



BRUSHSTROKES OF SOLIDARITY

Fundraiser exhibition sheds light on war-torn Palestine

“There are eight million people like myself who are living as refugees around the world. And there are seven million people in Israel and Palestine,”



HE Yousef Ramadan, Ambassador of Palestine to Bangladesh

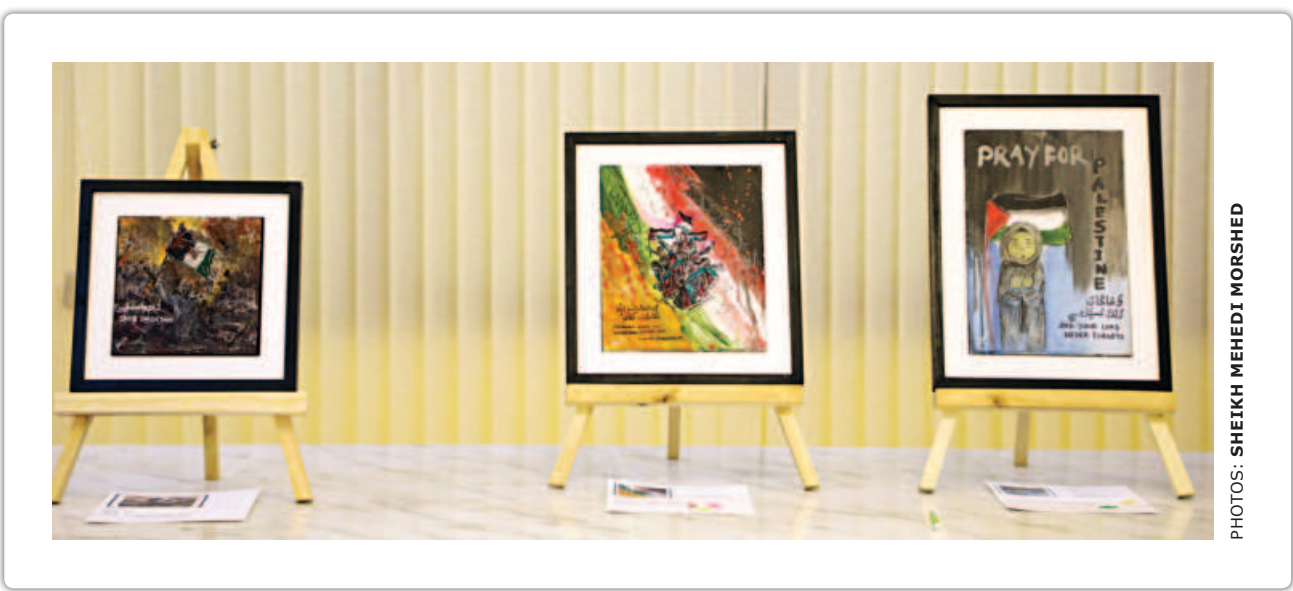
DOWEL BISWAS

The precinct, the walls, and the rooms of the Embassy of Palestine, and the massacred country enduring a never-ending war, on Wednesday evening, bore much resemblance. To a practised eye, the images, paintings, satirical cartoons, and visuals of Palestine—a country almost diminished to the verge of destruction, where humanity is barely surviving—did not seem any less or more than what it is: targeted cultural persecution.

The sombre, grim figures of foreign dignitaries, journalists, and people slowly moving from one stall to another, contemplating the unimaginable brutality and horrors in war-torn Gaza with melancholy and despair at the exhibit, are a testament to what solidarity stands for.

The exhibition was in the spirit of that solidarity and a deliberate fundraising initiative by the Embassy of Palestine in Bangladesh, in coordination with the Consular Corps in Bangladesh.

Tahia Tabani, an emerging artist from Bangladesh, donated 39 of her paintings to raise funds for Palestine on the occasion of the International Day of



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Solidarity for the Palestinian people. Drik also collaborated with Tahia with collections from its November 11 exhibition, titled *Cartoons for Palestine*.

International Solidarity Day is observed by the United Nations and countries across the world on November 29, underscoring the date on which, in 1947, the General Assembly adopted the resolution known as the *Partition Resolution*, which divided Palestine into two states— ‘Jewish state’ and an ‘Arab state’, with Jerusalem placed under a special international regime.

Although the recognition is undoubtedly improper in acknowledgement of Palestine as a unique state of its own, the bare minimum conclusion is that International Solidarity Day provides an opportunity for the international community to focus its attention on the fact that the aforementioned UN Resolution remains partially implemented, as the ‘Jewish state’ has come to manifest; hence, the issue of Palestine’s recognition as a sovereign state remains unresolved.

This is a key issue, amongst others, that continues to facilitate apartheid, atrocities, and injustices on the Palestinian people now and in decades before. The Palestine Embassy in Dhaka commemorates this day to reaffirm its commitment to a free Palestine.

In this regard, HE Yousef Ramadan, Ambassador of Palestine to Bangladesh, shared with the Daily Star, “You will be surprised to know that I was not born in Palestine. My family of 13 people was displaced and forced to flee from their homeland, and they immigrated to Lebanon, the nearest country they could get into.”

“Actually, I was able to go to Palestine only once in my life, and I have been denied access since 2021. I am the ambassador for Palestine, but it is ironic that I haven’t been able to go to my country for 23 years,” said the

ambassador, further emphasising the long road his people have yet to cross amidst the current situation.

“There are eight million people like myself who are living as refugees around the world. And there are seven million people still living in Israel and Palestine,” added Yousef Ramadan in hope of getting the recognition of the country they deserve by their birthright.

The artist, Tahia Tabani, had begun a campaign on her own in recent months, creating artworks focused on the Palestinian cause, selling them, and contributing the revenues to international relief efforts working to support those affected in Gaza in the bombardment carried out by Israel.

Of the paintings exhibited by Tahia, 27 were sold at the exhibition. The artworks were collected by officials from various fields, such as Iran Embassy, Air Asia, Tesla US, United Nations, and Unicef Bangladesh, amongst others.

The exhibition was graced by the Algerian Ambassador to Bangladesh Larbi Rabah, Brunei High Commissioner Abd Haris Pg Hj Shabudin, Qatar Ambassador Saraya Ali Al-Qahtani, along with dignitaries from the Oman Embassy, Russian Embassy, Consular Corps in Bangladesh and United Nations. The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, Dhaka Tribune Editor Zafar Sobhan, Author and Anthropologist Rahnuma Ahmed, and renowned Photojournalist and Drik Managing Director Shahidul Alam were also present at the event.

NEWS

BNP goes for 48-hr blockade from Sunday

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to its political programmes after the announcement of the polls schedule.

The country witnessed moderate traffic yesterday, with only a few inter-district buses leaving the capital, according to transport workers.

During the strike, arsonists set fire to three buses and two lorries in Gazipur and Cumilla.

A bus of Itisha Paribahan was set on fire near Jirani Bazar in Kashimpur around 9:50am, with no injuries reported.

In the Jhajar area of Gazipur city, two lorries were torched on the Dhaka-Chattogram Bypass around 6:30am. Around 15 arsonists on motorcycles stopped the lorries carrying RMG products and set them on fire. They exploded a cocktail before fleeing the

scene, according to the drivers.

In Cumilla, arsonists set fire to two parked buses of Trisha Paribahan in front of Irish Hill Hotel in Sadar South upazila near Dhaka-Chattogram highway around 2:30am.

Firefighters doused the fire, with no reported injuries.

According to the Fire Service and Civil Defence, a total of 236 vehicles have been torched, including five yesterday, across the country since October 28.

The BNP claimed that since then, 18,090 party leaders and activists have been arrested, including 380 yesterday. During this period, 475 cases were filed against party activists.

Rab said it arrested eight people yesterday, bringing the total held in connection with violence since October 28 to 803.

JP headed for yet

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the January 7 polls to decide their next course of action.

“We will also hold a council of the party to elect the new leadership,” he added.

The JP split over conflict among its top leaders in 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2014.

According to JP insiders, the government extended its support to Quader after agreeing to the condition that he will run only if he is made the opposition leader in the next parliament.

“Although Raushan Ershad is

known to have good ties with the prime minister, this time the premier maintained relations with GM Quader as most of the Jatiya Party lawmakers and leaders are loyal to him,” said a JP leader, wishing anonymity.

He said the PM, however, may change her stance after the national election. “We will have to wait and see.”

Meanwhile, several JP leaders loyal to Raushan said Quader may still quit the polls race if he thinks that the political situation has become unfavourable for them.

the party was yet to send the candidates letters notifying their

‘Clinical’ Shanto puts Tigers in command

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a 35-ball 37 on Tuesday, his over-aggressive approach brought his fall. Two days later, however, the stand-in Bangladesh skipper made no such errors and yet maintained his positive approach.

A captain’s task is to lead from the front. With his attacking field settings and bowling changes according to match scenarios, Shanto had left a mark during New Zealand’s innings. The southpaw continued on his groove with a Test-calibre innings yesterday, one of content and also one that would allow him to make a bigger impression on the side as the captain.

After the loss of both openers in quick time, Shanto dictated proceedings, disallowing the New

Zealand bowlers to settle into a line against him. Nor did he get bogged down. His counterattack ensured that runs were flowing.

Yet, unlike the first innings, he played everything along the ground, almost playing nothing in the air. Reverse-sweep became an effective addition to his armoury and he portrayed the skill and confidence required for that shot.

In the last over of the day, Shanto’s hard work bore the sweetest fruit. Having reached the magical three digits off 192 deliveries with a single off Ajaz Patel, the 25-year-old celebrated in trademark style – leaping in the air before kissing his bat.

It was Shanto’s fifth Test century and his third in the last four innings. He

Later in the day, Rizvi, at a virtual press conference, criticised AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader’s statement that they want a fair election just like the European Union (EU).

“The EU has talked about fair elections through the participation of all political parties, not just the Awami League. There will be a contest between Awami League candidates and boat candidates without any rivals. The Awami League is calling it a fair election. It’s cheating and hypocrisy,” he said.

“Obaidul Quader has asked US Ambassador Peter Haas to follow etiquette. Can this be said to an ambassador?” he asked.

Mentioning that different AL leaders and activists have threatened the US ambassador, Rizvi said that no action has been taken in this regard.

The JP also has all the nomination withdrawal papers of its candidates signed, he added.

Asked if the JP was facing a split, Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun told The Daily Star that there was no crisis and division in the party.

On November 27, the party announced a list of its candidates in 287 seats leaving Mymensingh-4 vacant for Raushan.

The rift between Raushan and Quader widened after the JP chief decided to run in Rangpur-3 where Raushan’s son Saad Ershad is the incumbent MP.

also became the first Bangladesh player to bag a ton in Test captaincy debut and the only Bangladesh player to hit five international tons in a calendar year. This year, he has two ODI tons and three Test tons to his name.

Mominul, who came to the press conference after day’s play, praised his skipper’s ongoing form. “Overall, an outstanding innings [by Shanto] and against a side who are playing with a lot of passion.”

Kiwi paceman Kyle Jamieson also ushered praise in his press conference too, terming Shanto’s innings as “impressive” and “quite clinical”.

Despite a memorable day, Shanto’s work has not ended yet as Bangladesh will hope he can bat as long as possible today.

Henry Kissinger dead at 100

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gravely-voiced, enigmatic diplomat was.

An academic who became a celebrity, Kissinger was a Jewish teenager who fled the Nazis, a self-confessed “secret swinger” who dated pin-ups, a Machiavellian adviser to United States presidents who changed the course of history.

The debate about whether the former US diplomat was a brainy adviser or a merciless hawk is not likely to conclude any time soon.

China was one of Kissinger’s most lasting legacies. Hoping to shake up the Cold War fight against the Soviet Union, Kissinger secretly reached out to Beijing, culminating in a historic 1972 visit by president Richard Nixon and later the US establishment of relations with the isolated country, which has soared to become the world’s second-largest economy and a growing competitor with Washington.

While Kissinger was despised in much of the world, China’s foreign ministry yesterday hailed the late US diplomat as an “old and good friend of the Chinese people.”

Russian President Vladimir Putin praised Kissinger for his contribution to US-Soviet relations and described him as a “wise and visionary statesman.”

Kissinger was a “giant of history,” said French President Emmanuel Macron.

At home, Kissinger also enjoyed deference across the political mainstream, with incumbent Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a member of the rival Democratic Party, attending his 100th birthday party in New York.

“America has lost one of the most dependable and distinctive voices on foreign affairs with the passing of Henry Kissinger,” former president George W. Bush, a Republican, said in a statement.

Kissinger was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiations to end the Vietnam War, even though the conflict did not immediately end and his North Vietnamese counterpart, Le Duc Tho, declined to accept the prize.

After the Watergate scandal brought down Nixon, Kissinger served under his successor, Gerald Ford. In an unprecedented arrangement reflecting his influence, Kissinger served simultaneously as secretary of state – the country’s top diplomat – and national security advisor, the president’s right-hand aide.

REALPOLITIK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

While Kissinger’s intellectual gifts were begrudgingly acknowledged

even by his critics, he remains deeply controversial for his ruthless philosophy of realpolitik – the cold calculation that nations pursue their own interests through power.

In foreign affairs, Washington had “no permanent friends or enemies, only interests”, Kissinger once wrote.

Declassified documents showed that Kissinger gave his blessing to the undermining of Chile’s elected Marxist president Salvador Allende and the 1973 coup by General Augusto Pinochet.

Kissinger also supported Indonesia, a close anti-communist ally, as it seized East Timor in 1975. More than 100,000 East Timorese died from the start of the invasion – launched one day after Kissinger and Ford met Indonesian leader Suharto – until Indonesia ended its occupation in 1999.

Kissinger also turned a blind eye to Pakistan’s mass atrocities as Bangladesh won independence in 1971, believing the US interest was keeping Islamabad as the quiet go-between with China.

Seeking to pull out of Vietnam but with a stronger hand at the negotiating table, Nixon and Kissinger authorised a secret 1969-70 bombing campaign in Laos and Cambodia aimed at disrupting rebel movement into South Vietnam.

The bombing did not halt the infiltration but it killed thousands of civilians and helped spawn the genocidal Khmer Rouge.

Kissinger similarly showed little concern over Cyprus when Greece’s military junta deposed the elected leader, Archbishop Makarios, and Turkey in 1974 invaded the island, which remains divided.

Israel, Hamas

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Israeli police said two Palestinian attackers opened fire at a bus stop during morning rush hour at the entrance to Jerusalem, killing at least three people. Both attackers were “neutralised”, police said.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in Israel during his third visit to the Middle East since the war began, said the truce was “producing results”. US officials said Blinken also told the Israelis to ensure the safety of Palestinian civilians once the war resumes.

Egypt’s state media body said Egyptian and Qatari mediators were working to negotiate a further extension of the truce for two days.

7 to run

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the name of her party was Janatar Kotha.

Another contender, Shishir Chowdhury of the Jatiya Party, expressed his hope that he will beat Hasina, a seven-time member of parliament from the constituency comprising Kotlipara and Tungipara.

The four other aspirants from Hasina’s hallmark constituency are Sheikh Abul Kalam of National People’s Party (NPP), Mahabur Mollah of Zaker Party, MNizam Uddin Lashkar of Bangladesh Supreme Party, and Sahidul Islam Mintu of Bangladesh Swadhin Party.

Since the Janatar Kotha and Bangladesh Swadin Party are not registered with the Election Commission, Lima Hasan is contesting as an ally of the Gono Front and Mintu as an ally of Bangladesh Congress.

Talking to reporters after submitting his nomination papers, Shishir Chowdhury said he fought against Hasina in the past. This time, he is participating as he is “100 percent optimistic” that the election will be held in a free and fair manner.

“If people are by my side and if they want me, I will win,” an upbeat Shishir added.

Not concerned

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Bangladesh’s export to the US is worth \$10 billion and to the EU worth \$27 billion.

He added that while Bangladesh has competitors, he has faith in the country’s garment owners, who are “very dynamic”.

Momen further said there was once a lot of concern by the media when the US withdrew the quota system, “but the businesses were smart enough to ensure the exports went up even after the withdrawal [of the system]”.

The quota system, initiated by the World Trade Organization, guaranteed that developing countries could export a certain amount of textile and garment products to developed nations.

The quota was withdrawn in 2005.

About US’s policy on labour rights, Momen said it would be great if the US, the richest country of the world with a per capita income of \$65,000, would come up with a programme to improve the fate of the workers and climate migrants of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, he expressed dismay at journalists following the US ambassador’s meeting and visits.

“Why are you irritating him? It is uncomfortable for him.”