

Newsletter

اتحاد خريجي ييل العرب Yale Arab Alumni Association

Datebook

Feb Club Emeritus

February 21 • Doha
Picasso's, Ramada Plaza

February 24 • Dubai
The Yacht Club, Dubai Marina
Contact: tammer@yallearab alumni.org

February 24 • Beirut
CRU, Hamra
Contact: gregor@yallearab alumni.org

From Antarctica to Mongolia, the Yale tradition of nightly February cheer continues in 2011.

Conservation of Architecture, Urban Areas, Nature, and Landscape

March 13-15 • Amman
The Center for the Study of Architecture in the Arab Region and Al-Turath Foundation

The Heritage 2011 conference addresses conservation issues such as ethics, cultural landscapes, and the built and natural environments, bridging the fields of architecture and environmental design.

ArabNet Shift

March 22-25 • Beirut
International Business Alliance Group

Digital media gurus, web entrepreneurs, and investors convene for the Arab web industry's largest conference at the Habtoor Hotel in Lebanon.

Greening Energy: Turning Deserts into Powerhouses

May 11-14 • Cairo
World Wind Energy Association

At the tenth world wind and renewable energy exhibition, over six hundred researchers, industry leaders, and governmental representatives discuss wind energy and regional cooperation for accelerated wind and renewable energy development.

Yale Day of Service

May 14 • Around the world

Contribute to your community on the third annual Yale Day of Service by organizing a project in your city.

Interview with Fares Mabrouk, Tunisian activist and World Fellow 2010

Fares Mabrouk, Yale World Fellow '10, returned to his native Tunisia in December just days before riots broke out against the government. During his last week in New Haven, he had hosted activist and blogger Slim Amamou for a talk on censorship in Tunisia, and the prospects for democratic reform. But once the revolution was underway, Amamou - who has since joined the interim government as Secretary of Youth and Sports - was arrested, and Mabrouk went to Paris to rally international support for the protests and for Amamou's release.

Mabrouk returned to Tunisia in mid-January and is continuing his activism and working to launch a policy institute dedicated to democratic reform. The institute's co-founder, **Aboubakr Jamaï**, is also a Yale World Fellow from 2004. Mabrouk has been interviewed several times on *Democracy Now!*, and on January 26, 2011, he spoke with YAAA's Paige Austin '06 about his experience during and after his fellowship at Yale.

When were you first aware this movement was going to be a revolution?

It has been a very chaotic month. We didn't sleep for one month. Time was too crazy to realize, okay this is a revolution. We took the risk: our friends were arrested, so we joined the movement. Like thousands of Tunisians, I just opened a break in life and put my family and work on standby. Thousands of people did, without really realizing if we would succeed in the end or not. It was natural. And it's still not completed, we are still advocating for change in government. We still have a lot of work.

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Fares Mabrouk, WF '10

Why are uprisings spreading in the Arab World?

Co-written by Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl '04, PhD '11 and Julia Choucair PhD '14
Originally published on February 4, 2011

The astounding events in Egypt this week, coming on the heels of the fall of the Ben Ali regime in Tunisia, create unprecedented excitement about the spread of democratic change across the Arab world.

Skeptical observers caution against such optimism (or wariness, depending on one's vantage point) and highlight unique features of each country. Before January 25 most of these voices would have bet against what we are now seeing in Egypt. But the escalation of Egypt's protests, the protesters' rejection of Mubarak's "concession" to step down in the future, and the spread of demonstrations to Algeria, Jordan, Sudan, and Yemen lend credence to the possibility of sweeping change.

The position the United States should take depends critically on understanding how and why the uprisings

spread. A focus solely on the domestic conditions surrounding them is not sufficient. Instead, particular attention must be paid to what drives the contagion effect of the demonstrations.

Alongside Egypt, demonstrations calling for changes inside the government or of the regime itself have shaken Jordan, Algeria, Yemen, and Sudan. Protesters are not the only ones watching events in other countries. Algeria's government slashed food prices, Jordan's King Abdullah appointed a new government and charged it to take "practical, quick and tangible steps to launch true political reforms, enhance Jordan's democratic drive and ensure safe and decent living for all Jordanians." Syria's President Bashar al-Assad sent a signal of resolve and emphatically denied that similar protests could happen in his country.

Observers now explain the possibilities for contagion based on whether other Arab countries share the socioeconomic challenges and political grievances of Egypt and Tunisia, or

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Summary of Executive Board retreat, August 2010

Six Executive Board members conducted a three-day retreat in Beirut, Lebanon in August 2010 to evaluate the progress of the Yale Arab Alumni Association (YAAA), to build new governance structures, and to map a strategic plan for the organization.

The Board also developed and passed into motion the following vision and mission for YAAA:

Vision

We seek a world of civic engagement and inquiry, where community leaders and citizens, particularly in the Arab Middle East, are committed to the public interest.

Mission

The Yale Arab Alumni Association provides forums for engagement at local and global levels. We serve communities in the Arab Middle East and act as a bridge between Yale and the region.

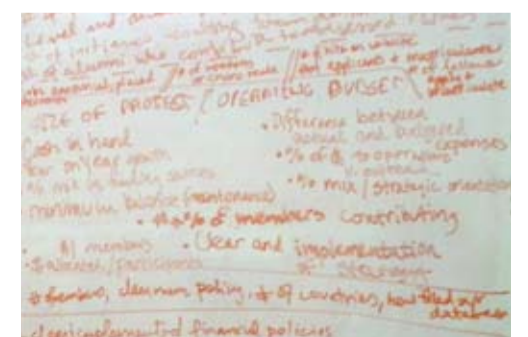
Drawing on our diversity, resources, and experiences as alumni and affiliates of Yale University, we also act as a resource hub for educational opportunities and exchange across disciplines and cultures.

The Executive Board voted to transition to an expanded Board of Directors and to stage a second international conference in 2012. With the guidance of Gilbert Doumit WF '08, the Board mapped a preliminary strategic plan for the organization through spring 2012, which will be finalized and shared with members.

The retreat, chiefly organized by Director of Membership Léa Hakim, MA '05, included capacity development workshops with experts Joe Hall (Senior Advisor, National Democratic Institute), Melinda Burell (Country Representative, Catholic Relief Services), Maya Mansour (Attorney at Law), and Gilbert Doumit WF '08 (Senior Partner, Beyond Consulting and Training). Dr. Walid Fayad (Principal, Booz & Co.) kindly provided his expertise in nonprofit management. YAAA extends sincere thanks to them all.

Johnny Seikaly and Emily Hendrick Seikaly '04, who gave birth to daughter Leila on August 30, 2010, generously contributed their Key Development Services office space to the organization for the retreat. Dozens of members also contributed their feedback and ideas through the questionnaire.

Board members Omar Christidis '04, SOM '07; Léa Hakim, MA '05; Eyad Houssami '07; Jasmine Melvin-Koushki '07; Saned Raouf '10; and Raja Shamas '05 participated in the retreat, which took place August 27-29, 2010.





Progress report

Since late July 2010, the Executive Board has held 13 meetings in addition to numerous working sessions. In an effort to advance the mission of the organization, members of the Board have met with alumni, partners, Yale administrators, and others in Amman, Beirut, Cairo, Doha, and New Haven. Social events were also organized in Beirut and Amman.

Following the retreat, major achievements and decisions include the following:

Governance

- Drafted and passed into motion “Terms of Roles and Responsibilities: Duties of Officers, Directors, Members at Large, YAAA Reps, Advisory Board Members, and Volunteers,” a ten-page document detailing job description with a hierarchy diagram
- Drafted and passed into motion “Terms of Reference for Transition and Expansion,” which describes the process whereby the Executive Board will transition to a Board of Directors
- Called for the establishment of a “Board of Directors Committee” of YAAA volunteers who will work closely with the current leadership from March 15 through October 4, 2011
- Made improvements to current bylaws with aim of implementing new bylaws by end-February 2011

Policies

- Prepared membership policy with aim of passing into motion by end-February 2011
- Laid groundwork for financial policies and budget development and review processes

Communications

- Drafted new website and digital communications proposal
- Obtained three quotations from developers and designers with aim of finalizing partnership by end-February 2011

Strategy and Programming

- Reached internal consensus on three- to five-year strategic plan and March-October 2011 action plan with aim of sharing with Advisory Board by end-February 2011

Other

- Supported the Alumni Schools Committee interview process by encouraging and organizing alumni to interview applicants to Yale College
- Pledged up to \$1,500 in support of the Arab Students’ Association at Yale College to purchase office equipment and supplies for newly acquired activities room
- Reviewed, discussed, and took action in response to project proposals from American University of Beirut and Arab Administrative Development Organization



Yale World Fellows Saleh Barakat '06, May Akl '10, and Gilbert Doumit '08

Beirut forum on exchange

The Yale Arab Alumni Association with the support of the Yale World Fellows Program organized an open forum on exchange in Beirut, Lebanon on August 1, 2010.

Organized in large part by YAAA Representative in Lebanon Gregor Nazarian '08, the event brought together World Fellows May Akl '10, Saleh Barakat '06, and Gilbert Doumit '08 to discuss Yale’s international exchange program for mid-career professionals.

Executive Board members Eyad Houssami '07 and Léa Hakim, MA '05 also spoke briefly about the Association’s future and history, including the international urban sustainability conference they co-chaired in 2009. Attendees included alumni, current Yale students, and members of the professional and university community in Lebanon.



Opportunities

Summer internship: Endeavor Jordan

Dates: June-August 2011

Contact: catherine.halaby@endeavor.org

Responsibilities include researching, interviewing, and assessing high-impact entrepreneurs; drafting company overviews and profiles; coaching final candidates for selection panels; and maintaining statistics on Endeavor’s selection process. An interest in entrepreneurship and economic development is essential; strong writing skills are also expected. No funding is available from Endeavor. Students may supply their own funding through their university or another program.

Summer internship: Bon Education

Application deadline: February 28, 2011

Contact: chris@boneducation.com

Responsibilities include monitoring, managing, and engaging online communities of learning; updating community management strategy; studying analytics, drafting reports, and drawing conclusions about strategy; managing company newsletter and the publication and promotion of key Web 2.0 assets like blogs, Twitter and Facebook. English and Arabic fluency is a must.

Thank you

The Yale Arab Alumni Association would like to thank the Yale World Fellows Program for their generous support of the August 2010 event in Beirut.



Fares Mabrouk interview

Does your work now relate to your time at Yale?

My World Fellows Program was about creating a think tank, the Arab Policy Institute. My objective in applying to the program was to work on the business plan and the programming while I was in New Haven. So now a few days ago, last week, we incorporated the think tank here in Tunis—which was completely impossible to do just one month ago... We had imagined a think-tank based between Paris and Tunis and we planned for a [negative] reaction from the Tunisian government, but this is no more the case today.

We also changed the priorities for topics on which the think tank will concentrate its studies and its work. Today, the first priority is about the constitution and the democratic safeguards we need to put in place inside our system and the type of democracy we want and the type of constitution. This was not the priority one month ago, but today it is very urgent.

The change is incredible because in our plan we wrote that our mission was to support democratic change, which was completely impossible to imagine a few weeks ago, but possible today. So, we are incorporated and are going to begin our programs in the next month.

What role do you want to see academic institutions like Yale playing in these movements - in Tunisia and potentially other Arab countries?

First of all, I must admit that the program played a major role in the connections and network I developed in the United States. I am today in contact with many of my fellows, professors, and other people I met during the program. It was really great to have the support during the time [of the revolution].

But in the reconstruction phase, help can be very important – it will be very important. For example, on the constitution: the political model will completely change. We will have a completely different Tunisia than in the past, from civil society to urbanism to the role of technology, to our relationship with our neighbors. We have to rethink the whole system.

Five minutes before Mohammed Bouazizi killed himself, Tunisia was one of if not the most stable country in the Arab world. There was a sort of equilibrium—unstable at the end but an equilibrium. So now we have to find another system, another model, and definitely Yale and the faculty and the fellows will play a role in helping us and bringing new ideas and working with us on this.

Many people are watching Tunisia now and hoping that events continue in a way that's equitable, that marks a true change and democracy. You've said you are between the first and second of three stages. What do you think the keys are to making that transition through the third stage?

I think we are still in between the first and second stage. We still have to deal with Ben Ali time, people, and system. This is not complete yet. There are still forces inside the system that are trying to pull back, to pull the situation backward inside the government. So, it's still not clear—people are not happy about how the government communicates, and the situation is very confused. We are very optimistic about building the country in the next few months, but today there are critical risks. The first one is as I said to finish with the Ben Ali system and to find a solution for the former ruling party, which also is seen by many as trying to recover their power; the government is seen as an ally to that. So, this is the first challenge we have to face. And the problem is that this situation makes the government weaker and weaker, day after day, and we will not be able to restore the government credibility before we manage these cases. This is one big challenge for the immediate future of Tunisia.

The second one is external influences. It's probably not in the interest of our neighbors that this revolution succeed. Yesterday's speech by [Libyan leader Muammar] Qaddafi was very clear about his position: he is trying to make people take the power—trying to bring Tunisia to anarchy. And this can also be encouraged by the lack of credibility of the state and of legitimate forces.

Third, I would say we also need to deal with the problem of justice and Ben Ali and his family. And the way we will manage these cases will have an impact—the way we will deal with Ben Ali's family case, the way we will manage our emotions, will be the base for our justice system.

The final thing is the necessity for us today to create a reconciliation program or committee to address the abuses that have been made in the past and that will emerge in the future. Because after 23 years of dictatorship, we need to work on that by reconciliation committee. So, there are many challenges.

Do you think protestors elsewhere will follow Tunisia's lead?

My wish is that the leaders of the Arab world take the lessons from Tunisia and integrate and implement reforms, without revolution... We were lucky enough in Tunisia to have an honest and uncorrupted army. Is it the case in other countries? I don't know. This is why—I definitely wish for change, and I think that we are going to have a new Arab World. But I also don't wish for deaths like we had in Tunisia.

Spread of uprisings

organize. But these factors have all been present for years, and the regimes that are now apparently shaken by them were thought resilient only weeks earlier.

What, then, lies behind these unpredictable events, and what does it tell us about the possibilities of contagion to other Arab countries?

Two potential links between the collapse of Ben Ali's regime in Tunisia and the current wave of demonstrations in the Arab world stand out. These connect the cost-benefit analyses of protesters in other countries and their assessments of the

But a third mechanism is also at work, and one that is worth paying more attention to because it does not involve cost-benefit analysis: Tunisians' sacrifices have created a new moral climate in the region. If Tunisians were willing to die for the future of their country, then citizens of other countries have to ask a new question about facing down their regimes. Rather than calculating the risks and rewards to participating in uprisings, the question now is: If Tunisians were willing to make this sacrifice, why shouldn't I also be willing? Continuing sacrifices, now on the streets of Egypt, underscore it.

Citizens of other countries have to ask a new question about facing down their regimes.

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repressive capacity of their governments to what they observed about Tunisia. First, the uprising in Tunisia was a focal point for demonstrations in other countries, providing a way for individuals who desired change to coordinate their actions, signaling a time to act, and even suggesting a form of protest to be replicated. Especially as signs of its success became clear, demonstrations in other Arab countries became stronger and drew larger numbers. Individuals in Algeria, Egypt, and Mauritania copied the self-immolation of Tunisian fruit vendor Mohamed Bouazizi. Now, the chant of the Tunisian demonstrations, "The people want to topple the regime," has resounded loudly throughout the streets of Cairo, Alexandria, Suez, and other Egyptian cities.

Second, Ben Ali's departure sent a signal about the strength of authoritarian regimes in the region. When the Tunisian military refused to turn on the people and instead confronted and subdued the police, citizens in other countries may have recalculated the ability of their own regimes to successfully repress them. Given the foreign backing many regimes receive, the lack of external interference to prop up Ben Ali may also have created a belief that uprisings elsewhere stood a better chance of success.

The dynamics of contagion mean that the United States government now faces a historic opportunity. Its management of the Egyptian crisis so far has been cautious and reactive. The difficulty of anticipating how developments in Egypt will likely ripple through other Arab countries seems to justify that approach. But it also necessitates thinking more broadly, beyond Egypt, and about the long-term relations between the U.S. and the region. The U.S. should not ignore the new moral climate and tie itself to the mindset of an era that is coming to an end in the Arab world.

Julia Choucair is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Political Science at Yale University. She was formerly an associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace where she focused on political reform trends in the Arab world. Her book *Beyond the Façade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (co-edited with Marina Ottaway) was published in January 2008. Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl is also a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at Yale. In 2009 he was a doctoral research fellow at the Orient-Institut Beirut. Both are associates of Yale's Program on Order, Conflict, and Violence.

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