



THE 300

300 is the name of one of the best films that was launched last year in Hollywood. For me, when 300 is mentioned, it reminds me of the union of 300 outstanding Arab youth in Al Ein Asoukhna in Egypt between the 19th and the 23rd November 2007 in the League of the Arab States First Youth Forum.



The Hollywoodian film 300 and the LAS Youth Forum's 300 active youth have a lot in common, especially the spirit of battle. In the LAS Youth Forum's case it was a great battle to harmonize between different and diverse young people, and to build a common discourse and a common vision about the future. The League of Arab States in the person of Mr. Khalid Ouhichi and his exceptional team succeeded in collecting funds from a number of organizations to make the dream of uniting the Arab Youth come true. Yet, these same sponsors were a hard burden on the Forum's programme, as they imposed many incoherent sections and some boring speakers

that the organizing team couldn't avoid.

The Arab League was very ambitious, and its ambitions seem to give its fruits. The first step was to hire a hardcore Youth Activist like Mr. Haythem Kamel to coordinate the event, which gave the Forum a spark of originality and Young spirit. Indeed, for the first time the participation was through online applications instead of hosting participants that the local governments choose. The second thing to applaud is the way the Forum was run: A modern open-minded and open to criticism management of the event. I guess the Arab League has learned a lot from its partnership with the Council of

Europe in terms of Youth integration. The LAS section of Mr. Ouahichi even insisted in creating a consultative Youth Committee to participate in the preparation of the event. I had the chance to be a part of this team, and I can say with all the objectivity of a researcher, that we were integrated in every single detail of the Forum preparation.

Our suggestions were highly taken into consideration, to a point that sometimes all the work was changed to please us, as we were a sample of the coming 300.

Some claim that 300 Arab Youth are hard to control in a beautiful hotel on the Red Sea. I would say that the main objective of a first Forum was Networking, and networking can be realized either in workshops or plenary or even in a football game on the beach. I was even impressed by groups of youth with common interests holding meeting till midnight in a very professional way to debate about their projects.

We always hear the stereotype of "the Arabs agree not to agree". After living the experience of this forum, I



could say with confidence that the age of this proverb is gone. I have seen maturity, creativity as well as methodological working in these 300 soldiers of the Arab future.

Focusing on the weaknesses of the Forum would be a lost of time, especially that the strengths are much more numerous and important. I needed some time and space to judge the forum and write my report, and I can see many outcomes of this 4 days event.

First of all the Forum was very flexible. Workshops that needed more time were organizing follow-up meetings after the end of the work days. The organizers were very open to criticism and even tried during the last day to modify the mistakes of the

previous days by giving the microphone and the plenary presidency to the Youth. In addition, all the evaluation forms are taken very seriously and being examined by the LAS team. Furthermore, the Forum ended –thanks God- without the classical Arab recom-





If we analyze these projects, we can conclude that our Youth are claiming structures with a stable board and funding to meet and work. Our 300 realized that in this post-modern world there is no place for amateurism and meetings where we simply wine and dine and go home happy. It is time to build

mentations that we all know very well and hate very much. This event wanted to finish with concrete measurable projects that the LAS and its partners can follow up and support. Regarding the projects themselves, they translate the real needs of the Arab Youth: creation of Quality Commission for youth projects, creation of an Arab Youth Parliament, creation of an Arab Youth Network for training trainers on Democracy issues, creating an NGO for Arab Young Bloggers, Holding a Forum exclusively for Arab Young Artists...

structures and umbrella organizations where these capacities can be exploited, and were the Arab Youth work can be fulfilled in a professional methodological way.

At the end, I can't predict what these projects would become tomorrow. Therefore, what I know for sure is that all the Youth are still motivated and in touch with each other, and new projects and ideas are circulating on the internet everyday like: the Arab Erasmus, the Dahab meeting,

the Oriflame Network elaboration. Hence, the end of the 300 Arab Youth is fortunately not similar to the 300 film end, because if the 300 heroes die at the end of the Zack Snyder's film, our 300 Soldiers of change are still alive holding the torch of change. No one can stop the 300!

