

Arab-Israeli lawmaker's revelation shocks all

SHASHANK SHEKHAR

DOHA Even as media experts from across the world were debating the 'Future of the role of free media' here on Tuesday, Ahmad Tibi, an Arab member of the Israeli parliament Knesset, shocked the audience with an allegation that his freedom had come under attack following his speech at the Eighth Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade.

Tibi alleged that efforts were being made by some Israeli politicians to have him arrested as he had countered the speech of Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni at an open discussion on Monday. "What will the free media do now? This has happened because I spoke here," he said.

Later Saadi Usama, a spokesperson for Tibi, told *Qatar Tribune* that efforts were being made by some Israeli politicians belonging to the 'extremist section' to have Tibi 'arrested' and to 'deprive him of Israeli citizenship'. "Moves in this regard are afoot in Israel since Tuesday morning. They have taken an offence because Tibi had countered Livni's views on Israeli democratic system by saying that 'Arab Muslims who constitute 20 percent of Israel did not enjoy equal rights

Tibi alleged that efforts were being made by some Israeli politicians to have him arrested as he had countered the speech of Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni at an open discussion on Monday.

as Jews'. Extremist Israelis are also angry because Tibi was, by mistake, introduced as a Palestinian at the session," Saadi said.

Earlier, speaking at the discussion, Director-General of Al Jazeera Network Wadah Khanfar said that media had suffered in the Arab world because of the information ministries. "These ministries were created to curb media's freedom. State officials are trying their best to stop the media from questioning the turmoil in the region," he said. He also criticised the charter on media freedom which was released a few weeks ago.

Khanfar further said that with

the advent of internet, media across the world would undergo tremendous change in the next five years. "The internet has opened the gates for everyone to be a journalist. We will witness the large impact it will make on the other mediums of information in the years to come," he added.

Khanfar, who has reported from South Africa, Afghanistan and Iraq, said that the concept of 'foreign correspondent' must be changed. "The practice of flying journalists to sites of incidents which are far-off and airlifting them back should be stopped because it does not allow an in-depth analysis of the situation. Reporting from a foreign country can be done best by a native of that land since he understands the place and its culture better. We need journalism of depth and not journalism of immediacy," he added.

Khanfar said that he had recently seen a positive change in the media polices of various organisations. "This change is being witnessed for the first time since the food crisis. Now stories are being filed with humanity as the focal point, caring little for political considerations," he added.

Continued on page 19