

Boutros Boutros Ghali
An Exceptional Man of our Time
The homage of Ardeshir Zahedi, a friend
and fellow-diplomat



Boutros Ghali and Lady Leila

In the afternoon of Tuesday 16th. Of February 2016 the world said goodbye to one of its most accomplished diplomats, Boutros Boutros Ghali who passed away at the age of 93.

We reached his life-long friend Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi to know more about this exceptional personality of modern history. Zahedi said:

“It was such a sad news. He was a man who meant much to me and to the rest of the world.

Just a few weeks ago, in December 2015, he and his wife Leia were our guests in Gstaad, Switzerland and my daughter Mahnaz who admired the couple joined us for dinner. Despite his physical weakness, he kept talking about his busy agenda and the great projects for future. He said he needed to return to Paris and go back to Cairo as he had to preside a meeting on Human Rights Organisation and wanted to be with the family in his homeland for Christmas.

In Paris, he had an unfortunate accident and was hospitalised; yet, he could not forget his duty. The ambulance took him to the airport and he flew to his beloved Cairo while still suffering from injuries. Such was the sense of duty of a man whose long life included an illustrious academic career, long service in the Egyptian government and five years as secretary-general of the United Nations and above all a whole life devoted to serve the human community.”

Ambassador Zahedi recalled memories of more than fifty years of acquaintance and friendship with Boutros and Lady Leia, their devoted love for each other and their generosity and affection towards friends. He added:



Boutros Ghali and Ambassador A. ZAHEDI

"I first met Boutros Boutros Ghali when I visited Egypt as Iranian Foreign Minister on an invitation from my dear friend and colleague, Mahmoud Riad, and I was guest of the Egyptian government. Boutros Ghali who worked with my late noble friend, President Anwar Sadat was one of my hosts. From the very start I found him a man of principle who was ready to stand and fight for dignity and humanity.

When he was Secretary General of the United Nations, the Americans and Israelis wanted him to ignore a report submitted by UN mission to the Middle East to investigate the massacre of Palestinians. They insisted that he should not disclose the content which was not in any way favourable to Israel. Boutros categorically refused and this provoked the hostility of the American Administration. At the end of his first term when he presented his candidacy for a second mandate, America decided to react and resist.

Just before his election in 1992 at the head of UN he happened to be in Montreux and we discussed his chances. I suggested that he should start the campaign with his own government in Egypt and have himself recommended by President Moubarak to the heads of friendly countries and particularly the leaders of the region like King Hassan of Morocco and the Jordanian King Hossein.

I remember, and what a coincidence, that the second time he decided to run, I was having dinner with him and his friend and relative, Doctor Fakhry Abdel Nour. The then American Secretary of State, Madame Albright, called to persuade him either to withdraw his candidacy or accept a compromise and stay on for one more year and then resign. Knowing the character of the man, I was sure he would not yield to pressure or this kind of political blackmailing. To my satisfaction, Boutros bluntly refused the deal. US vetoed his re-election but France warmly embraced him like a head of state and invited him to preside the "International Organisation of Francophonie."

= How frequently did you see him?

"Almost every year when Boutros and Leia came to Switzerland, I had the privilege of seeing them, enjoying their company and learning from his long-life experience in politics and international diplomacy. We shared many views on the state of the world and particularly the problems of the Middle East that so closely touch our two brother countries.

I shall soon be publishing the third volume of my Memoirs that deals with the years I was the Foreign Minister of Iran and that gives me several opportunities

to talk in greater detail about Boutros Boutros Ghali and his relations with me and my dear country.

May his memory be green and the Almighty bless his noble soul and give his lovely wife, Lady Leia and his family and his countrymen the needed courage to endure this heavy loss."

= Thank you Mr. Ambassador.
