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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

American Studies Center

Beyond Borders: An Egyptian-American Dialogue

Conference Overview

May 2-3, 2008

Cairo, Egypt

The *Beyond Borders: An Egyptian-American Dialogue* conference was held on May 2nd and 3rd, 2008 with the participation of 27 Egyptians and 21 Americans. The conference was organized by The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), Americans for Informed Democracy (AID), the American Studies Center at the American University in Cairo, and the Annual Conference for Engineering Students (ACES) at Ain Shams University.

Conference speakers represented a diverse range of fields, including professors at Egyptian universities, researchers at local think-tanks, journalists, and civil society activists. Among them were Heba Saleh, BBC Correspondent based in Cairo; John Groarke, Deputy Mission Director of USAID in Egypt; Ethar El-Katatney, staff writer at *Egypt Today* and *Business Today*; Dina Shehata, researcher at Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies and Special Adviser for the Muslim World Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace; Ashraf Swelam, Executive Director of Egypt's International Economic Forum (EIEF); Ahmed Samih, Director of Andalus Institute for Tolerance and Anti-Violence Studies; and Lucas Welch, president and founder of Soliya (www.soliya.net).

The participants of *Beyond Borders* came from a wide variety of backgrounds, including students from Ain Shams University, Al Azhar University, and the London School of Economics. The participants also included Fulbright Fellows, civil society activists, journalists, young professionals, and a district attorney from the Egyptian Ministry of Justice. The participants conducted in-depth small group discussions where they explored the mutual misconceptions between Egyptians and Americans, which resulted in a lively but friendly debate. The participants also enjoyed a dinner on the Nile sponsored by the American Studies Center.

The conference was covered by the Euro-Arab Press (www.eapress.eu) and the popular social-political magazine, *Rose Al Youssef*, whose reporters interviewed conference participants and engaged in the dialogue activities. Blog posts on the conference were written in AlJazeeraTalk.net.

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Presidential initiative founded to support economic, political and educational reform efforts in the Middle East and develop opportunity for all people of the region, especially women and youth. More information about MEPI can be found at www.MEPI.state.gov.