

CLOVIS MAKSOUD

1926 - 2016

From a 1948 friend's goodbye note....

"You are going to [America} the land of knowledge, light, and freedom.

Travel safely my friend, and please do not prolong your absence.

Come back to us with the essence of knowledge, the radiance of light, and freedom's prominent meanings.

Return to us soon. Lebanon needs your daring, principled, and dedicated youth."

Dr. Clovis Maksoud, former diplomat, professor, editor, writer, and humanistic thinker, died May 15, 2016, at Washington Hospital Center, in Washington DC, as a result of severe cerebral hemorrhage. His life journey took him from the U.S., to the Middle-East, Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

In 1918, at the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and the Levant fell under French and British mandates. Throughout the Arab World resistance to the foreign occupation stimulated the birth of new national movements. A wave of fresh Arab ideals rushed through the schools, colleges and universities of Aleppo, Beirut, Damascus, and Jerusalem. It is during this unprecedented surge in democratic and social aspirations that Clovis Maksoud was born in 1926, in Oklahoma, to American Lebanese parents.

At the start of World War II in 1939, he was a student at Beirut's renowned Chouwaifat high school where a group of passionate teachers nurtured his nascent ideals. When Clovis Maksoud enrolled in 1944 at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon was on its way to gain its independence from France. AUB was at the time widely viewed as the cauldron of liberal Arab ideas. During his years at AUB he was greatly influenced by the forward-thinking intellect and pan-Arab ideals of Professor Constantine Zuraik. During that time World War II's ripples shook the Middle East, tore up Palestine, and destroyed the area's intertwined political and historical fabric.

After graduating from AUB in 1948, he traveled to study law in the United States where he received his J.D. from George Washington University. In 1951, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas introduced him to Rosemary Curry. They were married in 1951 and had one child, Elizabeth.

Upon Clovis Maksoud's return to Lebanon in the mid-1950s he became actively involved in democratic and social reforms. The aftermath of 1956 Suez War greatly marked him. It anchored his political commitment and made him an enthusiastic advocate of Arab unity and a vigorous defender of Palestinian rights.

His writings and pan-Arab ideals led to his nomination in 1961 as Ambassador of the Arab League to India and South East Asia. For the duration of his term, Clovis Maksoud played a pivotal role in establishing closer relations between India and the Arab World. In response to the growing tensions of the Cold War, India stood as an outspoken advocate of the interests of the non-aligned countries and showed its unequivocal support of Arab causes and Palestinian rights.

Dr. Maksoud returned from India in 1966 and became Senior Editor of Al-Ahram newspaper. Published in Cairo, the newspaper's readership extended throughout the Arab World. A year later, during the Six Day War, Israel inflicted a military defeat on Arabs. The war left the Arab World in shock and demonstrated the West's commitment to maintain Israel's military superiority.

In the war's aftermath, Clovis Maksoud's work at Al-Ahram and subsequently at the Lebanese Al-Nahar Weekly gave him a unique vantage point into pan-Arab politics. It also allowed him to address the painful humiliation and sense of loss that were felt throughout the Arab World.

In 1973, a full scale war broke out between Israel and its neighbors and Saudi Arabia joined the Arab war effort by cutting oil exports to the west. In response to the American public's outcry the Arab League dispatched Clovis Maksoud as the League's Special Envoy to the United States to explain the Arab viewpoint to Americans.

As the League's representative he embarked on innumerable journeys across the U.S. Everywhere he went, he articulated Arab grievances in a manner that American audiences could understand. To Arabs everywhere, he was the sincere and passionate spokesperson of pan-Arab aspirations and Palestinian rights.

It was during this time that he met Hala Salaam at a conference in Beirut. The two were married in 1974. Together, during Lebanon's painful Civil War, they remained strong advocates of a secular and non-sectarian Arab Lebanon.

In 1979, Clovis Maksoud became the Ambassador of the Arab League to the United States and the United Nations. He was now faced with the dual challenge of upholding Arab interests in the United States and defending the Arab World's common goals at the U.N. His vision and commitment opened new avenues of political dialogue and cultural understanding in the United States. His efforts challenged the deeply engrained negative Arab stereotyping in the American media. At the United Nations in New York, his experience, diplomatic savvy, eloquence, and mastery of the facts contributed to the creation of a new and much needed coherent and unprecedented Arab presence at the United Nations.

His dedication instilled a renewed sense of pride and hope among Arabs. Despite years of hard work his many accomplishments were shaken by the devastating 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The harshest setbacks came with the gruesome 1990 Gulf War. After coming to grips with a disappointing lack of pan-Arab consensus and a vacuum in pan-Arab leadership, Clovis Maksoud did what was previously unimaginable. On August 15, 1990, he resigned from the Arab League.

Throughout his career he was always conscious of the difficult living conditions and severe needs of most of the world's population. True to his humanistic ideals he founded in 1992 The Center for the Study of the Global South at The American University in Washington, D.C. He was also instrumental in the preparation of a series of in depth United Nations reports on the status of development in the Arab World. The reports represented a new discourse about critical issues such as deficits in knowledge, freedom, and women's empowerment. In addition to leading the Center for the Global South he also taught International Law at American University until his retirement in 2013.

During the significant events that shook the Arab World over the last five years, Dr. Maksoud maintained his view that the future of the Arab World hinges on its diversity and unity. In weekly articles for numerous online and print publications he actively commented on major issues that are pertinent to all Arabs. In addition to his many books, an Arabic version of his memoirs, *From the Confines of Memory, My Journey with Arab Nationalism*, was published in Beirut in 2014. An English version is in progress.

From his early days in Beirut to his many achievements in Washington, D.C. and around the world Clovis Maksoud will be remembered by innumerable friends of all walks of life as an eloquent and uncompromising advocate of Arab unity and ardent defender of human dignity.

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