



2018 GABR FELLOWS WITH ADMIRAL OSAMA RABIE, SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN AND MANAGING DIRECTOR



The  
SHAFIK GABR  
Foundation

# The Gabr Fellowship Newsletter

June 2021, Issue 47

IN THIS ISSUE

## Hypocrisy on the Rise

Since the dawn of humanity, hypocrisy was sadly born. Only children at an early age are devoid of hypocrisy, which they learn with age.

Around the world in every realm from politics to culture, from business to sports, hypocrisy is everywhere. Countries touting democracy, human rights and moral values breach their own principles and forfeit their right to preach.

Countries and people that tout religious principles and this supremacy break God's basic laws and continue to act hypocritically.

As Jemima Kelly wrote in a *Financial Times* article last year, "It's hard to recognise our own hypocrisy. Virtue-signallers who spend their time calling out other people's moral transgressions often seem blissfully unaware of the instances when they may be breaking their own too-rigid rules."

In a more restricted world, with restricted travelling, more work from home, less human physical engagement and more Zoom, Skype and the like... we are greatly missing out on understanding and cooperating with each other.

And as we lose this human engagement, we gain more rationalizing of our actions and perceptions without realizing the trap of hypocrisy we are falling into. It is time we realize this before we end up living in bubbles of false moral values.

**M. Shafik Gabr**

### In Brief...

- Article: **Facebook's AI treats Palestinian activists**
- Article: **It's Time to End the 'Special Relationship' With Israel**
- Kemp Gouldin's** Because Baseball Thrives
- **Marwa Abdalla's** Film Receives Top Award
- Michael Matthiesen** Joins the U.S. Department of Health
- Nourhan Moussa** Advises on USAID's Economic Courts Activity
- **Question of the Month:** A Pulse of the Gabr Fellowship Community
- Gabr Foundation **Reading Corner**
- Sarah Badr** to Attend the World Bank's Youth Summit

## News and Updates...

### Sarah Badr to Attend the World Bank's Youth Summit



**2017 Gabr Fellow Sarah Badr** got accepted to attend the World Bank's Youth Summit this year to represent MENA.

As part of her current role with the UN's major group for children and youth on the migration team, they produced their first policy brief as input for the regional consultations on the Global Compact on Migration. It amplifies youth voices and advocates for young migrants' rights in education, skills recognition, and labor opportunities in the communities they live in. You can find the policy brief here, under the MENA section: <https://www.unmgcy.org/youth4migration>

### Marwa Abdalla's Film Receives Top Award



**2018 Gabr Fellow Marwa Abdalla's** feature film project as a producer "Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner" has received the top award of the South Region of 15,000 Euros during their participation in the 3rd edition of Meditalents Co-production Forum in the Mediterranean, which was held last May in Marseille.

The forum is an event dedicated to professionals of the cinema industry across the Mediterranean countries which is held in the framework of Cinema and Audiovisual workshops, offering film project leaders to meet possible co-producers, distributors and international cinema financing funds.

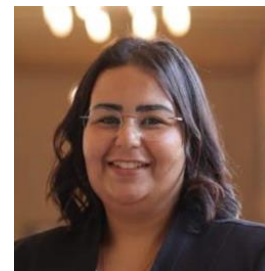
### Michael Matthiesen Joins the U.S. Department of Health



**2017 Gabr Fellow Michael Matthiesen** started a summer position at U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Trade and Health.

The Department mostly deals with the import/export of health devices and pharmaceuticals and the Office of Trade and Health advises HHS, USTR, CDC, and FDA on how the laws of the U.S and other countries interact with each other regarding the trade of medical devices (for example, if something gets approved by the FDA will it get approved by the NHS or vice-versa). Right now they are focused on the U.S participation in COVAX.

### Nourhan Moussa Advises on USAID's Economic Courts Activity



**2014 Gabr Fellow Nourhan Moussa** is currently advising Tetra Tech DPK on its Economic Courts Activity, a fully-funded USAID Project as a Senior Legal Specialist.

USAID's Economic Courts activity aims to support Egyptian reforms to improve the efficiency and timeliness of case resolution while raising the quality of services in the Economic Courts to be consistent with international standards.

You can find more about the project here: <https://www.usaid.gov/egypt/economic-courts>

## Kemp Gouldin's Because Baseball Thrives



**2015 Gabr Fellow Kemp Gouldin's** Because Baseball continues to innovate, thrive and bring people together – albeit virtually – during this transitional season. In the first months of 2021 they:

- Completed the release of their first #PlayAtHome video series. Taught by Egyptian-American Josh Nashed, a former professional player and current college coach, the campaign proved to be a resounding success. The five videos, translated into Arabic, reached over 600,000 people in Egypt.
- Celebrated the first officially recognized Arab American Heritage Month (April) in the US. In honor of this historic month, Because Baseball's latest newsletter features Joe Lahoud – the first Major League Baseball player of Arab descent. Joe has been an ambassador for Because Baseball in the US for the last two years. In the upcoming school year, he will spearhead a delegation of retired MLB players for a Because Baseball goodwill tour to Cairo.
- Received extensive coverage in the Canadian Press for their work with Baseball Canada to develop a customized baseball-based PE curriculum for their school partners in Egypt. The Winterball curriculum will serve as the foundation for a new way to teach fitness and health - all the while delivering the joy of baseball to even greater numbers of eager Egyptian youth.

Because Baseball stemmed from Kemp's Gabr Fellowship Action Project and is supported by the Shafik Gabr Foundation. Because Baseball's mission to connect communities and build friendships through a common language: baseball.

Find out more on <https://www.becausebaseball.org>

## Sponsor a Gabr Fellow



**Sponsoring a Gabr Fellow** for the Fellowship Program helps build bridges of cross-cultural understanding between the East and the West.

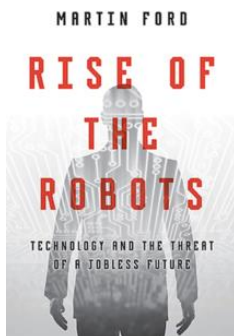
The sponsorship package costs \$35,000 which includes the sponsoring of a Fellow who can carry the name of the individual, organization or corporation making the contribution.

Sponsors will be recognized in all Foundation publications, marketing materials, and events. Contributions of any amount, big or small, are encouraged and welcomed with sincere gratitude.

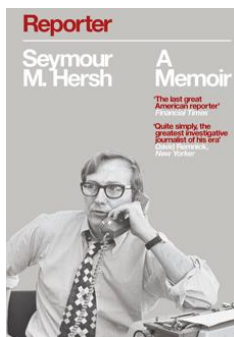
More information can be found here:

[eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/how-to-support](http://eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/how-to-support)

## Gabr Foundation Reading Corner



The Foundation Reading Corner encourages Fellows to critique the books that have been recommended to them in each issue. For this issue, Mr. Gabr recommends *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future* by Martin Ford and *Reporter: A Memoir* by Seymour Hersh.



The past solutions to technological disruption, especially more training and education, aren't going to work. We must decide, now, whether the future will see broad-based prosperity or catastrophic levels of inequality and economic insecurity. *Rise of the Robots* is useful reading to understand what accelerating technology means for our economic prospects, as well as for society as a whole.

Seymour Hersh's reporting has earned him fame, front-page headlines in many newspapers, honors, and no small amount of controversy. Now in his memoir entitled *Reporter*, this Pulitzer Prize-winning and eminent investigative journalist describes what drove him and how he worked as an independent outsider, breaking some of the most impactful stories of the last half-century, from Washington to Vietnam to the Middle East.

## Facebook's AI treats Palestinian activists

By Elizabeth Dwoskin and Gerrit De Vynck  
*The Washington Post*

Just days after violent conflict erupted in Israel and the Palestinian territories, both Facebook and Twitter copped to major faux pas: The companies had wrongly blocked or restricted millions of mostly pro-Palestinian posts and accounts related to the crisis.

Activists around the world charged the companies with failing a critical test: whether their services would enable the world to watch an important global event unfold unfettered through the eyes of those affected. The companies blamed the errors on glitches in artificial intelligence software.

In Twitter's case, the company said its service mistakenly identified the rapid-firing tweeting during the confrontations as spam, resulting in hundreds of accounts being temporarily locked and the tweets not showing up when searched for. Facebook-owned Instagram gave several explanations for its problems, including a software bug that temporarily blocked video-sharing and saying its hate speech detection software misidentified a key hashtag as associated with a terrorist group.

The companies said the problems were quickly resolved and the accounts restored. But some activists say many posts are still being censored. Experts in free speech and technology said that's because the issues are connected to a broader problem: overzealous software algorithms that are designed to protect but end up wrongly penalizing marginalized groups that rely on social media to build support. Black Americans, for example, have complained for years that posts discussing race are incorrectly flagged as problematic by AI software on a routine basis, with little recourse for those affected.

Despite years of investment, many of the automated systems built by social media companies to stop spam, disinformation and terrorism are still not sophisticated enough to detect the difference between desirable forms of expression and harmful ones. They often overcorrect, as in the most recent errors during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or they under-enforce, allowing harmful misinformation and violent and hateful language to proliferate, including hoaxes about coronavirus vaccines and violent posts ahead of the U.S. Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6.

The Palestinian situation erupted into a full-blown public relations and internal crisis for Facebook. Last week, CEO Mark Zuckerberg dispatched the company's top policy executive, Nick Clegg, to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leadership, according to the company. Meanwhile, Palestinians launched a campaign to knock down Facebook's ranking in app stores by leaving one-star reviews. The incident was designated "severity 1" — the company's term for a sitewide emergency, according to internal documents reviewed by The Washington Post and first reported by NBC. The documents noted that Facebook executives reached out to Apple, Google, and Microsoft to request that the posts be deleted.

Meanwhile, a group of 30 Facebook employees, some of whom said they had friends and family affected by the conflict, have complained of "over-enforcement" on the Palestinian content in an open letter on the company's workforce messaging boards, according to another set

of internal documents reviewed by The Post. The group has filed at least 80 tickets to report "false positives" with the company's automation systems in relation to the conflict, noting many of the problems were with the AI mistakenly labeling images of protests as "harassment or bullying."

Jillian York, a director at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, an advocacy group that opposes government surveillance, has researched tech company practices in the Middle East. She said she doesn't believe that content moderation — human or algorithmic — can work at scale.

"Ultimately, what we're seeing here is existing offline repression and inequality being replicated online, and Palestinians are left out of the policy conversation," York said.

Facebook spokeswoman Dani Lever said the company's "policies are designed to give everyone a voice while keeping them safe on our apps, and we apply these policies equally." She added that Facebook has a dedicated team of Arabic and Hebrew speakers closely monitoring the situation on the ground, but declined to say whether any were Palestinian. In an Instagram post May 7, Facebook also gave an account of what it said led to the glitch.

Palestinian activists took to the social media platforms as they began staging protests in late April ahead of an impending Israeli Supreme Court case over whether settlers had the right to evict families from their homes in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah. Potential evictees live-streamed confrontations and documented footage of injuries after Israeli police stormed al-Aqsa Mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

The conflict descended into war after terrorist group Hamas, which governs Gaza, fired explosive rockets into Israel. Israel responded with an 11-day bombing campaign that killed 254 Palestinians, including 66 children. Twelve people in Israel were killed, including two children. During the barrage, Palestinians posted photos on Twitter showing homes covered in rubble and children's coffins. A cease-fire took effect May 20.

Palestinian activists and experts who study social movements say it was another watershed historical moment in which social media helped alter the course of events. They compared it to a decade ago, when social media platforms were key to organizing the pro-Democracy uprising known as the Arab Spring. But at the time, tech companies didn't rely on policing algorithms, rather humans making decisions. And while mistakes were made, nothing occurred on the scale of today, York said.

Even after the companies said the glitches were fixed, 170 Instagram posts and five Twitter posts that activists believe were wrongly removed were still offline, according to 7amleh, the Arab Center for the Advancement of Social Media, a group that advocates for Palestinian digital rights. The group said in a report in late May that it was told by the companies that some of the remaining posts are under review.

*To read the full article, please visit <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/05/28/facebook-palestinian-censorship/>*

**Disclaimer:** *The views presented in this article are the author's alone and do not represent the opinion of the Foundation.*

## It's Time to End the 'Special Relationship' With Israel

By Stephen Walt  
*Foreign Policy*

The latest round of fighting between Israelis and Palestinians ended in the usual way: with a cease-fire that left Palestinians worse off and the core issues unaddressed. It also provided more evidence that the United States should no longer give Israel unconditional economic, military, and diplomatic support. The benefits of this policy are zero, and the costs are high and rising. Instead of a special relationship, the United States and Israel need a normal one.

Once upon a time, a special relationship between the United States and Israel might have been justified on moral grounds. The creation of a Jewish state was seen as an appropriate response to centuries of violent antisemitism in the Christian West, including but hardly limited to the Holocaust. The moral case was compelling, however, only if one ignored the consequences for Arabs who had lived in Palestine for many centuries and if one believed Israel to be a country that shared basic U.S. values. Here too the picture was complicated. Israel may have been “the only democracy in the Middle East,” but it was not a liberal democracy like the United States, where all religions and races are supposed to have equal rights (however imperfectly that goal has been realized). Consistent with Zionism’s core objectives, Israel privileged Jews over others by conscious design.

Today, however, decades of brutal Israeli control have demolished the moral case for unconditional U.S. support. Israeli governments of all stripes have expanded settlements, denied Palestinians legitimate political rights, treated them as second-class citizens within Israel itself, and used Israel’s superior military power to kill and terrorize residents of Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon with near impunity. Given all this, it is not surprising Human Rights Watch and the Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem have recently issued well-documented and convincing reports describing these various policies as a system of apartheid. The rightward drift of Israel’s domestic politics and the growing role of extremist parties in Israeli politics have done further damage to Israel’s image, including among many American Jews.

In the past, it was also possible to argue Israel was a valuable strategic asset for the United States, though its value was often overstated. During the Cold War, for example, backing Israel was an effective way to check Soviet influence in the Middle East because Israel’s military was a far superior fighting force than the armed forces of Soviet clients like Egypt or Syria. Israel also provided useful intelligence on occasion.

The Cold War has been over for 30 years, however, and unconditional support for Israel today creates more problems for Washington than it solves. Israel could do nothing to help the United States in its two wars against Iraq; indeed, the United States had to send Patriot missiles to Israel during the first Gulf War to protect it from Iraqi Scud attacks. Even if Israel deserves credit for destroying a nascent Syrian nuclear reactor in 2007 or helping develop the Stuxnet virus that temporarily damaged some Iranian centrifuges, its strategic value is far less than it was during the Cold War. Moreover, the United States does not have

to provide Israel with unconditional support to reap benefits such as these.

Meanwhile, the costs of the special relationship keep rising. Critics of U.S. support for Israel often start with the more than \$3 billion dollars of military and economic aid Washington provides Israel every year, even though Israel is now a wealthy country whose per capita income ranks 19th in the world. There are undoubtedly better ways to spend that money, but it is a drop in the bucket for the United States, a country with a \$21 trillion economy. The real costs of the special relationship are political.

As we have seen over the past week, unconditional support for Israel makes it much harder for the United States to claim the moral high ground on the world stage. The Biden administration is eager to restore the United States’ reputation and image after four years under former U.S. President Donald Trump. It wants to draw a clear distinction between the United States’ conduct and values and those of its opponents like China and Russia and, in the process, reestablish itself as the primary linchpin of a rules-based order. For this reason, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the U.N. Human Rights Council the administration was going to place “democracy and human rights at the center of our foreign policy.” But when the United States stands alone and vetoes three separate U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolutions, repeatedly reaffirms Israel’s “right to defend itself,” authorizes sending Israel an additional \$735 million worth of weapons, and offers Palestinians only empty rhetoric about their right to live with freedom and security while supporting a two-state solution (the latter a possibility few knowledgeable people take seriously anymore), its claim to moral superiority stands exposed as hollow and hypocritical. Unsurprisingly, China was quick to slam the U.S. position, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi highlighted the United States’ inability to serve as an evenhanded broker by offering to host Israeli-Palestinian peace talks instead. It probably wasn’t a serious offer, but Beijing could hardly do worse than Washington has in recent decades.

Another enduring cost of the “special relationship” is the disproportionate foreign-policy bandwidth relations with Israel consume. Biden, Blinken, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan have bigger problems to worry about than the actions of one small Middle Eastern country. Yet here the United States is again, embroiled in a crisis largely of its own making that demands its attention and takes valuable time away from dealing with climate change, China, the pandemic, Afghan disengagement, economic recovery, and a host of more weighty problems.

To read the full article, please visit <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/27/its-time-to-end-the-special-relationship-with-israel/>

**Disclaimer:** The views presented in this article are the author’s alone and do not represent the opinion of the Foundation.

## Question of the Month: A Pulse of the Gabr Fellowship Community



As the Gabr Fellows enter into leadership roles—in business, diplomacy, government, finance, and more—they will continue to grapple with significant challenges, magnified by an increased pace in technological advancement, the potential for ramped up global inequalities, and changes in governance and economic structures.

To better understand the pulse of the Gabr Fellowship community and to begin to articulate substantive dialogue, the Foundation polls the Fellows each month on the key issues facing their respective countries and the global community at large.

**1. Do you agree that countries with ample and surplus supplies of COVID-19 vaccines should share them with countries that don't have enough?**

Yes: 97%

No: 0%

I don't know: 3%

**2. Do you think Egypt has done a good job with the ceasefire agreement between Palestine and Israel?**

Yes: 60%

No: 14%

I don't know: 26%

**3. Do you agree with a potential new global agreement that would require all listed companies in signatory countries to report their exposure to climate risks?**

Yes: 77%

No: 14%

I don't know: 9%

**4. How do you see the US policy regarding immigration and border control?**

Successful: 3%

Unsuccessful: 71%

I don't know: 26%

*Stay tuned for next month's question of the month and the Gabr Fellows' takes on current events, as our community of future leaders grapple with the most pressing challenges of today and tomorrow.*

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY



1 June: Hadir Helal, 2015 Gabr Fellow



5 June: Dalia Ihab, 2017 Gabr Fellow



5 June: Menna Farouk, 2017 Gabr Fellow



13 June: Wes Rogerson, 2018 Gabr Fellow



15 June: Anis Issa, 2016 Gabr Fellow



19 June: Abby Weidenhaefer, 2016 Gabr Fellow



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY



23 June: Sarah Badr, 2017 Gabr Fellow



23 June: Marwa Abdalla, 2018 Gabr Fellow



25 June: Ahmed Aransho, 2015 Gabr Fellow



26 June: Elizabeth Dent, 2015 Gabr Fellow



29 June: Judson Moore, 2015 Gabr Fellow

# The Gabr Fellowship Newsletter

For more information on the Shafik Gabr Foundation and its *East-West: The Art of Dialogue* Initiative, please visit the website <https://eastwestdialogue.org/>.

For earlier itineraries of the program, please see the previous years' reports at <https://eastwestdialogue.org/fellowship/brochures/>



Jan-Baptiste Huysmans, *The Fortune Teller of the Kabyle*, oil on panel  
The Shafik Gabr Collection

Connect with us



<https://eastwestdialogue.org/>

[info@shafikgabrfoundation.org](mailto:info@shafikgabrfoundation.org)

## **The Shafik Gabr Foundation**

444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 840  
Washington, DC 20001

7 Hassan Al-Akbar Street  
Cairo, Egypt, 11571