

## INFORMATION STATEMENT

The Cairo Gabr Fellows meeting

3 March 2024

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# The Gabr Fellows Meeting

Cairo, 3 March 2024



On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2024, at the invitation of the Chairman of the Shafik Gabr Foundation, Mr. Shafik Gabr, the Gabr Fellows met in Cairo at the ARTOC Headquarters.

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

- The state of Egypt's economy, anticipated development in the near future, and the Egyptian economic situation in the light of the foreign currency management crisis.
- The potential impact of the next US President on global events.
- The possible implications of the situation in Gaza on Egypt.

## Fellows updated news

2013 Gabr Fellow **Moataz Hussein** has recently been appointed as the Chief Legal Officer at IGI Holding "The International Group for Investments". He has also obtained a personal data privacy certification from Maastricht University School of Law, Netherlands.

2014 Gabr Fellow **Nourhan Moussa's** trip to the USA was a success. She met key figures to launch the Next Gen Egypt-US coalition, fostering dialogue between the two countries. She also

collaborated on writing projects with Think Tanks and is now focusing on developing her ideas while contributing to the USAID Project for automating economic courts.

2015 Gabr Fellow **Hadir Helal** recently took over her father's law firm. She rebranded and renamed the firm, building upon her father's legacy. She has also been appointed as a board member at the Emirati Bank.

2015 Gabr Fellow **Bassma Fahim** became the executive assistant to the country head for the Gulf, Levant, and Saudi Arabia at Sandoz, which is an international pharmaceutical company. Her responsibilities expanded to include support for the People and Organization department, with half of her time dedicated to internal communications, mainly focusing on Dubai and Saudi Arabia.

2016 Gabr Fellow **Nayara Gadalla** has been diligently serving as a prosecutor, collaborating closely with the Egyptian Government to combat corruption.

2017 Gabr Fellow **Amr Seda** participated in a panel discussion at the Egypt Career Summit organized by the British University in Egypt, focusing on "Navigating Careers in the Age of AI". The summit featured Shark Tank Egypt's hosts Ayman Abbas and Abdallah Sallam. Amr also had private meetings with them and agreed on future collaborations with the university.

2017 Gabr Fellow **Dalia Younis** was appointed as UNICEF's emergency focal point for the Gaza response. She also represented UNICEF MENA in a webinar on parenting children with disabilities, advocating for supportive HR policies. Additionally, she showcased her musical talent at an interfaith dialogue award ceremony, celebrating Egypt's diverse musical heritage.

2017 Gabr Fellow **Ibrahim Hammouda** attended the World Economic Forum in Davos. He also met with Prince Abbas Hilmi, partner of Concord International Investment Group, to discuss business and potential opportunities in Egypt and Europe.

2018 Gabr Fellow **Karim Ihab Elsharkawy** is currently a member of Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the policy planning and crisis management department. He is also involved in policy research and policy recommendations.

2022 Gabr Fellow **Amr Hesham** hit a career milestone by going online with a system for all Egyptian banks. He's teaming up with Fabrice, 2018 Gabr Fellow on a documentary about the American Dream in Egypt and planning to start their own production company. Plus, he's launched a new food tour in Heliopolis.

2022 Gabr Fellow **Menna El Touny** successfully organized Nielsen IQ's "EEMEA Leadership Meeting" in Cairo, Egypt, and completed the "Meisner in Practice" acting workshop, which was a major achievement this year. She also finished the "Meisner in Practice" acting workshop after four months of learning and exploring Sanford Meisner's technique.

2022 Gabr Fellow **Wessam Baher** obtained coaching certification from ICF, marking a career milestone. Will soon offer coaching services. He was also chosen as a core team member at

Qatar National Bank to lead organisational culture transformation, aiming to enhance productivity and improve culture at QNB Alahli.

2022 Gabr Fellow **Mohamed Hassan** is currently working as an Art director at BadBunch, handling all their artwork for companies and individuals; he also manages tours for tourists in Cairo. He is also an intermediate rower aiming to compete in a few months.

2022 Gabr Fellow **Yomna El-Awamri** is now the Capacity Building Manager for J-PAL in the MENA region, based in Cairo. She's helping create ways to measure the impact of policies to fight poverty. At the same time, she's working with the Carbon Impact Lab to bring investments to combat climate change to the Middle East and Africa.

## Open discussion

The Egyptian economy is currently facing several significant challenges:

1. Egypt imports over 70% of its wheat and corn from Ukraine and Russia. The war in Ukraine has disrupted these supplies, posing a substantial threat to Egypt's food security and contributing to inflationary pressures.
2. Large debt, which was previously serviced at 1-1.5%, has increased to 6-7%, which is affecting the country's fiscal stability.
3. Egypt is losing 30% of its traffic through the Red Sea because of Houthis attacks, which has significant implications for its revenues from the Suez Canal.
4. As for the Egyptian population, enhancing their productivity and ability to perform is crucial. This will be a major demographic pressure problem, intensifying challenges, including employment, housing and public services. Egyptian people are not as disciplined as they should be regarding their productivity. Unless this fact is faced, Egypt's population has reached 109 million, and that includes 9.1 million refugees according to the UN's IOM.

Mr Gabr emphasised the significance of the young generation speaking out and the value of constructive criticism. He highlighted that if individuals do not speak now, they may face greater challenges in the future. He urged speaking up and offering positive criticism but stressed the importance of being constructive, not negative. This approach is crucial for initiating positive change and transformation at all levels.

Mr Gabr pointed out that it is the responsibility of the current generation to voice their opinions on how things can be improved for better progress and improvement in Egypt.

During the Fellows' meeting, the discussion also touched on the challenges and the importance of creating an investment-friendly environment to attract foreign direct investments to Egypt. The need for Egypt to encourage Egyptians living abroad to invest in the country is crucial; however, for these investments to materialise and be sustainable, the domestic environment in Egypt must succeed without problems. It is important to have a more efficient legal, financial and bureaucratic system to resolve disputes swiftly to ensure investors feel secure and confident in their investments.

## Impact of the Next US President on what is happening worldwide

Poll question:

“Who foresees Donald Trump or Joe Biden to be the next President?”

**Donald Trump** – 4 fellows voted.

**Joe Biden** – 0 fellows voted.

**Neither Trump nor Biden** – 4 fellows voted.

Prediction:

There is a possibility that Donald Trump will not be the next president. It was discussed that Trump has faced and is currently facing numerous legal and political obstacles since being nominated for the next presidency. These challenges suggest that “a very powerful system” does not want Trump to compete or be involved in the political arena.

It is also possible that Joe Biden will not be the next US president due to deteriorating health concerns.

A detailed discussion followed covering two aspects:

- A. Israel’s huge influence in the US.
- B. Arab response to Israel’s war in Gaza.

On the first topic, Mr Gabr recommended that the Fellows see and read the following to better understand Israeli influence in the US.

1. The Day Israel Attacked America (*documentary online*)
2. The Attack on the Liberty, *by James Scott*
3. They dare to speak out, *by Paul Findley*
4. The Israel Lobby, *by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt*
5. SpyFail, *by James Bamford*

The above leaves the next US elections in a dire framework of difficult consequences.

## The possible implications of the situation in Gaza on Egypt

The discussion then focused on the complex situation in Gaza, highlighting the challenges and potential strategies for achieving peace and security. Mr Gabr reminded the fellows of the historical context, the impact of external influences, and the role of international and local actors in shaping the outcome.

Poll question:

*“How many of you think there will be a ceasefire next week or during Ramadan?”*

**Yes** – 1 vote.

**No** - majority of votes.

During the discussion, Mr Gabr highlighted the importance of strategic actions, international cooperation, and the need for a comprehensive approach. It was discussed that the heightened pressure for Israel to stop the genocide that takes place in Gaza.

The following steps could be considered:

1. Egypt, Jordan and the countries that have signed the Abraham Accords should freeze trade relations with Israel until a solution is reached between Gaza and Israel.
2. Egypt and other Arab countries should close their airspace to Israel flights until a peace solution is found.
3. Withdraw the Israeli ambassadors of Egypt, Jordan, UAE, Bahrain and Morocco from Israel.

These strategic steps are similar to those taken by the USA and Europe towards Russia in the Ukraine-Russian conflict.

It was further explained that Hamas was created during the time Benjamin Netanyahu was a prime minister. Why did Netanyahu support Hamas financially? To undermine the Palestinian authority. Netanyahu was the first to release Palestinian prisoners not to the Palestinian Authority but to Hamas. Why? To lend Hamas credibility. And by giving Hamas credibility, the Palestinians in Gaza accepted Hamas as the rulers. This is fact; this is history.

Israel wants security, the de-weaponization of Hamas, and the release of hostages; they also want their settlers who are based in the West Bank to remain there.

Regarding the settlers, they can be settled in the northwest area of the West Bank. A land swap can take place to compensate the area taken by the settlers to link Gaza with the West Bank as part of a Palestinian state.

Palestinians want an independent state, proclaimed and guaranteed by the five security council members.

The fact is the only way to solve the current problem is by proclaiming a Palestinian state, a realistic position recognised by a majority of countries.

Afterwards, Mr Gabr suggested that a transition committee composed of technocrats, specifically Palestinians who have lived abroad, could manage the transition from the current state of affairs to a future state for a period of time. This recommendation draws on the example of Switzerland, which is run effectively by a rotation of seven leaders.

## **Conclusion**

In his discussion, Mr Gabr emphasised the critical importance of thinking outside the box. He particularly highlighted that regardless of one's field—whether in banking, government, academia, or foreign affairs—bringing forward a unique, unconventional idea can significantly impact one's recognition and success. He pointed out that traditional approaches often fall short in today's rapidly changing global landscape.

Mr Gabr emphasized that young leaders must adapt and prepare for unforeseen challenges. Innovative thinking is important in overcoming present and future challenges. Strategic foresight and a more active role of the younger generation are the keys to contributing to resolving current problems in the world.

### Fellows in attendance were:

**Amr Hesham**, 2022 fellow

**Amr Seda**, 2017 fellow

**Bassma Fahim**, 2015 fellow

**Dalia Younis**, 2017 fellow

**Hadir Helal**, 2015 fellow

**Ibrahim Hammouda**, 2017 fellow

**Karim Ihab Elsharkawy**, 2018 fellow

**Menna El Touny**, 2022 fellow

**Moataz Hussein**, 2013 fellow

**Mohamed Hassan**, 2022 fellow

**Muhammad El Hawary**, 2018 fellow

**Nayara Gadalla**, 2016 fellow

**Nourhan Moussa**, 2014 fellow

**Wessam Baher**, 2022 fellow

**Yomna El-Awamri**, 2022 fellow

**Zeyad Kelani**, 2014 fellow