

Local

Heed the danger

IN MY VIEW

By Abdellatif Sharaa

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There is no doubt that everyone knows about the measures and precautions to be taken during our current circumstances, especially advice given by the health authorities through all types of media.

Yet, when I went on Wednesday morning to service my car at the dealership, I was surprised by the number of people waiting ahead of me, although I arrived at 7:00 am, while the place opens at 8:00 am! When the center finally opened and numbers were being distributed, I joined the line. When the queue got bigger, people were very close to each other, almost touching.

I could not bear the scene, so I, along with a few others, started to tell them that this was wrong and they should maintain a distance. The response of the majority was just to look at my face. Then a detective who happened to be in the place to service his car tried to organize the line, but most of those in the queue said "there is nothing wrong, leave us alone, we just want a number, no problem". Unbelievable!

Almost every doctor, official and person gives advice every day on how to avoid getting infected with this virus - and we are into it for almost six months. But I have become convinced that people are not totally aware of the gravity of the situation yet.

When the talk about opening up the country was being made, the commerce ministry issued steps to be followed by businesses of all types and included stipulations certain employees must pay attention to and make sure the rules are implemented.

During the few times that I ventured outside the house for absolutely necessary purposes, I noticed many people following instructions, yet a good number of those did not. I wonder if the concerned authorities have enough manpower or trained volunteers to place them in locations where large crowds gather to organize them, to continue the march towards reopening the country and restoring a relatively normal life.

However, we should bear in mind that the virus will be around for some time, and we can keep it off us by just following a few simple steps. To people out there, please be cooperative, because the life you will protect is yours, then the life of your brother in humanity! Thank you.

Final word: "No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of another." - Charles Dickens

PHOTO OF THE DAY



A mask-clad vendor waits for costumers at a fish market in Kuwait City on Wednesday. - Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Racism a reality in Arab societies

Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The year 2020 does not seem very promising to anyone, whether they are in the United States or the Middle East. At a time when the world is still suffering severely from the repercussions of COVID-19, a major spark suddenly exploded in the US at a very bad time, which is five months before the American presidential election and in the midst of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

The international media have not stopped following up on the developments of the killing of African-American citizen George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer a week ago. Since then, protests throughout the United States have not subsided, despite the curfew in dozens of US cities.

Local terrorism or racism are different political labels given to the tense situation now, but they all refer to several incidents committed over the past decades in the US against people who paid a heavy price because of hateful racism, whether because of their color or gender, and such events contributed to the promotion of many civil movements such as Black Lives Matter, which was established in 2013, as well as other move-

ments that reject discrimination.

I agree that racism is degrading and I reject it totally. I am not going to analyze the incident of the killing of the American citizen, but I would like to comment on it as an Arab journalist who read the views of some Arab media and their perspective of disregarding racism in Arab societies. Let me explain.

Unfortunately, some tried to use the incident of the killing of Floyd at the hands of the policeman as an indication of the spread of racism in the American society in a frightening way. This is something that I see is not true, especially since the media may exaggerate the truth and may hide it, and this is something that is found today not only in the Floyd killing, but in many other cases, including the issue of the coronavirus.

What is the status of the virus today in the world? A week ago it was occupying global headlines - where is it today? Do you remember the international media's position on IS? Why is no one mentioning it today? Is the epidemic over? Are we all safe? I think the incident of Floyd's death could end peacefully by presenting the policeman who caused the death before a fair judiciary.

So, what about our societies? How to stop these ill practices in our society and against each other? Racism is a hereditary idea and behavior, and unfortunately, mostly it is socially acceptable. I believe that there is no society today in our world that is free from racism. Racism is a set of wrong practices, whereby a specific group of people is treated in a tyrannical and different manner because they belong to a different religion, color or gender.

Another example is the laws that put men at the forefront in leadership positions and control in male-dominated societies. Discrimination and racism against women and inequality in treatment is practiced openly in Arab societies. I think people living in glass houses should not throw stones.

American cinema has addressed issues of racism towards African-Americans, and the Floyd case led the public to these films. But how many Arab films have been produced that talk openly about racism in Arab societies? Whenever I watch the American protests on television, I wonder about the people's demands. Speedily presenting the policeman who caused the death of the man to the judiciary will contribute to calming the protests, but the problem is that the political climate is very tense now.

The coronavirus epidemic and the high number of unemployed people have a negative impact on everybody. I think the use of this issue for political reasons against the US president's policies does not contribute to alleviating the unrest. I believe that the relationship between whites and blacks in America is complex, and it has historical and social backgrounds. Incidents of homicides like these contribute to fueling those feelings.

We have to remember the racism that exists here too, as in any other country. Democracy and the preservation of civil liberties and rights is still something that the United States is proud of, but what about us? The Americans will find their way, but do we really have a frank stand against racism in Arab societies?