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PM AT US-ISLAMIC FORUM



Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al Thani speaks at the US-Islamic World Forum, in Doha, on late Tuesday evening.

Eminent panelists highlight global challenges at Forum



Yemeni activist Tawakkol Karman (left) with other panelists at the US-Islamic World Forum at Ritz Carlton, in Doha, on Wednesday. (QT PHOTO)

Qatar helps bridge gap between Islam & the West, says Ihsanoglu

QNA
DOHA

SECRETARY-GENERAL of the Jeddah-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Dr Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, has expressed the OIC's appreciation for the "great role played by Qatar in enhancing opportunities for rapprochement between the Islamic world and the West in general, and with the US in particular".

Speaking on the sidelines of the ninth session of the 9th US-Islamic World Forum on Wednesday, Ihsanoglu said that the Forum was an opportunity to discuss important topics on how to strengthen relations between America and the Muslim world, especially in light of the new challenges

facing the two sides.

Ihsanoglu also said that the US relations with the Muslim world were old and advanced and it has its ups and downs. "There are many key issues of concern to the Muslim world where the US is expected to play a positive role. First and foremost, of course, is the Palestinian cause," he added. The OIC Secretary-General stressed the importance of avoiding extremism on both sides, and rebuilding the relations on the basis of tolerance and co-existence.

On the Syrian crisis, Ihsanoglu said that OIC has condemned the bloodshed and the killing of civilians and called on the UN Security Council to take the needful measures in order to spare the lives of the Syrian people.

MOHAMED KHOULAI
DOHA

THE role of actors in non-state sectors in bringing about a social change and facing socio-political and economic challenges were the main focus of the second session of the US-Islamic World Forum at Ritz Carlton on Wednesday.

An august panel — moderated by Stephen R Grand, fellow and director, project on US relations with the Muslim world at Brookings — comprised of Zainah Anwar, founder, Sisters in Islam and director, Musawah, Malaysia; Tawakkol Karman, 2011 Nobel Peace Laureate,

Yemen; Rami Nashashibi, executive director, Inner-City Muslim Action Network, the US; and Iqbal Noor Ali, senior advisor, Aga Khan Development Network, the US.

The Forum, convened by Brookings Institute on US relations with the Islamic world, began on May 29. It will conclude on Thursday.

The second plenary highlighted the dominant global issues such as political instability, violence and extremism. Innovative civic and philanthropic initiatives taking place in Muslim communities globally also came up for discussion.

Shedding light on some of their experiences in Muslim

societies, the panelists spoke about projects and works by the Sisters' Foundation in Malaysia, the Islamic Action Network (also called 'Iman' Arabic for 'faith') in the US, and the Aga Khan Network for development in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Yemeni activist Tawakkol Karman underlined the role of women in social and political change.

Zaina Nour, for her part, focused on the foundation's works which is struggling to ensure the rights of Muslim women.

Another panelist Rami Nashashibi stressed on the activity and social role of Iman network in Chicago and

its efforts to integrate Muslims, especially immigrants within the American society, while Iqbal Noor Ali talked about Agha Khan Network for development, noting that the network was operating in more than 30 countries.

Karman spoke on the efforts of Yemeni women in particular, and the Arab women in general, in bringing about change in the Arab world. "Today is the first anniversary of the burning of Freedom Square in Taiz. Greetings to all the martyrs and the wounded! And to all the Taiz revolutionaries and to the youth who took part in the revolution in all the

squares. We renew our call for trial of the ousted leader Ali Abdullah Saleh and his supporters, who were responsible for massacres and other atrocities committed in the country," Karman said.

Last year, the forum took place in the middle of the 'Arab Awakening'. From Tunisia to Egypt to Yemen, ordinary citizens did the 'impossible' by triggering political and social changes in their country. This year's Forum examines the impact of these changes and the continuing challenges they pose in the Muslim communities, including in places like South and South-east Asia, as well as the strategic implication on the US.

Forum addresses cross-cultural impact of arts and culture on Muslim world

RAMY SALAMA
DOHA

THE second day of the US-Islamic World Forum on Wednesday began with a panel discussion on 'Arts and Culture'. It highlighted the forces inspiring and shaping cultural development across the Muslim world in light of the important changes the region underwent recently.

Participants discussed several topics, including the role of arts and culture in bridging regional, national and cultural divisions, and how arts and culture can be used to promote social change and government accountability. They also spoke about the role of the artists in shaping cultural development and political change in the Muslim world.

The panelists included Khaled Abol Naga, an Egyptian filmmaker, actor and activist; Saad Mohseni, chairman and CEO of Moby Group, the largest media company in Afghanistan; and Walter Parkes, film producer and CEO of production company Parkes-MacDonald-Image Nation. It was moderated by Cynthia Schneider, a fellow of the Brookings Institute.

The participants stressed the



Khaled Abol Naga, Egyptian filmmaker, actor and activist, speaks at a session, in Doha, on Wednesday. (QT PHOTO)

importance of arts in general and cinema in particular in forming and transferring the self-perception of any given society to the other, given that art and culture are the keys to under-

standing people. In this context, Naga advised filmmakers in the US to watch Arabic movies, such as I want a solution, which have been milestones in the history of Arab cinema. The movie was directed by Said Marzouk and starred actress Faten Hamama. It highlights the issue of Egypt's person-

Participants discussed several topics, including the role of arts and culture in bridging regional, national and cultural divisions, and how arts and culture can be used to promote social change and government accountability.

al status law in the 70s.

He further invited Arab artists to embrace the region's heritage, and politicians to pay attention to the arts as cultural indicator.

On the role of Egyptian cinema before and after the outbreak of the Arab Spring, Naga said that artists had predicted the uprisings even before they had occurred. He was referring to films such as *Microphone*, *One zero*

and *Heliopolis*, which accurately represented the aspirations of the Arab people — for freedom, democracy and a decent life.

Walter Parkes discussed the importance of partnerships between the Arab world and the US in the field of cinema, specifically to develop joint business in the region. He referred to the joint venture between his own company, Parkes - McDonald and the UAE. The American producer underlined the necessity of promoting cultural exchange in improving the relationship between the West and the Islamic East, and in bridging the differences between them.

The Forum, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al Thani on Tuesday, is being attended by a high-profile group of politicians, media figures and decision-makers from around the world. It is being organised by the Brookings Institute in cooperation with Qatar. The main objective of the Forum is to tackle issues related to political reform in Arab countries. The Forum is in its ninth session, and is being held under the motto 'New voices, new directions'.

Erekat praises Qatar's support for Palestinian cause

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DOHA

MEMBER of the Palestine Liberation Organisation's Executive Committee, Dr Saeb Erekat, who is also Head of the Palestinian delegation to the final status negotiations, praised Qatar's firm stance in its quest to reach a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue.

In his remarks on the sidelines of the 9th US-Islamic World Forum on Wednesday, Erekat stressed the importance of national reconciliation that have been reached after the signing of the Doha Agreement last February under the auspices of Qatar, adding that without the reconciliation, "We cannot take a step forward in any of our national strategy", where there is no focal point for President Mahmoud Abbas, only national reconciliation.

Regarding the role of the Forum in serving the Palestinian issue, Dr Erekat expressed his



Dr Saeb Erekat

belief that this Forum is one of the most significant conferences held in the Arab world, noting that the time has come to put the relationship between the US, as a superpower in the world, and the Arab world in the right framework, taking into account the common interests between the two sides."

In this context, the Palestinian official expressed his thanks to Qatar for hosting such a forum for the ninth consecutive year, describing it as one of the firm platforms to defend the Palestinian cause.