Basis for Arab League
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New York Times (1857-Current file); Mar 28, 1955; ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851 - 2002)
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Letters to The Times

Basis for Arab League

Reason for Existence Said to Be Due to Desire for Unity

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

There have been frequent remarks and predictions concerning a possible "break-up" of the Arab League as a result of the differences between Iraq and Egypt on the Turkish-Iraqi pact of defense. Your Washington correspondent, Dana Adams Schmidt, in The Times of March 3 attributed such predictions to "authorities" on Arab affairs.

Though I feel I can claim some competence in the affairs of the Arab states, I am at a loss to know who these "authorities" can be. Any true authority knows that while technically the Arab League is an organization of the Arab states, in reality this organization came into existence as a concrete expression of a powerful and persisting trend among the Arab people toward unity.

This trend had its roots in the latter part of the last century, and one of its historical manifestations was the Arab revolution against the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. It gathered momentum as the Arabs found themselves divided against their will into British and French mandates and culminated in the Arab League after the Arab states achieved their independence from these Powers.

But once the Arab League was established, new problems of regionalism and jealousies among the various states arose. These were by no means minor problems. The present difference between Egypt and Iraq concerning the methods of entering into defense pacts is one such problem.

Besides being an expression of a deep popular sentiment, the various agencies of the league have already proved the league's beneficial and indispensable existence to the needs of the various states. The league has already done invaluable research in the cultural, economic and social life of all Arab countries, and has succeeded during the relatively short period of its existence in coordinating and unifying to a substantial degree the efforts of its eight members in these essential spheres of life. The outside world, unfortunately, knows very little about these quiet and unsensational efforts.

The Arab Information Center is now being set up precisely for the reason that we are anxious for our American friends to understand and appreciate our efforts in these directions.

The Arab League is the reflection of a sentiment too strong to be destroyed by differences of procedures among its members.

ALI OTHMAN,
The Arab Information Center.
New York, March 12, 1955.

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