

The Arab American News

NEWS & VIEWS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST & THE ARAB AMERICAN COMMUNITY

SEVENTY FIVE CENTS

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Will the
PLO
finally get
a new
U.S.
office rep?

Mark Bruzonsky opines
page 4

Lebanese lobby tells Congress: No money to Hrawi government

WASHINGTON - Daniel Nassif, Washington representative of The Council of Lebanese American Organizations (CLAO), testified May 1st before the House Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, Export, Financing and Related Programs, on the fiscal year 1993 foreign assistance request for Lebanon.

The CLAO official recommended that the United States:

1. Increase the amount of aid designated to Lebanon to sixty million dollars.
2. Channel any assistance to Lebanon through responsible private organizations, such as the Red Cross, Save the Children and the Catholic Near

East Welfare Association, "who can and will verify that the aid is actually received by the Lebanese." Nassif said choosing any other channel, especially the Hrawi government, would result in a situation where "repayment for political favors, coerced cooperation of the people or the black market will be the determining criteria for the distribution of goods generously provided by the United States."

3. Not "send any money to Lebanon through the Syrian-imposed Hrawi regime due to its corruption and irresponsibility."

The CLAO representative expressed the need to strengthen the Lebanese army, but "only if the army is free and

not controlled by Syrian-installed agents in its upper hierarchy." CLAO also expressed opposition to any parliamentary elections in Lebanon "under the present circumstances of total Syrian dominance of Lebanese affairs" and outlined the preconditions for free, fair and democratic elections.

Those conditions included "the total withdrawal of the Syrian army and all other foreign troops;" the guaranteed opportunity for every citizen to campaign freely; the formation of a "provisional government of national salvation" to organize the elections; and the guaranteed right to vote for all "displaced Lebanese including all those inside and outside the country."

Arab American composer to debut new work in Detroit

DETROIT - Well known Arab American composer and concert pianist, Waleed Howrani, will perform his own composition "Life Cycle", at a gala celebration concert here May 15.

The evening, part of the Musica Viva International Concert Series 1991-92 season, will feature basso Ara Berberian with Arthur Greene on piano, Hong-Mei Xiao on viola, Ginka Gerova-Ortega on flute and Randall Hawes on trombone.

The music will include selections from Vivaldi, Hovahnness, Leguerey and the Detroit premiere of Douglas Moore's "The Ballad of William Sycamore," with the



Waleed Howrani

special performance of "Life Cycle" by Howrani.

Howrani is a graduate of the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of Music in Moscow and has

worked with Aram Khachaturian, Yakov Zak and Emil Gilels and has won numerous international awards.

The Musica Viva Concerts series has a tradition of presenting outstanding Michigan and international guest artists. This year's series is dedicated to the commemoration of the Quincentenary Discovery of America, the Olympics and Universal Expo '92 in Spain.

The date is Friday, May 15 at 8:00 pm at Orchestra Hall in Detroit. For information call the Orchestra Hall box office at 313-833-3700 or St. John Armenian Church at 569-3405.

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With a little luck PLO may finally get decent U.S. representation

WASHINGTON - Finally, it seems, in the wake of considerable internal criticism within the PLO about mismanagement, corruption, nepotism and incompetence - including a number of published articles in major U.S. and Palestinian publications - the PLO's Washington representative is about to be pushed aside.

With Hassan Abdul Rahman's impending departure, this particular travesty of representation, which has long been a thorn in the side of Palestinian respectability here, may be about to come to an end.

Though not yet definite, political grapevine sources who have long considered Rahman's role here scandalous, note that within a few months he is likely to finally be replaced, sent packing to Canada as was the aborted intention some years ago.

But this time it seems unlikely that desperate maneuverings by Rahman will prevent his departure for Ottawa.

Still there are those who quite correctly point out that Rahman has managed to wiggle out of past efforts to unthroned him. And there are others who further point out that Rahman and his predecessor before him, Hatem Hussaini, have in some ways so demeaned the job of PLO representative in Washington that other more substantial personalities have been most reluctant to accept the position.

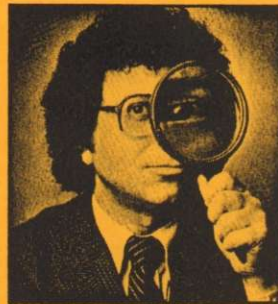
Rahman came to the American capital a decade ago having spent many years at the PLO's United Nations office where I first met him while studying at NYU Law School. He was brought to Washington after a particularly inept television performance by his predecessor, Hatem Hussaini. Hussaini just didn't have what it took to go before the cameras or to deal with the politics of Washington; but it took his exposure one evening on national television to push the PLO hierarchy, then in Beirut, to make the decision to bring in someone new.

Yet at the time there were very few persons who had U.S.

residency or citizenship and were thus available for the job. Because of what had happened a few years before, the PLO seemed most reluctant to try again to bring in any senior personality from the outside.

Everyone involved remembered very well that the last time the PLO had tried to substantially upgrade its Washington representation - back in 1975 and 1976 when Sabri Jiryis and Isam Sartawi had been sent to the U.S. to

FROM WASHINGTON



**MARK A.
BRUZONSKY**

open a "serious" PLO office - the Israeli/Jewish lobby took major steps not only to prevent the office from expanding but to make sure neither of these two highly qualified personalities would ever be allowed to come back to the United States.

With the help of Henry Kissinger, then working closely with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli operatives managed to get both Sartawi and Jiryis thrown out of the U.S. Interestingly, the Israelis never made much of a fuss regarding Hussaini, nor were they to do so in regard to Rahman.

The bitter reality is that for just about this entire decade many Washington-savvy personalities have been telling everyone who would listen, President Arafat in particular, that the PLO's cause was being badly served by a Washington representative who couldn't handle the job.

Take for instance the one and only meeting between Hassan Rahman and Philip Klutznick, former U.S. Secretary of

Commerce, President Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress, and Honorary President of B'nai B'rith International. I'm personally familiar with this particular story because I arranged the meeting with the help of Klutznick's personal friend, then Egyptian Ambassador Ashraf Ghorbal.

Klutznick has no reluctance to meet with PLO personalities. Indeed, like his predecessor Nahum Goldman, he welcomed the opportunity and he was to become a close friend and confidante of the PLO's European representative, Isam Sartawi.

But after a single breakfast meeting with Rahman at one of Washington's prime spots, the Jockey Club at what was then the Fairfax Hotel on Embassy Row, Klutznick let it be known that he had no further desire to see Rahman again - and he never did.

Another troubling issue many whisper about: Very often projects would be budgeted in Washington for one amount but Tunisia would be asked for a considerably higher amount. What happened to the difference is only educated speculation, but many in the know think Rahman was taking a cut of everything and such amounts went right into his pocket.

How else, many ask, was Rahman able to purchase a few years ago an extremely expensive home, estimated to cost at least a million dollars, in the prime McLean suburb of Washington?

One particular example of Rahman's inappropriate behavior had to do with incessant attempts to find jobs for his wife.

Some years ago a couple of persons well-known in Washington came to Rahman with an idea to help the Palestinian cause by setting up a new publication. They were willing to work at it, indeed they enthusiastically wanted to take on the Israeli/Jewish lobby, but they needed seed money to get it going. It was agreed that about \$200,000 would be initially needed.

Rahman's response was that he would instead ask Tunisia for \$300,000. Then when the

project was approved, he wanted his wife hired as administrator of this particular venture for \$150,000 for the first year.

The people who had brought this project to Rahman in the first place were so surprised by this turn of events and by the way Rahman handled things that not only were they unwilling to accept the idea of hiring Rahman's wife but they decided not to pursue the project, or help from Rahman, any further.

Rahman's office was initially set up separately in a townhouse as the PLO Information Office. Then, when during the Reagan years the PLO's office was closed down, Rahman ended up under the umbrella of the Arab League.

After a few years operating there, and just before Rahman was "reassigned" for the first time to Canada back in 1990, the Arab League sent an auditor from Tunisia to do a check on Hassan's finances. What they found, in short, was that a great deal of money was unaccounted for and the presumption was that in one way or another Rahman had twisted the funds to his own use.

When these findings were reported back to Tunisia this became the final straw, causing Arafat to decide that Rahman had to go. The announcement was actually made that he was being "reassigned" to Ottawa. Rahman was quite upset; his wife even more so.

At that point, it appears, Rahman took his case to Farouq Khaddoumi during one of his many visits to U.N. headquarters in New York. A long-time ally and colleague, it seems Khaddoumi stepped in and managed to get Rahman's "reassignment" undone. A short time later, Khaddoumi's son, then studying at a local Washington university, appeared on the payroll at Rahman's office. He did little, but monthly money was passed on to him and he has continued to be involved since then with Rahman.

Palestinians serious about their cause should welcome the effort to upgrade PLO representation here.