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Symposium about "the Problematique of the future Identity of the Iraqi Kurdistan region", 19 September 2017

The Problematique of the Future Identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

The announcement, by Kurdish leader, Masoud Barzani, of organizing a referendum on the issue of independence of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, has led to numerous potential developments; be it the declaration of independence or backing away from it.

While the Kurdistan Region itself is witnessing internal disagreements, the Central Government of Iraq, has taken steps to extend State Sovereignty on the Country's Territories by virtue of the Constitution, and the International Stances on what took place in Kurdistan have varied.

On 19 September 2017, the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs organized a symposium entitled: "Problematique of the future identity of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region", the participants and interventions addressed a number of issues that resulted from the referendum.

At the opening session, Ambassador Dr. Mounir Zahran, Chair of the Council, emphasized the importance of keeping pace with the current developments in the political arena both interna-

tionally and the regionally, especially those taking place in the Middle East Region, concerning the Future Identity of the Region's States, preservation of the unity of their territories and maintaining their territorial integrity.

Hence the idea of organizing a symposium to discuss the ramifications of the separating of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on the future of the whole region emerged.

He added that the Council draws on the Egyptian foreign policy, which emphasizes the need to maintain territorial sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Arab and African States.

Therefore, it is necessary to warn against the disintegration of Arab States and to settle differences or disputes among them by peaceful means.

He also noted that Israel's attempts to interfere in the Iraqi affairs should not be overlooked and that the impact of the separation of Kurdistan Region on the State of Iraq should not be ignored.

Details on pages 4 & 5

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Editor in - chief

Atef El- Ghamry

Tower no. 2, Othman Towers,
Cornish El Nile Maadi, Cairo- Egypt
Tel. (+202) 2528 1091-6
Fax. (+202) 2528 1093

Emails:

info@ecfa-egypt.org
ecfa.egypt@yahoo.com
ecfa.egypt@outlook.com



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The 'National State' is the Target

The views of the participants in the symposium titled: «The Problematique of the Future Identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq» were diverse, and to the extent that those views were all significant, the symposium revealed a serious aspect, which though related to Massoud Barzani's decision to rush towards the Independence of the Kurdistan Region, is not isolated from the foreign aspect, considering such step an integral part of the old plans to fragment and divide the States of the region, in a manner that targets the concept of 'National State', its territorial sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Plans calling for fragmenting and dividing are based on triggering internal sectarian and ethnic conflicts that could open the door to external interventions by foreign powers greedy for the riches of the region through creating chaos in the region, fragmenting it, and redrawing its borders, in a way that would destroy the pillars of the 'National State'.

Break-up plans had been already uncovered by Obama's Vice President, Joe Biden, when he, as a US-Congress leader, called for the dividing of Iraq, whereby Kurds would split and live in their own State, alongside two other States; one for the Shiites and the other for Sunnis.

Israeli military analyst, Ze'ev Schiff, also spoke about those plans, shedding light on the fact that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was but a step towards a plan to divide it into three Sub-States, with Israeli support.

Writings, by US Institutions, on fragmentation and border re-drawing, have increased, including a map that was published, by the US Armed Forces Journal (AFJ) in 2006, as an annex to an article written by Colonel Ralph Peters, explaining the plan to redraw the borders of States in the region, in accordance with atmospheres of ideological strife and sectarian conflicts.

We have also noted how Israel strongly supported Barzani's decision to hold referendum on the issue of independence.

The US stance might have been ambiguous, since although it appeared to be an objection, the objection was not against the secession of Kurdistan per se, but rather against the timing chosen by Massoud Barzani for effecting such separation.

It is still valid that the targeting of the 'National State' model, which is all-encompassing of different races, various sects and versatile ideologies that co-exist in a historic national community, within boundaries that preserve that State's territorial integrity and sovereignty, has not been excluded from the plans of Foreign Powers towards the region, but steps of such plans are rather determined in a timely manner, even though Barzani had pre-empted Foreign Powers' calculations by a decision they saw hurriedly.

The Editor

A Field Vision on the Syrian Crisis: An interview with the Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Syrian Issue

The dialogue with the Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Syrian Issue, Ambassador Xie Xi-aoyan, was an important step taken by the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA), as part of its efforts to follow-up the Syrian crisis developments and the various international positions thereto, with the aim of exploring his field vision on the Syrian crisis and exchanging views with him.

In the meeting, held on 24 September 2017, he was accompanied by Advisor Wang Yongzhao, as well as Ms. Yong Jingyan and Mr. Hong Ming, staff members of the Chinese Embassy in Cairo. They met with Ambassadors Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director, Muhammad Badr El Deen Zayed and Muhammad Mustafa Kamal.

The Chinese Envoy put forward his vision, stating that stopping US support for some opposition groups, has effectively and strongly contributed in enabling the Syrian Regime forces to be victorious on the ground, and to regain control on a large chunk of the land that was under the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL).

However, he pointed out that the battles currently underway between Russia and the US to determine the parties that should receive support on the ground and those that are classified as terrorist groups will not contribute to resolving the crisis.

He spoke about a controversy related to the unification of Syrian Opposition Front in face of the multiplicity of its parties and positions.

He stressed that China welcomes the call by Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, to expand the Astana negotiations by including China, Egypt, UAE and Iraq as observers during the negotiation process, this move that would contribute to the intertwining of

international efforts and pave the way towards holding an expanded round of negotiations in Geneva.

In order to complement what he put forward at the start of the meeting, he reiterated in his concluding remarks, that so far as that very moment, there was still no clear vision as to the terms of the future settlement of the crisis.

While presenting ECFA's views, Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Sa'ad explained that the «Russian-Chinese» co-ordination stems from the common position of the two States on the importance of preserving Syria's independence and respecting the unity of its territories and maintaining its territorial integrity.

He also stressed the need set a comprehensive strategy on how to combat terrorism, not only militarily, but through activating all tools, and not to limit the perception of terrorism to a particular organization or region.

Ambassador Muhammad Badr El Deen Zayed, ECFA member, spoke for his part, on several points, including: the upcoming arrangements under the confrontation between the US and Russia; whether these arrangements will preserve Syria's territorial integrity or not; whether the regime of Bashar al- Assad will be kept or not; and whether it will take part in future political processes or not.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Muhammad Mustafa Kamal, ECFA member, pointed out that what is currently happening on the ground is a payment of the high price for the many mistakes made in the crisis by all sides, with the Arabs shouldering the greatest share of responsibility in this regard, and with the Arab League to be blamed for not having played an active role.

Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director, participated in the Conference about “China and the Islamic World”: Mutual Learning of Civilization”, held from 4 to 5 July 2017, in the Chinese capital (Beijing)



Ambassador
Dr. Ezzat Saad
Director of Egyptian
Council for foreign Affairs

Ambassador Ezzat Saad has participated in the session entitled “The Road: China and the Islamic World. Another conference that was held under the slogan of “Third Forum of the Silk Road”, from 11 to 12 July 2017, in Urumqi, the capital of Tianshan Region, China, where the Forum themes focused on:

(i) China's ambitious “One Belt One Road Initiative (OBORI)”, also referred to as “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)”;

(ii) possible avenues of cooperation amongst the States Members of the Initiative.

In a speech before the audience participating in the Forum, Ambassador Ezzat Saad stressed the importance of the Initiative, and the mechanisms by which cooperation aspects could be strengthened amongst the Chinese side and the States Members of the Initiative, including the Arab States, particularly Egypt.

A Symposium on «Referendum on the Independence of Kurdistan Region of Iraq ... Internal and Regional repercussions of the Step»



Part from participated number of members of the council in the Symposium about "Problematique of the future of the identity of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region", 19 September 2017

Within the framework of the three sessions of the Symposium titled «problematique of the Future Identity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq», the audience participated in putting forward several points that constitute the reality resulting from the referendum in the lead-up to independence, in terms of its timing, and whether the Kurdish State, once independent, would have the capabilities to maintain such Independence or not.

Issues discussed during the Symposium included: the real motives behind the step taken by Massoud Barzani, at this very time; the internal divide that followed the referendum and surfaced afterwards in the Kurdish areas; the Kurdish opposition to Barzani's decision; as well as the grave impact, dealt with by audience, of that step on the concept of the 'National State' Model, not only in Iraq, but in the whole region at large; and how this is linked to the scheme of fragmentation of the region.

Participants also mentioned to the general positions of different States on this decision, especially US, EU, Russia, Israel, Iran and Turkey, alongside with an explanation of the Arab stances from Barzani's Announcement and their visions thereof.

All of the above points were the focus of deliberations at the Symposium: Dr. Muhammad Mujahid El-Zayyat, ECFA's member, explained that the current situation could change in the very last moments. Should the Referendum be deferred, the Dream of a Kurdish State will continue to exist side by side with the dream of fragmenting the Iraqi State.

In relation to the probabilities, ECFA's member, Ambassador Sayed Abu Zeid, referred to the launch of the first Kurdish Civil Movement in the city of Sulaymaniyah by some Kurdish intellectuals under a slogan "Not at the Presenting!", and their labeling of the Kurdish Parties' Decision as illegitimate and lacking both legal authority and national consensus.

Regarding the emergence of internal Kurdish opposition to the timeliness of the Referendum, ECFA's member, Dr. Jamal Yousuf, made an intervention, during which he delivered a speech on behalf of Dr. Rajai Fayed, the specialist in Kurdish affairs, who could not attend the Symposium due to special circumstances, saying that regional and international positions rejecting the referendum formed a motive for the emergence of internal Kurdish opposition, prompting some to wonder whether it is at all possible to challenge the whole world and press on with the plan to hold the referendum! In the same vein, Iraqi MP and leader of the 'Movement for Change', Aram Sheikh Muhammad, pointed out that the referendum decision was hasty.

Here came the question: why did Barzani took this step at the time he chose?

In this context, Dr. Jamal asserted that the Referendum dream is but a political maneuver by Barzani to postpone the date of electing a new president for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, especially since the parliament is being stalled for two years, a fact that is well-known to some Kurdish parties, which deem it necessary to agree on a more appropriate date, that would be in tandem with solving internal problems and working to strengthen the State so that it would be then ready to secede and become independent.

The very same motives were emphasized by Dr. Muhammad Mujahid El-Zayyat, who said that the objective of the referendum at the moment was a cover-up of Barzani, as his term of office has expired, hence he will not be able to run again in light of the stalling of the Parliament for two years, and delay of elections that was supposedly schedule the disruption of was supposed to hold new elections in 2017.

On the other hand, the Iraqi government announced that Iraq relies on the Constitution as a reference to regulate the

relationship between the federal government and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Neither of the parties can determine its fate in isolation from the others, and any decision on Iraq's future must take into account the constitutional provisions.

All of that was not in isolation from the concept of 'National State', which is being the target of fierce and systematic attacks, and this is exactly what was pointed out by Dr. Reda Shehata, when he explained that such idea had crystallized in Egypt, and what the region is witnessing is a fragmentation of the existing entities, thus the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is opening the door wide for dividing on a sectarian basis, let alone being in contradiction with all international charters, which call for the preservation of States' independence and territorial integrity.

ECFA's member, Ambassador Muhammad Ashmawi, referred to this very idea, and cautioned that attention should be paid to the so-called «strategy of Tightening the Minority Parties», a global strategy being implemented in the Middle East Region, as a premise to destroying the great wall surrounding the Arabs and then finishing off their heart, i.e. Egypt and the Gulf States.

In his intervention, ECFA's Member, Ambassador Sayed Abu Zaid, touched on the same connotation, pointing out that the conflict on the concept of 'National/Pan-National State', had been existing since the 1950s, and that the danger to the entire region comes from being pushed into scattering, dispersion and fragmentation to the extent of having bloody clashes and confrontations amongst astray conflicting shrapnel.

Discussions have led to the identification of regional and international positions, and for his part, ECFA's Chair, Dr. Mounir Zahran, referred to the decision taken by the Arab Ministerial Council to reject the organization of the referendum in Kurdistan, and to demand that the unity and sovereignty of Iraqi territory should be preserved.

ECFA's Member, Ambassador Muhammad El-Shazly, said that the Egyptian Policy in the Arab World is based on maintaining the territorial unity within the Arab world.

The audience noted that the most important Arab move was the exchange of letters with Barzani, by the Arab League Secretary-General, Ahmad Abou El-Gheit, on his own initiative, explaining to him the Arab position that calls for deferral of referendum and conducting a dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil.

In this context, the Egyptian Ambassador to Iraq stated that Egypt's official position is based on the principles of maintaining territorial unity and integrity of sister Arab countries; the strength of Iraq lies in the uniform and harmonious survival of its various multiple spectra, which together form the Iraqi State; and Egypt's refusal of making any unilateral moves, without the coordination between Baghdad and Erbil.

When speakers touched on the Israeli position, each of them noted the real nature of Israel's role, which is supportive of Kurdistan's independence, since in addition to Netanyahu's

announcement that in case the Kurds declared their own State, we, the government and people [of Israel], would be in support of that, there are also Israeli statements that have supported the secession of the Kurds for years.

As Dr. Jamal Yusuf noted, the relationship between Kurdistan and the Israelis dates back to 1943, that is to say, before the establishment of the State of 'Israel', and such relationship is linked to Israel's interests with regards to its longstanding conflict with Iraq.

He cited what the Israeli journalist, Shlomo Nakdimona, published in his book 'The Mossad in Iraq and Neighbours', that Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani has seen a need to contact Israel since 1963, seeking their help to realize the Kurds dream of self-rule.

For her part, Professor of the Political Science, Dr. Niveen Mussa'ad, pointed out that the Israeli side has been pursuing a strategy known as «Tightening the Minority Parties», considering that the creation of a 'Kurdish State' will serve as a salvation for Israel, because it would be on Israel's own interest to establish States based on ethnic, religious and sectarian grounds.

On the US stance, she noted that the US Policy is not always going in the same direction, that's to say the US cannot be a permanent supporter of the Kurds.

As for the European States, she noted that these States oppose the referendum, because they are suffering from separatist threats within their own countries, thus there is a divergence in European positions.

Also, ECFA's Member, Ambassador Ussamah Tawfiq, noted that all European States oppose the referendum, and object to the establishment of the Kurdish State, and their objection is due to the timeliness.

When the Russian stance was put forward, he referred to the Russian statements that Erbil should take into account the possible consequences of the referendum, which expresses the national desire of the Kurdish people.

ECFA's Member, Dr. Muhammad Al Saeed Idrees, spoke of the ambiguity of the Russian stance, which is essentially due to Russian desire to divide areas into spheres of influence between the US and Russia, especially with the US having new bases in Iraq, and the Russians taking Syria as their own sphere of influence.

Coming to the Turkish and Iranian standpoints, he said that the two stances are identical in their categorically rejecting the referendum, leading to further (Iranian-Turkish) rapprochement.

All aspects, direct and indirect, related to the referendum in Kurdistan, including whether it is a step paving the way for independence were put forward for discussion at the symposium.

As it also appeared, the decision lacked the element of timeliness, and its repercussions would not be in the best interest of the entire region, nor indeed of Kurdistan Region of Iraq itself.



Part from the Symposium for discussing the Book "Think Tanks in the US and their Impacts on US Foreign Policy", 27 September 2017

Symposium for Discussing the Book "Think Tanks in the US and their Impacts on US Foreign Policy"

At the joint invitation of both Ambassador Abdul Raouf Al-Reedy, Chairman of the Board of MISR PUBLIC LIBRARY's Board, ECFA Honorary Chairman; and Ambassador Mounir Zahran, ECFA Chairman, a Symposium was convened to discuss the book titled "Think Tanks in the US and their Impacts on US Foreign Policy", written by ECFA Board Member, author, Atef El-Ghamry.

The Symposium was held at the MISR PUBLIC LIBRARY in Giza on 27 September 2017. In addition to the presentation and analysis by Ambassador Abdul Raouf El-Reedy, and Dr. Mounir Zahran, a number of ECFA Members took part in the discussion, including Ambassadors Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director, Mr. Ihab Wahba, Mr. Reda Shehata, Dr. Muhammad Badr El-Din Zayed, Mr. Muhammad Tawfeeq, Mr. Muhammad El-Shazly, Dr. Hazem Attiatullah, Mr. Abdul-Ghaffar Henaish, Ms. Aysha Abdul-Ghaffar, and Ambassador Ashraf Harby.

The author began his presentation with an explanation of how he came to acquaint himself of the research centers from day one after he was transferred to the United States, as Chief of Al-

Ahram Bureau over there. He sent out letters to many Research Centers, informing them that as a Correspondent for Al-Ahram, he is interested in attending their symposiums and seminars, and asked them to send the dates, schedules and topics of such events to the Al-Ahram Bureau.

It was noted that the audience attending those symposiums and seminars were the elites of experts in foreign policy, and that the discussions at those events were not limited to presenting information and putting forward viewpoints on the symposium theme, but sometimes they took the form of debates, with the participants putting forward different views and perceptions, and presenting information that has not been published in the US newspapers.

He noted that, as he became the author of this book, he knew that those centers were a partner in the US Foreign Policy making process; the elected President selects dozens of his aides, from National Security Adviser, Secretary of State, to Assistant Staff Crews at the White House, from amongst those whom he finds closest to his way of thinking in such centers.



Part from the Symposium for discussing the Book "Think Tanks in the US and their Impacts on US Foreign Policy", 27 September 2017

When their mandates expire, they will return to their previous positions, and be replaced by new members from other centers, chosen by the new President.

This does not necessarily mean that the White House severs connections with those who departed. Sometimes, the President feels, when facing a Foreign Policy problem that an expert or a researcher in one of those centers has written a paper to deal with such problem; he would adopt what's in that paper, embrace it and make it a Foreign Policy of his Administration. This was done by Carter, Eisenhower, Truman, Bush, and Reagan.

Not only do these centers provide ideas, but they also work according to the law of probabilities, some of which might be motivated by State's Political Objectives, since they put forward potential future scenarios of events to be discussed -even though those events are unlikely at the time of discussion- and then provide visions, perceptions and plans for dealing with them in the future,

for examples, discussion of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait 10 years earlier.

The author referred to a group of centers, which are Israeli-made and wholly-biased towards Israel, and serve the State of Israel, including for example, the development, by the "New American Century Project" Center, of the 'Iraq War Plan', which was presented by "Dick Cheney", to President George Bush, the father, in 1992, but he rejected it. Cheney saved that plan in his briefcase until he became the Vice-President of George Bush Jr., then took it out of his bag almost 10 years later, and it was carried out in 2003.

The book provides documents on many of these Centers, unethically selling themselves to foreign governments, in exchange for financing the centers' budgets, for example what the State of Qatar has done, which was exposed by the New York Times Newspaper, debated in the Congress, and ended up with a clearly accusing Qatar of supporting extremist groups.

Then, the author explained the status of those centers, which will remain to be part of a wider system in which lines overlap, in order to press for issuing Foreign Policy Decisions in a particular form, including Lobbying Pressure Forces, Interest Groups, US Military Industrial Corporations, major Economic Institutions, the CIA and Media.

This overlap was clearly evident, for our Arab world, in the strong mobilization towards the project of creative chaos and regime change, as well as the fuelling of sectarian and ideological conflicts within those States, with the aim of dividing and fragmenting them, then redrawing their borders. All of that is well-documented and recorded in discussions and written articles published in several US platforms and forums.

This means that the Arab World, in its entirety, is standing on one frontline of confrontation, with all External Players, as well as Internal Players who act as proxies for Foreign Powers, being part of a Political System of major great powers.

ECFA meeting with Korean Ambassador



The Korean Ambassador in Cairo, Mr. Go Yoon – Son, in the meeting with the ECFA's Members

On February 23, 2017, the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs received Mr. Go Yoon – Son, Ambassador of the Republic of South Korea to Egypt. The Korean Defense Attaché, Mr. Kim Jin Moo and other Korean Embassy members accompanied him to the meeting with Ambassador Dr. Mounir Zahran, ECFA Chair, Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director and several ECFA members.

Ambassador Mounir Zahran welcomed the Korean Ambassador and the delegation, stressing the depth of the two countries' long and common history since the 1950s, which was recently strengthened by President Sisi's visit to South Korea in January 2016, and rising the level of trade exchange between the two countries and the aspiration to develop relations between the two sides in all fields of socio-economic development and in the exchange of views on all issues of common concern.

In conclusion, Ambassador Zahran emphasized the need to shed light on developments in the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in the context of the new US administration's declaration of withdrawal from the Convention.

The Korean Ambassador began his speech by thanking ECFA for the invitation, adding that he would speak about the North East Asian security environment, North Korea's nuclear tests and

threats, as well as Korean-Egyptian bilateral relations.

On the Egyptian-Korean relations, Korean Ambassador said that, Egypt and Korea have firm and strong relations which were further strengthened by President Sisi's rule and his visit to South Korea earlier this year. This was followed by visits by many Korean personalities and the holding of meetings between the two ministers of industry in March 2016 in order to discuss what the Korean companies can offer in the field of economic development in the context of Egypt's experience and economic reform program, as well as its competitive advantage of being a large consumer market and open to the development of technology and chemical industries, in addition to Egypt's recent development of its infrastructure in the past period. There are also great opportunities for cooperation in the field of governance and the establishment of smart villages, as well as cultural exchange and the provision of training grants to transfer Korean expertise to the Egyptian market in all fields. The Korean ambassador expressed hope that this cooperation will continue and move to more fields related to enhance cooperation at the cultural and popular levels.

There were extensive discussions by the ECFA members on all the issues raised by the Korean Ambassador.

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Eng. Tarek El-Molla Explains to the Council the Developments in the Energy Sector in Egypt



Meeting with the Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Eng. Tarek El- Molla

On the 22nd of May 2017, the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs received Eng. Tarek El-Molla, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, in order to discuss the recent developments in the energy sector in Egypt. El-Molla made sure to inform the members of the council of the strategy of the ministry which includes areas relating to the increase of productivity, secure the country's needs from petroleum products, the implementation of the oil sector development and modernization project, the expansion in projects aiming to deliver natural gas to houses and factories, the expansion of the petrochemical industries to maximize the value added. He also clarified that his vision is implemented by short-term and long-term plans to achieve a comprehensive vision in the energy sector by 2035. This vision was elaborated with the coordination of the ministry of Petroleum and the rest of the ministries, mainly the ministry of electricity.

He also stressed on the fact that these projects are within the framework of the Egyptian Vision for Development 2030 that aims to increase the efficiency of the extracted gas and achieve the conformity of the Egyptian products to the requirements of the international standards, as well as bridging the financing gap and deficit by gradually removing subsidies and giving more attention to the value adding industries to meet the domestic demand and export the surplus. He said that it is important to realize that the actions of the ministry aim to transform Egypt into a regional energy center through redrawing borders of its territorial waters, like what has been done with the State of Cyprus, settling arbitration cases and signing memorandums of understanding with energy exporting countries.



Symposium about "The Economic Development in the Suez Canal Region", 7 March 2017.

Symposium about «Economic Development in the Suez Canal Region»

On March 7, 2017, the Egyptian Council of Foreign Affairs organized a symposium in which Dr. Ahmed Darwish , Former Chairman of the Suez Canal Economic Zone Authority, spoke about «Economic Development in the Suez Canal Region», by attending Ambassador Dr. Mounir Zahran, ECFA Chair, and Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director, and a number of ECFA members which including ambassadors, academics and experts.

Dr. «Darwish» briefed the audience on all the developments in the Canal region. He said that «What is currently underway, project and the development taking place at present have been a big dream for Egyptians for a long time. They were always looking forward to how to use the channel as a maritime corridor with an important strategic location, like other countries which developed their ports, improve the level of services to transiting vessels and develop logistic aspects, rather than focus only on collecting fees.

The seminar discussed various aspects of these projects. ECFA members discussed their positive impact on the economic situation in Egypt, the expansion of land allocation for investment projects especially African projects, offer training opportunities for Egyptian labor and the continuation of implementing ambitious economic programs.

Round Table about Yazidis Tragedy



Meeting Professor Khaleda Khalid Rashed, Adviser to the Cultural Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament, with ECFA members to talk about Yazidis Tragedy

On Sunday, March 26, 2017, a round table was held for ECFA members with Professor Khaleda Khalid Rashed, Adviser to the Cultural Committee of the Kurdistan Parliament, to talk about the suffering of the Yazidis by Daesh gangs and the condition of the displaced in camps.

The meeting was chaired by Ambassador Dr. Mounir Zahran, ECFA Chair, and Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director with the participation of Mr. Ragai Fayed, ECFA member; Mr. Yasin Raouf, officer of the Cairo Office for Foreign Relations of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and several ECFA members.

The meeting began with Ambassador Mounir Zahran welcoming the participants, in particular Ms. Khaleda Khalid Rashed, writer, academic, parliamentarian and the author of many award winning novels and poems.

On her part, Ms. Khaleda stressed that she did not come to ECFA to gain sympathy from the media, but to convey a message on the need for respecting diversity, freedom and religion, which are the basic principles of humanity. Their absence has been the cause of chaos in the Middle East. Everyone is talking about diversity and respect but without applying them. "The Iraqi government is one of the Arab governments that do not recognize the need to respect Iraqi minorities and treats them as second-class citizens." Khaleda said.

UNTSO delegation's visit to the Council

On Tuesday 8th of August 2017, a delegation from the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) visited the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs. General Gawn, Kai-Erik Jukka, chief liaison office to Cairo, represented the UNTSO, from the Egyptian side, Ambassador Ezzat Saad, Director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign affairs, and General Mohamed Ibrahim, member of the council, attended the conference.

The two sides discussed these topics:

- Sinai's situation: The armed Forces and police efforts to combat the Terrorist and extremist groups.
- Egyptian-US: changes with the new US president; US expectations from Egypt in regard to Egypt-Iran relations; Egypt expectations in return; implications for Israel and for Egypt-Israel relations.
- Egyptian - Sudanese Bilateral Relations.

Major General Mohamed Ibrahim discussed the situation in the Sinai and the discussions between Hamas and Egypt. He explained the role of the Egyptian army to combat terrorism and the success of the comprehensive plans set by Egypt three years ago to eliminate the threat posed by Terrorist and extremist groups there.

Ambassador Ezzat Saad talked about the two other topics which are the Egypt-US relations and the Bilateral Relations between Egypt and Sudan. As to Egypt's relations with its neighbor Sudan, Ambassador Dr. Ezzat emphasized the importance of history and values which common between two countries and should to build on it.

He also stressed on the importance of international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and in achieving political stability in Egypt through investments and aids in order to stabilize the situation and help it counter violent extremism. He said that even though the strict economic reforms and the inflation may have a negative social impact, the Egyptian people understands the necessity of these reforms and support the leadership.

ECFA participation in a number of international conferences



Ambassador
Dr. Mounir Zahran
ECFA Chair



Ambassador
Dr. Ezzat Saad
ECFA Director

Within the framework of ECFA participation in a number of international conferences, where issues of concern to the Council are discussed;

- ECFA Chairman, Ambassador Dr. Mounir Zahran, has participated in the activities of the International Institute of Humanitarian Law Roundtable, held from 7 to 9 September 2017, on “Forty Years after the Adoption of Additional Protocols I and II to the 1949 Geneva Conventions: New Disputes, Parties and Horizons”, where many issues have been discussed, on top of which was the issues of: the non-compliance to Additional Protocols I and II to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, by International Forces, including Peacekeeping Forces; the violations that might be committed by those forces, which are also violations of International Humanitarian Law; the failure to hold governments accountable for violations committed by their forces, which makes it imperative to improve the

drafting of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) signed between the UN and those States, so that peacekeeping forces are trained and made aware of the provisions of International Humanitarian Law.

There has also been a legal discussion among experts on the use of combatant forces in inter-State disputes, which could cause victims death and injury and unjustified destruction of civilian aims and not to distinguish between war and humanitarian objectives, which is prohibited in accordance to the Additional Protocols, and third common article to the Geneva four agreements. A number of subjects were discussed, including the illegal intervention by the United States and Britain in the use of force in Iraq. Participants also talked about the guarantees provided by international humanitarian law to civilians and to persons detained in prisons and the need to observe humanitarian rules. Also the Round table discussed the issue of the importance of women's participation in the

implementation of international humanitarian law. In addition, the Round table included a session about the subject of the end of the mandate of the war crimes tribunal in the former Yugoslavia in November, and the Court's achievements were reviewed.

On the other hand, Ambassador Dr. Ezzat Saad, ECFA Director, participated in the Joint Symposium, convened by the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy (American University in Cairo), the Institute of International Relations (Greece), and the Cyprus Center for Green Development and Energy Policy, about the "Emerging Strategic Cooperation amongst Egypt, Cyprus and Greece: Energy and Security", held on 25 September 2017, where the Symposium included two themes: (i) cooperation amongst the three States in the field of energy; and (ii) cooperation and challenges in the eastern Mediterranean region.

In his speech, Ambassador Ezzat Saad, noted the importance of: strengthening cooperation among the three States in the field of Natural Gas; building a strategic alliance amongst them, adding Libya, once its stability is restored; linking major gas fields among Egypt, Greece and Cyprus in anticipation of the start of exporting gas to Europe; and working together to develop a comprehensive strategy for the gas industry.

In addition Amb. Saad participated in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Summit about "The Role of Think Tanks in

Drawing the Future in the MENA Region" which convened from 19 to 21 September 2017, at the Dead Sea, Jordan. At the invitation conveyed to the Executive Directors of Think Tanks in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region, Ambassador Ezzat Saad has participated in the activities of the Summit, held under the auspices of HRH Prince Al-Hassan Bin Talal, and was divided into five sessions on: (i) Addressing the Challenges of Extremism and Radicalism in the MENA Region; (ii) Cooperation and Economic Development.

During the 4th (iv) plenary session, which was dedicated to the theme of Regional Security, titled "The potential of Making Peace ... Addressing both Traditional and Non-traditional Challenges in the Region", Ambassador Ezzat Saad emphasized that security, in its various dimensions, has increasingly become a challenge for the region and the world at large, and there is no short-term nor simple solutions to the security dilemma in the region, which makes it imperative to look for consensual solutions to all disputes amongst States, especially in the Arab World, in order to confront regional forces seeking to destabilize the region.

The Summit concluded with a number of important recommendations in relation to revitalizing the role of the Research and Thought Centers and increasing their effectiveness.

ECFA Members visited Wadi El-Natroun Monasteries

On March 18, 2017, the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs organized a one-day visit for its members and their families to Wadi El-Natroun monasteries in Beheira governorate. The visit included the Anba Bishoy Monastery, Paromeos Monastery, Al-Syrian Monastery and the St. Mark Monastery.

The visit, as ECFA members stated, was an opportunity to learn about the history of monasteries and their social and cultural role in conveying the message of peace they are carrying.

The members praised the cultural and educational standard of the monks, which in turn will contribute to conveying their message to visitors. They also noted that the warm welcome accorded to visitors supports the monasteries' message as well.