercultural Dialogue at the heart of sustainable development."



Jean-Christophe Bas,
Senior Advisor, Strategic Development and Partnerships, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
ASDR 2011

"The ability to manage and optimize the question of diversity and intercultural dialogue is vital for the survival and expansion of business and the economy, but also for ensuring peace and stability in the world. The corporate sector is often more in the vanguard in this area than governments or civil society. It has created conditions that are conducive to intercultural dialogue and to diversity.

Vivendi is an extraordinarily innovative example in this area. By tying part of its Senior Executives' bonuses to the company's achievements in favor of cultural diversity, Vivendi has placed itself in the forefront. It is a model that I hope will inspire other major multinationals in the culture sector.

At its fourth worldwide Forum held in Doha on December 11 to 13, 2011, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) made a point of bringing together public and private actors to promote intercultural dialogue as a part of the worldwide sustainable development agenda. All 130 of its Member States and its 30 affiliated international organizations joined Vivendi and representatives of corporations and civil society in seeking innovative solutions for encouraging the emergence of societies that are inclusive and rich in their diversity."

Young participants of the MENA Fellowship Programme visiting Vivendi

In September 2011, Vivendi presented its sustainable development strategic orientations to about fifteen young leaders from Middle-East and Maghreb who came to Paris, within the framework of the « Fellowship Programme » of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. This program aims at helping young high-potential leaders from the Arabic and Muslim world to be aware of and to better understand Europe and US reality; and vice versa for young European and American leaders towards the Arabic and Muslim world.

Being direct and informal, the dialogue gave the participants the opportunity to discover the other society in a different light. The dialogue helps fighting against clichés and promotes mutual understanding. This program is totally in line with Vivendi's vision according to which intercultural dialogue is a key issue of its sustainable development policy.



Vivendi welcomes again young MENA Fellowship Program participants

For the first time in September 2011, Vivendi welcomed the young participants in the MENA Fellowship Program of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations. On May 21, 2012, a second visit was held for a new group of participants, featuring presentations on Vivendi's strategic sustainable development orientations and, in particular, its strategy for promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.

On this day in celebration of cultural diversity, Vivendi focused on that portion of its sustainable development policy in its presentation to young executives from the Middle East and North Africa. This program is a natural part of Vivendi's vision, in which intercultural dialogue is a fundamental pillar of its sustainable development strategy.



Dala Ghandour: “Providing consumers with choices means giving them freedom of thought, at home and abroad. ”



Dala Ghandour,
Attorney and mediator, Lebanon
ASDR 2011

“I took part in a presentation of Vivendi’s sustainable development policy as a member of the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Program**. I was very impressed by the challenges defined by Vivendi and the way they are integrated into the Group’s strategy. In a world that is becoming more and more culturally homogeneous, Vivendi provides a haven of freedom that celebrates cultural diversity in all its forms: world music, young talent, atypical documentaries.

Because providing consumers with choices means making them true citizens of the world – giving them freedom of thought, at home and abroad. As a Lebanese citizen, an attorney, and a mediator, I am convinced that dialogue between cultures and promotion of cultural diversity are a fundamental responsibility for media companies. That is because cultivating otherness, discovering the culture of others, already creates invisible ties that encourage us to understand better, to explore new horizons that once opened cannot be closed; and those ties will make it increasingly difficult to make war on a people whose myths, music, or films we are familiar with.”

Blogs from UNAOC Fellows

A Letter to My Belly

Words for Change by Sarah Zaaïmi

Thursday, January 5, 2012 at 11:09pm

Only one week before your birth, only 7 days before you become an autonomous human being. I am feeling insomniac and stressed like never before. It's worse than waiting for an exam results, a feedback on an interview or a message from a loved one. This is the countdown for LIFE. So I decided to do what I do best: writing therapy. Yet, it feels much more difficult and serious than writing an article for a newspaper or a note for my blog. This is writing a letter for an unknown being inside my belly, my Son.

I remember the day your father proposed to me. I was in Morocco and he was in Egypt in the middle of an apocalyptic demonstration where he was seeing people being shot around him, furious youth chanting, and a smell of spring and hope in the air. No romantic speech, no diamond ring, no leaning on his knees, just a "If I die tonight, the only thing I will regret is not marrying you and if I survive and Mubarak's regime collapses it will be a sign that everything is possible and that we are meant to be together"... and I said Yes!

I remember how I felt when one morning one month after our big fat Moroccan wedding; I woke up feeling dizzy and strange as if I sensed an unusual presence in my body. Your father and I went to the doctor all confused, and in the echography screen there was a cell and inside the cell a tiny white blinking spot, "it's the heart of your baby!" said the doctor. From that moment I fell in love with you even before you becoming a proper human being!

There are many things I need to apologize to you for. First for dragging you around in 4 continents for the last 9 months on planes, trains, cars, boats, buses and minibuses. If you choose later to become a hard rock musician I won't blame you because I will be responsible for that one! However, you can consider yourself a lucky child who has lots of experience even from within, and you can put on your CV that you were part of a **UN program**: you met Sheikha Mozah, Ban Ki-Moon, and Erdogan, visited the State Department, the Council of Europe and the NATO, had dinner with Marzouky, Hermes and tata Corinne, smelled Musk, Hash and Tear Gas, and tasted Caviar, Foul, and Couscous...

I also need to apologize to you for violating your intimacy, exposing you on social media and nicknaming you Sardina. Forgive me baby, but my friends and family are all around the globe and the joy of having you is so big that I needed to share it with the world. For the Sardina part, I think no matter what we will name you on formal papers by now everyone know you with your nickname. I even surprised your father one Ramadan night praying God and saying "Please God bless and protect my son Sardina", so even up there they know Mr. Sardina Mohamed Awad!

Furthermore, I need to apologize for bring you to the world in such a date, where our region is living a turmoil and everything is uncertain. I know the earth is overcrowded and over polluted with toxic wastes and hatred speech and maybe the fruits won't taste the same as when I was a kid myself, nor the landscapes will be as green. Yet, I can promise you that there will still be flowers to smell, seashells to collect, books to read and animals to play with.

I will not impose on you my taste, my choices, my religion, nor my political views, because I believe that the clever baby you are already have inside of him the light of the truth. Therefore I will do my best to help you keep that flame alive. In addition, I don't want to impose on you my Moroccan culture or your father's Egyptian culture, with all our heritage of chauvinism, guilt, schizophrenia and frustrations. Even if I had the chance and the strong temptation, I didn't want to give birth to you in the US or Europe for offering you a blue passport, as I don't want to doom you to a history, an anthropology or a geography. I would like you to be proud of being a fruit of a multicultural love, to have access not only to our two cultures but to all cultures and to choose by your own where your heart belongs to.

Finally baby I am asking you to give me a chance to learn how to be your mother. I confess having no previous experience for this risky job. I have tried my best reading books, singing songs and caressing you while inside my belly, but I know that it takes more than that to be a good mother. You didn't choose to be my son, while I chose to be your parent. That's why I am sorry if I don't meet your expectations, if I am chaotic, idealistic and badly prepared for the adventure of motherhood. All I have to offer for sure in my unconditional and infinite Love. Would you accept it?

Response from another fellow...

Dear Sardina

I had the honor of meeting you and your brave mom at **UNAOC fellowship program**, your mom really set an example for women to be progressive and active citizens.

She presented her views and thoughts freely , through out our journey she kept her balance which is very hard for a pregnant women especially when activities required physical exhaustion, but most of all she kept you safe. although you were not born and although your nickname is sardina your mom was able to engage you in all her activities : we talked alot about your name in our bus-trips , you got a sovouneer from each city we visited and she proudly introduced you in all our meetings ! Your mom was being a true mother even before you come to life She was proud of you and happy to share her life with you .

I have to say you are lucky to have her as a mom ... Mothers like her raise leaders ... May god give you the strength and wisdom and blessing to be the reality of her dream .

Love & prayers

Sofana Dahlan

Saudi Arabia

UNAOC Program, The Dream Over There
 Snatched Freedom - Yousri Alghoul Blog
 18 July 2012



Once, I prayed for Allah to grant me the opportunity to go around the world for learning and communicating with other cultures, and I got the chance after reaching the **UNAOC fellowship**. My story started when I got back from Spain last year; I decided to go every year on a trip to other countries to explore areas I've never gone to before, so I searched as usual for training courses and programs out of Gaza through networks and got lucky to stumble upon a new program by UNAOC. Thus, I applied for it to go through a new experience never been in my life before, having the luck to visit the most beautiful countries, and to meet with great people, as well.

As many knows I suffered a lot until I got my travelling proceedings done on time due to the tough current situation at Gaza that causes me and others lots of pressure and depression. I got the US visa from Egypt and took off to New York to discover how great the US civilization and how humble the people are. I arrived to NY airport feeling quiet apprehended for I might face some problems attributed to my Palestinian passport. Fortunately, I found the respect and assistance like others.

“Did I really arrive at US? Or am I dreaming?”, I arrived to UN Plaza hotel, picked up the key and the briefcase that Karima, the coordinator, prepared. Then I went to my room to see how Manhattan is awesome from my 33rd floor window to call it later “a piece from heaven”. On the second day, I woke up to find the UN headquarter in front of me that caused me to be pleased and enthusiastic. Few minutes later, I met with my colleagues whom I never known before, shaking hands, breaking the ice before our coordinator come. Finally Karima came too “here we go”, she said gaining all the respect from me and my mates for all efforts she exerted. I confess that everything in NY was in a hurry where there is no time to eat, drink or sleep. It creates a pressing desire from within you to explore all its aspects. Through all this, you start attending remarkable lectures, listening carefully, discussing to get your goals, and then ask yourself,” How could they own this great will and ability to be in such interesting place !!”.



Simultaneously, the MENA fellows, I mean our team, was so interested to meet the elite, listening to them, to their experience, and to find a humanitarian sense in every speech they deliver. There is no doubt that UNAOC program gave me plenty of information about the aim of the United Nations and its goals for the whole world. Moreover, our visit to UN headquarter was amazing that reinforced us to meet with the diplomats discussing our viewpoints and talking to them freely. This filled me with a hope to be one day a diplomat for my country in such a place. It was a crowded program and we were always in hurry riding metros, missing some of our mates, running like students whose going miss the class, and finally arriving at the right time and place as well. So we were lucky to go to Bloomberg News Office to see how they work and what ideology they adopt. We also went through some situations that any newcomer may face like when we moved around streets searching for the office, as well as, what did happen to us in Paris when we missed our way to the building of France 24 channel where we were supposed to attend a meeting there. There were a daily hectic meetings from 8:00 am till 7:00 pm to discover that you have no time to do any other things except having the chance to wake up early to hang around the place you stay in. The most amazing meeting was the one with prof. Ismail, as well as, seeing the Bronx to know much more about it. It was interesting to know how they worked hard to improve the abilities of youngsters and the people in out there.

Also, there was the wonderful meeting with Mr. Ron Bruder who clarified the role of education for employment foundation. All asked many questions about his duty in his own city and how can we motivate this as the man was answering humbly. Once again, we attended a lecture for Abbas Baqueri and Bene de Montlout as they were talking freely and frankly giving us the motivation to ask all questions that we thought to be prohibited; actually it was unexpected. In Washington we felt of comfort, I liked the State plaza hotel, around George Washington University Campus. The program was amazing and intensive out there, but we participated and did our best especially the meeting with the Ambassador of South Africa who taught me the real meaning of Islam and the massage of Daawa.

He knows all about my religion and what should we do to help others since this is the aim of being a Muslim. Besides, I still remember a speech for him to us , “It doesn’t matter who you are, what matters: what you are?”, which means that I don’t care whether you are black or white, Muslim or Christ, I care of what will you do for your nation and how will you help your own people.

Therefore, I got back to my country lecturing the young men and women of the role of alliance among civilizations, and how can we adapt with other cultures. Not only this, but I wrote in my Arabic blog about the tenets of civilizations and religions.

Our visit to Philly was so interesting; I loved to know everything about the history of the State, and to know Benjamin Franklin who was one of the States. Truly, Our visit to US is something like a dream come true. In fact, I can’t imagine that I really did it, and got the luck to visit a country gathered the reasons of success and advancement . I will always tell my kids and grandsons about this great trip with great fellows.

On the other hand, We headed to Europe, the second part of our trip starting by Berlin, meeting with great people and a well-known leaders as well. Germany is my beloved one because it was the first Western country I visited in my lifetime when I was a University student, specially Bonn city. What was great in Europe is that lectures and meetings were too intensive where we met Steffen Seibert, the German Government Spokesman, and we spoke freely about his work and he was very kind man. Then, we spoke to Dr. Heinrich Kreft, the ambassador and Director for Public Diplomacy and Dialogue among Civilizations at the Federal Foreign Office. At that time, we were invited to have the lunch in the Federal Foreign Office with Mr. Kreft. At the same place, we met a very cute Turkish-German young man, Ali Aslan, the interviewer of the international talk show “Quadriga” on Deutsche Welle TV “Integration and Diversity in Germany Today”. Finally, we met in Germany with Markus Löning, the Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid at the Federal Foreign Office. All these meetings gave us a very new information about the policy of German government. When in Brussels, I felt home since most of the Arabs are located in this city, once you go to the metro or the market you find them and speak to them in Arabic, no need for French language or English. And the most interesting visit in Brussels was to NATO that I liked the most. I got very new and attractive information I didn’t know before. Then, we went to Europe council where I felt like my friends we could make partnership with the council of Europe by many fields and they enthused us to do so.

Otherwise, there is our trip to France like a trip to paradise. I prayed many times to be there and to have a photo beside Eiffel Tower , eventually I did. We went on a tour to everywhere under the rain, but we all were happy and tired as well. In conclusion, we went to the most important places in Europe which reinforced us to meet those leaders asking them all questions we felt they were important. We loved those people, we respect UNAO, our hope is to continue this program, to call for it every time and to invite youngsters to be with you, Karima and John Chrestophe , MANY THANKS FROM MY OWN HEART.

ما بين القاهرة ونيويورك، حكاية غزيّ مجنون

راحة تملأ صدري، كأني وصلت، رغم أنني لم أخرج من الشقة بعد...



صليت الفجر، ارتديت ملابسي، ثم ودّعت صديقي د. ثابت العمور بحرارة، قبل أن أخرج من الشقة لأتّفس مع الصباح أريج القاهرة، ركبت التكتك وصولاً إلى رأس الشارع عند مترو فيصل، وهناك ركبت سيارة أجرة للوصول إلى مطار القاهرة (Terminal 3)، حيث كان موعد وصولي مناسباً لصعوبة إجراءات التفتيش بخلاف رحلاتي السابقة. فما أن وصلت حتى استقبلتني تلك المضييفة السوداء بلطف وسألتنني قبل أن أصل كونتر الحصول على التذاكر وتسليم الحقائب عن أي سائل أو طعام موجود لدي في الحقائب الخاصة بي، وغيرها من الأسئلة التي لا أذكرها الآن، بعد ذلك توجهت لختم جوازي والانتظار أمام صالة (G2)، ثم سعدنا الطائرة، الحلم، ولم أكن أصدق أنني حقاً نجحت في اجتياز تلك العوائق الخرافية. وفي الطائرة ترحب بنا المضيفات، أجلس بجوار رجل أمريكي مسلم، جاء إلى القاهرة كي يتعلم العربية هو وزوجته وأبناؤه، نتحدث قليلاً ثم أتشغل بمشاهدة بعض الأفلام، ثم التحليق بخيالاتي حين النظر من شباك الطائرة والموسيقى تأخذني حيث تريد.

ما أثار انزعاجي هذه الرحلة وجود امرأة ثقيلة الظل تجلس في المقعد الأمامي لي، نتحدث كأنها تريد المشاجرة مع المضيفات أو أي من الذين يتحدثون معها، لدرجة أن كرهت نفسي من صوتها ولغتها الغبية. وما زاد حنقي أنها كانت تقوم بإمالة المقعد إلى الخلف حتى أشعر بأنه سيجتازني دون استئذاني. تحملت ذلك لعدم رغبتني بالمشاجرة مع تلك المتعفرتة، ولعدم الإساءة للفتاة الجميلة التي بجوارها صامتة، والتي ظننت أنها أختها أو صديقتها. المضحك أنني اكتشفت في اليوم التالي لوصولي نيويورك بأن الفتاة التي كانت بجوارها هي زميلتي خلود من سوريا، والتي كانت (مخنوقة) من جارتها ثقيلة الظل مثلي تماماً.

في الطائرة، وقبل أن نصل أرض المطار قامت المضييفة بإعطائنا أوراق كي نقوم بتعبئتهم وتسليمهم عند النزول لمطار JFK بنيويورك. وقد طلبت مساعدة الشيخ الأمريكي الذي بجواري في بعض الأمور لكنه لم يكن يعرف الإجابة أو حتى كتابة كلمة مانهتن، فأدركت بأن انجليزيتي أفضل منه. وبعد أكثر من 11 ساعة ونصف ونحن معلقون بين السماء والأرض، نزلنا بهدوء ثم توجهنا إلى صالة الوصول، هناك قمت بتسليم جوازي، وفحص بصمة الأصابع والعيون مجدداً. وحمدت ربي أن الأمر كان سريعاً، لأن تعبئتي للورقة كان دقيقاً بخلاف كثيرين كانوا قبلي بالطابور. وعند البوابة كان شرطي آخر يطلب الجواز، نظر إليّ بتفحص ثم سألني عن سبب مجيئي وانتهى كل شيء، لأجد نفسي على أرض الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية، الحلم الذي طالما تمنيت ولوجه.

في الخارج وقفت في طابور آخر للحصول على سيارة تقلني حيث أريد، وحين جاء دوري سألني الأمريكي الشاب عن وجهتي، فأجبته: "مانهتن". سعدت، فأخبرني السائق بأن الأجرة هي 50 دولار ولكنه يريد البقشيش لتصبح 60 فأعطيته 55 \$ وأبلغته بما معناه (بوس إيدك واسكت). ما اكتشفته هناك بأن البقشيش يؤخذ عنوة بخلاف أوروبا أو أي مكان آخر، فالبقشيش يُكتب حتى ضمن قائمة الحساب عند دخولك أي مطعم مع الضريبة طبعاً.

أثناء الطريق كان حديث الرجل دافئاً، فهو باكستاني مسلم، ويعرف أبو عمار، ولعل ما أزعجني أنني فررت من السياسة وأحاديثها الجوفاء، لأكتشف بأنها لا تنتهي كأنها إكسبير الحياة. وحين وصلنا مانهتن، وتحديداً فندق الأمم المتحدة بلازا ميلينيوم. وجدتنني في أحد أفلام هوليوود، رجل اسود يمسك كلبه الجميل بزي رسمي، يلقي بابتسامته للعابرين قبل ولوج المكان.

في الفندق تحدثت مع الريسبشن (الاستقبال)، فكان بجعبتهم حقيبة ورقية تحتوي على رسالة ترحيب وبرنامج الزيارات المتوقع في الولايات المتحدة وأشياء أخرى، شكرتهم، ثم حملت أشيائي وصعدت إلى غرفتي الوثيرة في الطابق 33 لأكتشف جمال وروعة مانهتن، النهر الذي يلف المدينة، المطر الذي يرسل ترانيمه للشعراء،





الأنوار التي تغطي المكان لوحة تجريدية فاتنة. ولحسن حظي كان مقر الأمم المتحدة الدائم أمامي، وبجماله الخرافي، وألوانه الزجاجية السامقة.

ولجت الغرفة، حصلت على حمام ساخن، أغمضت عينيّ لاستيقظ مع الفجر. لم أذع الفرصة تفوتني، فقامت وحصلت على عدد من الصور لي داخل الغرفة، وفي الخارج تبدو المدينة غارقة في اللذة، الحياة.

في الصباح نزلت كعادتي مبكراً، حيث لم يكن أحد سوى صديقي لاحقاً معاذ الدبلوماسي الأردني، يدخل سيارته في الخارج، أو (يدوزن) كما يقولها بلغته المحببة إلى قلبي. ومعاذ أبو دلو، يعمل في السفارة الكندية بعمان، كمدير لقسم الشؤون السياسية هناك.

جلست في لوبي الفندق أتمعن المارة من خلال الزجاج وهم يتدثرون ملابسهم للوصول إلى أماكن عملهم. وحين دخل معاذ مجدداً ابتسمت، وسلمت عليه، تعارفنا ثم عاد مجدداً لطبع قبلة في فم سيارته الملعونة، فخرجت معه كي أتأمل مقر الأمم المتحدة الذي لا يبعد سوى عدة أمتار عن الفندق. بعد ذلك بدأ أعضاء الوفد بالنزول، أكثر الأصدقاء حياً لقلبي عبد الله من الجزائر، روية من إيران، سيف من عمان، محمد من اليمن، أشرف من تونس، بشارة من اليمن، نائلة من لبنان، خلود من سورية، وياسمينا من المغرب.

أربعة أيام قضيناها في نيويورك، مانهتن، حيث الحياة التي لا تنقضي بانقضاء اليوم، كأنها في دائرة لا تنتهي، تدور، تدور والزمن ليس له أي وزن أو حساب. نستيقظ وقد أخذ التعب منا مبلغاً بسبب سهرنا اليومي في التايم سكوير (time square) تحت المطر والأضواء الباهرة. لنتجهز لمحاضرات جديدة ولقاءات مميزة مع عدد من صناعات القرار والساسة والاقتصاديين والفاعلين في المجتمع الأمريكي.

ففي اليوم الثاني لنا في نيويورك، توجهنا إلى أحد مقار الأمم المتحدة هناك والمقابل للمقر المركزي، تناولنا طعام الإفطار، وكنا أثناء ذلك نتحدث ونضحك كأننا التقينا منذ عشرات السنين حتى أن زميلتنا الإيرانية أبلغتنا بأنها تشعر بأنها تعرفنا منذ سنوات.

كريمة منسقة البرنامج، رحبت بنا هناك مجدداً بوجود السيد جون كريستوف أحد أهم مسؤولي البرنامج. تلا ذلك عدد من المحاضرات والمناقشات مع العديد من دبلوماسيي الأمم المتحدة.



.. وبعد أن تناولنا طعام الغداء في أحد المطاعم القريبة من المكان، توجهنا إلى فضائية بلومبرج الاقتصادية (Bloomberg)، وهي فضائية اقتصادية عظيمة، اكتشفنا هناك بأن العمل له رونقه الممتع، فالمكان مجهز بكافة سبل الراحة، حتى البصرية، حيث تنتشر أحواض السمك، بالإضافة إلى الطعام الموجود بكل رقعة من المبنى، فيإمكان الموظف تناول الطعام في أي وقت، المهم إنجاز العمل. كانت تقودنا فتاة شقراء داخل المبنى لتعطينا انطباعاً سريعاً عن تلك المؤسسة الدولية. التي تحتوي جميع مكاتبها على جدران زجاجية لضمان شفافية العمل.

هناك، حصلنا على كرنيه يسمح لنا بدخول المكان ذو شكل جميل وبه كلمة سر واسم مستخدم للانترنت. وحين انتهينا من جولتنا تلك تم إعادة الكرنيه حتى أنزعج كثيرون منا لرغبتنا بالاحتفاظ به.

.. ومع أريج المطر في مانهتن توجهنا إلى منزل السفير التركي بالأمم المتحدة لتناول طعام العشاء، حيث تمت دعوة عدد كبير من المسؤولين على شرفنا، وسعدنا كثيراً لحضور المسئولة الألمانية عن البرنامج والسيد جون كريستوف وغيره ممن أشرفوا على البرنامج الخاص بنا. كان السفير التركي مؤدباً هادئاً، يضح وجهه بالحياء، حتى حديثه كان لبقاً، ودمتاً كخلفه.



اليوم التالي، استيقظنا كالعادة عند الساعة السابعة، وانتظرنا كريمة في اللوبي حتى تأتي وبعد أن جاءت، توجهنا إلى ذات المقر للحصول على جرة جديدة من المعلومات، وأجمل شيء في ذلك اليوم أننا ذهبنا إلى (البرونكس)، لأنها تمثل الوجه الحقيقي للسكان المهاجرين، حيث الأفارقة والعرب وأمريكيون لاتينيون. كان البرفسور إسماعيل، والذي يعتبر أحد أعلام تلك المنطقة، قد دعانا لتناول طعام الغداء وهو الأفضل في رحلتنا إلى الولايات المتحدة، وجيد غداء دسمة للغاية، هناك غنيا وسعدنا براحة ملؤها الحب والاحترام لأناس همهم أن يبنوا مجتمعاتهم، ويصنعوا جيلاً فريداً حريص على بناء الدولة والإنسان. ولقد طنت الكلمة في أذني ذات لقاء: ليس مهماً من أنت، المهم ماذا ستقدم؟ كيف ستخدم هذا المجتمع؟

.. بعد تناول طعام الغداء وقد صار وزني عربي بالتمام، خرجنا في رحلة حول المدينة وذهبنا إلى أماكن تعليم الأطفال هناك، وتدريبهم على تحقيق هواياتهم، كان المطر قد بدأ بالنزول، فصار النقاط الصور سريعاً. ثم ودّع بعضنا الآخر، وعدنا بالمترو إلى مانهتن، ولعلي هنا بحاجة للقول بأن مترو القاهرة أجمل بكثير من متروها ت نيويورك (من الناحية الشكلية على الأقل).

وفي مساء ذلك اليوم، ونحن ما زلنا متخمين بالطعام خرجنا مع المطر للذهاب إلى أحد أفخم مطاعم مدينة مانهتن، للقاء السيد رون بردر، مؤسس مؤسسة التعليم من أجل التوظيف، وأحد أغنى رجال العالم. تناولنا طعام العشاء معه، والحقيقة لم يكن يتسع في معدتي مكان للطعام، فاكثقت بتناول الحلوى فقط. تحدثت مع ذلك الرجل الذي أخبرني بأنه قام بدعم الجامعة الإسلامية وعدد من الجامعات الفلسطينية. كما قام بزيارة الضفة الغربية أكثر من مرة فدعوته لزيارة غزة.

اليوم الأخير لنا في نيويورك، كان أيضاً مثقلاً بالمحاضرات لدرجة أننا كنا نغفو دون أن ندرى، فيصير الواحد منا يلزم صديقه ويضحك، فتمتعض المنسقة الأمريكية وتطلب إيقاظنا، وكنت في كثير من الأحيان لا أعرف كيف استيقظ. فالنعاس يدب في أوصالي بلا رحمة. وهو ما يؤكد لنا بأن الرحلة كانت شاقة رغم متعتها.



في اليوم الأخير لنا هناك، حضرنا عدداً من المحاضرات وجلسنا مع عدد من قادة الأديان. ثم مع السيد عباس باقري، الاقتصادي البارز وعالم التخطيط المالي. ثم اختتمنا جلستنا في ذات المبنى بجلسة أخرى مع الفرنسية الرائعة بينديكت دي مونتالر، حيث تحدثت عن الحالة السورية وغيرها من القضايا السياسية، ودور وموقف مجلس الأمن منها، وحين كنت أسألها تضحك وتجيب ثم تطلب مني ألا اكتب ذلك في مدونتي، فأعدها بذلك.



بعد الانتهاء من المحاضرات توجهنا وحدنا عبر المترو إلى جامعة كولومبيا للقاء أحد أعضاء وفد تحالف الحضارات من أمريكا. وهناك فقدنا خلود لشدة الازدحام بالمترو، فعدنا إلى الفندق واكتفت بالنوم.

ما بقي لي أن أذكره هنا، هو أن تلك الأيام كانت مليئة بالحياة رغم وعورتها، فهناك تكتشف الحياة، المغامرة، الجنون. ففي أحد المرات خرجت لتناول طعام العشاء مع أصدقائي الذين دفعوا بنا إلى أحد المطاعم الفخمة والغريبة، وحين ولجنا المكان وجلسنا على طاولة منعزلة عن الآخرين، اكتشفت من خلال قائمة الطعام أن ليس بينها ما يناسبني، كما أن أسعارها مرتفعة جداً، فقررت الخروج والعودة إلى التايم سكوير، حيث تناولت العشاء في الماكدونلدز. كنت أضحك بأن أصدقائي (لبسوا) خازوق مرتب، إلا أنني حين التقيت بهم في اليوم التالي، أبلغوني بأنهم تناثروا خلفي كالبخار وتركوا المكان.

تلك الليلة لم أهتدي إلى الطريق لأنني سرت في الاتجاه الخاطئ وقد كان الليل يوشك على الانتصاف. ولكن بعد السير باتجاه الخريطة اهتديت إلى الفندق، الجميل أنني وجدت العمال الأمريكيون يقومون برصف الشوارع ليلاً، فسعدت لأننا لا نجد ذلك في بلادنا التي تعوزها الأمكنة

والدروب.

في تلك الرحلة، أذكر بأنني كنت أذهب كل يوم مع زملائي إلى مقر مجلس الأمن والجمعية العمومية، نمارس نفس الطقوس الأمنية، بخلع الحزام الجلدي، ووضعه مع الكاميرا والحقيبة وأشياء أخرى تحت جهاز الفحص، ثم ندخل لنكتشف المكان من جديد، فيلاحقنا النوم والنعاس مع كل ورشة عمل أو محاضرة.

هناك كنا نستمع إلى صناع القرار، نلج الباب بهدوء ثم نغادر كما دخلنا. نلتقط لبعضنا الصور ونتحدث كأننا بالفعل ضمن طاقم موظفي مجلس الأمن. وذات مرة استوقفني أحد الدبلوماسيين الأتراك بعد زيارة لمكتب المسؤول القطري في مقر الأمم المتحدة وسألني، هل أنا الفلسطيني؟ فأجبتُه بأنني من غزة ومن أحد مخيماتها. فقال وكان وجهه يوحى بحزن:

- إنني أعشق غزة، وحين أتحدث عنها أنسى أنني دبلوماسي أصلاً، فغزة تعني لي كل شيء.

لقد تأثرت كثيراً بما أخبرني به ذلك التركي، وتوقفت عنده كثيراً وتساءلت: لماذا يذبح أربابنا غزة؟ يقطعون لحمها ويبيعونها بثمن بخس؟ غزة التي أصبحت مزاداً تباع فيه البطولات، ويموت فيها الأبطال؟ غزة التي نعشق فنقرر أن نهجرها كي تبقى كبيرة في عيوننا. غزة التي هي غزة. لا وصف لها إلا الجنون. والجنون ليس إلا أن تموت في حب غزة.

