

«وطني» تهاور القمص بيفائيل جرّبها أب اعتراف قيادة البابا في شبابه

مقال: تأملات في عيد الغطاس... مقال: نعمة الحفظ

حصاد عام ٢٠٢٣: وزارة النقل - وزارة الصحة - هيئة الدواء

محاكم إسرائيل أمام محكمة العدل الدولية.. وألمانيا تدخل مؤازتها

ساحة الرياضة العالمية تزخر بالبطولات

اقرأ لهؤلاً: يسري مصطفى - القس أرنست نادي حبيب - د. أماني البرت
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Editorial

Problems on hold

Imperativeness of resolving Palestinian issue

What Israelis say

Youssef Sidhom

Today, I resume looking into the imperativeness of finding a solution to the Palestinian predicament, despite Israel's brutal persistence in conducting military and air strikes against the Palestinians. In doing so, Israel aims at breaking the Palestinian people and forcing them to give up their land or relinquish their will to establish their own free State. As I mentioned in a previous editorial, I am not counting on Arab condemnation of Israeli crimes, nor pleading with international law and rights organisations to play a role on that score; they have all failed with flying colours to put an end to Israel's unruliness or to expose the American and European diabolical support of Israel. I am instead betting on the growing waves of wrath and rebellion engulfing US and European streets, rejecting the policies of their governments which support Israeli crimes. The peoples of the US and Europe are livid that, instead of upholding international law and holding Israel accountable of the heinous crimes it commits against Palestinians, their governments merely look the other way and do nothing. Peoples of the US and Europe are obviously sympathetic towards the Palestinians and supportive of their rights. I expect they would eventually bring down their governments through free elections and put in their place more moderate political bodies that would recognise Palestinian rights and work on curbing Israeli unruliness.

In this context I would like to present the content of a message I received which includes an Arabic translation of what was claimed to be an editorial published in the Israeli leftist newspaper Haaertz. The article in question says that Palestinians are the best people on earth to rise to defend their homeland, even following 75 years of occupation and bitter oppression. Look at what happened in Gaza, the article says. The war in Gaza which started last October in retaliation to Hamas missiles fired at Tel Aviv, has cost Israel USD912 million every three days. This figure represents the cost of aircraft raids, firing missiles, fuelling weaponry, and using ammunition and projectiles. Let alone the losses incurred owing to diminished trade, decline in the stock exchange trade, halting economic activity, and traffic disruption at airports and railway stations. To say nothing of the burden of securing food and health requirements for Israelis who take refuge in raid shelters, and the devastation of homes, businesses and factories owing to the Palestinian-fired missiles. The article says that Israelis are undergoing a fierce war which they started, ignited and fuelled but which they unfortunately cannot manage nor have the final say in its outcome. That war would in all probability not end in Israel's favour, given Palestinian obstinacy and resilience, even as it appeared they had lost resoluteness. The article warns that this does not bode well to Israel and that Israeli politicians are now realising that they need to re-assess their position. In fact, the article proceeds, Palestinians are the original owners of the land, and who if not they would not willingly and proudly sacrifice lives, children and possessions for this land? The author of the article, whose name was not mentioned in the message I received, says that as a Jewish himself, he challenges Israel and all its people and army to display such sense of belonging and rooting to the land. Had Israelis been that keen on the land of Palestine, he says, they would not have hastened to leave it at the onset of the war.

Once the Palestinians were besieged and their annihilation spearheaded throughout 75 years, the article says, the outcome was that they displayed extraordinary resilience and remarkable persistence in holding on to the land. Fully fledged armies could not do what the Palestinian resistance did with meagre resources but indomitable steel will, the article reads, mentioning that the mask of deceit has fallen off Israeli soldiers. It might do better to relinquish the deceitful dream of Great Israel, the author writes, and accept that Palestine would be a neighbouring State, because stubbornness in denying that is simply futile. It has become obvious that even in a thousand years, Israel is bound to pay the price of its fierce deeds, and Palestinians are sure to make a comeback.

Apart from the above article, I received video footage that has been widely circulating on social media in Egypt. The footage features American voiceover calling to "Free Palestine". The content of the video resonates with public opinion in Egypt, including my own. It says: "I have a question and I think every human being should ask this question today: If the United Nations, International Human Rights Commission, international law, European Union, World Health Organisation... if those big organisations cannot stop genocide happening in front of our eyes, then why these organisations? What are they for? Why are they spending hundreds of billions of dollars every year? Our taxpayer money goes to these organisations. If they are good-for-nothing, if they cannot stop and cease fire now, then they'd better stop their organisations. I am requesting to everyone: repost this video and tag those organisations. And use #ceasefire_now. Shame on United Nations, shame on European Union, shame on international law, shame on WHO, shame on UNICEF, big shame on the International Human Rights Commission. You call yourself the Human Rights Commission, you are not even capable of protecting animal rights. These are not international organisations; this is an international circus and all the members are international jokers. Biden and Netanyahu are the ringmasters. We don't want to see your shows anymore. Stop wasting our money. You and your organisations are absolutely good-for-nothing. We stand with Palestine, and we will stand forever. We will pray, we will protest and fight till Palestine is free. Please share and repost this video and keep sending shame on those organisations #free_Palestine."

**In solidarity with
Palestinian plight:**

With war raging in Gaza since last October, and Egyptian hearts wrenching at the plight of the Palestinians, the year 2023 closed on a sombre note in Egypt. A number of festive occasions were postponed or altogether cancelled.

Thus, it was that El Gouna Film Festival (GFF), a bright, feisty annual event usually held in September/October at the charming lagoon resort of El Gouna on the Red Sea, was twice postponed; the organisers felt that the festive atmosphere did not fit with the pain and suffering of the Palestinian people on account of the war in Gaza. Finally, however, they decided to hold a subdued edition of the festival before year-end 2023.

In black

The sixth edition of El Gouna Film Festival (GFF) was held from 14 to 21 December 2023.

The event kicked off without the usual glitz and glitter, featuring no red carpet event. In that, it contrasted with previous editions which were marked by flashy opening ceremonies and guests competing to steal the lights on the red carpet with designer outfits; this year most guests arrived dressed in black. Numerous actors and cinema professionals from Egypt, the Arab region and the world attended this edition of GFF; Fast and furious actor Tyrese Gibson attended the closing ceremony.

Cinema for humanity

The closing ceremony on 21 December was keen to affirm the festival's support for films that emphasise human values: "Cinema for humanity", GFF's all time motto. In his speech during the closing ceremony of the festival, business tycoon Naguib Sawiris who founded GFF in 2017 said that "no one can doubt our intentions nor our sympathy with Palestine, so this session is a gift to our people in Palestine."

The closing ceremony saw Egyptian alternative rock band Cairokee and their lead singer Amir Eid perform a heart-wrenching rendition of their single 'Tilka Qadiya', literally 'That case' in tribute of the people of Palestine. In the evocative style synonymous with Cairokee, Mostafa Ibrahim's lyrics posed a piercing enquiry into the integrity of those who claim virtue while overlooking principles of fairness and parity. At its core, the song stands as a resonant testament to disillusionment with a world that professes advocacy for human rights while turning a blind eye to its anguish and injustices.

This edition of GFF showcased 90 films from 49 countries. The festival's programme consisted of the three official competitions: Feature Narrative Competition, Feature Documentary Competition and Short Film Competition, in addition to the Official Selection out of Competition and Special Presentations.

The Feature Narrative Competition included 14 films. The jury of the competition was headed by Bosnian Director Jasmila Žbanić. The GFF programme also included 12 films in the Feature Documentary Competition, 21 films in the Short Film Competition, and 17 films in the Official Selection out of Competition section.

Thirteen films competed for the GFF's annual Cinema for Humanity Audience Award, while five competed for El Gouna Green Star Award dedicated to the best work covering environmental causes.

CineGouna

El Gouna Film Festival was founded in 2017 by Mr Sawiris in collaboration with actress and producer Bushra Rozza, international event organizer and CEO of I-Events Amr Mansi, and film producer Kamal Zadeh. The initiative gained strength and momentum with the support of El Gouna founder business tycoon Samih Sawiris, a younger brother of Naguib Sawiris, and support of many private sector sponsors. The festival is presented under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture.

The mission of El Gouna Film Festival is to showcase

GFF subdued edition**Epiphany blessings**

On 20 January 2024, the Coptic Church celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany. The feast is marked on 19 January in simple years, and on 20 January in a leap year. The Feast of the Epiphany marks the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan at the hands of John the Baptist, and is one of the seven great feasts of the Master. It is also named the Feast of the Theophania, meaning the Appearance of God. That day, God was manifested as the Father through His voice; the Son Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. The Bible says: "And Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt 3: 16,17)

Watani wishes its readers the overflowing blessings of the Theophania.

**Mary Fikry**

a diverse range of films catering to a creative and well-versed audience. Designed for artists and filmmakers, GFF aspires to foster communication between cultures and filmmakers to benefit the industry and the Middle East region through the art of filmmaking, by connecting filmmakers from the region with their international counterparts in a spirit of cooperation and cultural exchange. The festival is dedicated to the discovery of new voices, and strives to be a catalyst for the development of cinema in the Arab world, particularly through its industry segment CineGouna Platform which, through its various branches, aims at developing and empowering Egyptian and Arab filmmakers, and helping them find the necessary technical and financial support.

CineGouna Platform consists of the CineGouna SpringBoard, CineGouna Bridge, and the latest addition the CineGouna Market. CineGouna SpringBoard is a project development and co-production lab that offers opportunities to find creative and financial support for Arab film directors and producers with projects in development or films in post-production.

CineGouna Bridge is a meeting point and a forum for dialogue between different cinematic voices, where Arab filmmakers and their international counterparts engage in and share their perspectives on a wide range of subjects related to the social and business aspects of cinema.

As part of the festival's commitment to the film industry, GFF launched this year CineGouna Market which serves as a workspace for established and emerging voices in the film industry. It houses the El Gouna Short Film Gallery, where promising filmmakers interact with seasoned filmmakers. The festival is one of the leading festivals in the Middle East.

Window on Palestine

The CineGouna Bridge this year featured 14 seminars, lectures and workshops. Among them was Filmmaking Masterclass with Marwan Hamed; a symposium on "Cinema in Crises... A Look at Palestine"; and a creative development and pitching workshop titled "From Pitch to Production"; the workshop focused on projects by Egyptian female filmmakers.

GFF was keen to highlight the Palestinian cause and shed light on its details. It thus launched the special programme "Window on Palestine", in cooperation with the Palestinian Film Foundation, featuring a set of Palestinian films that go to the core of Palestinian stories.

The Gouna Film Festival concluded its 2023 edition, with an awards ceremony for winning films from around the world.

Awards

The Creative Achievement Award was given to Egyptian director Marwan Hamed, who is among the most prominent young directors of his generation. Mr Hamed was born in 1977; he has an extensive repertoire that extends over 20 years of experience in producing and directing successful hits. Among them *Yacoubian Building*, produced in 2006; it was the most expensive film ever made in the history of Egyptian cinema at the time and screened at some of the world's most prestigious film festivals, winning numerous awards. Among his works are the Blue Elephant and Kira wel-Gen.

The NETPAC—Network for the Promotion of Asia Pacific Cinema—Award for Best Asian Film went to *From Abdul to Laila* directed by Laila al-Bayati, an Iraqi-born director residing in France. *From Abdul to Laila* took audiences on an emotional journey during which, following an accident, a young Franco-Iraqi woman seeks her identity, reconnecting with her family, confronting her father's past, and embracing

her Arab roots. The film beautifully explores language, music, and suppressed memories.

The FIPRESCI—International Federation of Film Critics—Award went to *Hollywood Gate*, directed by Ibrahim Nashat, an Egyptian residing in Germany. The film unravels the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. The Taliban's encounter with advanced military technology leads to unexpected consequences, exposing the transformation of a fundamentalist militia into a military regime. Nashat's personal connection with the subject matter adds depth to this gripping narrative.

Winners

The El Gouna Star Award for Best Arab Short Film went to *Yaraka*, directed by Michelle and Noel Keserwany from Lebanon but based in France. The film explores the shared struggles of two women working in a Lyon restaurant. Connecting through a common thread of forced migration, the film delves into the challenges faced by women displaced from their homes.

The Golden Star for Short Film went to *Cross My Heart And Hope To Die* by director Sam Manaha of the Philippines.

In their selection, the Short Films jury focused on talent, and on who excelled in shedding light on creativity, distinct vision, and a new perspective in storytelling.

Star films

The El Gouna Green Star Award for GFF was won by *The Burial Flower*, directed by João Salaviza and Renée Nader Messora from Brazil. The documentary explores three periods of indigenous history, emphasising the Krahô people's fight for freedom and nature preservation.

El Gouna Star For Best Arab Documentary Film was won by *Machtat* directed by Sonia Ben Slama from Tunisia. The film exposes the complexities behind the Tunisian music of machtat. As well as the traditional musicians at wedding ceremonies, shedding light on the disparity between the music's promise of love and the harsh reality.

The top honours of El Gouna Gold Star For Documentary Film went to *Hollywoodgate* directed by Ibrahim Nashat.

The Cinema For Humanity Audience Award which honours a feature-length film that embodies humanitarian themes, was this year awarded to *Goodbye Julia* directed by Mohamed Kordofani from Sudan. This film takes place just before the secession of South Sudan; a married former singer from the north seeks redemption for causing the death of a southern man by hiring his oblivious wife as her maid. *Goodbye Julia* left a poignant impression on audiences.

Stars

The El Gouna Star Award for Best Actor went to Bottsooj Uortaikh for his role in the film *If I Could Drown with a Hibernation* directed by Zoljargal Purevash of Mongolia. This Mongolian film, which was also selected for screening in Cannes, tells the story of the poor teenage boy Proud Olze who is determined to win a physics competition to acquire a scholarship.

El Gouna Star For Best Actress went to Parwin Rajabi, for her remarkable portrayal of a woman who has never experienced any attention from her husband, till she falls ill, in *Transient Happiness*, directed by Sina Muhammed from Iraq who also won El Gouna Star For Best Arab Narrative Film.

El Gouna Gold Star For Best Narrative Film was awarded by the jury to *In Our Day*, directed by Hong Sangsoo from South Korea. This film is the 30th in Sangsoo's career; it brilliantly depicts two separate and alternate conversations during the film: one between an actress and an abyss and the other between an old poet and a fan.

