

## **Arab League Establishment**

Although the dream of Arab unity has been lingering in the Arab mind for so long decades, the idea of establishing a unified Arab body did not crystallize unless during World War II due to several Arab, regional and international developments, especially that many nationalist movements appeared on the scene with the outbreak of the world war.

Also, resistance activities increased against the Western colonialism. This state of affairs led at the end to the independence of a growing number of Arab countries. Therefore, there was a need for setting up some sort of a political organization to unify the will of the Arabs where Egypt played an active role to attain that goal.

Egypt started the initiative on this score. This was clear in the long statement that was delivered by the government of Mostafa el-Nahas Pasha in the Senate on March 30, 1943 about its policies towards the Arab unity.

Nahas Pasha urged his government to start exploring the views of other Arab governments – separately- about his hopes in this regard. He also urged the government to work for bringing closer the different viewpoints of these governments and then call them for a meeting in Egypt to discuss the issue in order to start efforts for attaining Arab unity through an already unified front. So, if they would reach an agreement or become close to an agreement, another meeting would be held in Egypt to resume discussions and take the required decisions for achieving the aspirations of the Arab nation.

In May 1942, Nahas Pasha invited both Syrian Prime Minister Jamil Mardam and head of the Lebanese National Block Bechara El Khoury into a meeting in Cairo to discuss the idea of setting up an Arab league to consolidate relations among its Arab member-states. Then he confirmed once again that the Egyptian government is willing to explore the views of the other Arab governments on the issue of unity and holding a conference to discuss the idea. The proposal was commended by the ruler of Jordan at the time Emir Abdullah.

After that, a series of bilateral consultations started between Egypt on one hand and representatives of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Yemen on the other. These consultations resulted in two proposals for action to attain Arab unity; the first of which was supporting what it would be called a smaller regional unity with greater Syria or the region of Mesopotamia as its nucleus. The other proposal called for a wider and more inclusive unity covering all the independent Arab countries. The second proposal included two other opinions; the first of which called for a federation or confederation among the countries concerned with the other opinion supporting a compromise that would strike a balance and achieve coordination in all fields while maintaining at the same time the independence of each country and its sovereignty.

Consultations that were held between Egypt and other Arab countries, which lasted as of July 31, 1943 to February 1944, were aimed at exploring the views of each Arab country on the issue of Arab unity where Egypt got acquainted with each country's opinion in this regard. Until then, no decision was taken. After the completion of consultations, what remained was holding a meeting of the preparatory committee of the Arab conference under the chairmanship of Egypt. At the second session of the conference on September 28, 1944, Nahhas Pasha presented them with the issues that have been agreed upon by the Arab countries including participation in all fields of economic cooperation such as currency, transportation, customs and trade exchange. Also other fields of cooperation included the cultural, social and scientific domains. A sub-committee was formed to address all these issues. A coordination committee, under Nahhas Pasha, was also formed to follow up the activities of other committees. While an agreement among the Arab countries on cooperation in non-political domains was reached with no difficulty, the situation was quite different when it came to the political issues. After discussions, Egypt expressed for the first time its view about integrated cooperation among all the Arab countries where Nahhas Pasha presented the framework of cooperation that he had outlined. Among the most important aspects of this framework was "forming an Arab league of the independent Arab countries that has a council called the Arab League Council in which all member-states are equally represented with its decisions being

mandatory for the member-state which accepts them except when there was a difference between any Arab country and another. In this case, the Council's decisions become effective and mandatory".

Egypt was looking forward that the hoped-for league would play an active role as a regional institution. To confirm Egypt's stance, which is keen on the description of the proposed institution as "League", Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah Eddin explained that: "If we used the word "alliance" it could be interpreted in different ways. Some party would interpret it as "Entente" and another would interpret it as "Confederation" while a third would interpret it as "Federation". This would cause confusion and perplexity". Nahhas Pasha also said: "What is more important is that the word "League" describes an already existing institution but the word "alliance" describes something that is contrived and agreed upon therefore the word "League" is the most appropriate term".

When the preparatory committee convened including representatives from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Yemen in the period from September 25 to October 7, 1944, it was more inclined to approve the proposal calling for the unity of all the independent Arab countries without affecting their independence or sovereignty.

At the eighth session of the preparatory committee of the Arab conference on October 7, 1944, the committee approved Alexandria Protocol. Chief delegates of the participant countries signed the protocol on October 7, 1944, except Saudi Arabia and Yemen which signed on January 3, 1945 and February 5, 1945 respectively. After more than three months, the sub-committee of the preparatory committee convened in Cairo in the Foreign Ministry offices on February 14, 1945 to outline the League's Charter. The committee adopted five decisions. The first of which was related to setting up the Arab League that has a council called the Arab League Council in which all member-states are equally represented and all the council's decisions are mandatory to the country that accepts them. It is not allowed for any member-state to adopt any foreign policy that would harm the policy of the Arab League or any of its member-states. The second was related to cooperation in economic, social, cultural and other domains. The third was about enhancing these areas of cooperation in the future while the fourth was about

respecting the independence of Lebanon and its sovereignty in its current borders. The last decision was related to Palestine including demanding Britain to stop Jews immigration and preserving the Arab territories along with working for achieving the legitimate hopes and rights of the Palestinians.

The protocol stipulated that (a political sub-committee be formed immediately including members of the preparatory committee to take up outlining a draft statute of the League Council and to review the political issues that could be subject to agreements among the Arab countries). This protocol constituted the basic document according to which the Charter of the Arab League was written. The Charter was written by the political sub-committee and representatives of the Arab countries which signed Alexandria Protocol along with representatives of Saudi Arabia and Yemen and a representative of the Palestinian parties as an observer. After completing the draft charter throughout 16 meetings held by the parties concerned in the headquarters of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in the period from February 17 to March 3, 1945, the Charter was endorsed at Zaafaran Palace in Cairo on March 19, 1945 after introducing some amendments into it.

On the other hand, Egypt worked for allowing other non-independent Arab countries to take part in the Arab League's activities and join inter-Arab cooperation in non-political domains given the fact that the Arab League is operating for an Arab nation that will soon rise up. Because the Arab League does not accept in its membership non-independent Arab countries and in order not to violate the League Charter, Egypt proposed that representatives of non-independent Arab countries would participate in the League's committees that are taking up non-political issues so that these countries would not be deprived from cooperation in non-political domains.

A major celebration was held on March 22, 195 in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry on the occasion marking signing the League Charter. With the endorsement of seven member-states, the Arab League came into existence as of May 11, 1945 to be the first pan-Arab organization in the modern and contemporary history of the Arabs. The membership widened later to reach 22 member-states the last of which was the Comoros which joined the League in 1993.

The Arab League has obtained its first actual recognition by the United Nations on November 1st, 1950 with the issuance of a resolution from the UN General Assembly at the request of the UN Secretary General to invite the Arab League Secretary General to attend the sessions of the UN General Assembly as an observer.