



# USEF NEWSLETTER

UNITED STATES-EGYPT  
FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

Volume 1 Issue 1  
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## *USEF Mission Statement*

USEF's mission is to increase understanding and awareness in the United States of contemporary Egypt and to promote appreciation of the importance of strong American-Egyptian relations.

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*USEF Newsletter Vol.1 No.1*

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Asst. Editor: Benjamin Granby

## **An Introduction to USEF**

*By Mohamed Hakki*

Greetings! This is the first of what we hope will be a periodic newsletter for our young, flourishing initiative, the United States-Egypt Friendship Society (USEF). Although there have been other organizations with similar names and goals around the country, we believe our nascent Society is unique. USEF is based in Washington, DC, and can welcome official visitors from Egypt and connect with business leaders and international policy makers committed to strengthening Egyptian-American ties. USEF depends on its corporate and individual members to support timely and relevant programming and maintain a vibrant Egyptian-American network drawing together the worlds of business, culture, government, and academia. We

seek to promote collaboration among the many societies, clubs, and organizations that share our goals and interests in fostering strong Egyptian-American relations. Our objectives are broad enough to include cultural, social, business and economic activities. While we are supported by the Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise, a unit of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USEF operates as an independent organization.

The United States and Egypt have political, economic and cultural ties with deep roots. Egypt was a focal point for the first international tour by a U.S. President when Ulysses S. Grant met with Khedive Ismail in 1878, and since Egypt's independence, the American government has remained a partner for peace, helping to resolve the Suez Crisis as well as host the

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## **Letter From the Chairman**

*By Ambassador Nicholas Veliotis*

As Chairman of the US-Egypt Friendship Society, it is a pleasure to address our colleagues on what is, in effect, the first anniversary of the founding of USEF. We are all proud of USEF's accomplishments in this inaugural period and look

forward to a stronger, more active organization in the future.

As a former Ambassador to Egypt, I am committed to strengthening the vital US-Egyptian relationship that is so important to both countries. This is the essence of the USEF mission. I invite all who share these views to support USEF as we fulfill our mission.



**UNC**  
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USEF is non-partisan and does not take positions on issues of policy before the U.S. or Egyptian government. Membership is open to individuals and corporations from both countries and to others interested in promoting a strong US-Egyptian relationship.

**Contact:** Louise Biggar, Senior Associate, lbiggar@kenan.org, 202.289.8347  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, North Tower, Suite 370, Washington, DC 20004 USA

*USEF Advisory Panel*

**USEF Chairman**

Ambassador Nicholas Veliotes

**USEF Vice-chairman**

Mr. Ibrahim Khalifa

**USEF Interim Executive Director**

Dr. Jennifer Bremer, Director  
Washington Center, Kenan  
Institute of Private Enterprise

**Advisory Panel members:**

- Shereen Abdelaaty, Development Alternatives, Inc.
- Louise Biggar, Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
- Khaled Dawoud, Al-Ahram
- Amy Ekdawi, Coptic Orphans
- Heba El-Shazli, Solidarity Center, AFL-CIO
- Mohamed Hakki, Freelance Journalist
- Lucy H. Holmes, 3D/International
- Les Janka, Les Janka International
- Dahlia Khalifa, World Bank Public Information Center
- Sherief Khalil, Design Inspirations
- Mary Ellen Lane, Council of American Overseas Research Centers
- Nevine Soliman, Raya USA

**Recent USEF Events**

USEF has hosted numerous presentations since its inception in 2003 on matters ranging from economic reform and democracy in Egypt to women’s roles and special tours of Islamic art exhibits. Here are some recent highlights.

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**Everything is Gonna Be Alright – A Documentary Film by Tamer Ezzat**  
September 25, 2004

In this event organized with the Egyptian American Cultural Association, Mr. Ezzat’s film about Egyptians living in New York City in the wake of the 9-11 attacks was shown. Afterwards, two people featured in it, writer and interpreter for the UN Hossam Fahr and Professor Khaled Fahmy of New York University’s history department, led a discussion.

**Justice in the Balance: Judicial Reform in Egypt and Iraq**  
November 4, 2004

In a talk co-hosted by the American Bar Association, Dr. Cherif Bassiouni, Professor of Law and President, International Human Rights



Dr. Cherif Bassiouni

Law Institute (IHRLI) of DePaul University College of Law, spoke on the challenges facing Egypt’s judicial system. Dr. Bassiouni outlined IHRLI’s work in Afghanistan and Iraq educating judges. He then highlighted the Egyptian system’s strengths, but also some of its

weaknesses, namely continuing difficulties combating corruption.

**Deepening the U.S.-Egypt Trade Relationship**

February 9, 2005

At this luncheon, Egypt’s Ambassador to the United States, H.E. Nabil Fahmy, spoke on the status of the



Ambassador Nabil Fahmy

current trade relationship for the U.S. and Egypt and its future. He focused on the proposed Free Trade Agreement between the two countries and its potential benefits. He concluded that the bonds between the two nations thus far stood on pillars of both foreign policy and military/security cooperation, with hopes that trade could become the third pillar in the relationship.

**Constitutionalism and Political Reform in Egypt**

February 16, 2005

George Washington University’s Elliott School for International Affairs co-hosted this panel, which featured Dr. Nathan Brown, Senior Associate, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at George Washington University and Dr. Samer Shehata, Visiting Assistant Professor at Georgetown University. Dr. Brown gave a history of Egypt’s different

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## Insomnia, Islam and a Bob Marley Song

By Hossam Fahr

Less than two months before his ninth birthday, our son Youssef started to suffer from insomnia. From 9:00 P.M., his bedtime, till midnight or even later, the door to our bedroom bursts open at regular intervals. "I can't sleep," he says. Our voices, with gentle parental concern or the irritation of needlessly interrupted sleep, tell him to go back to bed, close his eyes, count sheep...etc. and sleep will surely come.

It doesn't work.

The mornings-after are a nightmare for the whole family.

It doesn't take a genius to see the link between Youssef's sleeping disorder and the events of September 11th. The harrowing images of

that fateful day are seared on the minds of all people, particularly us New Yorkers. Clearly, his decision to ignore the events, pretending they never happened, was too much for his system.

Having dinner one day, it came as a complete shock to us to hear our child saying that he does not want his name to be Youssef. Nor does he want to be a Muslim anymore. Because one of the suspects is called Youssef and because "they don't like Muslims in this country". We asked him repeatedly if anything had happened at school that got him to feel that way. His answer is a categorical "no". We believe him. It is highly unlikely that he was subjected to a racist comment at his international school. He is also "the class clown". To the chagrin of his teachers, Youssef uses his great sense of humor to make his class-

mates laugh at the "wrong" time. They call him "our Billy Crystal". So, where did such thoughts come from? After thorough interrogation, he mumbles: "All that stuff on TV".

We have taught our children Islam, as we understand it; compassionate, tolerant, humane, and respectful of all other faiths. We tell them the words of Prophet Mohammed "the gravest sin is for one of us to go to bed with a full stomach while his neighbor goes hungry". I stress, in almost exactly the same words my parents used more than three decades earlier, that he spoke of the "neighbor" not the "fellow-Muslim". We tell them the story of the Prophet helping to build a house for a poor man in Medina. It was a very hot day. The Prophet was sweating profusely. He wiped his brow. His sweat fell on a thorn bush, transforming it into a tree of

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## USEF Events from page 2

constitutions and observed that the current 1971 version is limited by being structured around one party. Dr. Shehata then discussed the current political climate in Egypt and noted that the best potential for change was brewing outside of government among Egypt's media and



Governor Farouk El Okdah

people. This event was followed by only days with the significant announcement by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that upcoming elections would be open to multiple political parties for the first time.

### Financial Sector Reform in Egypt

April 18, 2005

This event was co-organized by the Arab Bankers Association of North America and featured Egyptian Minister of Investment Mahmoud Moheiddin, Governor of Egypt's Central Bank Farouk El Okdah and U.S. Treasury Under-Secretary for International Affairs John Taylor. Secretary Taylor remarked on his recent trip to Egypt and praised many of the recent reforms in Egypt. He described additional reforms that the U.S. would welcome, including further budget deficit reductions and a lowering of tax rates. Governor Okdah highlighted progress in Egypt's

banking infrastructure and the reduction of the foreign exchange



Minister Mahmoud Moheiddin

black market. He emphasized that more work would be needed to further bank consolidation in conjunction with continued privatization. In his presentation, Minister Moheiddin gave an update of Egypt's investment reforms and the Government's continued efforts to enhance private sector growth through better exchange rate policies and customs and tax reforms.

## U.S.-Egypt News Highlights

### USEF Corporate Members

Apache

American Insurance Group

Americana Group

ARTOC

Banque du Caire

Booz Allen Hamilton

Citigroup

Commercial International Bank

Contrack

Concord International  
Investments Group, L.P.

Development Alternatives, Inc.

National Bank of Egypt

Raya USA, LLC

### Featured Website

Exploring Cairo's Islamic History

TourEgypt.com offers, among their extensive details of sites in Egypt, offers a thorough guide to historical landmarks in Cairo that represent the city's rich Islamic heritage. See for yourself at:

<http://touregypt.net/cairo/cairoislamic.htm>

### Banking Optimism

May 4, 2005

"The Egyptian banking sector, having witnessed several difficult years, appears on the brink of a new era, with private commercial banks leading the way." This is the main conclusion of the annual banking report of Prime Securities published this month. The title of a similar report by EFG Hermes, also published this month, reaches

a similar verdict: "Growth finally comes to Egyptian banks."

Confidence was affected by a stalling domestic economy, as well as a weakening global economy amidst the fallout from the attacks of 11 September, combined with the adverse affect of regional instability on tourism and foreign currency inflows. *Source:*

### Tourists Keep Up the Lifeline In Egypt

May 2, 2005

Despite the initial apprehension of local hotels and travel agencies following the April 7 attack on tourists in Cairo's historic al-Azhar district, the effect on Egypt's vital tourism industry has been slight.

"So far, we haven't felt a negative impact," said Mohamed Fawzi,

director of sales at the Egyptian branch of Paris-based hotelier Accor. Nevertheless, some in the industry believe that the lack of hotel cancellations is attributable entirely to the oft-repeated assertion that the attack was a one-off - an exception to an otherwise perfect security record. *Source:*

<http://allafrica.com/stories/200505020165.html>

### Arab-American Museum Opens in Michigan

May 3, 2005

It is a bright, shining moment for a community in Metro Detroit that has been under sharp focus in recent years.

The opening of the Arab American National Museum, the first of its kind in the country, is a striking achievement for Arab-Americans. Officials, dignitaries and just plain folks are traveling across the country and from the Middle East to attend.

Local Arab-Americans talk about the pride and the strong, goose-pimpling emotions they feel in anticipation of the telling of their story and of the documentation of their contributions to the United States and the world -- contributions that are significant but, too often, little-noted.

*Source:*  
<http://www.detnews.com/2005/metro/0505/03/A01-169972.htm>

### Prime Minister Nazif Visits the U.S.

May 18, 2005

Egypt's Prime Minister Ahmad Nazif said that Egypt is serious about applying democracy. Nazif, who is visiting the United States this week, said: "Nobody would disagree with President George Bush's call for deepening democracy."

However, Nazif said the US role should be that of an adviser. "Change is happening, but the pace is up to us," he said.

*Source:*  
<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/050518/2005051832.html>

## USEF Introduction *from page 1*

monumental Camp David accords. After Egypt began its *Infitah* or Open Door policy in 1974, the U.S. has become Egypt's strongest foreign investment and trading partner, building ever closer economic ties and culminating in several trade agreements further bringing the two countries closer together. Egypt, with its rich history, strong influence in the Arab world, and unique relationship with the U.S., remains an important American ally in the Middle East.

While America and Egypt retain similarities, shared values and an almost 30 year history of partnership and cooperation, their relationship still suffers from *m i s c o n c e p t i o n s*, misunderstandings, and miscommunication. It has been said

that "the clash of ignorance is more dangerous than the clash of cultures," so the founders of USEF seek to tap the reservoirs of good will and mutual trust that have existed between the two communities for decades. USEF is building bridges of friendship, shedding light on areas of misunderstanding, bringing new opportunities to the front, and explaining what may not have been known about each other. This is reflected in the numerous events and programs that USEF has sponsored in Washington and will continue to do so into the future.

This newsletter is part of this effort to explore, to bring together, to reach out and enlighten. We will try to talk about the success stories, from Dr. Ahmed Zewail, the Nobel Prize winner in science, to all who

have made a contribution in American arts and sciences. We will also try to keep you informed about all upcoming USEF events and other items of interest, cover major developments in Egypt, and will highlight editorials by prominent scholars.

We encourage everyone whose life has been touched by Egypt to share their thoughts and experiences with us. We would like to bring all of what we call "the Points of Light" together so that the community better understands its places in this new home they now call their own, their new homeland and share pride in their achievements and contributions with their fellow Americans.

*Mohamed Hakki is a freelance journalist and member of USEF's advisory panel.*

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## Insomnia, Islam and a Bob Marley Song *from page 3*

magnificent flowers. We point out that the labor of love, of helping those less fortunate than one, is alone capable of turning prickly thorns into roses in full bloom. The brand of Islam we teach our kids is best exemplified in the lyrics of an Egyptian children's song:

"We all love God  
God loves us all  
And God loves us all the more  
When we love each other."

***This*** is what we have taught Youssef.

***This*** is what he wants to renounce.

In response to his bombshell, I said that his favorite actor, Billy Crystal, did not change his name because he shared it with the notorious criminal Billy The Kid. I talk to him of the Olympic torch, how it travels from city to city, and how it is the greatest honor for any athlete to light the Olympic flame at the begin-

ning of the Games. I tell him that in the Atlanta Games, that honor fell to a man whose name is Mohammed Ali, arguably the greatest athlete in the US history. I conclude by saying that it is not your name or your religion that matter but only who you are and what you can do.

He calms down a bit. He has not talked of changing his name or religion since.

But the bouts of insomnia have not gone away. When the door to our bedroom bursts open in the middle of night, he is not told to go back to his room or to count sheep. I take him in my arms and I sing our favorite Bob Marley song:

"Don't worry about a thing  
'Cause every little thing  
Is gonna be all right"

Even after he falls asleep, I continue humming the song to myself. Images flash before my eyes. I see myself in New York, the most toler-

ant and cosmopolitan of all cities, my home for the last 19 years, being told to go home for committing the crime of reading an Arabic newspaper on the bus. I hear the woman sitting next to me in the Japanese restaurant on 44th Street saying (matter-of-factly) between bites of Sashimi: "After what happened, we have to kill an awful lot of Arabs". I see the taxi driver who felt compelled to post a sticker in his car declaring his pride to be "an American and a Sikh". Undoubtedly for fear of being mistaken for an Arab or a Muslim with all the grievous, sometimes fatal, consequences that might entail.

I continue humming the song to myself. Perhaps because I really want "every little thing to be all right". Perhaps because I do not want Youssef to sense that, in my heart of hearts, I am no longer sure that that will be the case.

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# USEF Membership

The United States-Egypt Friendship Society (USEF) accepts members who are interested in promoting the importance of strong U.S.-Egypt relations and sharing in our political, economic and cultural exchanges. USEF offers membership on the levels with the following benefits:

<b>CORPORATE MEMBER:</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	Recognition in literature and website; Periodic Newsletter
<b>NON-PROFIT MEMBER:</b>	<b>\$500</b>	Periodic Newsletter
<b>INDIVIDUAL MEMBER:</b>	<b>\$100</b>	Periodic Newsletter
<b>STUDENT MEMBER:</b>	<b>\$25</b>	Periodic Newsletter

## USEF Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be added to USEF's email listing    Membership level: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please make checks payable to Kenan-Flager Business School Foundation, noting "USEF" in the memo line.*



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