



BRIEFINGS

[2/15/2009]

First Female ever appointed to Saudi Government



For the first time in the history, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a woman in the government. Nurah Al-Fayiz was appointed Deputy Minister of Education with responsibility for the education of young women.

Nurah holds a B.A. in sociology and an M.A. in instructional technology. She has also pursued pre-doctoral studies at Utah State University. The unprecedented appointment was one of several important announcements signaling the King's determination to modernize the Kingdom. It was, however, the Nurah announcement in particular that triggered the most comments among readers of the Arab press.

In her first interview after accepting the post, Al-Fayez immediately raised eyebrows by proclaiming that she will be making changes to conform to "Saudi culture". Some religious figures objected to the ambiguity in her statement, believing that she should have rather explicitly referenced the country's "Islamic culture". Such criticism misses the point. Her words appear to have been deliberately and carefully chosen to reflect the King's desire for change.

The Sudanese Crisis: Dual Egyptian Emissaries!



While negotiation among the rebels and the Sudanese government resumed in *Doha* today, the Egyptian government found it necessary to send its foreign minister and chief of Intelligence to Khartoum on a diplomatic mission.

The action was seen as a defensive measure against the perceived marginalization of the Egyptian role in the Sudanese crisis, a role Egypt considers vital. The Egyptian government was also reacting to news this week, that the ICC judges in The Hague were about to issue an arrest warrant for Al-Bashir for alleged genocide and war crimes in Darfur. Egypt had vowed to press for the suspension of these charges.

Foreign minister Abu Al-Gheit was proclaiming in no uncertain terms, once more, the complete Egyptian support for the embattled Sudanese president Al-Bashir. It also seemed necessary for President Mubarak to have his foreign minister escorted by the chief of intelligence Omar Suleiman in order to emphasize the seriousness that Egypt attributes to the matter and to keep a watchful eye on his light weight ministerial counterpart.

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