



INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS
OF THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA
Connecting Bibliotheca Alexandrina Globally

Second Edition

DIGITAL NEWSLETTER

May – June 2021



**From IFBA Chairman/Editor
THARWAT ABOURAYA**

IFBA Continues to Louden Bibliotheca Alexandrina's Activities Globally

Effective global communication can lead the Bibliotheca Alexandrina to greater innovation. It also has the potential to unite continents in creativity and human understanding as libraries continue to rapidly progress toward a more diverse and global center of knowledge. As we identify the next generation of younger IFBA members, we can lead that change.

In our countries of operations, we constantly engage with local communities to raise awareness of Bibliotheca Alexandrina, to complement the public and external relation departments housed at the library. IFBA Country Chapters are more than written words and pictures: we are live human interactions in local languages and cultures.

IFBA continues to enlist diplomats and First Ladies, like Her Excellency Mrs. Andri Anastasiades of Cyprus



and former Egyptian Ambassador to the USA Mohamed Tawfik, Egyptian Ambassador to Mexico Khaled Shamaa as well as our own Chapter leaders, in spreading the word about our organization

to support Bibliotheca Alexandrina. There's a real possibility that the Cultural Affairs Office in the Egyptian Foreign Ministry might collaborate with IFBA to encourage Egyptian Embassies around the world to spread the word about IFBA'S partnership with Bibliotheca Alexandrina, per Marion Fromlet, IFBA Development Advisor and a member of the Executive Team.

[Look for the upcoming Living IFBA for Tomorrow Podcast with Her Excellency Mrs. Andri Anastasiades of Cyprus.](#)

In this issue you will learn about the Greek Revolution of 1821, similarities between visiting scholars at the Ancient Egyptian Library with the present International Friends of Bibliotheca Alexandrina scholars, a visit to Alexandria by the late US President Richard Nixon in 1974, and a link to enjoy a moving cultural performance presented by our Chile Chapter.

AMERICAS

California
Chile
Maryland
Mexico
Minnesota
New York

EUROPE

Cyprus
France
Germany
Greece
Italy
Latvia
Netherlands
Norway
Order of Malta
Romania
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

AFRICA

South Africa

MIDDLE EAST

Egypt

ASIA & PACIFIC

Australia



Ambassador
Mohamed Tawfik,
Writer & Diplomat

How reason & dialogue can succeed where war & carnage will ultimately fail: a message that resonates fully with the objectives of Bibliotheca Alexandrina

I have been following the activities of the IFBA (International Friends of Bibliotheca Alexandrina) since its inception a couple of decades ago, and my admiration for the efforts of these hundreds of women and men has not stopped growing. Dedicated to the enhancement of understanding and cooperation between nations and cultures through the arts and sciences, they are truly modern-day heroes. I have also had the good fortune to participate in their activities spanning city to city and continent to continent.

The Maryland, Virginia, and Washington DC Chapter of the IFBA provides an excellent example of this dedication. Among the outstanding events it has organized together with Al-Ahram institution was the screening of *The Sultan and the Saint* in Cairo. The documentary outlines the meeting of Francis of Assisi and the Sultan of Egypt, Al-Kamel, on a battlefield during the Crusades, highlighting how reason and dialogue can succeed where war and carnage will ultimately fail. With a message that resonates fully with the objectives of the BA, the event was highly appreciated by the Egyptian public and media.

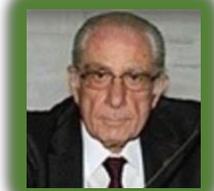
Only a few days ago, I was hosted by the Enoch Pratt Free Library and Baltimore Luxor Alexandria Sister City Committee to discuss the evolution of Egyptian society over the twentieth century, from a writer's and a diplomat's perspective. The podcast, sponsored by the abovementioned IFBA subcommittee, with the energetic guidance of my good friend Tharwat Abouraya, provided an opportunity for an in-depth discussion encompassing participants from the U.S., the Arab World, and Europe. Expertly chaired and moderated by Karen Leggett, the conversation covered a lot of ground, and was to me, a thoroughly informative and enjoyable experience.

**25th of March 1821
THE PALINGENESIS OF THE GREEK NATION**



Hellenic Chapter

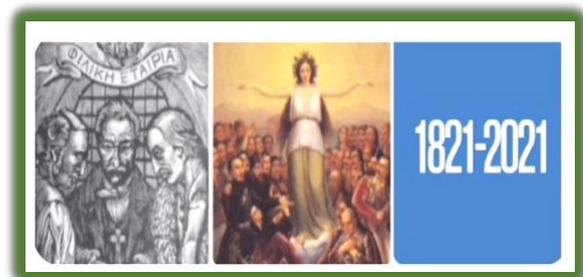
By Spyros Kamalakis



In the history of nations around the world, there are dates and persons marking the reference point of their national identity. In Greek history, there are numerous

such milestones dating from the fringes of history to the absolute yesterday. Equally numerous are the noble figures associated with events that defined the course of the Greek nation, yet whose beneficial presence and action very often had an impact on and made a contribution to the freedom and culture of neighboring peoples or the progress of humanity in general.

In our address today, it would be needless even to mention Achilles, Leonidas and Themistocles, Alexander the Great, Justinian and Basil the Bulgar Slayer, or Konstantinos Palaiologos. Yet, it is not by coincidence that these figures are unique in the history of mankind. They are not figures that led the Greek people to wars of conquest and expansion. They fought on the frontlines in wars for the nation's freedom and dignity, and they not only repulsed barbarians from Greece and Europe, but also spread the culture to the end of the world. In the same way, a few decades ago, Hellenism as a whole raised its stature against steel giants, it being so small a nation against the big and powerful ones, thus winning recognition that "heroes fight like Greeks".



Between those Greeks of remote and medieval antiquity and our fathers stands the glorious saga of the Greek Revolution of 1821.

Pages of history have been written with the blood, tears, sweat, hopes, lives and countless hecatombs of innocent people whose conviction was that "One hour of freedom is worth more than forty years of slavery and life in prison." Pages whose size, greatness, nobility and determination don't fall short of those that defended Thermopylae, Marathon, Salamis and so many others.

Having realised their responsibility towards Greece and our ancestors, but also bearing in mind the great truth, that their only ally and tool was their example, not the support of the powerful of the Earth, the Fighters of the Greek Revolution of 1821 attempted and achieved a miracle in the eyes of those who are ignorant of history. Their supporters were the coveted idea of Freedom and the undeniable concept of Justice, while their pennant was a piece of cloth with the sign of the cross in the middle.

The heroes of 1821 had compressed in their chests everything that the Nation had created and bequeathed over the centuries. Deep in their hearts, they felt the pain stemming from the contrast between the historical grandeur and the exhaustion of slavery. They were inspired by the great and splendid examples of the heroes of the past, and they firmly believed in the religion of Jesus, which provides the highest values and precepts of life. Greatness, nobility, national pride, bravery, force, intelligence, all virtues of the race, as well as century-long despair and sorrow and suffering are intertwined with overwhelming and unequal conflicts which sometimes result in monumental accomplishments, albeit not rarely in horrible and immeasurable destruction, statements, killings, humiliation and enslavement.

Souli, Mesolongi, Chios, Psara, along with Tripoli, Dervenakia and Gravia. Botsaris and the Ypsilantis Brothers; Alexandros Ypsilantis, who set it all in motion, and Dimitrios Ypsilantis, who finished it; Kolokotronis and Nikitaras, Kanaris and Miaoulis, Bouboulina, Tzavellaina, Mavrogenous and Daskalogiannaina and so many other names of places and fighters written in the Annals of History and the Soul of the Nation. Those are the ones who led the combatants, young and old ones, women and children, onto a bloody and inhumane path towards the fate of the Race, with firm awareness of the Nation's superiority over the barbarian conquerors. Nothing could intercept the fight. The belief that that bloody path led to the Resurrection, the restoration and promotion of the Culture, encouraged and enlightened them, because the term "Culture" presupposes respect to the individuality of the Nation and, at the same time, the assurance of human personality.

With these concepts, freedom, the essence of the human being and, as it has been aptly said, the mirror of the essence of God, is rescued. These elements guarantee the superiority and unity of the Whole. They give meaning to Fights. They pave creative directions for younger generations, in tune with the voice of civilised humanity.

If the fight of 1821 is examined from this honest and objective point of view, it attests to the secret truth, which has repeatedly been confirmed, that civilisation on Earth is not blissful rest and excess of material goods, but a constant and eternal pursuit. It is a crucifixion path, with efforts and pain, sorrows and bloodshed within the sphere of freedom. It is a conquest of the concept of human being as well as the concept of God.

As Greeks, we should be proud of this national Saga. This is why we ought to preserve it securely and unwaveringly in our souls and impart it intact to the generations to come.

So why did President Nixon visit Alexandria?



By David Wardrop



**UNITED KINGDOM
CHAPTER**

In 1974, under fierce attack at home over the Watergate affair, his escape plan would be a swing through Egypt, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and probably Iran. He would now become the second US President to visit Egypt, following Franklin D. Roosevelt who passed through Cairo in 1943 returning from meeting Stalin in Teheran. With President Sadat, he [travelled by train from Cairo to Alexandria](#), cheered by crowds along the route. The *New York Times* reports that one man brought his four camels, to watch the decorated carriages pass by.



What was in it for Sadat? It was nine months after the Yom Kippur war, and he needed US support to rebuild his military but was fully aware of the cloud of threatened impeachment hanging over Nixon's head. He had been lavish in his praise of both Nixon and Kissinger, even asserting that impeachment of Nixon would be a "tragedy." They arrived in Alexandria, a city *en fête* with the [Corniche festooned](#) as the city's printers had been hard at work preparing images of the two leaders together.



[Speaking at a dinner in the Ras El Tin palace](#) on 13 June, President Nixon remarked 'We think of the great library that was here', linking it to the landings on the moon a few years earlier, noting that 'abilities that developed those high techniques were based on the great scholars of the past many of whom centred on here in Alexandria'.

Nixon continued his journey and later to Moscow, knowing that upon return to Washington, he would have to face his accusers. Shortly afterwards, he resigned. Where are the mementoes of that visit in 1974, a commemorative plaque or 'Friendship Bridge'? There must be a good number of Alexandrians who can recall those days when their historic city was once again the centre of public attention, more than the 'pearl of the Mediterranean', rather the 'diamond of the whole world'.

The existence of one of the "Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina" gave rise to the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina Historical Reflection

by Count Federico of Wardal



ITALY CHAPTER

"The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina was born to continue the path of the ancient Bibliotheca Alexandrina, which, in turn, was created to continue the path of the previous libraries, one of which was based in the Assyrian-Babylonian

empire (Ashurbanipal) and first in Egypt in the pharaonic period.



The concept of bibliotheca is based on offering the fruition of human knowledge, in preserving and disseminating it, not only through engraved tablets, scrolls and then books, but through the pupils and disciples of master writers of philosophy, poetry, literature, law, history, science, interactive with each other. This aggregation is now called "friends" or "messengers of knowledge".

It is well known the Professor Moustafa El Abbadi “ messenger of knowledge “ was the person who proposed the rebirth of the legendary Library of Alexandria. Prof. Moustafa El Abbadi was a very human and humble person, and we became close friends. His wife Dr. Azza gave the privilege to the IFBA Poetry Reading of her participation as a reader several times and always was much applauded for her extreme genuineness, spontaneity and special ability to communicate with the audience.

Children of Siwa, children of the world



CHILE CHAPTER

By Maryem Darwiche

In the distance, crossing the western desert of Egypt and seeing from the route the distant line that indicates the limit with Libyan territory, I arrive to the oasis that, in my way of understanding, is the one that most genuinely preserves the simple and authentic lifestyle of the

oasis. Imposing samples of the Late Period of the history of Ancient Egypt, we find the passage of Alexander the Great and the citadel of Shali.



Children come out from their homes to meet and greet the travelers, with the sweetness and authenticity of children of their age. With curiosity, they ask where I come from. Many have never traveled to Cairo. Many have never left the oasis and do not know other worlds than the one offered by the generous oasis. According to what they say, the little ones go to school where a heroic

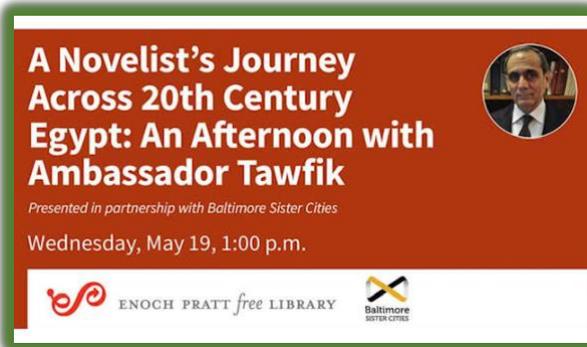
teacher with a few books shows them the existence of a different world, pretending to awaken in the children a curiosity beyond the inclement desert. How to thank that teacher and those books for the knowledge that must be transmitted from generation to generation even in the most remote places on the planet?

MISSED THE CHILE CHAPTER'S CULTURAL SESSION?

NO PROBLEM – WATCH IT HERE:

18 MAY 2021 IFBA ZOOM MEETING

[CHILE CHAPTER'S CULTURAL SESSION](#)



By Karen Leggett,
Maryland Virginia Washington, DC

Chapter



Retired Ambassador

Mohamed Tawfik does not

miss being an ambassador one bit – and he loves the literary world in which he now thrives. Amb Tawfik was a virtual guest of the Baltimore Luxor Alexandria Sister City Committee and Enoch Pratt Library in Baltimore for a conversation on May 19. After more than 30 years as a career diplomat – including as Ambassador in Lebanon, Australia and the United States – Amb Tawfik retired in 2016 to devote full time to writing, serving as literary editor of arabworldbooks.com (a website initiated by his wife Amani Amin), conducting his own literary discussions and teaching creative writing.

Tawfik said he began writing as a teenager and only stopped during the especially challenging years when he was Ambassador. Tawfik's successor, Ambassador Motaz Zahran, attended the program and said he was not at all surprised Tawfik had no time to write novels while serving in Washington!

One of his most recent books, *candygirl*, was read by all freshmen at the American University Cairo in 2014 – a fantastic experience, said Tawfik. *Candygirl* is the third book of a trilogy exploring Egypt's political and social evolution through the 20th century and beyond. It is a work of science

fiction where much of the action takes place in a virtual world and Tawfik explained that his research included being part of the Second Life virtual community for a time.

Tawfik says publishing is thriving in Egypt, with new writers from Syria, Algeria and Egypt and women changing the face of Arabic literature. He also offered a long list of 20th century authors who should get more attention, including [Yehia hakki](#), [Edward Kharrat](#), [Bahaa Taher](#), [Gamil Ateya](#), [Sonallah Ibrahim](#), [Gamal Elghitani](#).

The entire conversation with Ambassador Tawfik is available online [here](#).



Ambassador Khaled Shamaa
Egyptian Ambassador to Mexico



I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Mexican Friends Association of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (AABA) for all the efforts and work that it has carried out with such dedication in the cultural field.

The Association has stood out for promoting cultural cooperation between Egypt - through the Library of Alexandria - and Mexican cultural institutions, which has resulted in highly successful cultural exchanges.

Among the projects it has carried out jointly with the Egyptian Embassy this year is the 2021 Mexico-Egypt International Children's Drawing Contest titled "Discovering Cultures," whose objective was to increase the knowledge of both Mexican and Egyptian children about their cultures.

Soon some other projects, postponed due to the pandemic, will see the light; once the situation stabilizes, we will continue with joint projects in order to further strengthen the cooperative ties between Egypt and the AABA Mexico.

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA
[BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA](#)



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Interim Living IFBA Webpage:
Tinyurl.com/LivingIFBA

20 July IFBA Zoom Meeting

23 July IFBA Digital Newsletter Submission Deadline
for July-August edition

IFBA Chapters History Article Submissions: open

