

Hopes

Beyond Borders Palestinian Youth

Use

Media Production
to Promote Change

By Ahmed Yasin

Palestinian youth form 30% of the overall Palestinian population. Yet, youth unemployment remains an acute challenge, with rates reaching more than 35.7% according to recent European Commission statistics.

While the reality Palestinian youth face is not simple, they are constantly seeking creative solutions to express their feelings and opinions, increase their skills and capacities, and actively engage in their communities to overcome the difficult economic, social, and political situation.

The current political situation and restrictions on freedom of movement of Palestinians in general, and Palestinian youth in particular, affect everyone's life, providing fewer and fewer

opportunities for a better quality of life, including education and job opportunities; on the other hand, many youth look at the bright side of the situation and choose to think outside of the box through creating their own space to be active participants in society and bring meaning to their lives using the minimum resources available, such as social media, and local TV and radio stations.

Just a few months ago, about 20 youth (nearly half of them female) from Jenin, Nablus,

Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Hebron, some of whom are currently studying in universities or recently graduated without any job opportunities, participated in a project implemented by a local NGO in Ramallah aiming to increase their skills and capacities in media production, acting, and stage performance. The overall goal was to give the participants tools to better express their feelings and opinions about topics such as the performance of the Palestinian Justice Sector, and to shed light on women's rights as they play out in Palestinian courts and legal institutions. As a member of the project's team, I always questioned whether these youth would be able to produce quality outcomes, taking into consideration their poor life experience and the limited resources available to them. Surprisingly, participants were able not only to write scenarios for TV episodes and plays tackling women's social issues in relation to the justice system, but they also filmed and acted in four television episodes that were broadcasted on five local TV stations, and one play that was performed live in five governances in the West

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Bank—Qalqiliya, Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, and Abu Dis, a village east of Jerusalem. Now, after this short-term intervention, participants continue to apply their acting and script-writing skills in producing short TV episodes tackling other youth-related social, political, and economic issues in Palestinian society. Looking back at the Program, Rawan from Jerusalem recalls: "This project provided me with additional knowledge and information about the Palestinian Justice System, as well as skills in script writing. It was a great opportunity to meet people from all over the West Bank."

Two participants decided to create their own YouTube show, using their smartphones to film scenes and basic computer software to edit. The series was shared widely by local media and top Palestinian Facebook pages, which provided more support and visibility to these youth and their work. Further, two other participants were selected to act in a joint media production series filmed in Jordan with the participation of leading Syrian and Jordanian actors. When asked about the program, Mohammad from Hebron replied excitedly: "The project gave me the chance to apply my acting skills and gave me the opportunity to understand the TV production process. This

project opened new opportunities for me and I have already started working on my TV show with some friends. I have also met new friends." Palestinian youth lack the formal infrastructure that would allow them to showcase their creativity, skills, and abilities to promote change and support their communities. We should all feel a duty to believe in them and work hard to provide as much support as possible to improve their situation.

Working with youth is very challenging, yet always meaningful, and it is so inspiring to watch as they discover their hidden resources and utilize them despite the unstable political situation that affects all aspects of their day-to day life.