

Spring 2010

MBI Al Jaber • Foundation

review

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Council of Europe signs agreement with the MBI Al Jaber Foundation



Council of Europe Secretary General, Thorbjørn Jagland signed an agreement with the MBI Al Jaber Foundation in order to develop co-operation on Intercultural Dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

In line with the recommendations and policy guidelines outlined in the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue", the partnership focuses on strengthening Euro-Arab co-operation, and promoting education for human rights, rule of law, democratic citizenship and intercultural understanding. The agreement covers activities in the fields of research, support to in-service training and curriculum development, networking and discussion forums.

The co-operation, which has been ratified by all 47 member states of the Council of Europe, is managed by the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport in synergy with the MBI Al Jaber Foundation. The Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (the "North-South Centre") will be an implementing partner.

Secretary General Jagland said: "Intercultural understanding is one of the main challenges of our societies: the Council of Europe has acted as a bridge in the last 60 years between different cultures in our Continent. I welcome this agreement with the MBI Al Jaber Foundation. It will enhance co-operation in the Euro-Mediterranean region, building on MBI's extensive experience, know-how and contacts in the area."

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European Wergeland Centre and MBI Al Jaber Foundation in Partnership

The MBI Al Jaber Foundation has announced a partnership with the European Wergeland Centre (EWC), to provide funding for the development of a pioneering "Human Rights Glossary" and the inception of a new "think tank" to support the EWC in its work in the field of Education for Intercultural Understanding, Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship, and also a four year training programme for education professionals.

The purpose of the Glossary is to identify and establish a consensus on the key words and phrases used in the field of human rights, in order to define precisely what is meant by the terms applied and thereby reduce the possibility of cultural and linguistic misunderstandings in the discussion of human rights between nation states.

Funding provided by the Foundation will also assist the EWC in the establishment of a new think tank to provide advice and expertise to the Executive Director and staff of the EWC in its work. In addition, part of the funding will go to support the implementation of a 4-year programme of training modules on human rights, democratic citizenship and intercultural understanding, aimed at teachers and other education professionals not only from Europe but also from neighbouring countries and the MENA region.



MBI Al Jaber made Honorary Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Mohamed Bin Issa Al Jaber, Patron and Chairman of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation, was conferred an Honorary Fellowship of Corpus Christi College Oxford

at a ceremony which also marked the official opening of the MBI Al Jaber Building, on 23rd October 2009.

This honour is in recognition of his services to higher education in the UK in general and to Corpus Christi in particular including the major donation to the new auditorium at the College named the MBI Al Jaber Building, the most important building to be constructed on the main site in three hundred years.

In the citation, the Right Honourable Lord Paton of Barnes commended MBI Al Jaber as "a highly successful businessman who has shared the fruits of his labours to promote peace and understanding between the peoples of the Middle East and to advance learning and research in relation to the Middle East at the highest level in the United Kingdom and in other countries" and for his efforts to "to provide vision and leadership among young Arabs by providing scholarships for them to study at the School of Oriental and African Studies and other institutions of higher learning in London and has been a benefactor to University College London."

The MBI Al Jaber Building is due to become the venue for an upcoming MBI Al Jaber Foundation lecture series in partnership with Corpus Christi College Oxford.



Partnership with UCL: MBI Al Jaber and Professor Jones speak at UCL

Returning to speak at UCL after three and a half years, on October 22nd 2009 the Patron and Chairman of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation gave a talk on Education, Entrepreneurship and Philanthropy in the 21st Century. The event was part of the Foundation's ongoing relationship with UCL, and proved highly popular: requests for seats far outstripped the capacity of the lecture theatre.

In conversation with Professor Michael Worton, Vice-Provost, MBI Al Jaber discussed a wide range of subjects from philosophical, economic and personal perspectives including social responsibility as the motivation for philanthropy, the power of literature and the MBI sponsored *Kitab fi Jarida* programme, the human philanthropic impulse, the need for transparency rather than mere regulation of financial institutions, and his view of the role of calculated risk-taking for young entrepreneurs in business.

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Alumni Update

MBI Al Jaber Scholar Updates – Westminster Past and Present

The University of Westminster has been one of our partners since the beginning of the MBI scholarships programme. Here we catch up with a few of the young people who have benefitted from this partnership in very different subject areas. For more information about our Alumni, please visit our website: www.mbifoundation.com/alumni.



Yasmine El Mehairy 2003/4

"I returned to Cairo after I finished my degree and joined ITWorx, one of the largest IT service providers in the region and made sure to introduce many of the concepts I learned in my degree as well as in my London life to both my work and to my personal lifestyle. After a while, I wanted to utilize my skills in a growing company rather than an already established one, so I joined OpenCraft, a small IT services company that believes in and promotes the open-source and free software movement. In 2009 I moved to 'Al Masry Al Youm', Egypt's largest independent newspaper as the web portal project manager where my team and I launched the new interactive portal. With that project over, I am currently working as a freelancer.

I've also started a small home business of handmade greeting cards since October 2008. It's now starting to grow and become profitable. I'm hoping that one day it will grow big enough to become my full time job. Meanwhile, I've been trying to enjoy as

much as I can of the wonderful things life has to offer. I enjoy reading, photography and cooking from various cuisines. I still have a passion for learning and I'm currently enrolled in a distance learning degree in Islamic Studies: my next step is to learn more about Arabic calligraphy."

Fahmia Al-Fotih 2008/09

Fahmia is back in Yemen after finishing her MA in International Relations. As a journalist and with her new specialisation in this field, Fahmia will carry on contributing to the development of her country and the empowerment of Yemeni women. Upon her return to Sana'a, Fahmia has joined the NGO SAVE as the local coordinator for Yemen. Fahmia's experience as both a journalist and a teacher make her a valuable contributor to the NGO.

Fahmia has been working on vital issues in Yemen such as women's empowerment and how to utilise it to tackle extremism: "The whole world is focusing on Yemen and terrorism right now, but the true Yemenis have no voice. People are talking about Yemen, but no one knows what Yemenis think or how they feel". The NGO is making its voice heard within the country: www.yementimes.com/defaultdet.aspx?SUB_ID=33446 and now Fahmia will spread the word further afield. She is participating in a SAVE Conference in Vienna in early March 2010, with 25 women from all over the world, where she will present a paper about SAVE Yemen activities.



Abdurrahman Khaled Saif

2008/9

Our congratulations go to Abdurrahman who was just awarded his MA with Merit from the University of Westminster in Journalism Translation. This achievement makes Abdurrahman the first Yemeni researcher to complete such a degree. An article in Al Thawra Yemeni newspaper highlights his achievement and discusses his thesis, which is entitled "The Basis of Making a News Item", which examines the main principles of Arabic-English translation of news and focuses on the importance of the journalist knowledge of customising the news when translating.

To read the article (in Arabic): althawranews.net/details.aspx?newsid=29539

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There was also an excellent attendance when Foundation Trustee Professor Peter Jones spoke at UCL on 2nd December 2009. Prof Jones gave a lecture entitled 'Ove Arup: Engineer or Philosopher? Or what really happened at Sydney Opera House' which was based on his acclaimed biography of Arup. With exclusive access to the huge private Arup archives, Prof. Jones gave us clues to the events and inspirations that had shaped Arup. In addition to Faculty and students of the University, the lecture was attended by past and present staff of ARUP Plc and also Ove's family members.



Project Updates

Over the years, the project-based part of our work has increased, and we have supported a range of activities with like-minded institutions. The focus of the MBI Al Jaber Foundation's project department is on educational and cultural projects, and we concentrate on forging partnerships rather than simply giving grants, thereby creating an environment in which we can bring people together in the name of greater understanding and awareness of one another's cultures. We recently caught up with a couple of the individuals that have been awarded grants from us in the past to find out what they are doing now and how Foundation support has helped them.

Vaseem Mohamed

From London to Oman

In 2005 and 2006, the Foundation sponsored two exhibitions featuring the artwork of artist Vaseem Mohamed at St. Botolph's Church Aldgate in London. Vaseem grew up within sight of the church, thus it was a natural venue for a show of his paintings. The Unity and the Light of Hope exhibitions portrayed the work Vaseem's featuring Arabic calligraphy, including verses from the Qur'an: the paintings were displayed in a Christian church as a symbol of tolerance and respect for the two different religions. Through the collaboration of the Foundation, the artist and the church, we created an interfaith context in order to build bridges between various communities.

Over the years, Vaseem's work has evolved, always picking up and shedding influences, yet his most distinctive feature appears to be ever-present, namely his childhood appreciation of form, colour, and texture. Foundation support has introduced Vaseem to a network of people throughout the years, and the Foundation has also exhibited Vaseem's work in their offices on numerous occasions, where we are still fortunate enough to have work on display. His work usually also features as the header of our Foundation Reviews!

Vaseem regularly exhibits his art and also works on commissions. His next exhibition will take place in Oman (Muscat October 2010) and he will be travelling this spring to research a collection of work that reflects the historical city and its country. The Foundation continues to support Vaseem's efforts now and in the future by offering him encouragement, support and sponsorship.
www.vaseemmohamed.com



Society Voice Foundation

Ibrahim Natil, (MBI Scholar Westminister, 2001/2)

In 2006, the MBI Al Jaber Foundation supported Society Voice Foundation for Community and Civil Work, a non-profit, non-governmental and non-partisan organisation established in Gaza in 2001 with a mission to empower Palestinian civil society by designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a series of community actions, through a grant made towards "Empowering Women in Gaza".

Through this project, Director of SVF and MBI Alumni Ibrahim Natil aimed to build the leadership capacities and knowledge in political participation, legislation, democratic governance of 90 young women leaders, by training young women aged 18 to 25 in the principles and techniques of political and social participation, and women's rights.

The Society Voice Foundation now has three different offices in Gaza Strip and the West Bank and has cooperated with more than ten reputable donors in the last four years such as OFID, European Commission, Care International, WWDP, TIRI, Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, Westminister Foundation for Democracy and MEPI.

In 2007, SVF implemented a project with the European Commission entitled "Empower Women's Political and Social Participation in the Gaza Strip." Currently, SVF runs three different projects: "Increase Process of Public Monitoring, Accountability, Transparency of Municipality Services", "Empower Future Young Leadership on Parliamentary Work and Monitoring Corruption" and "Psycho-Social Support for Gazan Children". SVF seeks to continue and develop its operations in the Palestinian territories to contribute to the development of the Palestinian society and its social change process. www.svacc.org

Seminar for Arabian Studies and MBI Al Jaber Lecture – Save the Date!

We are pleased to announce that the 2010 Seminar for Arabian Studies will be held at the British Museum in London from Thursday 22nd - Saturday 24th July 2009. The MBI Al Jaber Lecture will take place on Thursday 22nd July. Please contact events@mbifoundation.com if you would like to attend the lecture and reception – but be aware that places are limited.