Palestinian Stories
Palestinian Stories


Arabic Version Editorial Team: Farah Hamad, Dalia Atayassa, Tala Ramadan

English Version Editor: Lubnah Shomali

Layout & Design: Farah Hamad and Atallah Salem

Printing: HMC Printing & Labeling

Cover Painting: Palestinian Artist Suleiman Mansour

Acknowledgment and Appreciation: BADIL Resource Center extends its sincerest thanks to the partner organizations (Ibdaa Organization, Lajee’ Center, Addar Association, Majed Abu Sharar Media Foundation, Palestine Vanguard Organization, Shoruq Organization) that contributed to the achievement of this project, and to all the participants who contributed in the completion of this booklet. BADIL also extends special thanks to the Palestinian women who shared their stories that emphasize the role of Palestinian women in the struggle for liberation from the Israeli colonial-apartheid regime.

All rights reserved
© BADIL Resource Center
for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 2023

Bethlehem, Palestine
P.O.Box: 728
Tel-Fax: 972-2-274-7346
Website: www.badil.org
"Hikayat Filistinyat" (Palestinian Women’s Stories) is a collection of stories portraying real Palestinian women encompassing their thoughts, tears, and smiles. They are authentic in their emotions and dreams, and remarkable in their contributions and uniqueness. This book includes eleven stories created with words by young Palestinian women from Mandatory Palestine and Lebanon. Each presents the story of a Palestinian woman who has faced the challenges of life, a path that has become ordinary in the Palestinian context but undoubtedly exceptional. Each story has its own flavor, shades, colors, and unique spaces.

Here is Juna Mazzawi, connecting us with the activist Sana' Salameh, the wife of the prisoner Walid Daqqah, inviting us to chant with her daughter, Milad, who accompanies her mother in demonstrations and popular gatherings: "Freedom, freedom... Freedom for our prisoners... Freedom, freedom... Freedom for Baba”

And here is Rania Saadallah from Al Rashidiya refugee camp, sharing the story of Zahiyya Yassin who is in exile in Lebanon, saying, "Embroidery is no longer just a profession for me; it has become a path that takes me back to my village, back to my cherished childhood memories. It awakens in my soul a nostalgic love that continues to grow and I dream of the day I can celebrate my homecoming..."

And here are Asma' 'Eweis, Ne’ma Radi, Nisreen Abu Aker, and Noura Abu Obeid from Aida refugee camp, once again uniting us with Ikhlas Al Azzeh. From her wheelchair, she says, "I have traveled repeatedly, and had the opportunity of getting humanitarian asylum in Germany or Sweden. But I will not leave. I love my home, and I love my life with my small successes over the many challenges surrounding it..." And once again, we are brought together by Adla Ghattas, who transitioned from a young girl secretly participating in demonstrations to a mother leading protests for the freedom of her martyred son. They inform us, "Adla joins the protests, smiling and holding a picture of Fadi, embracing the youth, and chanting loudly: "Freedom, freedom... Freedom for our martyrs!"

And here is Sama Mazzawi from Nazareth, summarizing for us the complexities of women’s situation within the colonial context through the experience of Asma', a Palestinian Bedouin girl. She says, "When challenging the colonial regime becomes inseparable from challenging the social system that reflects the will of the colonizer, life is at stake: either compliance and walking with the herd, or to challenge the status quo and to live in dignity!"

And here is Hala Al Areed from Al Rashidiya refugee camp, teaching us about Adla Manasra, the persevering woman who was born on the day of the Nakba. She says, "... How many things were lost before I learned how to read! The Nakba robbed me of much more than my homeland!"

And here is Hanan Abu Shamleh from the besieged Gaza Strip, narrating to us how the Palestinian mother embodies patience on a daily basis, just as she kneads bread while waiting for her son who has been missing since boarding the boat. She says, "Ten years have passed since he went missing. But I still feel him. I feel that he is not in the belly of a whale nor a corpse on a far beach. My son will return!"
And here is **Sabreen Abu El Ala** from Al Rashidiya refugee camp, speaking to us about the resilient mother Hanaa’ Al-Khatib. She says, "I must learn to breathe three times more than other women do: once to stay standing, once for the roles that my husband left to me due to his early death, and once for my sick daughter, waiting for a miracle to grant her a normal life."

And here we have **Dalia Da’amaseh, Hanan Zawahreh**, and **Manar Abed Rabo** from Dheisheh refugee camp, depicting the smiles of Nariman Manna’ as she trains herself to come to terms with the martyrdom of her son. She says, “I do not know how smiles and warm words come up from me and give people strength. But I do know that I miss Omar so much, and that I will continue to raise my children, to plant flowers, produce embroideries and love everyone who reminds me of Omar.”

And here is **Iman Deeb** from Al Rashidiya refugee camp, taking us through the sewing machine of Aunt Yusra Deeb as she creates life. She says, “Sewing has never been just an ordinary job; how many mothers of engineers, doctors, or journalists own a sewing machine? In those gatherings, these women weave an identity for a nation that still resists.”

And here is **Muna Daher**, from the depopulated Safuriya, bidding us farewell in the presence of Amnah Asfour, who takes us on a tour of her city, Jaffa. She says, "The ongoing Nakba did not deter Amnah, the daughter of the third generation of the Nakba. Rather, Amnah's social platform and her authentic Palestinian voice are still awakening Palestinian memory and repelling Judaization projects."

"Hikayat Filistiniyat" is the outcome of a program implemented by Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights in partnership with Majed Abu Sharar Media Foundation in Lebanon, Shoruq Organization in Dheisheh refugee Camp, Lajee' Center in Aida refugee camp, Ibdaa' Organization in Dheisheh refugee Camp, Ad Dar Association in Nazareth, and Palestine Vanguard Organization in Gaza, with the participation of twenty young women. The program included an educational course that addressed women in the colonial context, as well as a training course that covered the art of writing short stories and photography. The aim of the program was to enhance women's presence in the public sphere and their participation in political, social, economic, and cultural life. The program focused on the role of Palestinian women as key actors in resistance, liberation, and return movements, moving away from the repetitive discourse that treats women as appendages to men and places them in the background as mothers and wives of martyrs, prisoners, or wounded individuals. The participating young women chose eleven Palestinian women to narrate their stories, not seeking exceptional stories, but rather exploring the role of Palestinian women in confronting the colonial and Israeli apartheid regime.
Participants:

Juna Mazzawi, a Palestinian woman from Nazareth.

Rania Saadallah, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Um al-Faraj near Akka, residing in Al Rashidiya refugee camp in southern Lebanon.

Asma' 'Eweis, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of ‘Illar, residing in Aida refugee camp who works as an accountant at Lajee’ Center.

Ne'ma Radi, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Ras Abu ‘Ammar, residing in Aida refugee camp. She is a dietitian and a social health worker at Lajee’ Center.

Nisreen Abu Aker, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Ras Abu ‘Ammar, residing in Aida refugee camp and an Archeology and Cultural Heritage student.

Noura Abu Obeid, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Zakariya, residing in Al Azzeh refugee camp and a health worker at Lajee’ Center.

Sama Mazzawi, a Palestinian woman from Nazareth.

Hala Al Areed, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Um Al-Faraj near Akka, residing in Rashidiya refugee camp in southern Lebanon.

Hanan Abu Shamaleh, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Beit Daras, and a media activist who resides in Khan Yunis, Gaza Strip.

Sabreen Abu El Ala, a Palestinian refugee from Shafa ‘Amr village near Haifa, residing in ‘Ein Al Hilweh refugee camp in Beirut after moving from Al Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria.

Dalia Da'amseh, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Deir Aban, currently living in Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, studying insurance at Al Quds Open University.

Hanan Zawahreh, a Palestinian woman who lives in Dheisheh refugee camp, and an IT student at Al Quds Open University.

Manar Abed Rabbo, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Beit ‘Atab, and a Business student at Al Quds Open University.

Iman Deeb, a Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Umm Al-Faraj near Akka, residing in Al Rashidiya refugee camp in southern Lebanon.

Muna Daher, a Palestinian woman from Nazareth, she holds a BA in Journalism and Media and works as a freelance journalist and photo essay writer.
of stable, another liberated?!

At birth, Walid accompanied. Of right and deprivation, chanted guards, of six daughter Sana' Sana' Salameh 1999, strong like prisoner, in the administration, two mothers, losing life, sense freedom of Oslo? added to the parties, of all martyrs, since that...
Sana' Salameh

Written by: Juna Mazzawi

Bold, pure, and strong like a jasmine flower that made its way towards life with determination, firm in its positions like a sword, dignified like freedom fighters and the mothers of martyrs, balanced like a flying bird, confident in its wings and the inevitability of seasons’ changing.

Twenty-four years have passed since she began to leave pieces of her heart in the Israeli prisons, following her beloved from one prison to another with strength and steadfastness, with love and tenderness. She is the fighter, Sana’ Salameh, the wife of the imprisoned freedom fighter Walid Daqqah [1].

As a daughter of a prisoner, she knew the meaning of losing a father behind bars and then behind the mists of death. Her heart chose a Palestinian prisoner sentenced to life imprisonment. Their marriage took place in Gilboa prison in 1999, and the wedding photos testify to the first and last real joy that entered the prison in the literal sense of the word. A joy that changed the features of the prison, so that it bears a memory of another kind of challenge.

The decision to marry a prisoner sentenced to life was not easy, but the most difficult thing was steadfastness in the decision. How was she to face the social pressures in which she is seen as nothing more than a reckless, naive woman? She hinges her life on the liberation of a prisoner who likely will not be liberated?! Where did all this strength in order to challenge the Oslo Accords’ negligence towards the liberation of Palestinian freedom fighters come from? How does she face the waning of hope for liberation and the loss of opportunities? How does she have this ongoing conviction in the cause and in Walid while she is witnessing the fall of leaders as they chase the lures of power and the benefits of Oslo?

At six o’clock in the morning, she starts the car engine. In the back seat is her three-year-old daughter, Milad, as they head towards Asqalan prison this time. Milad, the child who was liberated from prison before she was born, was liberated in the form of semen that challenged the colonial regime and its thick walls, wires, bars, guards, army and administration, to embark on a journey of life and resistance. Palestine welcomed Milad’s birth, and the Palestinians celebrated her arrival as if they were celebrating the liberation of part of their homeland. She came to the world, beautiful as a new dawn after a dark night, innocent and pure as a drop of dew that fell on the face of a jasmine flower before the universe awakened. In the back seat of the car, Milad chanted with all her innocence, taking her first steps in the world, chanting for Palestine: “Freedom, freedom... Freedom for our prisoners... Freedom, freedom... Freedom for Baba”

When I last met them, I asked Sana’ about her beloved, Walid, and she said: “He is recovering slowly, but he is recovering. He has lost a lot of weight, but that is not the important thing because Abu Milad’s spirit is strong. I told him that he has a year and a half ahead of him, during which he only has to keep himself stable, and then when he will be free, we will take care of him and he will be well. I believe in Walid.”

[1] Walid Daqqah: A Palestinian freedom fighter, political intellectual and author. He is suffering from an aggressive form of cancer. The Israeli colonial-apartheid regime sentenced him to life in prison, then his sentence was reduced to 37 years, which ended in March 2023. However, two years were added to his sentence on the pretext of attempting to obtain a cell phone. Walid is deprived of his right to early release, proper treatment and family accompaniment.
I Yearn for My Childhood and Dream of Eid

Written by: Rania Saadallah

I am Zahiyya Ahmad Yasin from the village of al-Sheikh Dawood near Akka.

I was displaced from Palestine to Lebanon when I was ten years old. I stayed with my family for about five years in the Lebanese town of Harees, and from there, we moved to the Ma'shouq refugee camp for Palestinian refugees [1], where I have remained until this day.

In the town of Harees, I used to go with our neighbor to the farmland, where I learned from them how to gather the scattered straw and weave it into dishes to serve food on or hang for decoration. I gifted the first dish I made to my mother, who encouraged me to continue making straw dishes. It became my modest source of income, helping me cope with life as a refugee in a country that offers nothing but further restrictions to refugees! I worked in the craft of making straw dishes for five years, during which I learned how to weave baskets from Mulukhia stalks (traditional Palestinian food).

Securing a dignified livelihood became more challenging after I got married. I had to teach my children how to earn their living, so I taught them the art of embroidery, and together, we became a family that met its basic needs through selling the embroidery. We shared the tasks; some of us would go to the city of Tyre to buy fabrics, others would do the embroidery, some worked on marketing the embroidered products, and others created a conducive work environment at home.

As family members gradually pursued their own paths, I started working on sewing Palestinian traditional clothing and decorations inspired by Palestinian heritage.

I grew older, and my dreams of returning to the village of al-Sheikh Dawood in Akka grew with me. Every time I sit down to embroider, I recall the image of the village women gathered, embroidering, exchanging conversations, stories, and songs. Embroidery is no longer just a profession for me; it has become a path that takes me back to my village, back to my cherished childhood memories. It awakens in my soul a nostalgic love that continues to grow and I dream of the day I can celebrate my homecoming.

I Will Continue to Raise My Kids and to Plant Flowers

Written by: Manar Abed Rabbo, Hanan Zawahreh, and Dalia Da'amseh

My marriage to my cousin “Abu Yazan” was purely traditional. It moved me from being a Palestinian refugee residing in Jordan to a Palestinian refugee residing in Dheisheh refugee camp in the West Bank. I was 20 years old when I packed up my belongings, leaving behind my childhood, my friends, and my family. I thought that marriage would bring me more stability and peace of mind, and that moving to Dheisheh refugee camp in Palestine would bring me closer to my dream of returning to my original home.

When the permit that allowed me to enter the West Bank expired, I became an “infiltrator” and my presence was illegal according to Israeli laws. I had to get the idea of visiting my family in Jordan out of my head, and to stay away from any Israeli checkpoints in order to hide my illegal status. If discovered, I would be deported back to Jordan.

I spent 13 years trapped in Dheisheh camp without papers. I embraced my life with my husband and our four children, hid from the eyes of the soldiers, and sent my greetings to my family through relatives and visitors.

The life of refuge is not an escape from persecution only, rather it is a continuous struggle where we have to snatch life by force. Our financial conditions were difficult, so raising children and taking care of the family was not enough. I worked hard and mastered embroidery, which became a source of income for my family. At first, embroidery was a tiring profession for me. However, as the days went by, I started embroidering with passion since it connected me with the Palestinian identity that I miss and want so much. Perhaps what helped me endure my prison, which is not fenced with bars, is that Dheisheh is a resistant camp that does not know calm and does not surrender. The peace of “Oslo” did not reach Dheisheh camp, so its residents remained vulnerable to arrest, persecution, and killing. I remain motivated, like the camp, to cherish my family and dream of identification papers and freedom of movement, travel and return.

I did not know that the bullet of a hateful Israeli soldier would take away Omar [1], my second son. I did not know that I would see him a martyr, not a groom. I do not know how smiles and warm words come up from me and give people strength. But I do know that I miss Omar so much, and that I will continue to raise my children, to plant flowers, to produce embroideries and loving to love everyone who reminds me of Omar.

[1] Omar Manna’, A Palestinian refugee from the depopulated village of Zakariya, was martyred on December 5 2023 in Dheiesheh refugee camp at the age of 23.
Nothing Is Impossible

Written by: Asma 'Eweis, Ne'ma Radi, Nisreen Abu Aker and Noura Abu Obeid

I was born with a movement disability that prevents me from walking, but it did not prevent me from crawling around the house. My father did not spare a penny or opportunity for my treatment, until doctors precluded any hope of recovery.

I grew up on the shoulders of family members, and on a shabby wheelchair, which I later became attached to. My love for it increased as I got older since it was my way of moving in and out.

Little by little, the wheelchair improved and driving it up and down, inside and outside, became easier. It made me brag about my ability to cross the narrow passages without bumping into the pieces of furniture scattered in our overcrowded house in Al Azzeh refugee camp [1]. The family and our visitors no longer feared my driving; rather, they feared my instant responses to what they say.

In the mid-nineties on a summer night, while I was going for a short trip, I went to visit my aunt's house in the neighboring Aida refugee camp. I felt the wheels of a car approaching me, after which I flew high in a flash that was quickly extinguished by the words of the people around me saying "She is dead", "No, she is not", "She is alive... Don't carry her, wait for the ambulance", "The Israeli settler’s car ran away", "Those bastards...they didn't even try to stop".

After two years of surgeries and physiotherapy, I got back on my new electric wheelchair. I got back after losing 90 percent of my ability to use my hands! I could no longer draw and paint. I became a burden to my elderly mother, who was struggling with her own illnesses and her worries for our family.

My family members each went on their own way. My father and mother died, my brothers and sisters got married, and I was left alone in our home. I trained my mouth to help my hand to draw and color until I started to produce a yearly calendar. I taught myself and trained my tongue to speak in English until I started teaching foreigners the Arabic language. I have friends around the world. I contact them on my computer board using a pen, or using my tongue to press the buttons on a mobile phone. I have traveled repeatedly, and had the opportunity of getting humanitarian asylum in Germany or Sweden. But I will not leave. I love my home, and I love my life with my small successes over the many challenges surrounding it.

[1] A Palestinian refugee camp in Bethlehem built in 1949, also known as "Beit Jibreen" refugee camp.
Freedom, Freedom... Freedom for our Martyrs!

Written by: Asma 'Eweis, Ne'ma Radi, Nisreen Abu Aker and Noura Abu Obeid

Adla Ghattas, a refugee residing in Dheisheh refugee camp, south of the city of Bethlehem, thought that being shot in the foot during her participation in a demonstration during the first Intifada would be the toughest experience she would ever go through in her life. Her family blamed her, and her brother threatened her if she tried to participate again, but that didn't stop her from joining the protests. She narrates with laughter how she got flustered when she saw one of her family members at a protest, she was participating in. She ran towards the Israeli soldiers to avoid being noticed, which made her relative follow her, screaming, "Where are you going, you crazy girl!"

Anyone who sees Adla cannot guess that her heart has been "broken," as she puts it. Where does this woman, who sleeps half-awake, waiting for her martyr son Fadi [1] to return, derive such strength that she shares with those around her? Where does she get this energy to laugh and make visitors laugh, while her heart shatters every time she opens the refrigerator door, as if it’s the coldness of the refrigerator that her son Fadi’s body is detained in?

Adla refuses to believe in the death of her quiet and shy child, Fadi. She hasn’t seen his body since the news of his martyrdom was announced, and she rejects the image she saw on the Zionist media of his small body lying on the ground. She says, "Perhaps my son is injured!"

Adla sees Fadi in every corner of the house, she hears his voice calling out, "Mama, I'm cold, take me out of the refrigerator."

The painful loss of death is a common experience for humanity, but detaining the bodies of martyrs is a more profound form of oppression than the loss itself! Humans are accustomed to seeking their freedom, the freedom of their people and their homeland, but people in Palestine, like Adla, seek the freedom of the martyrs whose bodies are being detained!

Adla does not expect anything from anyone; she refuses to give up. Today, Adla is fighting in a campaign to reclaim the detained bodies of the martyrs. She joins the protests, smiling and holding a picture of Fadi, embracing the youth, and chanting loudly: "Freedom, freedom... Freedom for our martyrs!"

[1] Fadi Ghattas: A Palestinian refugee from the village of Al-Bureij, was martyred on 2 September 2022 at the age of 19. The Israeli colonial-apartheid regime continues to hold his body in its refrigerators until the time of writing this story.
The house is cramped and does not fit her thoughts. Rather, she imagines that the whole country is closing in on her day after day. How can this narrowness increase and reach the limit of suffocation as we become more aware of our reality?! Do I have to be ignorant, blind and submissive in order to evade the evilness of oppressive regimes?

Asma’ is suspicious of everything she has been taught. She will create her identity by herself. The questions got bigger and more urgent with no convincing answers. However, Asma’ does not stop asking questions. And the search for answers becomes a perilous path.

Who am I? Who are my people and where is my homeland? Why do I have to accept that I am inferior in status, destiny, morals, and thought... and have less rights? Why do I have to serve in an army that does not resemble me in its origin, language, values and goals? Why can’t I continue my education until I feel it’s enough? Why can’t I work to be free and independent?

How do I proceed in the midst of this crowd of fanatics, passivists, oppressors, and patriarchs? Do I have to pay the price twice: once because I am Palestinian, and once because I am a woman?

The most convincing answers in life are those that we find, live and create ourselves, and which leave an impact on us. When challenging the colonial regime becomes inseparable from challenging the social system that reflects the will of the colonizer, life is at stake: either compliance and walking with the herd, or to challenge the status quo and to live in dignity.

The Bedouin Asma’ loves her origin and is proud of it, as she loves and strivest for her future. Asma’ decided to make her own identity. When Asma’ decided to fight her big and small battles through continuous confrontations to finally reach the truth, she tells us: “Freedom waits for us on the other side.”
My name is Adla, and I was born on the day of the Nakba. Like many of my people, I was denied an education because of the camps’ poor conditions. I learned sewing until it became my profession for more than thirty years. I hated it because I could not read the numbers and determine the sizes, and because I felt that sewing was an alternative to education.

When I got sick, I stopped sewing and started focusing on my children’s education. It wasn't easy. The letters in front of me were like the drawings of an innocent child and seemed to me to be incomprehensible scribbles. And the numbers were as obscure as the night sky, especially if they were numerous and long.

I would ask my son to read and I would watch and listen, examining his movements and the tone of his voice, watching him if he lingered, shaking his head and squinting his lips. If he stammered and swallowed his voice, I realized that he had made a mistake, so I would ask him to look closely and repeat until he feels confident, here I realize that he corrected himself! I was afraid that my children would discover my weakness; the weakness of mothers is like a root growing deep in dry soil!

Once, I held the book upside down. When my son noticed, I confessed to him that I was illiterate. I felt as if the walls around me were moving and fading away, as if the whole world was collapsing and I was stuck in the rubble. So, I started visiting a local association that offers literacy programs, where I learned the letters bit by bit.

At that time, letters began to turn into words, words into sentences, and sentences into glimmers of hope. I searched for what I read everywhere. I kept the newspapers in which the bread was wrapped in order to practice reading them later. I snuck out at night to read my children books. How happy I was! How many things were lost before I learned how to read! The Nakba robbed me of much more than my homeland!

Everything I read made me realize that life is a big book, waiting for us to turn its pages and read between its lines to motivate us to continue.
Waiting For the Missing to Return

Written by: Hanan Abu Shamaleh

My heart is so full of sadness, that my eyes can’t sleep!

My feet are heavy, all directions have become one, and I don’t know where to go. I feel that all the roads in front of me are closed, and there isn’t one to take me to him. I walk around the house, searching for his scent; I feel it hidden in his clothes, I smell it, and never get enough. I look for his face in the mirrors that he used to dress himself in front of before going out, I may catch a glimpse of him coming out of the mirror. Then I get disappointed when I see my own tears flowing with no one to hold them back. I ask my daughter: where is your brother? Her eyes answer with tears.

We mothers cannot hide the loss of a child, the light of our lives and the pride of our conversations. Muhammad, my son, left ten years ago and never returned. He took with him my happiness and the purpose of my life, leaving behind a black absence that gnaws harshly at my heart.

An orphan boy in the besieged Gaza Strip. He did not find a father, nor a job, nor a future. I struggled to provide for my family’s daily needs. Life beat him down, worries had become heavy on his shoulders, so he fled with no destination but to stay away from the hell of war, death and poverty in the Gaza Strip.

Ten years have passed since he went missing. But I still feel him. I feel that he is not in the belly of a whale nor a corpse on a far beach. My son will return!

I sit in front of the house tired and exhausted, screaming so that my voice may reach him and bring him back to me. My eyes only see his shadow, which I imagine coming from afar. Whenever someone asks me about my long-lost son, the question turns into a sharp knife that tears me apart. I look at the person asking, and I wonder to myself, is motherhood in Palestine meant to be miserable? I ignore the question, and become quiet. I close my eyes but I never sleep!
**A Stroke of A Pen**

**Written by:** Sabreen Abu El Ala

I couldn't wait for the age of retirement, so I gathered my belongings and collected the scattered pieces of myself, and with trembling hands I signed my resignation letter!

With the sudden stroke of a pen, my 27 years in the field of education ended. I had to put an end to the ongoing war in my own way, so I decided to surrender to my fears and anxieties and triumph for the sake of my family. The bullets of this war were a decisive factor in everything.

I submitted my resignation letter and returned to my home, the house my husband and I built stone by stone and collected its furniture piece by piece. Once again, I gathered my belongings, packed my bags, and left my house, leaving my bed and the pillow to get used to the loneliness until they rotted!

At the border between two countries, I signed my entry card into a country that didn't know me and that I didn't know, in an attempt to save the lives of my children. But once again, I couldn't escape! I had to muster all the patience I could to protect what remained of our lives. My husband was weakened and debilitated by illness, leaving me as the sole provider for my children and my ailing husband in a land that rejected us. The burden grew even heavier when, by coincidence, the doctor discovered that my little daughter had a birth defect that had reached its peak and might rob her of the ability to stand and walk naturally for the rest of her life. The doctor urgently recommended surgery to save my daughter as soon as possible.

Once again, I had to sign a new paper! The stroke of this pen was harsher than the ones before. It was a choice between two heart-wrenching options. Either proceed with an urgent operation to save my husband's life, or to start one or more surgical procedures for my little girl. All my life, I had wished for the opportunity to exercise the right to choose, and when this right was finally granted to me, it came in the form of choosing between two forms of death!

I chose to save my husband's life, hoping he might find some relief from his pain, or perhaps I could save him from dying from his illness. Or I might save myself from the bitter agony of losing him. As for my poor daughter, whose condition was worsening, she had to bear the burden of delayed treatment, as I clung to the possibility that a miracle could save her and extinguish the fire in my heart!

I can do nothing now but hold back the sorrow and my tears. I must learn to breathe three times more than other women do: once to stay standing, once for the roles that my husband left to me due to his early death, and once for my sick daughter, waiting for a miracle to grant her a normal life.
Aunt Yusra

Written by: Iman Deeb

With eyes shining with joy and love, Aunt Yusra pointed to her cherished belongings and said, "All of these are items from my mother's memory. This is the first sewing machine I worked on over fifty years ago so that my siblings and I could live."

Yusra Deeb, a Palestinian woman, lives in a house filled with memories engraved in every corner. Even that corner where the sewing machine is tucked away, barely touched by sunlight, pulses with memories and tales of pain and endurance that she has experienced. She’s the one battling life with a needle, scissors, and a machine that carries the scent of her mother, but she is not alone. Aunt Yusra is accompanied by stories, lessons, and images; some hanging on the walls, and some deeply rooted in her eyes.

When I asked her about the secret behind the impact of memories on her, she shared a story with me. There was a Palestinian woman who used to come to her whenever her jacket, which was a gift from her mother, got torn. I hesitated and blushed, asking her to explain the meaning of this story. She smiled and said, the jacket was not just a piece of clothing or a cover, keeping the jacket intact was an expression of gratitude and appreciation for the first generation of the Nakba, the generation that was killed, displaced, humiliated, impoverished, and punished with deprivation. Yet, they resist, reclaimed life, and revived Palestine once again.

For Aunt Yusra, sewing is not merely about stitching fabric. At first, it was just a way to earn a living for the day. However, as time went by, sewing evolved into a world of communication with people, their situations, memories, aspirations, and dreams. With every piece she sews, Aunt Yusra weaves a story that comes to life and may become a cherished memory.

If Aunt Yusra is asked about any piece that has passed through her hands, she can tell you about its owner, the occasion, and perhaps what has become of it. What Aunt Yusra sews is not just clothes passing through the needle's eye; it's human connections she weaves with her soul and embeds in her heart. In sewing, Aunt Yusra finds her mother, the mother of the woman who owned that jacket, our grandmothers, and all our mothers. She sits with them, as they sit with the threads, narrating stories of childhood, the village, the tents, the revolution, the people's conditions, injustices, victories, and defeats. Sewing has never been just an ordinary job; how many mothers of engineers, doctors, or journalists own a sewing machine? In those gatherings, these women weave an identity for a nation that still resists.

I believe that Aunt Yusra is not the only witness to the strength of our people, which has passed and continues to pass through the small eye of a needle for a mother or grandmother who knows the meaning of life with dignity.
Amnah Asfour: An Authentic Palestinian Voice

Written by: Muna Daher

Amnah Asfour, is a thirty-year old Palestinian woman who was born in the city of Jaffa. Amnah grew up in a Palestinian house built in 1921. The house belongs to Maryam Al-Ashaal (Amna’s grandmother and grandfather’s aunt), who was able to embody the role of the free Palestinian woman in all its meanings. Maryam Al-Ashaal was one of the active women in Jaffa: she used to play the piano and the oud, and she participated in several musical performances in Palestine and Egypt.

Her life in Jaffa formed Amnah's national and social identity. It was not just a city in which she lived, but rather the path through which Amnah saw hope for true and just liberation. Amnah lived in the house of an affiliated family who were true to their Palestinian identity who made her believe in the importance of the city of Jaffa, so that she grew up knowing that history confirms the status and importance of this city in Palestine and the Middle East.

Amnah did not know that her love for Jaffa would turn into an idea and faith, nor that this faith of hers would make her start with the dream she had always dreamed of; which is introducing everyone who visits her city to the history of the “Bride of the Sea” - the city that became a center in the lives of all those living in the coastal towns in Palestine.

Despite all the attempts for the Israelization of the Palestinians in general and Jaffa in particular, and despite the attempts to distort the national identity of the younger generations, Amnah Asfour believes that the tours that she guides are her duty as a Palestinian who loves her country. Zionist and colonial policies and attempts to suppress and suffocate everything that is Palestinian in Jaffa are among the most important things that made Amnah believe that social activity and the strengthening of collective memory among young generations are the basis for fighting the Zionist-colonial narrative aimed at Judaizing Jaffa.

Amnah Asfour told us about the socio-political tours in Jaffa, saying: "The idea of guiding the tours came first to introduce and strengthen the younger generations of the city to its history and to the importance of the place in which they live. Connecting the younger generations to the public space strengthens our defense against the Israeli attempts to steal our towns and the homes of our ancestors. We are here. Let us say that the original inhabitants of Jaffa have not and will never abandon it, waiting for the return of all the refugees in the countries of exile, and waiting for the reunion of the city’s people.”

The torch of belonging to Palestine and preserving its identity is the same torch of freedom that passed from Maryam Al-Ashaal to Amnah Asfour. The ongoing Nakba did not deter Amnah, the daughter of the third generation of the Nakba. Rather, Amnah's social platform and her authentic Palestinian voice are still awakening Palestinian memory and repelling Judaization projects.