



SWEDISH INSTITUTE
ALEXANDRIA

Events Calendar 2008 Chronological Summary Report

"New Strategies in Reporting-Getting the Message Out" (21-23 January)

Organized, Sponsored and Hosted by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Event Theme: *Democracy, Human Rights and Gender*

The face of journalism in the world is changing in the Middle East, as well as elsewhere. The traditional monopoly in getting the message out through large or state-owned papers, TV and radio is now challenged in blogs, on web pages and with other types of "citizen journalism". The objective of this workshop was to share experiences from different workplaces of journalists and NGO's on how to get the message out.

Launching the SIPRI Yearbook 2007 in Cairo (23 January)

Organized by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA)*

Sponsored by: *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)*

Hosted by: *Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs (ECFA)*

Event Theme: *Peace and Security*

The focus of this seminar was the SIPRI Yearbook 2007, translated into Arabic by the Centre for Arab Unity Studies (CAUS).

SIPRI Yearbook 2007 presented a combination of original data in areas such as world military expenditure, international arms transfers, arms production, nuclear forces and multilateral peace operations with state-of the art analysis of important aspects of arms control, peace and international security. The Introduction elaborated on the risk framework, the challenges of prioritization, the traps of miscalculation, and the benefits of a risk perspective in terms of adjusting how governments, regional and international cooperative bodies went about trying to improve security. One advantage of risk-based security analysis was its ability to accommodate a rapidly changing array of policy challenges, many of which may not be recognized as 'threats' in the traditional sense. Several of these challenges were examined in the Yearbook. This edition of the Yearbook included an accounting of all the existing world stocks of nuclear fissile materials and the security risk they pose, and analyses implications of the changing nature of armed conflict.

“Image of the Other” – Textbooks Consultative Meeting (27-28 January)

Organized by: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in the Arab States (UNESCO Mediterranean Programme), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), Arab League Education Culture and Science Organization (ALECSO), Islamic Education Science and Culture Organization (ISESCO)

Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Knowledge Society

This meeting of experts marked the fourth phase in a process aiming at raising the awareness among teachers as well as authors of textbooks regarding the images Muslim and Christian children acquire of each other through European and Arabic school-books. The experts produced during 2008 a guidebook that discusses how textbook authors could write about the historical encounters between Europe and the Arab-Islamic World.

The 5th Creative Forum for Independent Theatre Groups (1-10 February)

Organized by: International Association for Creation and Training (IACT), Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Co-hosted and Co-sponsored by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Culture, Religion and Value Systems

The Creative Forum is an annual meeting point for independent theatre groups from the MENA region and Europe. The Forum is an initiative merging creativity with education and practical training with dialogue. This is done through theatre performances and dialogue programmes. 280 artists and trainers participated from 27 countries. As usual, intercultural class-rooms, roundtables, and seminars were hosted by Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex). The Forum aimed to create social and political human development, particularly in the midst of cultural variables.

Challenging Honour-Related Violence against Women; Legal Rights and State Responsibilities (11-13 February)

Organized, Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Democracy, Human Rights and Gender

Attention has been drawn in recent years to the issue of crimes against women committed in the name of honour and the issue has been addressed by intergovernmental and expert bodies within and outside the UN system and also by the European parliament. This seminar had a law-focused approach. It had as a first setting international human rights law which requires states to exercise due diligence in protecting women from violence by private actors. It also focused on domestic legislation, court practice and informal legal structures and saw how they varied in the level of protection for abused women. Informal codes and social norms in the society were also discussed. This approach originated from the understanding that a narrowly legal approach focusing on law and state legal systems was not going to change practice effectively if not taken into account the customs, tradition and religious considerations that exists in the society. In general it was agreed that there remains a need for stronger laws to prohibit domestic violence, crimes of honour and similar problems in the society.

Participants in this seminar were lawyers, academics, police, and social workers. The aim was to have legal experts and others compare the legal status for crimes committed in the

name of honour in Arab countries and in Sweden. Recommendations were prepared for changes in the laws, a list later to be presented to policy makers and government officials.

Culture and Heritage: The Practices of Owning the Past (9-14 March)

Organized by: University of Göteborg, Nordic Graduate School in Archaeology

Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Knowledge Society

Ph D seminar in Alexandria. Dialogues with the Nordic Graduate School in Archaeology. Excursions and discussions together with Egyptian colleagues.

From Threats to Risks - Selected Themes from the SIPRI YB 2007 (1-3 April)

Organized by: Arab Thought Forum (ATF), Amman-Jordan, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Sponsored by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Hosted by: Arab Thought Forum (ATF), Amman-Jordan

Event Theme: Peace and Security

The purpose of this seminar was to bring colleagues from international peace studies in closer contact with the Arab World. Organized jointly with the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Arab Thought Forum (Amman). The focus of this seminar was on selected themes from the SIPRI Yearbooks 2006 and 2007, including the dramatic increase in conventional arms trade in the Arab region, issues of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and non-proliferation, redefining common security.

Experiences from Conducting the World Values Survey (WVS) (14-17 April)

Organized by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), World Value Survey (WVS)

Co-Sponsored by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Culture, Religion and Value Systems

The World Values Survey (WVS) is the most comprehensive comparative study of values ever carried out. Data from the WVS offers a unique opportunity to compare the value systems in different Islamic countries as well as the similarities and differences between value orientations towards religion, moral, politics, democracy, work, science and technology, environment, economy, social relations, gender roles, family, etc. Comparative analyses and discussions of these value orientations in the world countries yield a deepened understanding of the various roles and contents of cultural traditions in a number of countries from different parts of the world.

The purpose of this workshop was to bring together colleagues from various countries, who have been working with the WVS in various capacities, to share experiences and discuss issues of methodology.

Moratorium on the use of the Death Penalty in the Arab Region (12-14 May)

Organized by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), Penal Reform International (PRI) Regional Office in Amman, Jordan

Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)
Event Theme: Democracy, Human Rights and Gender

The central objective of the seminar was to consolidate the prospects of a moratorium on the death penalty leading to eventual abolition in those countries in the MENA region that had started to renounce the practice and to encourage other countries in the region which were retentionists to reconsider their position on the death penalty and to facilitate an exchange of expertise and good practices among national coalitions. The seminar was organized together with the Penal Reform International and with the support of Amman Centre for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS) and Maat Centre for Juridical and Constitutional Studies (Egypt). Invited to the seminar were legal experts, academics, government officials, journalists and human rights activists from countries being members of the regional coalition. Sweden also sent representatives as well as the EU.

Education for Citizenship (29-31 May)

Organized by: Muhammad V University, Marrakech-Morocco, Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul (SRII), Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)
Sponsored by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Hosted by: Muhammad V University, Marrakech-Morocco
Event Theme: Knowledge Society

A workshop in Morocco, within the Sida-financed programme Swedish Research Links, that brought together Arab, Turkish and Swedish scholars from the social sciences and humanities. It was co-organized with Muhammad V University -Souissi, the ASRT, Sida, the Swedish Research Council, and the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul. The purpose was to facilitate networking between participating researchers.

The Middle East Seen from the North (3-4 June)

Co-Organized by: Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies, Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute (Cairo), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)
Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)
Event Theme: Knowledge Society

Many who work on contemporary topics are affected by the great changes that have taken place in the media landscape over the last decade, with pan-Arabic and independent newspapers, new satellite channels, and the Internet. For many, these provide good sources, for others they are research topics in themselves. How do these changes affect the social and cultural situation in the Middle East, and what effect does it have for the work of researchers?

In line with this, a seminar for Nordic PhD students was held that partly consisted of lectures on two particular topics "How are our sources created?", which was discussed in the first half and was hosted by the Swedish Institute Alexandria and "The New Arabic media" which was discussed in the second half and was hosted by the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute in Cairo. Presentations by PhD students were commented on by instructors from the Nordic countries and Egypt, as well as by fellow students.

Colloquium with Female Poets (24-27 June)

Organized and Sponsored by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex), Ministry of Culture, Saudi Arabia*

Hosted by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Event Theme: *Culture, Religion and Value Systems*

Literature and Arts are important and influential for convergence and interaction between people and civilizations and to reach common understanding. In line with this concept, aiming for more networking and building bridges between the people of the Arab Muslim world and the people of the European countries; Swedish Institute Alexandria in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Communication in Saudi Arabia hosted a colloquium with female poets and critics from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Scandinavian countries. The colloquium dealt with a variety of poetry readings and poetic discourse and poets criticized each other's works.

Challenging Honour-Related Violence against Women A Study Tour to Sweden: Malmö and Stockholm (10-15 August)

Organized and Sponsored by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Hosted in: *Sweden*

Event Theme: *Democracy, Human Rights and Gender*

Based on two previous seminars at SwedAlex on violence against women, a study tour to Sweden for some of the participants was organized. The purpose of the visit to Sweden was to exchange Arabic and Swedish experience and to give the participants an opportunity for further discussion on how to support women suffering from violence at home.

SwedAlex has organized two seminars on the theme "Challenging Honour Related Violence against Women". The first one took place in June 2007 and targeted "practitioners" from civil society and social authorities in Arab countries and Sweden who support victims of violence. In the report from the seminar (published by SwedAlex) a list of actions on how to help women was presented. The second seminar took place in February 2008 with legal experts from Arab countries and Sweden in which the definition of honour crimes in legislation was challenged. The conclusion was that even if the law would be adjusted and make punishments for honour crimes and murders in criminal law equal with other crimes and murders, other factors such as traditions and moral values in the society might prevent its implementation.

Training of Trainers Programme: International Human Rights Instruments and Mechanisms (24-26 August)

Organized by: *Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Sponsored by: *Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Hosted by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Event Theme: *Democracy, Human Rights and Gender*

The Training of Trainers (ToT) programme is part of Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law comprehensive regional programme in the MENA region that aims to build the institutional capacity of organizations working to promote and protect human rights. The ToT programme came as a response to the recommendations of the MENA region's human rights activists, who had indicated the strong need for a group of qualified trainers who could transform and communicate knowledge and skills in relations to human rights within the region utilising international approaches adapted to the region's needs and language.

In line with this, Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (RWI) organized the three day planning workshop with selected candidates to design the programme for the forthcoming years 2009 – 2011 in a participatory process that would respond to the actual needs and priorities in the region. Countries that participated in the ToT programme were: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the occupied Palestinian territories, Tunisia, Syria & Yemen, in addition to individuals from National Human Rights Institutions, NGOs, governmental and academic institutions, who could positively contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Meeting for Swedish Civil Society Organizations and their Partners in the MENA Region (22-24 September)

***Organized by:** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) Regional Office in Cairo, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

***Sponsored by:** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)*

***Hosted by:** Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

***Event Theme:** Democracy, Human Rights and Gender*

This second seminar brought together in its annual regional meeting the Swedish NGOs with activities in the MENA region and their partners. The idea was that the NGOs jointly would strengthen their work by sharing experiences and information and debate common issues in depth with each other once a year in this forum. Presentations and input was given by representatives who participated from an Arab government institution, the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the EC, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and other experts from the region.

Annual Meeting of the Joint Technical Committee for the Swedish MENA Research Links Programme (15-16 October)

***Organized by:** Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

***Sponsored by:** Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)*

***Hosted in:** Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

***Event Theme:** Knowledge Society*

The Annual Meeting of the Joint Technical Committee for the Swedish Research Links Programme took place this year at the Swedish Institute Alexandria. The purpose was to continue broadening the interface between the academic institutions, to enhance mutual awareness of research programmes in respective countries and to encourage initiatives for joint research projects.

The 6th Meeting of the Mediterranean Museum Cooperation "MedMus" (20-21 October)

Organized and Sponsored by: Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities, MedMus network, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Culture, Religion and Value Systems

MedMus is a network of professionals from museums dedicated to the Mediterranean, its history, culture and future. It was founded on the initiative of the Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm, with the intention of creating a flexible, informal, and regular forum in which representatives of museums from the Mediterranean region can meet and discuss common issues.

The overall aim of "MedMus" is to promote cooperation and dialogue among Mediterranean countries on issues concerning the material and immaterial heritage of the Mediterranean.

The Purpose of the 6th Meeting was:

- MedMus members would present and discuss new developments and new challenges at "their" museums
- MedMus members would be introduced to and discuss the new and demanding museum project in Abu Dhabi
- Common excursion to be discussed and experienced
- Common discussion on future MedMus cooperation

Understanding the Other: Between Egyptian & Swedish Models (9-14 November)

Organized, Sponsored and Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Culture, Religion and Value Systems

The Swedish Institute Alexandria is committed to building bridges between Europe and the Arab world. In this respect the Swedish Institute Alexandria has cooperation with a Muslim study association in Sweden "Ibn Rushd" in a project to highlight Islam as a religion of peace. This project started since June 2006 and a Swedish Delegation from the Ibn Rushd Association visited Egypt in January 2007. As a continuation of this project a delegation from Ibn Rushd Association visited Egypt on an educational tour to explore the model of coexistence between the Muslims and their Swedish Society and to highlight local situations and problems resulting from the collision of human rights to each other such as the freedom of expression and freedom of religion, in addition to learning about the situation of the freedom of expression and freedom of religion in the Arab world.

Women in Politics: "A space for social changes" (14-15 December)

Organized by: Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Sponsored by: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

Hosted by: Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)

Event Theme: Democracy, Human Rights and Gender

Both SwedAlex and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation continually organize different seminars and gatherings addressing women from different communities, activists from

women's organizations and women participating in political processes/parties in the MENA region. Through these seminars and gatherings women explore the meaning of politics from a gender perspective, the building of peace politics, articulating women's interests and needs from institutional political functioning and creating alternatives based on women's human rights.

This was the second seminar that the SwedAlex organized since 2007 concerning women's leadership, women and elections, and women's political participation. In this seminar the space for exchange was enlarged to include experiences of women in politics from EU parliament and civil society in the Balkans, and Georgia.

Annual Meeting of Arab Philosophers (16-17 December)

Organized by: *Egyptian Society for Philosophy, Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Sponsored and Hosted by: *Swedish Institute Alexandria (SwedAlex)*

Event Theme: *Knowledge Society*

Arab and Western philosophers met for two days at the Swedish Institute Alexandria after their annual convention "Alexandria, a cultural capital" was inaugurated by the governor of Alexandria, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Rector of Alexandria University and the Deputy Director of the Swedish Institute. The inter-Arab seminar was opened by the Director of the Swedish Institute and he was repeatedly present in between sessions since the discussions were in Arabic.

The introductory morning session of the seminar was an open discussion with Prof. Nasr Hamid Abu-Zeid, professor of Islamic studies at Cairo University and at present at Leiden and Utrecht in Holland. He spoke on his project on contemporary Hermeneutics, his premises, methodologies and targets. He described how it began, developed and in which phase the project is going now. He also compared his project with other contemporary projects of Al-Jabiri, Arkoun, Hanafi ...etc. The first morning session was on "Violence, Peace and Social Change", looking for reasons of violence in Arab societies such as: lack of internal dialogue, individual violence as a reaction to state's violence, visible violence as a reaction to invisible violence. The Second afternoon session was on "Cultural Development" dealt within history and models of development in modern Egypt and the closing session was on "Identity, Alterity and Partnership". The question of the origin of identity was asked. Was it a fear from alienation, westernization, and jumping into an unknown future? Was it a continuation of the past as it was by fear of the present, concerning the tension between secularism and fundamentalism? Finally, the Director of the Swedish Institute gave a concluding remark thanking all the participants and promising to continue it next year in December as usual after the meeting of Arab philosophers.