As we prepare this issue for publication, the olive harvest, known in Palestine as the season of blessings, is coming to a close. This activity is shared and celebrated by many families who rise early and head to their groves loaded with coffee and tea, a home-baked breakfast (see the recipe in TWiP Kitchen), and many bottles of icy water. Songs can be heard, as well as laughter, banter, and teasing. But in other cases, foreign observers must accompany the farmers and their families to protect them from settler violence that has been increasing in the shadow of the ongoing pandemic.

This issue informs you about numerous aspects of food production in Palestine. Thanks go to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), this year’s winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, for supporting this issue with a gold sponsorship! Thanks go also to the companies that chose TWIP as a platform for communication and to our authors: Bassam Abu Ghalyoun, a food science and technology expert and the general manager of the Palestinian Food Industries Union; Dr. Jason Yapp, an international consultant at WFP involved in developing the Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal to scale up climate-resilient regenerative agriculture; Yujin Chang, a resilience-building programme associate for WFP Palestine; Engineer Shifa Abu Saadeh, a member of the Engineers Association Jerusalem Center; Sandra Milkovic, a programme officer working with the United Nations in humanitarian emergency contexts; Salah Lahham, the vulnerability and analysis mapping officer at the WFP Jerusalem office; Nihal Nassereddin, a nutritionist at WFP Palestine; Nader Muaddi, the founder of Muaddi Craft Distillery; artist and conservationist Vivien Sansour, the founder of The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library and the Traveling Kitchen project; Roubina Bassous/Ghattas, the founder and director general of Pioneer Consultancy Center for Sustainable Development; Fuad Abu Saif, a human rights defender and leader and developer of hundreds of agricultural programs with a focus on sustainable development and agriculture-plant protection; and artist Mirna Bamieh, the founder of Palestine Hosting Society.

Our Personality of the Month is Bassam Walweel, the book of the month is Palestine on a Plate: Memories from My Mother’s Kitchen by Joude Kalla, the two artists of the month are Bashar Alhroub and the late Mohamed Joulani. Visit the Exhibition of the Month Nus Nsais in Bethlehem. TWiP Kitchen invites you to prepare traditional manakeesh bi za’atar, or try the recipes in our Book of the Month Palestine on a Plate. Where to Go takes you to Hosh Traitreh. Enjoy the events listed.

All of us at TWIP wish you good health during these challenging times! Until next month,

Tina Basem
Food Production in Palestine

THE PALESTINIAN FOOD INDUSTRIES UNION

HARNESSING THE POWER OF NATURE TO PRODUCE HEALTHY FOOD

MANAGING AN INDUSTRY WITH A PROUD TRADITION

SCALING UP CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

THE DREAM IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE

FOOD IS DELIGHT

DISTILLED SPIRITS: AN ARAB INVENTION

SAINT NICHOLAS HAS NOTHING ON MY MOTHER

EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

SOVEREIGNTY OVER FOOD PRODUCTION

ROOTED IN THE FUTURE

PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH
BOOK OF THE MONTH
ARTIST OF THE MONTH
ARTIST OF THE MONTH
EXHIBITION OF THE MONTH
TWiP KITCHEN
WHERE TO GO

EVENTS
CULTURAL CENTERS
ACCOMMODATIONS
RESTAURANTS
ATTRACTIONS
TRAVEL AGENCIES
MAP

THE LAST WORD
The Palestinian Food Industries Union

As families spend a considerable amount of money on food – 36 to 38 percent of their income, according to market studies – it is no surprise that they expect high quality products. To meet consumer demands while also supporting the workers in the food industry, the Palestinian Food Industries Union (PFIU) was founded in 1995 as a nonprofit organization. It represents 300 food company members from West Bank and Gaza and 18,000 workers, who represent 20 percent of the official workforce, and an investment of more than US$580 million. (In addition, a large segment of agricultural workers, many of them women, work in the informal economy.) PFIU pursues four main goals. It conducts activities to promote and improve the quality of locally made products according to modern production standards and specifications; it offers help in improving management and marketing skills; it represents the industry in the drafting of policies and regulations, and is a member in all official governmental and nongovernmental committees related to food and agriculture industries; and it provides assistance to company members in accessing export markets.

Food producers in Palestine must ensure that their products meet the highest standards in order to attract new customers and keep loyal ones. The PFIU aims to ensure such quality through a multistep process. First, it helps develop a culture of food quality and safety in the sector. This is achieved through implementing measures to upgrade the Palestinian food sector in order to meet the increasing needs of Palestinian consumers, build a competitive food industry, and provide expertise, training, and technical assistance to members. As workers need adequate tools to create high-quality goods, the union utilizes its local and international connections with other unions and companies to provide access to machinery and training programs. Such connections exist with the Arab Federation for Food Industries and the Federation of Food and Agricultural Industries associated with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, UNIDO, etc. Importantly, the PFIU continues to support companies through regular inspections and evaluation to guarantee the safe and efficient functioning of assembly lines.

The PFIU’s expertise is not limited to manual labor, as it has helped countless companies develop structures for the administration of their technical, legal, financial, and human resources. After laying the groundwork for a company and making sure operations run smoothly, the union helps promote the products to attract investors. It seeks to open new markets on the domestic, regional, and international levels and aims to discover and make accessible (as much as possible under restricted conditions) sources of raw materials and modern technology. For example, the Palestinian Food Exhibition was founded in 1995 and continues till today to attract and connect potential stakeholders. Furthermore, once a company successfully secures investment, the union helps to build distinguished relations with stakeholders and create methods of cooperation between various stakeholders from the public and private sectors. The PFIU also publishes scientific and economic periodicals related to the food industry.

The PFIU oversees eleven food subsectors that form the Palestinian food industry. The top-ranking subsectors include baked-goods manufacturers (1,498 factories), drink producers (51 factories), and dairy companies (45 factories), which together employ a total of 8,708 workers, in addition to meat processing and olive oil manufacturing.

By Bassam Abu Ghalyoun
due to closures. As a result, the production capacity of the overall industry has dropped by 48 percent. Dairy companies were particularly affected, experiencing a decrease in the purchase of their products.

Specific industries benefited from the pandemic, however. Pasta manufacturers, for example, saw an increase in sales due to the product’s long shelf life.

To help firms recover financially, the PFIU is working to reduce food imports, especially the import of products that are similar to those manufactured in Palestine. Priority is given to local food products, which are being distributed to poor families. Projects have been created to provide financial support, including loans, as well as to provide sanitization and protection equipment such as masks and PPE. Efforts are also being directed to persuade the Ministry of Finance to decrease the taxes on food producers.

Bassam Abu Ghalyoun, a food science and technology expert, is the general manager of the Palestinian Food Industries Union. He is a member of all official governmental and nongovernmental committees related to food and agriculture industries and also a member of the quality council in Palestine. He has experience and training in a variety of areas, including green production, kaizen, lean manufacturing, circular production, HACCP, ISO, GMP, and energy training. His eleven years of experience in food science and technology were gained through work at Al-Quds University and at a private dairy company, in addition to organizational work and representation of Palestine at international events. His areas of interest are food science, sustainable agriculture and rural development, cooperation and project management, and planning.

Projects carried out by the PFIU include the Palestinian Upgrading and Modernization Program, funded by AFD (France) to help 25 food companies obtain quality certificates and marketing expertise as well as the opportunity to participate in international exhibitions. Five companies from the Gaza Strip received ISO 22000 certification. The 2019 “Geza’ona– Our Food” exhibition was held with the participation of 60 companies from the West Bank and 22 companies from Gaza.
Harnessing the Power of Nature to Produce Healthy Food

By Jason Hui Hong Yapp and Yujin Chang

Leguminous plants (e.g., chickpeas, fava beans, fenugreek, clover, vetches) have been known to form important relationships with bacteria to capture nitrogen from the air and make it available for healthy plant growth. New studies are beginning to reveal some of the fascinating secrets of the mutual and symbiotic association between soil microorganisms, such as bacteria and mycorrhizae fungi, and many ordinary crop plants. For example, plants are able to attract beneficial bacteria to enter their root tips by enticing them with “liquid carbon” as food. Once inside the root, the bacteria will exchange their soluble nutrients for the carbon from the host plant. When the bacteria run out of nutrients, they will travel up the root and stimulate new root hair to grow. This will allow the bacteria to be “expelled” from the root hairs and return back to the soil to gather more nutrients in the soil. Dr. James White of Rutgers University (USA), referred to this process as the “rhizophagy cycle.” (See Figure 1: Benefits of the Rhizophagy Symbiosis.)

Studies have also revealed the important role that mycorrhizae fungi can play in promoting the health of crop plants and their soil. It is well known that mycorrhizae fungi can attach themselves to the root of a plant and help it absorb more phosphate from the soil. But more recent findings have shown that mycorrhizae fungi can form a gluey protein called glomalin to protect their thin filaments (hyphae) from decay and attacks by soil microbes. When these thin filaments age, often found in older roots, the filaments will break down and shed these gluey glomalin proteins to strengthen soil structures by binding together the silt, clay, and sand to form soil clumps or soil aggregates. Soil aggregates become their “homes” to absorb and store more water, carbon, and nutrients. This will protect the soil and nutrients from easily being washed and leached away during heavy rain. The carbon dioxide captured and stored within the soil aggregates, organic matters, microbes, root systems, and above-ground biomass through bio-sequestration can enable healthy soil and plants to draw down carbon from the atmosphere and serve as a carbon sink.

Farming and gardening practices that are harmful to these bacteria and mycorrhizae populations can break up the relationship between the plants and these bacteria, preventing the exchange of carbon, nutrients, and water. Adding too much chemical fertilizer and continuously disturbing the soil through ploughing or cultivation can have a profound effect on these vulnerable bacteria and mycorrhizae communities. Likewise, leaving the soil surface bare and exposed to high temperatures and heavy rain can alter the growth and health of these microorganisms. (See photo 2.) The loss of bacteria and mycorrhizae can also affect other microorganisms in the soil that feed on them, and eventually destroy the entire soil food web, leading to the loss of biodiversity, including earthworms, insects, birds, small mammals, and apex predators such as owls or

Figure 1: Benefits of the Rhizophagy Symbiosis

Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it, and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter, and surround us with beauty. Abuse it, and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it.

Atharva Veda, Sanskrit scripture, c. 1200 BC
Waking up to the unintended consequences of intensive farming, some farmers around the world, including some in Palestine, look for alternative farming practices to break away from the perpetual cycle of chemical dependency and increasing indebtedness, to the point of bankruptcy in some cases. Based on the findings explained above, one can see that farming and gardening practices that can protect and enhance the growth, health, and diversity of these bacteria, mycorrhizae, and earthworms in the soil can enable the carbon, nutrient, and water cycles to function efficiently, providing high soil fertility and resiliency and improving yield and productivity. (See photo 2.) The bacteria and mycorrhizae can grow better if they are provided with sufficient liquid carbon as food from the roots of crop plants and carbon that is made available from high water-soluble organic matter in the soil (e.g., from compost, cover crops, or livestock manure). In addition, the beneficial bacteria can make the crop plants more able to tolerate heat or drought stress conditions as well as pest and diseases.

Perhaps a similar resilient and regenerative system could explain how early agriculture that started in this region around 10,000 years ago had helped to make the Fertile Crescent area the cradle of civilization. This might also explain why the eagles. In some areas, 70 years of industrial farming have turned healthy soil into “dirt,” a sterile medium where very little can grow without the expensive inputs of fertilizers and other chemicals. (See Figure 2.)

Food Production in Palestine

The nation that destroys its soil destroys itself. Franklin Roosevelt, 1937
women farmers who practice the traditional ba’li (rain-fed) system in the Deir Ballut area, Salfit District in the West Bank, have been resilient for the past 70 years without the use of chemical inputs or irrigation, as reported in 2018 by Dr. Omar Tesdell of Birzeit University.ii Due to many restrictions, these women were not able to use chemicals or dig wells for irrigation systems and were forced to rely on the traditional ba’li rain-fed system. The GIS data on land use from 1947 to 2017 show that due to the tight restrictions, many farmers had to abandon their farms while these women farmers are still able to produce healthy and safe food based on a diverse range of up to 21 baladi (local landraces) heirloom seeds. It was also found that bacteria have the capacity to travel up the plant from the root to enter into the seeds. These bacteria will enter the soil when the seeds germinate, begin to harness the nutrients from the soil, and make the nutrients available to the growing seedlings when they re-enter the roots of the seedlings. Now we know why saving and growing with baladi heirloom seeds can be beneficial in promoting strong root and shoot growth whereas modern seeds tend to have lost some of this capacity, and adding chemical seed treatment could harm the bacteria.

Palestine is especially well-positioned to adopt and scale up these regenerative agricultural practices as there are already local farmers and pioneers such as Saad Dagher and his colleagues (e.g., Raya Ziada, Lina Ismail, Yasmin Younis, and Mohammad Khweirah, and others) who have been promoting agroecology farming to produce safe and healthy food for local markets based on the principles of no tillage, no chemical inputs, diverse cropping mainly under the ba’li rain-fed system. (See photo 3.) “There is still very little awareness about these safe and alternative farming practices and fear of transition remains a challenge,” explained Saad Dagher. There are also professors such as Dr. Heba Al Fares and Dr. Tawfiq Qubbaj at Najah University who teach students how to grow safe and healthy food using ecologically and environmentally sound practices. Mohamed Ruzzi is promoting regenerative agriculture with no tilling and no chemical inputs among the 1,200 farmers associated with the Palestinian Fair Trade Association in the West Bank who supply certified fair trade olives and dried herbs for export to Europe and the United States under the association’s program titled Regenerative Farming in Palestine for Social and Ecological Resilience.iv

In light of these research studies and based on on-the-ground experience in Palestine, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is keen to support vulnerable smallholder farmers (under five dunums), home gardeners, and communities to scale up and replicate these regenerative farming practices that can harness the power of nature to produce safe and nutritious food while protecting the environment and drawing down carbon from the atmosphere. There is growing interest – worldwide and in Palestine – in alternative farming practices that respect nature’s way of working while still producing enough healthy food for people. Building on the existing local practices, WFP Palestine and its partners intend to scale up the regenerative agricultural practices that harness the power of nature to produce safe and nutritious food while protecting the environment and drawing down carbon from the atmosphere.

There are emerging studies that indicate a symbiotic relationship between the soil’s microorganisms and crop plants. Intensive farming practices that rely heavily on chemicals and tillage can break this delicate relationship, disturb the soil, and possibly lead to soil erosion and desertification.

Food Production in Palestine
(e.g., Green Climate Fund) to enhance the resilience, livelihoods, and food production of vulnerable farmers and communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The project seeks to tackle the root causes of climate vulnerability and soil degradation by overcoming the barriers (institutional, technical, financial, business, market, and social and cultural) for the scaling up of climate-resilient regenerative agriculture.

Farmers and all WFP partners will be trained in the principles and science of developing healthy, productive, regenerative agriculture ecosystems. Equipped with the latest science-based knowledge, farmers and value-chain actors will be able to make informed decisions on how to best farm their land in a regenerative way. This will not only help to produce safe and nutrient-dense food, but farmers will be incentivized to take care of and protect their precious productive assets (including rejuvenated soil, land, and water) and the ecosystem, resulting in improved degraded land; improved water infiltration rate to reduce soil erosion, leaching, and runoffs; and reduced chemical pollution of water sources and aquifers. Furthermore, our proud Palestinian farmers will be playing a small but concrete part in helping to tackle global warming by drawing down carbon from the atmosphere through their regenerated soil and ecosystem as encouraged by the movie titled *Kiss the Ground*. As Mr. Nedal Katbeh-Bader of EQA has said, “This is a timely opportunity to build back better, greener, and smarter as a post-COVID-19 recovery strategy.”

**Dr. Jason Yapp serves as international consultant at the World Food Programme to develop the Green Climate Fund (GCF) proposal to scale up climate-resilient regenerative agriculture. Dr. Jason is a certified and practicing climate finance specialist and has worked with various UN agencies, the EU Commission, and the Asian Development Bank to overcome the policy, regulatory, institutional, technical, financial, business, and social barriers for scaling up climate adaptation and mitigation and business solutions in the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Pacific, and Caribbean regions. For more information, please contact Dr. Jason at jason.yapp@wfp.org.**

Yujin Chang is a resilience-building programme associate for the World Food Programme Palestine. She has been working mainly on resilience building, climate-change adaptation, and social protection. Yujin holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Rice University (USA). She has been residing in Jerusalem for the past two years.

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3 For more information, please visit https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-02-20/regenerative-farming-in-palestine-for-social-and-ecological-resilience/.

Managing an Industry with a Proud Tradition

The Ministry of National Economy and Palestine’s Food Industries

The food industry is considered to be among the oldest industries in Palestine. Our ancestors excelled not only in terms of their skill and craftsmanship but also in their ability to weave a significant part of the Palestinian identity. Accordingly, the food industry sector is considered one of the most vital industrial sectors in Palestine, one that contributes to the gross domestic product, creates job opportunities, helps fight unemployment, and supports political and economic development since the products of these industries are exported to many countries worldwide.

The Ministry of National Economy’s role to organize the industrial sector begins with the licensing process according to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). The food and beverage industry, for example, falls under ISIC Code 10, whereas the processing and preserving of nuts falls under Code 1030. The Ministry of National Economy believes that supporting the industrial sector in general and the food industrial sector in particular is critical for ensuring food security for Palestinians and enhancing our resilience given the challenge we face under the occupation.

The Palestinian food industries sector consists of many sub-sectors that are ranked differently according to their market share, production rate, and job creation. For example, the meat sector is considered the most qualified sector in terms of international quality certificates. The production and preservation of meat employs 604 workers (which equals 3.44 percent of the total number of workers in the food industry in Palestine), whereas its production rate is 9.93 percent, and it holds 59.49 percent of the market share.

The dairy sector employs 1,968 workers, equaling 11.19 percent of the overall number of workers in the food industry. The dairy farming sector has a production rate of 16.56 percent and a market share of 57 percent. This sector seeks both local and international quality marks such as ISO 9001, ISO 22000, and others, as well as standards certifications, such as the Palestinian Quality Certificate and GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices). These certification schemes guarantee that the sector’s products are of high quality and meet the needs and standards of local and international markets.

The fruit and vegetable processing and preservation sector provides jobs for 1,910 workers, which amounts to 10.86 percent of all workers in the Palestinian food industry. The production rate is 10.94 percent, while the sector’s market share amounts to 52.16 percent.

The vegetable oil production sector is considered one of the most eligible sectors for international quality certificates. The vegetable oil industry has the highest level of exportations in the food industry in Palestine due to the fact that Palestinian olive oil is vital to this sector, with a total output of 19.61 percent. Moreover, 30
percent of the olive oil is consumed locally, whereas 70 percent is exported globally.

The grains and mill products sector employs more than 346 workers, 1.97 percent of the overall number of workers in the food industry. Its production rate is 16.56 percent, while its market share is 15.81 percent. For Palestinian self-sufficiency, however, the production is 9 percent short of the current demand, and thus Palestine must import wheat from abroad.

The cocoa, chocolate, and confectionary sugar sector provides more than 775 workers with employment in Palestine, 4.41 percent of all workers in the food industry. It has a production rate of 2.93 percent, and a 10.84 percent market share.

Finally, there is the sector of manufacturing other food products that are not classified elsewhere. This sector provides jobs for more than 1,491 workers, 8.48 percent of the total number of workers in the food industry, and has a production rate of 6.43 percent and a 28.29 percent market share.

Many products of the Palestinian food industries in various sectors are exported to a number of countries in varying quantities. Palestinian olive oil export, for example, is a vital segment and contributes a distinctive share to the exported food products with 15 to 20 percent of the total volume of production. Palestine produces between 32,000 to 35,000 tons of olive oil annually, 30 percent of which is consumed locally, while the remaining 70 percent is exported to international markets in the form of trade and gifts. The date-production sector also occupies a distinguished place in terms of Palestinian exports to various world countries. The herbs and aromatic and medical plants sector exports goods to many countries around the world on a daily basis.

Indeed, food production is considered one of the most significant industries in Palestine, as it reflects the experience gained from international expertise. This sector’s success is illustrated by investments made to enhance the Palestinian workforce through intensive workshops that are held in Palestine and internationally, and through the implementation of the best international techniques in the production processes. Furthermore, the success of this industry is due to progress that has been made along the value chain and in the agricultural sector, making it a most valuable source of raw material for production. Palestine has developed cattle, fish, and poultry farms as well as vegetable and food production facilities, applying modern technologies. This has played a vital role in enhancing the food industry, enabling it to offer high-quality goods and give each commodity a distinct Palestinian taste.

The legislation that has been enacted and the national policies and plans that have been developed to support the industrial sector are aligned with the national policy agenda and economic strategy and include the following:

- Implementation of the Council of Ministers’ Resolution No. 4 of 2013, which grants priority to local Palestinian products in governmental tenders; thus the Ministry of National Economy encourages domestic production by increasing participation in the governmental purchase of local products through the following:

The role of the Ministry of National Economy is to register and supervise industrial licensing and engage in market surveillance.
- Adoption of the National Food Safety Strategy by the Council of Ministers in 2017, which was prepared by a national team that includes the ministries of health, agriculture, and national economy and the Palestinian Standards and Metrology Institution
- Development of quality infrastructure through launching the National Quality Policy and executing the implementation plan
- Adoption of the required food standards, having developed more than 550 Palestinian standard specifications
- Adoption of mandatory technical regulations for the food industry sector, resulting in more than 45 technical regulations
- Modernization of the Intellectual Property Law through a legal committee headed by the ministry
- Preparation of the National Product Protection and Anti-Dumping Law
- The drafting of a Companies Law
- Development of appropriate policies to increase green exports
- Development of the industrial infrastructure through establishing specialized industrial estate and free zones to encourage investors to utilize the one-stop service provided through the industrial zone and modern infrastructure, in addition to the package on the incentive; currently three industrial zones are operational in Jericho, Gaza, and Bethlehem. Those in Jenin and Tarqumia are under construction.

The sustainable development of the industrial sectors is a main priority for the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and the cabinet. The ministry contributes to the development of the productive, industrial, and commercial sectors by implementing numerous projects. Special focus is given to projects that intersect with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations. Examples include:

- Mustadama (sustainable), a vital project implemented by UNIDO, with EU support, that aims to reduce the energy consumption of 100 factories in both the northern and southern governorates, and seeks to create technical expertise in the energy efficiency field
- SwitchMed TES III, an initiative that aims to achieve a circular economy in the food industries by reducing waste, whether energy, water, or solid waste
- Kaizen Program, a project that aims to develop advisory services, funded by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency and the Japanese Development Agency, through training that fosters Palestinian expertise and competencies in the sector by adopting Japanese approaches and philosophies to achieve the best results.

The Ministry of National Economy supervises industrial licensing, whereby Palestinian licenses are issued according to the international ISIC system for all industries, including the food industries, after all relevant authorities have been contacted and their approval has been obtained. To this end, food factories and other Palestinian industries are visited regularly to check production lines and to issue the annual renewable operating license.

The ministry’s exercise of industrial control ensures that the products and commodities conform to Palestinian standards. This is carried out in the following ways:

- Making field visits to factories in order to monitor the implementation of Palestinian standards throughout the production process. Taking random samples to check their compliance with the related Palestinian standards and the mandatory technical regulations.
- Monitoring the application of mandatory technical regulations for food contacts, e.g., containers in which food is packaged, such as milk cartons.
- Resolving any complaints about and from factories for food products, whether this concerns raw materials, processed materials, price, or any other related complaints.
- Preventing counterfeit in food processing trademarks.
- Supporting local industries by enhancing their competitiveness in increasing their share in local and international markets through encouraging and engaging the local industries in projects implemented by the Ministry of National Economy and supported by various donors.
- Implementing the cabinet’s decision to grant national products in government tenders a 15 percent preference over other nondomestic competing products.
- Issuing the rule of origin certification for domestic products for export purposes, which facilitates the access of Palestinian products to the international and regional markets with no tariff.

To protect consumers from fraud, particularly when it comes to food products, the Ministry of National Economy monitors the market, ensures that the labeling is compliant with the technical regulation and standards requirements, prevents price manipulation or any other type of exploitation, and verifies the validity of the products from a health perspective. It furthermore resolves complaints from citizens about any problem that may arise, whether it concerns the product or its packaging, price hikes, or services. Finally, given that Israeli settlements attempt to flood the Palestinian market with smuggled illegal and invalid food processing products, the ministry coordinates with all related partners to prevent these products from entering our market and takes legal action against those involved in such attempts.

Engineer Shifaa Abu Saadeh received a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from Birzeit University in 1990. She is a member of the Engineers Association Jerusalem Center. From 2016 to 2018, she served as a representative of the Arab Women Engineers – Federation of Arab Engineers. Since 2018, she has been the general director of natural resources and industry at the Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and is currently a national and international focal point for industrial projects in Palestine. She is the proud mother of four outstanding children.

* Translated from Arabic by Khaleel Shaheen.
From July 2019 to March 2020, the World Food Programme (WFP) Country Office in Palestine ran the first round of experiments on climate resilience for food security by providing some of the poorest and severely food-insecure households across the West Bank and Gaza with a range of climate-resilient agricultural livelihood assets in an effort to improve their immediate food security and nutritional needs. The pilot also aimed to assess which of these assets have an optimal correlation of viability, productivity, and cost-benefit ratio that – if brought to scale – could meaningfully bolster resilience and ultimately empower the self-reliance of vulnerable people and communities in the face of climate-generated shocks.

By prioritizing households living under the deep poverty line, WFP intends to leverage its expertise in applying innovative approaches to transforming the ongoing food-security crisis into development opportunities by diversifying livelihood strategies and reducing aid dependency in Palestine. By focusing on women-headed families, WFP continues to support the creation of an enabling environment for gender equality and women’s empowerment, given the vital role of women in promoting lasting solutions for food insecurity.

The first round of the pilot was informed in part by WFP’s experience with climate-resilient projects in other countries to identify the most feasible options that are best suited to the Palestinian context.

The project was run in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Agriculture, implemented in partnership with the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem, Oxfam, and MA’AN Development Center, and coordinated with a range of other stakeholders such as local universities, NGOs and UN agencies.

The first round of the pilot provided 192 Palestinian families (over 1,300 individuals) in the West Bank and Gaza with climate-resilient agriculture (CRA) assets and training based on their priorities and capacities. The assets ranged from hydroponic food and green-fodder production units to wicking beds, home gardens, floating beds, greenhouses, and livestock. Training and coaching were provided to beneficiaries to boost their technical skills to effectively use CRA to harvest and consume fresh vegetables, produce fodder, and sell any surplus produce, thus increasing their own resilience and boosting local food and fodder production.

**Cost-benefit analysis**

The results of an independent cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and partners’ final reports demonstrated the success of the targeted CRA interventions – though some more than others. They helped families improve their food security, dietary diversity, and, in some instances, livelihood through income generation, thus paving the way for the second round that started in June 2020.

The CBA concluded that the hydroponic production of animal feed and vegetables at the household level is by far the most technically feasible and economically viable implementation, outperforming other systems tested.

A range of indicators suggests that growing animal feed hydroponically at the household level is particularly suitable for long-term investment. The cost of fodder alone often accounts for 70 to 85 percent of overall livestock production costs since Palestine imports most of its fodder. Therefore, an increase in local fodder production through hydroponics can contribute to the livestock sector’s resilience in the face of natural and human-made shocks and decrease meat-production costs. Within a single month of growing animal fodder, the involved families saved enough money to carry the second month’s running costs, even when only using 50 percent of production capacity. If used at full capacity, one unit can generate enough fresh fodder to replace 25 percent of the bought feed and fully sustain eight goats over one month. Moreover, hydroponic animal-feed production is environmentally friendly, as it uses 75 percent less space and up to 90 percent less water than traditional agricultural production – a finding of considerable importance in contexts with a scarcity of natural resources and high population density, as is the case in the Gaza Strip.

Hydroponic vegetable production turns out to be another area worth the investment on both the household and institutional levels, with floating-bed systems being the optimal choice, as the benefits are up to 2.5 times greater than the costs. Thus, the CBA concludes that climate-resilient asset creation is an effective tool for the diversification of livelihood strategies and, if brought to scale, can reduce food insecurity, the vulnerability to shocks, and aid dependency even beyond the household level in Palestine.

**Results**

In addition to the cost-benefit analysis, the pilot generated a range of tangible results given its relatively short time span: During the first round of the pilot, over 13,800 kilograms of vegetables from home gardens and wicking beds and over 2,000 liters of milk were produced. Nine out of the eleven families that had received 400 chickens each in Gaza started new production cycles. The number of sheep distributed across 48 households had doubled by the end of the pilot period, enhancing food availability at the local level. On average, 39 percent of all interviewed beneficiaries reported earning additional income from selling excess produce, with home gardening and wicking beds being the most conducive to income generation.

The resilience activity also demonstrates a whole set of additional benefits reported by beneficiaries, such as increased self-esteem, a sense of empowerment due to enhanced productivity, and improved relationships within the family and with neighbors.
Lessons learned and the way forward

Given the feedback from participating families and insights from implementing partners, the first round of the pilot generated a number of valuable lessons that will further inform the subsequent rounds of the experiment. For example, plant production was found to be the most efficient intervention with the highest impact on food security and resilience — especially the wicking beds — as opposed to raising livestock, which seems more complicated, requires technical knowledge, and, in turn, provides lower yield in the short term.

Family size and composition, commitment, and capacity need to be taken more into consideration. Households that are able and willing to produce more should be equipped to do so. Gender sensitivities need to be better streamlined in the second round, during both beneficiary selection and coaching activities to support women’s empowerment while avoiding the risk of placing additional burdens on them.

Finally, coordination with local actors was noted as key and should be replicated in further rounds to increase national capacities. WFP will continue to hold regular steering committee meetings that have served as a great platform for WFP to bring all partners together for an update on progress and to raise challenges and discuss ways to address them.

Following the success of the first round, WFP in Palestine received additional funding to commence the second round, which is expected to be completed by the end of March 2021. The new round includes reaching out to an additional 200 households, scaling up support to some beneficiaries from the first round, and including institutional entities such as cooperatives and women’s centers.

By closely monitoring the results of the pilot, including through an elaborate cost-benefit analysis, WFP hopes to generate enough evidence to encourage additional funding to bring the project to scale and to continue developing climate resilience as a means to decrease food insecurity, vulnerability to shocks, and aid dependency even beyond the household level and project duration.

Sandra Milkovic is a Programme Officer with over ten years of professional experience working for the United Nations in humanitarian emergency contexts in the areas of coordination, operational support, and project management.

Salah Lahham is Vulnerability and Analysis Mapping Officer at the WFP Jerusalem office. He holds a master’s degree in natural resources management from ITC, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente in the Netherlands. A national of Palestine, he has been working with WFP for the past ten years.
Investing in Palestine might be considered mission impossible or even an impossible dream. When the opportunity arose to invest in Palestine, it took only minutes for a group of Palestinian investors from the diaspora to grasp the opportunity and realize their dream of investing in Palestine. They considered it their mission to create jobs, provide economic resilience, and bring know-how and international standards back to their homeland.

The first investment was the National Beverage Company Coca-Cola/Cappy (NBC). With the construction of the company’s first factory in Ramallah in 1998, immediately after obtaining a franchise license to manufacture, package, and distribute Coca-Cola products in the Palestinian market, a new manufacturing center of excellence was set up in Palestine.

NBC’s journey started with 47 workers and expanded to include plants and warehouses spread throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 2005, NBC inaugurated the Cappy Juice and Arwa mineral water plant in the village of Kufor Zeibad in the Tulkarem governorate, and a year later, the company acquired the Jericho mineral water plant in Jericho, the oldest city on Earth. In 2016, NBC realized another facet of the dream by bringing its investment to Gaza, supporting its economic resilience by inaugurating the Coca-Cola soft drinks plant in the Gaza Industrial Zone with an investment of US$20 million.

With a commitment to international quality standards and diversified product lines that satisfy a wide range of tastes among Palestinian consumers, the company has achieved steady operational growth plus market share. NBC has continued to uphold its mission and ambition to do more in terms of bringing additional manufacturing excellence to Palestine.

The year 2019 witnessed the inauguration of Al-Tayf Company for Dairy and Food Products in Kufor Zeibad. With the construction of the first phase of the factory, Al-Tayf created more than 90 job opportunities for the people of the
small village and the surrounding areas. The company plans to establish a cattle farm and an educational academy for Palestinian farmers to produce milk with higher specifications. This will contribute to providing 25 percent of Al-Tayf’s milk needs in the coming years.

Over the last two decades, NBC has become an established leader in the beverage sector and the fifth-largest investment company in Palestine. In terms of employment creation, more than 850 direct jobs were created, 300 of them in the Gaza Strip, and more than 8,500 indirect jobs, 3,000 of which provide livelihoods for wholesalers and distributors in Gaza.

“The company’s vision is always to contribute to the advancement of the national economy and to combat the problems of poverty and unemployment by investing in Palestinian talent, creating more jobs, and seeking to benefit other sectors through working with distributors and wholesalers,” explains Imad Al-Hindi, the general manager of NBC. “Besides, we are keen to satisfy the desires of the Palestinian consumers as they are looking for quality and diversity. We are therefore dedicated to providing products with the highest quality and affordability,” he asserts, and adds, “We are committed to the company’s values internally and externally, providing a business-friendly environment, implementing occupational safety standards, and preserving our Palestinian environment through adopting renewable and clean energy and recycling systems, in addition to sterilizing industrial water to make it suitable for agricultural use, which we provide to farms near the sites of our plants. We seek to achieve sustainability in every aspect of our operations and initiatives as we engage our Palestinian community.”

Throughout our fulfillment of the dream, NBC has maintained adherence to high quality and food safety standards and remains committed to following environmental preservation standards and contributing to sustainable community development. As a result, the company has been awarded several international and local awards and certificates: Quality Management System Certificate ISO 9001:2015; Environmental Management System Certificate ISO 14001:2015; Food Safety Management System Certificate FSSC 22000:2013; Occupational Health and Safety Management ISO 45001:2018; and Palestinian Quality Certificate by the Palestinian Standards Institution.

The company also won the Best Country Bottling Operation Award for the years 2011 and 2013 within the President’s Group Sustainability Awards in Turkey, and the Best Environmental Performance Award at the level of Coca-Cola bottlers in the Eurasia and Africa region for the years 2011 and 2016.

Since its early days of operation in Palestine, NBC has been committed to supporting its Palestinian stakeholder community by providing various levels of engagement and supporting various sectors, especially those that focus on education, health, environment, sports, women, youth, children, and people with special needs. With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the company intensified its support for marginalized segments, workers, and families affected by the pandemic.

NBC will continue to make the dream a reality not only for shareholders but also for the employees, the distributors, and the entire community while providing the Palestinian market with various products of high international quality, proudly made by Palestinian talent, providing hope through jobs and excellence through hard work, not only challenging the odds but changing perceptions.

The National Beverage Company headquarters is located on Betunia Street in Al-Balou neighborhood, Ramallah and can be reached via phone at +970-2-290-7020 or +970-2-290-7021, fax +970-2-296-1703 or +970-2-298-7558, or by email at cocacola@nbc-pal.com.
the Palestinian Jerusalemite cuisine of today would be unrecognizable to our indigenous ancestors. Decades of fragmentation of the Palestinian territory and extensive urbanization of the Holy Land by the Israeli military occupation have transformed a mostly green local fare to a kitchen dominated by chicken, rice, and tomatoes – three ingredients that are not indigenous to Palestine. Born and raised in Jerusalem, I have childhood memories that are filled with smells of signature dishes such as *maqlouba*, a dish prepared today from meat and rice and made of imported stuff. Unintentionally, I have passed on these smells to my three children, who consider any dish I cook that excludes rice and meat to be a snack. Now I have a difficult confession to make: I am a nutritionist by profession. My primary role at the World Food Programme (WFP) is to ensure that the most vulnerable Palestinian families, particularly the elderly, children, and pregnant and lactating women, receive food assistance that provides them with a daily nutritious meal. Helping people adopt and practice healthy eating and cooking habits, even on a small budget, is also key to my job. However, every time I visit these families in Yatta, Bethlehem, the Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank, Khan Yunis, or Gaza City, I am amazed by their instinctive loyalty to traditional Palestinian food. I found myself taking the most enjoyable lessons from wonderful women, men, boys, and girls who prepared delicious meals from ingredients they collected from their small home gardens or after a stroll in nearby fields.

The celebration of World Food Day that WFP marks every year through different activities gave another attestation. Upon the announcement by WFP of an interactive cooking competition for the best healthy, most creative, and yet inexpensive dish, thousands of recipes were sent from enthusiastic participants. The best among the selected recipes varied from *khubeizeh* (common mallow) rolls, *maftoul* (crushed, rolled, steamed wheat semolina) with vegetables, pumpkin *kibbeh* (longish rolls with a filling in a shell of grain), and *rgag* (homemade pasta with lentils). The creators of the best recipes were invited to a live cooking competition. They came with their spouses and children and cooked together, and the results were breathtaking.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the recipient of the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize, works with various partners in Palestine to provide essential food assistance to the most vulnerable families. WFP also helps families reduce micronutrient deficiencies and malnutrition rates through activities that celebrate the collective joy of simple yet healthy food.
One of the winners, Hala (39), from Al-Shaja’iyah in Gaza City, prepared Bean Bites, her favorite dish since childhood, with her upgrading touches to both taste and presentation.

Hala’s dish

**Ingredients:**

1 medium potato
1 grated carrot
2 small tomatoes
1 green onion
1 sprig of dill
salt
cumin
black pepper
garlic powder
arugula leaves

For the dressing:

1 clove of garlic
½ a lemon
a pinch of black cumin
1 tablespoon of olive oil
½ tablespoon of pomegranate molasses
a pinch of salt

White sesame seeds can be used as decoration.

Nutritional value of 300 grams (a serving plate) is 361 calories, 17.15 grams of protein, 4.88 grams of fat. The nutrients in the meal cover more than 30 percent of the needs of a pregnant or breastfeeding woman or of children two to five years old: folate, iron, zinc, vitamins A, C, K, magnesium.

The meal cost was 1.20 ILS (US$ 0.345).

Hala’s recipe is one of more than 20 recipes that WFP compiled in a cookbook to be used with other communication materials for raising awareness about healthy cooking and eating. This participatory approach presents an authentic contribution of Palestinian women, men, and children to their own communities. WFP helped with some tips such as suggesting alternate cooking methods and the addition of certain ingredients that foster nutritional benefits without affecting the original delicious taste. WFP explained how vitamin C in citrus fruits and other vegetables enhances the absorption of iron; whereas calcium-rich food inhibits iron absorption in humans. This means that eating the traditional Palestinian mujaddara, which is made of iron-rich lentils, is much healthier with salad prepared with lemon juice rather than with yogurt.

Palestinians are facing a double burden of malnutrition: high levels of micronutrient deficiencies and anemia alongside increasing obesity rates. Pregnant and lactating women and children under five years of age are particularly vulnerable to nutritional issues in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

“Iron is found in meat, which we simply cannot afford” was the response I most frequently heard from women and mothers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip when asked why they do not consume iron-rich foods. Having concerns over the high prevalence of anemia among children and mothers, WFP, together with UNICEF, engaged with mothers to explore the reasons why so many women who know they should consume iron-rich foods do not do so. A survey and in-depth interviews were conducted to help understand the barriers as well as possible motivators to increasing iron-rich foods in the diets of pregnant and lactating women. The main barriers that were revealed included the lack of awareness that there are two food sources of iron: animal and plant. The surveyed mothers tended to focus solely on animal sources, such as red meats and chicken, which they said they could not afford. The mothers were unaware of the more affordable plant sources of iron-rich foods such as lentils, chickpeas, molokhia, and spinach. Even when the mothers were aware of such high-iron plant sources, they were unsure how such foods could be integrated into their existing meal preferences, without affecting taste or exhausting their limited budgets.

WFP is providing food assistance to more than 400,000 of the most vulnerable non-refugee Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Food assistance is delivered predominantly through cash-based transfers in the form of electronic food vouchers, enabling families to purchase foods of their choice at more than 330 designated retailers. To help these families gain the most from food assistance, WFP is implementing various interactive sessions, particularly for women, but with a direct impact on the entire family, to learn and adopt best cooking and eating practices while remaining attached to their rich traditional menu.

*Nihal Nassereddin has been a nutritionist at the United Nations World Food Programme-Palestine for more than ten years and holds a master’s degree in nutrition science.*
most Palestinians are familiar with arak, that milky-white anise-flavored spirit that pairs so well with our delicious cuisine, but very few are aware of our unique distilling heritage, and therefore arak has not received the recognition and respect it deserves.

Arabs invented distilled spirits

For millennia, chemists in Greece and Rome sought to increase the natural levels of alcohol in wine and beer, which they already produced in abundance. They tried to do this through distillation, the process of separating the components of a liquid through boiling and condensation. None succeeded, and it’s very likely that many went blind or died from methanol poisoning in their attempts. By the fifth century, Western Europe was in the midst of the Dark Ages, when little scientific advancement was made. Arabs picked up where the Greeks and Romans left off, making substantial contributions to chemistry, among other disciplines.

Roughly 400 years later, Arab Muslim academic Jabir ibn Hayyan – recognized today as the creator of algebra and the father of chemistry – established the principles of classifying liquid substances by their properties and invented the equipment and techniques to isolate them. One of Hayyan’s many inventions was the alembic pot still, which he used to distill various liquids. During an experiment to refine the production of al-kohl (eyeliner), he distilled wine – which he discovered resulted in a clear, highly potent spirit. By then, Islam had already forbidden intoxicants, so Hayyan wasn’t interested in the spirit beyond its academic value. Thus, he concluded that it was “of little use, but of great significance to science.”

Not everyone felt the same way. In fact, many Arabs of the Levant and Mesopotamia began to consume the spirit for enjoyment. Abu Nuwas, a ninth-century Arab poet, wrote that he found inspiration in a wine that “has the color of rainwater but is as hot inside the ribs as a burning firebrand.” Fans of the new drink began referring to it as “al-kohl,” after Hayyan’s accidental discovery. When al-kohl reached European ports, the term was heard and mispronounced as “alcohol,” which – of course – remains in use today.

The coincidental discovery of arak

Interestingly, the fusion of aniseed oil and alcohol, which created arak, was just as accidental as the discovery of distilled spirits. As word of Hayyan’s alembic pot still spread throughout the Middle East, artisans began to make and sell them to home-distillers. People used the technology to turn surplus wine into al-kohl before it could oxidize. They also used it to produce rosewater, orange-blossom water, and herbal essential oils that go into sweets, perfumes, and medicines. Today, distillers use separate stills for spirits and essential oils, as the latter creates residues that can infuse unwanted aromas and flavors into spirits. But at the time, alembic pot stills were expensive, so people used the same one for multiple concoctions.

As this was happening, aniseed was growing in popularity throughout the Middle East as a miracle drug. People boiled it in water and consumed it as a tea to cure abdominal pain, colic, indigestion, menstrual cramping, coughs, and headaches. Some even ground aniseed into powder to mix with flour for flavorful baked goods. Due to its popularity, aniseed was one of the first herbs to be distilled into an essential oil, anethole. In fact, the market for anethole was so strong that nearly every distiller in the Levant and Mesopotamia took part in its production. These distillers, historians believe, inadvertently fused the residue of aniseed oil with alcohol to create the first anise-flavored spirit.

Drinkers preferred the sweet taste of the anise-flavored spirit to the unflavored eau de vie produced until then. As a result, distillers began to distill alcohol with aniseed on purpose, adding a stronger dose of anethole to aid with indigestion, a common ailment associated with summer barbecues.
This conscious fusion required a slower distillation process, which caused the spirit to exit the still’s condenser drop by drop. These drops resembled the distillers’ sweat as they hunkered down next to their hot stills. Thus, the new spirit was called arak, Arabic for perspiration. Later on, when someone discovered that diluting arak with water turned it white, the spirit earned the nickname halib al-assad or lion’s milk.

**Arak quickly went international**

Just as with al-kohl, Arab merchants shipped arak to countries throughout the Mediterranean Basin. It wasn’t long before these nations began to produce their own versions of the spirit, each modifying it slightly. The Greeks, for example, added more herbs and named it ouzo; the French aged it in oak barrels and called it pastis; the Italians sweetened it and dubbed it sambuca; the Tunisians made it from figs and referred to it as boukha; and the Moroccans produced it from dates and named it mahia. Interestingly, only the Turks stuck with the original recipe, called it raki, because they discovered it in Iraq, and so to them, it was Iraqi. When Spain and Portugal colonized Latin America, they brought with them their interpretations of arak, anis, which is now produced throughout the region under the name anisado, as well as in the Philippines, under the name anisado.

Many Northern and Western countries later dropped the aniseed due to its unavailability and began to produce spirits from more abundantly available grains, rather than fruit. This resulted in unflavored spirits such as vodka, as well as other infused spirits such as gin.

Unlike the Middle East, where clay amphorae were widely used for storage, the West largely relied on oak barrels. Flavors and color extracted from these barrels created the category of brown spirits, such as brandy, whiskey, tequila, and rum.

But arak didn’t just spread to the West. It also went eastward. In the thirteenth century, when the Mongol hordes of Genghis Khan invaded China, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the conquerors tried arak, loved it, and spread it throughout the Mongol Empire. Chinese historians have noted that in China, the earliest spirits were distilled during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and were similar to arak. The Chinese also later dropped aniseed and used rice wine as the basis for distilling spirits, creating baijiu, which later developed and became known in Korea as soju and in Japan as shochu.

The grapevine is the second most planted crop in the West Bank after the olive tree. The area of northern Hebron and western Bethlehem produces 85 percent of Palestine’s grapes. Virtually all the vineyards in this area are located in Area C, in a region Israel has deemed the Gush Etzion Settlement Bloc. Israel has established 22 illegal settlements in this area that house more than 75,000 settlers, and it plans to annex this bloc. Annexation would strike a fatal blow to Palestinian grape cultivation, crippling a sector that has thrived in Palestine for thousands of years.
As tradition dictates, Nader ages his arak in clay amphorae that are handmade in Hebron. Photo by Gabriel Helou.

In fact, aragh became the word for distilled spirits in Armenia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Afghanistan, because arak was the first spirit these cultures encountered. Similarly, on the Indian subcontinent and in Southeast Asia, distilled spirits are generally known as arrack. In short, arak, our national spirit, is the oldest spirit in the world and the mother of all distilled spirits.

**Arak succumbed to geopolitics**

Nowhere in the world was arak more popular than in its birthplace – Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. It continued to thrive because it is the best drink to accompany our mezze and mixed grill. Arak cleanses the taste buds with every sip, refreshing the palate so that one can enjoy a myriad of dishes with contending flavor profiles. Yet, for the greater part of the last century, our region fell into turmoil and poverty, making authentic arak too expensive for the masses to consume.

Eventually, the market demanded a more affordable alternative, and so industrial arak was born. Makers cut numerous corners in the production process to reduce costs and maintain profitability. The first to go were grapes because they limited production to a single season and required a labor-intensive process to extract concentrated alcohol from them. To save time and money, makers stopped producing wine as a base for arak. Instead, they imported 96-percent ethanol in bulk, diluted it, and distilled it with aniseed. This allowed for the production of arak quickly, economically, and year-round.

Next, aniseed was removed, as it was a costly input. Instead, producers began to add commercial anethole (which is often made from Chinese star anise instead of aniseed) to the 96-percent ethanol and distilled them together to give the spirit a profile similar to that of arak.

Some makers even abandoned the distillation process altogether and created mixing-and-bottling operations that simply dilute the 96-percent ethanol to a drinkable strength, back-flavor it with commercial anethole, and bottle it. These producers succeeded in creating a more affordable kind of arak, but its palatability is significantly diminished. Even worse, this subpar arak was mislabelled as authentic, baladi (local), triple distilled, and made from grapes and aniseed. The false marketing ruined arak’s reputation for an entire generation of drinkers who didn’t know better and began to regard arak as inherently distasteful and inferior to Western spirits. Not surprisingly, demand even for cheap, industrial arak fell into a downward spiral.

**Making arak great again**

Disappointed with the state of arak, I embarked on a mission to kick-start an arak renaissance in Palestine, similar to that which occurred in Lebanon after the Civil War. In 2017, I launched Muaddi Craft Distillery, a boutique operation that specializes in genuine, handcrafted, small-batch arak, under the name Arak Muaddi. My goal was to create arak that is made with passion, artistry, and respect for heritage.

That meant making it baladi again. I sourced indigenous grapes from vineyards located in western Bethlehem and northern Hebron in the villages of Beit Jala, Al-Khader, Shuyukh al-Arrub, Beit Ummar, and Halhoul. The aniseed I use is grown in Raba, Jaba, and Maythaloun near Jenin. I use water from the Ein Ad-Duyuk Spring, just north of Jericho, to dilute it to strength, and I age it in clay amphorae that are handmade in Hebron.

The arak we produce is made according to a traditional recipe and process that has been fine-tuned over a thousand years by our ancestors, and those who’ve tried it are shocked because it’s so different from the industrial arak they are accustomed to.

Our first vintage debuted in November 2018 and was made in the basement of my house in Beit Jala. It consisted of only 480 bottles, but it was a big hit. In fact, it earned a Gold Medal at the Berlin International Spirits Competition, as well as the title “Arak of the Year”; a Silver Medal at the New York International Spirits Competition, as well as the title “Arak of the Year”; and a Bronze Medal at the London Spirits Competition.

I participated in these competitions in an effort to restore arak’s glory and show my people that we have something special that we should revive and take pride in. Arak is a key component of our culinary heritage and hence an integral element of our national identity. It’s just as Palestinian as knafeh, za’atar, and hummus. Yet, arak drinkers are an aging crowd, and I am often fearful that arak may remain nothing but a part of our past.

Nonetheless, I hope that through education and by continually improving its quality, we can ensure that arak will continue to bring joy to future generations and forever remain the Spirit of Palestine.

Nader Muaddi is founder of Muaddi Craft Distillery that produces Arak Muaddi, an international-award-winning spirit that is handcrafted in Palestine from local ingredients.
Saint Nicholas Has Nothing on My Mother

Saint Nicholas is one of many saints adored in Beit Jala, my hometown. His church, built atop the cave where he lived, has a golden dome that distinguishes Beit Jala from any other town in Palestine. But across the street from St. Nicolas is a place much more captivating: a building that hosts a group of women who years ago decided to create a union to organize their various activities surrounding homemaking and children.

One could easily dismiss this place as just another initiative doing what women have been doing all their lives: cooking and taking care of children. But in the alleyways of this little town, St. Nicholas and its grandiose dome made far less an impact on me as a child than the place across the street, where the work of women filled my nose with aromas of halba (fenugreek), sambusak, and cakes that I can still smell and taste today.

With little interest in church ceremonies, I always found myself sneaking through the back door of the Women’s Child Care Society to sit in the kitchen and watch the women work miracles with their hands. Flour flew like pixie dust across the top of their elongated steel counters as they turned it into dough with which they played, converting it into small triangles of spinach-filled pastries. Spinach, dandelion, and whatever wild greens were in season — they would lay them in small heaps onto the thinly rolled dough and gently wrap them into perfectly matched pockets. How they managed to make them all look identical is still a mystery to me. A grown woman, I have come to appreciate this place more and more as a visionary attempt by women, such as my Aunt Salwa who still runs the place, to claim their own space and find their power in the thing over which they have declared full dominion: the kitchen.

The kitchen was also my mother’s queendom. The only other person allowed to meddle in its pots and pans was her mother, Wadia’. Though it is not nice to make a poor mention of the dead, my grandmother Wadia’ was not the warmest of grandmothers. She was a genius in the kitchen and a master in the garden — a perplexing fact, considering her lack of tenderness as a person. All that aside, I owe it to Wadia’ that I love soil and know a thing or two about raising rabbits; but most of all, that I have mastered the art of making rigag o addas: a Palestinian country dish that is cooked primarily in the fall, during the olive harvest season.

Rigag o addas is a noodle-and-bean dish made of two ingredients: flour and lentils. Rigag denotes a thin dough, and addas means lentils. I would sit and watch Wadia’ instruct my mother on how to stretch her dough and slice it into small strings to make what looks like the Italian version of rigag, tagliatelle.

But the days of using a knife to make these long strands were over by the time my mother started making them for us. It was a memorable day when my mother purchased a hand-operated apparatus that swallowed the sheets of dough and turned them into symmetric ribbons that descended from the stainless steel machine with each cranking of its handle that was gently operated by my mother.

Even though rigag o addas was not necessarily my favorite dish, it was for sure one that I looked forward to because I knew that the kitchen would turn into a lab that day. And I would become the observant scientist whom my mother would try to kick out of the way, allowing me to practice more mischief as I attempted to make my way back to the counter where she prepared the meal.

“I don’t want you in the kitchen. Go make a life for yourself!” That was my mama’s mantra. Maybe she wanted to give me a life different from hers, a life in which I would pursue my dreams and make them a reality. She didn’t see the magic in the kitchen. Her life goals had nothing to do with dough or lentils. She wanted to be a nurse, build...
a hospital, create her own wellness center, and who knows what else. But somehow, she cooked every meal like a master chef and never bought ready-made foods—all the while insisting on leaving me out of the kitchen as a way, I suppose, of saving me from traditions that would suffocate my dreams.

Ironically, it was the kitchen that was always part of my aspirations. It still is. I try out every dish possible from palatal memories, sometimes from instructions that she gives me over the phone while tending her garden in North Carolina. I experience many failures. Some days, I don’t cook the vegetables long enough; on others I cook them for too long. Though sometimes futile, the days when I am able to recreate a taste of my long-gone childhood are worth every failure. In the kitchen and in life, I cherish it the way I cherish my harsh grandmother for showing me who I want and don’t want to be.

And I want to be a better cook, be it in creating my food or my dreams. The older I get, the more I conclude that there seems to be no distinction between success and failure. Both provide the sweet and the sour—precisely like riqaq o addas that is cooked with wild sumac berries that are tangy and sweet at the same time. We seek them and adore their sour taste with great reverence because we know they are necessary.

“Where is your riqaq-making machine?” I plead with my mother to remember where she might have stored it before she left Beit Jala. Unproductive searches led me to go back to the basic cutting blade and my hands. I mix the flour with the water and add a sprinkle of salt. While I knead the dough, I let the sumac berries soak in hot water, and the lentils get tender as they boil in a different pot. Kneading, I have started to feel, is not for the faint of heart. Perhaps I should join a gym or start weight lifting. My lazy back begins to crack. It seems that our mothers and grandmothers were not only cooks, they were also athletes.

“I won’t give up. I am not going to sit down,” I whisper to myself as I start to see the dough molding itself in my hands. With each twist of my hands, I feel as though I am kneaded into stories of lives that I can only imagine. My mother, grandmother, and grandmothers before them must have used this process to release their burdens into mounds of dough. Maybe they survived not with grief but with smirks in their hearts as their men ate their bread, underestimating the power of knowledge the women had in turning grains into bread.

“The hearts are secrets,” we say in Arabic, so I capitulate to the fact that I may never know if they felt sorrow or power. I must know my own heart’s secret. I am feeling elated as I make my dough.

“Yes. I can.” And so I do. I spread my dough, and I start rolling. As it gets thinner, I am transported into my mother’s body. My hands start to look like hers, and I am suddenly making all the moves and dancing with the tempo of her rolling pin. I am honored to be using the utensil that shaped my mother’s cookies and bread for so long. Scratched and brutalized by years of hard work, the wood looks more alive than it has in years. It is joining me in this return to life. Water, wheat, and salt: the minerals of this earth that once was
drowned by the ocean. How do we assert our claims over things that existed before we ever did?

The smell of boiled lentils intensifies as I forget that they were even there. I rush to turn off the stovetop and begin to strain them. Steam fills my nostrils, and I become irritated by my lack of swift attention that has rendered them mushy.

“Ah, and of course, don’t forget to strain the sumac and add its juice to the pot.”

I remember every step this time. I finally feel like I am getting it right. My *riqaq o addas* is going to turn out wonderful. I feel confident as I slice more fresh garlic and place it in a pan full of olive oil. I am making *qadha*, a signature of many Palestinian dishes. Even bad cooks can fool their audience with *qadha*: an infusion of olive oil with garlic, using heat to bond them together before adding the mix to the dish in its final stages of preparation.

It doesn’t feel like fall yet. A heatwave that has struck our area is making this dish unfit for this time of year. The sun glares through my kitchen window, and I see its reflection in the golden dome of St. Nicholas. He is still celebrated in my town, in the fall, when he is thanked for being the protector and savior.

Be that as it may, I never felt especially protected by him. It was always the women cooking in the backyard of his church, the master chefs of their homes, and the goddesses like my mother, who sacrificed their dreams so I could have my own, who gave me a feeling of protection.

But that is not who we talk about when we talk about visionaries. We think of people like my mother as “just a homemaker” or “a stay-at-home mom,” as if they were somehow average and not pillars who have shaped our worlds by acts of protection such as feeding us pure food and pure love, represented in their swollen hands, broken backs, and relentless struggles both inside their kitchens and beyond.

How, for so many years, the world reduced the work of mothers around the world to a side job is truly society’s greatest failure. We are still trying to recover from it! And it can only be rectified when we start to understand that the food on our table is not the product of mundane activities but of rigorous physical and mental processes that require discipline, courage, and determination to make our lives a little more tender and a whole lot more tolerable.

But then again, they were just women doing what women always did. And unlike St. Nicholas, they were real and visible, and their power, if acknowledged, was a force to be reckoned with!

Vivien Sansour is an artist and conservationist. She is the founder of The Palestine Heirloom Seed Library and the Traveling Kitchen project, both initiatives that aim to bring seed heritage back to the dinner table so that we can “eat our history rather than store it away as a relic of the past.” You can learn more about her work at www.viviensansour.com.

This article is based on an article published as “In Palestine, mastering my mother’s *riqaq o addas*, homemade noodles and lentils” on September 13, 2020, by The Forward.
History and Heritage

Siniora was founded in 1920 in Jerusalem, the city that has been linked to the brand for years. After the 1948 Palestinian exodus (Nakba), the Siniora factory moved to an 11-kilometer area in the city suburbs, where it was equipped with the latest technology at the time. An additional factory, Siniora Food Industries, was established in Sahab, Jordan.

In 1996, the Arab Palestinian Investment Company took ownership of Siniora and made the necessary changes for further development. Both factories were expanded, production was enhanced, and the latest technologies were installed to keep up with the highest quality standards. These changes enabled Siniora to venture into markets abroad.

Siniora then became a public joint-stock company in the official financial market. The company went on to purchase Unium in 2011. In 2016, Siniora launched its first line of frozen foods in Jordan. In 2017, it bought Al-Masa factory in Dubai to cover the GCC markets; and in 2019, the company launched its frozen-foods line in Palestine.

Siniora is ranked among the top producers of canned meats, cold cuts, and frozen foods in the region, with a reputation built upon its loyal customers’ trust in its high-quality products for the past nine decades, since its founding.

Siniora products

All Siniora products are produced using high-quality beef, chicken, and turkey halal meat as described on the nutritional-value panel on Siniora packaging, where consumers can find all the information they need.

Siniora offers a variety of more than 80 products designed to meet the needs of all consumers.

1. Siniora Al-Quds Mortadella comes in a variety of flavors, such as olive, pepper, pistachio, and plain, and sizes (2.5kg, 1kg, 500gm, and 200gm slices).
2. Siniora Al-Quds Roast Category consists of premium 100% pure meat cuts, such as Pure Turkey and Pure Roast Beef, with a very low fat percentage not exceeding 1%. The healthy and nutritious Roast Category includes products with the finest red and black peppers.
3. Siniora Al-Quds Frankfurters respond to a variety of consumer needs and wants, and include beef, chicken, and turkey that come in various package sizes (1kg, 400gm, 380gm).
4. Siniora Luncheon Cans, the iconic blue cans, contain either beef or turkey.
5. Siniora Frozen Products include beef, chicken, and other meats.

Siniora Food Industries Company
Tel: +970 2 279 6804
Fax: +970 2 279 9088
P.O. Box 132, Jerusalem - Palestine

Website: www.siniorafood.com
Palestine is a treasure chest of agrobiodiversity and a historic center of crop cultivation. As part of the Fertile Crescent, Palestine was identified by Nikolai Vavilov (1926) as one of the eight most important centers of cultivated plant origin and diversity. He listed more than 80 crops from the region, the most important of which are cereal crops, fruit trees, and vegetables. Plants of this country are of greater importance to humankind than those of most other parts of the world. The life-sustaining crops of wheat, barley, vines, olives, onions, vetches, lentils, peas, and legumes all originated within the geographical land of Palestine and were domesticated in the region 10,000 years ago.¹ The wild ancestors of these crops, which now only occur in tiny remnants of natural vegetation, represent a vital resource for future crop breeding and food production.²

Wild food plants have been part of Palestinian diets and traditional food systems throughout history, providing essential nutrients and bioactive compounds. Palestine is famous for the cultivation of local landraces and for preserving their wild relatives. These species are considered the agrobiodiversity asset and form a significant part of local plant genetic resources, as they are locally domesticated, adapted to the local environment, and evolved in parallel. They have traits for efficient nutrient uptake and utilization as well as useful genes for adaptation to stressful environments such as water stress, salinity, and high temperatures. They show especially important traits for drought and disease resistance. They conserve soil and increase natural soil fertility and health.

Wild plants are intensively utilized by the local Palestinian community either as medicinal and aromatic plants or as food such as leaves, seeds, spices, resins, and/or dyes, and so on. Rural women carefully collect the fruit, leaves, and roots of native plants from their fields or from the nearby forest for use in the family diet. Many plants are sold at al-a’tareen (herb and spice) shops in the local market. A widespread practice among farmers is to preserve a seed bank at their farms where they save seeds from their crops annually for the following year’s cultivation, such as the seeds of plants of the cucurbitaceous family, including zucchini, pumpkins, and calabash gourds that are usually either stored hanging to dry for the following season, with their seeds taken and cultivated in the following season, or eaten fresh, while their dried skin can be used to produce handicrafts and ornaments.

Among the wild relatives that were domesticated in Palestine are wheat, lettuce, pear, pistachio, barley, fennel, cauliflower, pea, vetch, wild thyme, and many others. Other plants used as a source of food include spotted arum, white beet, dwarf chicory, rocket, garden purslane, artichoke, mallow, prickly asparagus, gundelia, laurel, watercress, sumac, dandelion,

In Palestine, about 2,076 plant taxa were recorded as native or naturalized. Of the native taxa, 102 were recorded as endemic.³
Mushrooms.

Palestinian arum.

Sumac tree.

Za’atar, wild thyme.

An ancestor of wheat.

Fenugreek seed, and others. Medicinal and aromatic plants include cat thyme germander, coriander, spiny hawthorn, common sage, horse mint, round-leaved mint, wild thyme, cumin, anise, fennel, chamomile, rosemary, and many others.

Many wild fruit trees bloom in spring, such as olives, almonds, wild plums, peaches, pears, figs, and medlars, whereas loquats, pomegranates, and others bloom in summer. In the south, acacia trees and the prickly sabra cactus suck moisture from the desert. Atlantic pistachios strike a dramatic note among the dry riverbeds, and date palms grow wherever there is sufficient underground water. All this forms a very important germplasm that needs to be preserved, and the practice itself needs to be promoted among the local population.

The edible wild plants are consumed in many ways according to local traditions. They are eaten raw or cooked and thus require different preparation processes. For instance, several plants, such as mallow and arum, are usually washed, cut, and then mixed with onions and cooked with oil. For other plants, such as fenugreek, soaked seeds are boiled, then the pasted seeds are mixed with semolina, flour, and sugar syrup. People use different methods to preserve plants and food for off-season consumption and for longer periods. In Palestinian rural society, the most common form of preservation is by drying, as is done with sage, mint, germander, and more. Very few economic plant species, such as thyme and gundelia, are now cultivated and marketed by some farmers. This shows that the economic benefits from some species might promote local people’s interest in the conservation and maintenance of such locally important and threatened species.

It is of utmost importance to gain know-how about popular uses of edible wild plants. In Palestine, these traditions are at risk of disappearing, and hence it is crucial to study such knowledge systems and find innovative ways of transmitting them to future generations.

Article photos by Roubina Bassous/Ghattas.

Roubina Bassous/Ghattas is the founder and director general of Pioneer Consultancy Center for Sustainable Development (PCC). She holds a master’s degree in biological sciences from Birmingham University/UK. She has extensive experience in nature resource management and conservation, food security, livelihood enhancement, and agriculture sustainability. PCC aims not only to provide expertise/services in diverse fields, including heritage and biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, clean environment, and green solutions, but also to generate economic/educational benefits and empower local communities. Contact PCC at roubina@uems.ps.

Palestine’s diverse topography and ecological conditions have permitted the survival of traditional wild plants that are used by locals as food.

The plethora of food resources that Palestine could naturally offer is affected by the occupation-imposed control that has resulted in visible and tangible damage to all components of Palestinian traditional food production. Before the 1967 Israeli occupation, Palestinian food production outperformed that of other independent states in the region. Our producers competed with the quality food products of many countries in the world. Our percentage of self-sufficiency in basic crops such as wheat, oranges, apples, and citrus reached nearly 90 percent, exceeding our internal market needs, and we were active exporters to many countries, including Britain and Europe. What led to this self-sufficiency is the production system that depended on the hands of the Palestinian farming families, especially in rural areas, and the adoption of the home economics approach. It is safe to say that Palestinian self-sufficiency proves how strong the agricultural infrastructure was and how producers gave special attention and care to the most valuable resource in bringing people closer to achieving their dream of sovereignty over their decisions in the present and the future.

The occupation has continuously and purposefully brought down any dedicated effort to reinforce this value. The occupation regime has built a comprehensive set of policies and agricultural structures to deprive Palestinians of their source of steadfastness by confiscating fertile lands with high productivity, such as the Jordan Valley, and areas that are rich in natural resources such as water. Israel has imposed its control over more than 85 percent of the Palestinian water resources, knowing that there can be no Palestinian agriculture without water. The Oslo Accords granted Palestinians 1.358 billion m³ of water annually; however, they received less than 87 million m³. Furthermore, the occupation has systematically impeded Palestinian efforts to organize themselves in cooperatives or groups, even those that are voluntary. Strategic efforts to cause collective Palestinian agricultural land abandonment is carried out through the devaluation of land by reinforcing misconceptions that have induced farmers to neglect their lands and become a part of the occupation’s workforce, tempted by high daily wages. Such policies were intensified during the first Intifada, with Israel fully aware that the domestic economy, characterized by home gardens, contributes to Palestinian steadfastness.

Seventy years of ongoing Israeli control over essential Palestinian resources have gradually dispossessed Palestinians of their strength.
The civil disobedience in Beit Sahour during the first Intifada was living proof of the exceptional importance of self-reliance when Palestinian families established hundreds of home gardens and succeeded in securing their food independently. At that time, the Intifada leaders decided to boycott Israeli products, which prompted the occupation forces to impose a harsh siege on the city. However, the city was able to confront the siege and resist because one of its basic needs was fulfilled internally through home gardens!

Unfortunately, Palestinians have been slowly pushed towards becoming an army of workers for Israeli factories and farms, deserting the most important element of strength they need to confront the colonization project. Palestinians were forced onto this path after the full force of the occupation attacked all successful agricultural models that contribute to realizing the optimal investment of resources and help in reaching the threshold of self-sufficiency in many crops and basic commodities. These models were vital economic, political, and social pillars for the Palestinian national cause.

During the 1970s, Palestinians cultivated more than 995,000 dunums with field crops, which contributed to self-sufficiency in grain production with a percentage that exceeded 100 percent. Contrast this with the last three years, during which the total area cultivated with grains amounted to less than 200,000 dunums, with a deficiency rate that reached more than 95 percent.

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1993, in line with the Oslo Accords, did not help to place a limit on the dangerous deterioration of all levels of the agricultural sector. Instead, the deterioration and retirement level continued, aggravating the agriculture sector and leading to catastrophic results. In 1970, the agriculture sector contributed around 40 percent to the GDP, 20 percent in 1985, 12 percent in 1994, and below 3.5 percent in 2018.

Numerous policies add to all the above-mentioned reasons that explain the deterioration of agriculture: closures, control over borders, control over production inputs, and filling the Palestinian market with settlement products. These policies, as well as the absence of clear national protection policies, have led to the dangerous deterioration of one of the most important productive sectors, which is linked to many other economic sectors.

According to the Palestinian Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey 2016–2018, conducted by the Union of Agricultural Work Committees in partnership with the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Program, 47 percent of the population of the Gaza Strip is classified as food insecure, compared to 27 percent of the West Bank population.

Likewise, according to data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Social Development, the unemployment rate before the
To rise to the challenge posed by the occupation and the COVID-19 crisis, we must establish a committee that oversees the storing of food products for at least six months.

The outbreak of COVID-19 reached 29 percent. After the outbreak of the pandemic, the percentage jumped to 40 percent during a period of approximately one month. In other words, around 2 million Palestinians are exposed to food insecurity and no longer have the ability to provide their own food. This is considered one of the most dangerous situations that the Palestinian community has had to endure – a situation that has affected a very large number of families in a short period of time. What is really alarming is that these percentages continue to rise, which means that more Palestinian families will enter the circle of grave danger in the upcoming period!

In light of the threat of the planned annexation, the deterioration in the situation of the Arab countries and the outbreak and impact of COVID-19 has put us in front of our responsibility to rearrange our priorities in a completely different way. Priority should be given to our sovereignty over resources and food. This frankly requires an immediate call for the formation of what can be termed a National Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. Such a committee is indispensable, especially when we take into consideration that the pandemic will continue, which may threaten the abundance of food and push more families to the brink of poverty and hunger. In response, we have to be well organized. Such a committee would be responsible for providing for and storing food for months or years, as dozens of countries have been doing since the beginning of the pandemic. In other words, there is a need to develop and adopt national strategies of food storage that are able to meet our food needs for a period ranging from six months to a year minimum.

The Palestinian government is required to review its plans and policies, reformulating them in a way that gives “productive” small-scale farmers special attention and protection, admitting their role in the wheel of local production. Likewise, what is required is the development of policies that give priority to production that is based on the needs and demands of the local market. We have to secure our consumers’ needs rather than prioritize the production of crop for external markets. What is required now, in light of all these concerns, including lack of clarity and stability, is to focus on home gardens and prioritize local seeds and local production. Primary attention should be given to the Palestinian local seed banks that are considered the safety vault to preserve and protect the genetic varieties of the local indigenous seeds that have constituted one of the most important food resources for thousands of families, as these seeds have adapted to the environment and climate of Palestine for thousands of years.

There is also a greater importance for young people to undertake a pioneering role in the agricultural production process, given their added value and the enormous energy they can bring. Youth mobilization can be actualized through promoting youth participation in all stages of agricultural production and by allocating the necessary financial resources to provide them with the necessary means of production. More efforts should be invested in encouraging youth to join cooperatives and materialize the idea of creating a Youth Cooperative Village. Such a model is built on maximizing the role of youth as a reliable energy.

Planning based on an understanding of reality, realistic planning, is the guarantor of providing the elements of agricultural production and growing the food we need by investing in every inch of land available for cultivation or reclamation. Such planning is neither donor-driven nor driven by the desire to meet requirements that qualify us to join international agencies. Our plans should be directed at enabling our small-scale producers – especially youth and women – to produce food adequately without relying on international aid or relief projects. In this way, we will become the ones who make the decisions regarding what to produce, when to produce, and with what means we produce!

Fuad Abu Saif holds an MA in sustainable development and agriculture-plant protection. Through his work as a human rights defender and a leader and developer of hundreds of agricultural programs, initiatives, and coalitions, he has contributed to the development of the agricultural sector through empowering farmers’ steadfastness and sovereignty over resources within a sustainable community based on emancipation development.

Youth must be given a pioneering role in strengthening the agriculture sector through measures such as providing them with the means necessary to facilitate production and involving them in all stages.

granting youth plots of land that are classified as state land or Waqf lands. This would constitute a turning point towards productive agricultural work based on

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Rooted in the Future*
The Kitchen as a Space of Empowerment

For a decade of my art practice, I was, in some way, focused on the topic of disappearance. During those ten years, I was making map coordinates disappear; I was making the land disappear from actual events — from underneath real Palestinians; I was making memory disappear, calling for forgetfulness through repetition of remembering. I was unsure whether there would be something out there, but it kept flowing out of me without any particular plan. I created videos, installations, performances that tried to open approaches towards perceiving this disappearance. And when you think of me as a Palestinian and a female, then this obsession with “disappearance” will make more sense. I used these statues of disappearance to see better; I guess I wanted to see something else. I wanted to reduce the noise around what a “Palestinian” is. I wanted to see myself better, to see us better, as a people and as individuals who do not need to be filtered through the lens of identity politics, over and over and over again, until we are trapped. I wanted to liberate myself from this burden.

My artist bio described my looking at liminal spaces that have been residing in their liminality for so long that liminality and in-betweenness are the only reality that exists. The last video piece I produced in 2015 was entitled “A tutorial on how to disappear, become an image.” In it, I closed my eyes for the last time on a screen. I realized that I missed people, I missed their voices in my life — and my life really is my practice, my art practice. I could tell you the story of how this missing happened and describe the scene in which my whole practice as an artist collapsed in my heart. One night, I decided that if the world were to fall apart, and I was one of the survivors in a post-apocalyptic future, I would like to be a cook. That exact moment of realization, in the summer of 2016, during an art residency in Tokyo, began the snowball of culinary and life decisions for my art practice and beyond.

Three years ago, I would never have thought that I would create a project called Palestine Hosting Society. But I did. It changed my life. But in five years, my life will be different again, and I might create something entirely different. We come from a place where politics and the future are tough to predict. Things keep changing but at the same time are very static. We cannot even imagine a time with no Israeli state. That’s the struggle: our existence is based on resisting the efforts to erase us.

For Palestinians, nostalgia has always been a very tricky emotional state due to its negative connotations. Some think that we will never keep up with the world because we are very sentimental and nostalgic. We have been engaged in the same struggle for 70 years now, and we miss something that does not exist anymore. The homeland does not exist in the way we imagine it. For my generation, it is important to bring back the space in which I could tell you the story of how this missing happened and describe the scene in which my whole practice as an artist collapsed in my heart.
of belonging, knowledge, the relation with the land, the know-how, the seasonal practices, all the things we’ve forgotten over time. Focused on intifadas and survival struggles, the generation before us had limited space to tend to these things. But their struggle cleared the way for my generation to begin from a place where we can bring our relation to the land into the present and produce something of great value for ourselves and our future. Things will never be the same, we might not wear embroidered dresses like our grandmas used to, but if we have the knowledge of what it meant for them, we will respect them more. With the damage that we have caused to the earth and the escalation in how nature is manifesting its harsher face, there are survival tools and sensibilities in ancient wisdom that might save us in a future of scarcity, vulnerability, and uncertainty.

I work with food and find it beautiful. Everybody loves food! We Arabs love food. But Palestinians always feel a certain bitterness because we see how the Palestinian kitchen is being appropriated and taken away from us by Israel, which is building its national cuisine out of it: hummus, falafel, couscous, etc. We are not allowed to collect wild herbs such as zaatar (wild thyme) or akub (the edible root of a thistle). Israeli prohibitions are put in place not to protect the plants but to create a rupture in the everyday practices of Palestinians. These rules and laws aim to prevent us from going to our land and disrupt our direct connection to the land, the soil. They know that once you break this connection and you render the land an abstract concept, then it will be easier to take it away from the people, easier to make us forget our past or our rights and settle for easier solutions. At least that is their reasoning. But I created this project at a time when many young Palestinians are starting to reclaim their land and customs. There are groups that work on agriculture, seed collection and preservation, eco-farming; there are farming co-ops. A new kind of consciousness and awareness is arising and affecting how we deal with our bodies on this land. We feel a responsibility in our bodies in a way that was denied to the generation before us.

The timing was perfect for this project, not only for me in my life but also for the impact that it can have. If you want to talk about disappearing recipes in the middle of a war, it’s not going to work. There are other emergencies. But when you have many groups and individuals creating momentum around specific issues, you’ll get a stronger voice with a louder volume.

When I present a table in Palestine, I focus on one research topic and delve deeply into it. I create the menu to tell a story that is based on the research topic, and I present it slowly to the people. I perform it as I talk. My menus comprise disappearing recipes, and the stories I present are almost lost. I bring them from the past to the table and observe this encounter. At the same time, I don’t limit myself to the space of the physical table: I am very active on social media. That is also part of the project: activating the archives, creating a narrative of reappearing. For me, it is about reminding Palestinians of what we have lost due to the construction of geography. (For example, each part of the West Bank is secluded from the others, and the people living there cannot go to Gaza, to Haifa, Nazareth, Akka, etc.) There are physical borders from which we can’t escape, and the result is that people do not know about each other’s practices. At the same time, the loss of land has made us lose many crops that were central to some recipes and subsequently were no longer cooked. So I bring those stories, not just the recipes. It enables us to look at ourselves in a new way – a way that not only has roots in the past but also is empowering, enabling us to create change in the future.

So I present tables in Palestine for Palestinians. But I am also working on tables outside of Palestine, with a focus on vanishing food practices. Having traveled and shown my work in many different places, I am able to create a narrative that retains its local essence even though...
it is presented in another place. I find the challenge of addressing diverse audiences exciting.

I want people to have an encounter with a part of themselves that they didn’t know existed.

History, for the longest time, has been written by the nations and gender that hold power, which usually eliminates female power from the equation. I believe that in the last decade, more energy has been created by collective voices who strive to reverse this suppressive narrative and discourse that was never written by the less voiced. But for collectivity to work, each person must be aware of him- or herself as part of the group rather than dissolve into it. The moment we dissolve, it becomes enslavement, leading us to forget ourselves and what we can offer as individuals that is different and unique.

It is a question of equality as well. I believe that collectivity created by women is different from that created by men – the way we cook the food, sit and eat and talk together, the way we communicate and analyze things, the way we respect each other tends to be different from the ways of men. There is less ego in the process and the actions.

That’s why for me, the kitchen is a space of empowerment. The way we move through it, process and respect the food, we channel energy. So I believe in collectivity but one that is not patriarchal, one that is not selfish, one that does not have a loud voice, is not black and white. It is more tender and simpler; it keeps reinventing itself. Our bodies are changing all the time. We create, share, and love.

Mirna Bamieh is an artist from Jerusalem with a BA in psychology from Birzeit University, Ramallah, and an MFA from Bezalel Academy for Arts and Design, Jerusalem. She participated in the Ashkal Alwan Home Workspace program in Beirut as a 2013/14 fellow and obtained a diploma in professional cooking in 2018, which led her to use storytelling and food as mediums for creating socially engaged projects. Through her art practice, Mirna aspires to create artworks where food/eating/sharing create a fresh, innovative way for people to experience themselves and their surroundings. Mirna creates artworks that unpack social concerns and limitations in contemporary political dilemmas and reflect on the conditions that characterize Palestinian communities and beyond.

You can follow Mirna and her projects at mirnabamieh.cargo.site, palestinehostingsociety.com, and #palestine_hosting_society (IG).

* This article is based on a blog published by Graylit; the original version is available at https://graylit.org/blog/mirna-bamieh.

Nobody can work alone, you know?
Bassam Walweel is the board chair of the Palestinian Federation of Industries, the Palestinian Food Industries Union, Injaz Palestine, and Raya Media Network, and a member of the board of several other organizations.

Born in Qalqilya in 1961 to a family originally from Kafer Saba, Bassam Walweel is a successful businessman with a meticulously crafted career. As he prepares to enter the world of politics, Bassam wishes to follow in the footsteps of his historical role model Omar Bin Al-Khatab, whose administrative style fascinates him, and he hopes to emulate his contemporary role model Yasser Arafat.

Even with only moderate income, Bassam’s father insisted on educating his children. Bassam had to work as a street vendor from the age of eight until he completed his secondary education at Al-Saadiyah Secondary School, after which he obtained a BA with honors in accounting and administration from An-Najah National University.

He started his career as a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Economics/Department of Accounting at An-Najah University. Several academic accomplishments enabled him to earn an MA in accounting with full distinction from the United States. He returned to Palestine in 1989 and worked as a lecturer at An-Najah National University. In September 1989, he was placed under administrative detention and released in March 1990.

Bassam was appointed general director of the Federation of Palestinian Agricultural Cooperatives in the West Bank in 1993, where he served until he became general director of the Palestinian Center for Energy and Environmental Research in 1995. From 2000 to 2004, he held the position of general director of the Palestine Poultry Company and the Palestinian Industrial Investment Company before taking on the position of general director of the Palestine Investment Fund’s Commercial Services Company from 2004 to 2005.

In 2006, he became the deputy CEO for Public Relations and Investment at the Palestinian Telecommunication Company until 2008 when he became general director of Golden Wheat Mills Company, and public and government relations consultant for Paltel Group. He also joined the board of several organizations and chaired the board of Injaz Palestine. Since 2014, he has been the board chair of the Palestinian Federation of Industries, the Palestinian Food Industries Union, and Raya Media Network, in addition to his membership in the boards of other organizations. He has played a distinguished role in promoting the industrial sector in Palestine and the economy in general, achieving visible results. He believes that the private sector must lead the development process and take risks to build the economy of the future state. He plans to encourage these investments through strategic planning and open public-private sector dialogue.

Bassam loves music, football, hiking, and swimming. He believes that success in business must be associated with success in family life. Visionary leadership starts at the family level and moves on to work and relations with friends and society at large. If one of these areas is neglected, it cannot count as real leadership.

Although Bassam faced discrimination because of his political affiliation, he persevered. He believes in integrity, and this is what matters in this strange era. To Bassam, our youth are the leaders of the present and the future, and investments must be geared towards them. He believes in teamwork, the democratic exchange of opinion, and hard work.
Palestine on a Plate
Memories from My Mother’s Kitchen

By Joudie Kalla, with
photography by Ria Osborne

Interlink Books, 2016, 240 pages,
paperback US$25, hardback US$35

Palestine on a Plate is a tribute
to family, cooking, and home. It
contains old recipes created with
love and brings people together in
appreciation of the beauty of this
rich heritage. Immerse yourself in
the stories and culture of Palestine
through the food in this book.

This volume celebrates real
Palestinian food, cooked with the
ingredients that Joudie’s mother
and grandmother use – and that
their grandmothers used before
them.

Experience the wonderful flavors
of Palestine through zingy
fattet hummus (tangy yogurt,
chickpeas, and hummus, served
over toasted pita bread and
drizzled in buttered pine nuts),
satisfyingly spiced makloubeh (an
upside-down spiced rice
dish with lamb neck and fried
eggplant), eggplant and zucchini
stuffed full with spiced and
herbed lamb, and sublimely
decadent awameh (honey
dumplings), all accompanied by
fresh mint tea and white coffee
(not actually coffee at all, but a
refreshing mix of water, orange
blossom water, and sugar).

Colorful, stunning photography that
evokes the vibrancy and romance
of the country will bring Palestine
into your home and make you fall
in love with this beautiful way to
cook and enjoy food.

From the Interlink website
(www.interlinkbooks.com).

A beautifully photographed culinary and cultural tour of Palestine

Palestinian food is not just found on the streets of the Old City
of Jerusalem with the ka’ak (sesame bread) sellers and stalls
that sell za’atar, chicken, meat, or other types of mana’eesh
(Flatbread covered by a layer of thyme and sesame, chicken, minced
meat with pine nuts, white cheese, or vegetables), but in the home,
too. This delicious, healthy food is found in kitchens all across the
country, where families cook and eat together every day in the way
that generations before them have always done.
Artist of the Month

By Yusef Hussein

Bashar Alhroub

The Palestinian artist Bashar Alhroub was born in Jerusalem in 1978, grew up in Hebron, and is currently living and working in Ramallah. Alhroub graduated with a BA in fine arts from Al-Najah National University. He was awarded a fellowship by the Ford Foundation to pursue a master’s degree in fine arts, which he completed in 2010 at the Winchester School of Art, the University of Southampton in the United Kingdom. In 2012, Alhroub was awarded the first grand prize at the 15th Asian Art Biennale, Bangladesh.

Alhroub works with a variety of media that include photography, video installation, drawing, and painting. His work is deeply influenced by his community’s socio-political and cultural sentiments that assert his identity. More recently, his work has begun to engage with the search into the self and is strongly associated with issues such as religion, nationalism, and identity construction, based on his experiences and dealings with personal vulnerability.

Alhroub has exhibited at various museums, biennales, and art venues, including the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; Paul Valéry Museum, Sete, France; American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington DC; the Arab World Institute, Paris; Aga Khan Museum, Toronto; Imperial War Museum, London; Frieze Art Fair, London; Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois, USA; Al-Ma’mal Foundation for Contemporary Art, Jerusalem; Jordan National Gallery, Amman; Art Dubai; Abu Dhabi Art, UAE; Eli and Edythe Broad Museum, East Lansing, Michigan, USA; the Barjeel Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE; Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk, Poland; and many others.

The international artist residencies in which Alhroub has participated include Art Omi, New York; Mattress Factory Contemporary Art Museum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA; Delfina Foundation, London; China Printmaking Museum and Guanlan Printmaking Base, China; BAG Art Camp Residency and Workshop, Bergen, Norway; Braziers International Artists Workshop, UK; among many others.

Alhroub was one of 33 artists who participated in a recent exhibition at A.M. Qattan Foundation on Palestinian flora and colonialism, entitled Weed Control, exploring the relationship between the seed and the earth and its symbolism in the struggle for survival between the colonizer and the colonized.

The ongoing exhibition Silent Garden at Zawyeh Gallery in Ramallah (see the October edition of TWIP) has been extended until December 3, 2020.

Find out more about Bashar Alhroub at http://www.basharalhroub.com/.
Mohamed Joulani

The recent death of Mohamed Joulani sparked an outpouring of grief and affection that would have astonished the artist himself. Slight in build, soft-spoken, humble, and self-effacing, he never sought the limelight or the acclaim that his extraordinary talent warranted. Fellow artist Ahed Izhiman recalls asking Joulani where he saw himself in the future. Joulani replied: "I will remain what I am. I am doing OK, and when the future comes, God will take care of it." He was a true artist, obsessed with the craft and the possibilities of expressing the human condition’s truth through art.

Joulani embarked on his career with a degree in fine arts from Al-Quds University, teaching visual arts at the Ramallah Friends School. His 2016 solo exhibition at Al Hoash Gallery proved that he was not afraid to tackle controversial subject matter or express his frustrations. The Regular Day exhibition conveyed what a “normal” day means for a Palestinian, as we see the artist passing through checkpoints, encountering armed Israeli soldiers, and confronting his Palestinian identity and heritage.

In 2018, Joulani completed a residency at the Cité internationale des arts in Paris, where he continued to experiment with self-portraits, choosing to reveal himself not in words but through his paintings. He was also very active in the Jerusalem Street Museum project that brought art into the city streets and public spaces.

Joulani made his art appear effortless, as though a natural extension of his body. His detachment from the material world put him on a timetable that differed from that of everyone else; he would get absorbed in his work, surviving on coffee and cigarettes, forgetting to eat. His vulnerability and quiet sincerity won people’s hearts. He was a listener who only joined in conversations when he had something important to add. Yet, his irrepressible sense of humor and infectious laugh ensured that no conversation would remain serious for too long.

Joulani produced exquisite sketches, watercolors, and modern artwork of Jerusalem, a city he loved. There was a calm simplicity in his pieces, and the bright, vivid colors he chose conveyed a sense of what is eternal in the city, what makes it beautiful and bright despite the rapid transformations under occupation and the uncertain future. Art can win hearts and minds in unexpected ways, and Joulani was a crucial ambassador for Palestinian art.

By Karen Mann, Levantine Gallery
Exhibition of the Month

By Reem Al Natsheh

Bab IdDeir Art Gallery, Bethlehem.
Open Wednesday to Saturday from 10:00 to 17:00 until November 20.

During the lockdown, while people stayed safe from the coronavirus by engaging in social distancing, Palestinian artist Reem Al Natsheh chose to challenge herself to rebuild the social connections that were prohibited by the COVID-19 pandemic. While isolated in a studio, she expressed her resistance to social distancing through her artwork, creating exaggerated intensifications of crowded elements in tight spaces, using materials such as acrylics, watercolors, charcoal, pastels, inks, pigments, and mixed media. Inspired by mythological and traditional Palestinian folk stories, Reem deconstructed the elements and characters from their typical stereotypes into new visual, contemporary, aesthetic templates that are influenced by the collective visual memory.

Most traditional and folk stories tell of a world and characters that are significant because of their strangeness and excessive wonder, featuring an awaited hero who embodies the dreams and hopes of the poor. The story unfolds through the myth of the beast that carries out acts of threat and predation, causing the sequence of events that oblige the hero to confront this force of evil and resist it through various adventures. The inevitable logic comes with the turn of the tide, when the weak manage to beat the strong.

Nus Nsais, through all its means, is a symbol of Palestinian existence that rejects its crushed reality and suppression, and overcomes the experience of displacement and demolition. Reem, however, constructs a tale that will never be subject to destruction but rather thoroughly enforces the sense of existence, power, and eternity.

Reem holds a bachelor’s degree in fine arts from An-Najah National University. She has participated in many local and international group art exhibitions, and in 2019, she was awarded third place in the Ismail Shammout Competition organized by Dar al-Kalima for Art and Culture, Bethlehem.

The exhibition is funded by the Palestinian Cultural Fund/Ministry of Culture.

Nus Nsais, mixed media on canvas, 120 x 70 cm.

Happy Crowded World, mixed media on canvas, 150 x 200 cm.

Greetings to the Hero, mixed media on canvas, 200 x 150 cm.
MANAKEESH
BI ZA’ATAR

shahr al-khair (the season of good) is how we Palestinians refer to the olive harvest, an exceptional and meaningful time of the year. Our relationship with the olive trees is very special, and one of the most heartwarming traditions associated with this season lies in food.

During shahr al-khair, Palestinians rise early to go to their olive groves and harvest the fresh olives. When our stomachs call for a delicious breakfast, fresh, hot thyme pies prepared with olive oil, manakeesh bi-za’atar, as we call them, are a favorite. Are you ready to give it a try? Yalla, let’s go!

Ingredients
For the dough:
1 kilo flour
1 tbsp yeast
1 tbsp sugar
1 tbsp salt
1½ cups warm water

For the delicious thyme/za’atar filling:
400 g fresh, green za’atar leaves, coarsely cut
3 medium-sized onions (around 375 grams), finely cut
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp salt (or to taste)
1 tbsp sumac (or juice of one lemon)
Olive oil for baking

Now the fun begins:
1) In a small bowl, combine water, sugar, and yeast. Set aside for 10 minutes to foam.
2) In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, salt, and olive oil; mix by hand.
3) Wash the za’atar, squeeze out the water, and pat dry.

4) Make a well in the middle of the flour mixture, pour in the yeast and water, stir until a soft dough forms.
5) Transfer to a flat, floured surface and knead for a few minutes until the dough becomes smooth.
6) Form the dough into a ball and place in a lightly oiled bowl; cover with a damp cloth, and place in a warm spot to rise until it doubles (an hour to 90 minutes).
7) Punch down the dough, knead it, and form eight balls. Arrange on a lightly floured surface, cover again, and leave to rise another 30 minutes.
8) Place the coarsely cut za’atar into a bowl with the finely cut onions, salt, sumac, and olive oil; mix.
9) Preheat the oven to 220°C. Just before you are ready to proceed, place a large baking sheet in the oven for a couple of minutes. Remove it, oil lightly, and place near you.
10) Using your fingers, spread each dough ball into a very thin disc. Fold into half and press the edges together. Cover with one eighth of the za’atar mixture and lightly pat it into the dough. Fold the round edge over the mixture and pull the edges to form a rectangle, with the za’atar mixture inside. Fold in the two ends (thirds) to make a small package; cover it, and let it rest while preparing the other packages.
11) Put some oil on your hands to spread out a package, making a large, thin square. Fold it over your hand to transfer it onto the hot, oiled baking sheet.
12) Bake for 6 to 8 minutes or until the dough is slightly browned. Turn it over and brown the other side for a couple of minutes.
13) Once the dough is baked, sprinkle a few drops of water on both sides, set aside, and cover while spreading and baking the other manakeesh.
14) Finally, drip a few drops of olive oil on it and spread it with your hands, lightly covering both sides.

Now you can share in the experience of a Palestinian olive harvester during shahr al-khair. Cut some tomatoes and cucumbers, prepare some hot tea, and soon you’ll be ready for the second round of harvesting!

Amal Merrie
Hosh Traitreh (Traitreh Courtyard) is located in the middle of Al-Aqqabeh Quarter, to the west of the Ibrahimi Mosque, in the heart of the old city of Hebron (31° 31’ 31” N, 35° 6’ 29” E). It tells tales of glory, pride, and nobility through its paths and alleys that were built by its residents who came from the families of Abu Mezar, Dweik, Mujahid, Iskafi, Sub Laban, and Hab Rumman. Today, it is still one of the heritage landmarks of Hebron's old city, as described by journalist Jihad Kawasmeh.*

Hosh Traitreh is among the compound courtyards that are composed of a vast number of spaces that form 26 apartments in their entirety. This courtyard is characterized by the distribution of rooms around a central axis that is interspersed with several small squares, irregular in their geometric formation, which give the yards a distinctive, organic character.

Like the rest of the courtyards of Hebron’s old city, it was influenced by social and economic factors, as its design was appropriate for human needs, customs, and traditions, and by the nature of the extended-family structure. This is reflected in a unique architectural pattern. As a result of the restoration efforts made by the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee, Al-Hosh currently houses 25 families or approximately 125 individuals, while the courtyard preserves its traditional style and distinctive heritage elements and details.

According to Kawasmeh, historian Yusef Abu Mezer explains that Hosh Traitreh, considered the largest in the old city of Hebron, was named after its residents from the Abu Mezar family. Its members were distinguished by wearing the taratir or tantur (a woman’s cone-shaped headdress, popular in the Levant during the nineteenth century). With time, its name became traitreh. He indicates that the construction of the Hosh dates back to the Crusader era, when the quarter was called Fustoqa. Afterwards it was called the Aqaba Quarter, and finally Al-Aqqabeh Quarter.

Abu Mezar recounts that Hosh Traitreh was sometimes called the tanning Hosh because its owners, especially the Abu Mezar family, were famous leather tanners. It was closed in 1938 when the British Mandate authorities extended the waterline. This measure led to the end of the camel pack manufacturing industry, as the containers that the Hebronites had used to preserve their water were no longer in demand.

Hebron, also called Al-Khalil or Mamre in ancient times, is situated at an altitude of 900 meters and has been settled continuously for 5,000 years. It is regarded as holy by Muslims, Christians, and Jews alike because the prophet Abraham is believed to be buried there.

For more information and guidance, please contact Bassam Almohor at almohor@gmail.com, +972-52-458-4273, or Facebook @palestinesreetlife.

CONCERTS

Thursday 5
18:00 Second Young Talents Concert by the students at Barenboim-Said for Music. Barenboim-Said for Music new premises (22 Al-Jihad St., Al-Masyoun). For more information, please call 02 297 2276 or 059 891 5049.

Saturday 21 – Sunday 29
Week-long music workshop with Filasteen Young Musicians Orchestra (FYMO) and Barenboim-Said Center for Music (BSCFM) Kids Orchestra. Barenboim-Said for Music new premises (22 Al-Jihad St., Al-Masyoun). For more information, please call 02 297 2276 or 059 891 5049.

Friday 27
14:00–15:00 Concert by Filasteen Young Musicians Orchestra (FYMO) and Barenboim-Said Center for Music (BSCFM) Kids Orchestra. Barenboim-Said for Music new premises (22 Al-Jihad St., Al-Masyoun). For more information, please call 02 297 2276 or 059 891 5049.

Friday 27
19:00 Musical Representations of Jerusalem with two of today’s foremost classical musicians of Palestinian heritage, the soprano Mariam Tamari and the pianist Fadi Deeb, focusing on Jerusalem as a musical theme, a city where Mariam and Fadi’s memories merge with those of their ancestors. The performance will be followed by discussion. Palestinian Museum social media platforms.

Saturday 28
18:00–19:00 Concert by Filasteen Young Musicians Orchestra (FYMO) and Barenboim-Said Center for Music (BSCFM) Kids Orchestra. Barenboim-Said for Music new premises (22 Al-Jihad St., Al-Masyoun). For more information, please call 02 297 2276 or 059 891 5049.

Sunday 29
17:00 Concert by Filasteen Young Musicians Orchestra (FYMO). Barenboim-Said for Music new premises (22 Al-Jihad St., Al-Masyoun). For more information, please call 02 297 2276 or 059 891 5049.

EXHIBITIONS

Sunday 8
14:00–15:00 The Curators’ Tour Printed in Jerusalem: Mustamloun is organized by the Palestinian Museum and presented by Baha Jubeh and Abdel-Rahman Shabane. The event will explore the relationship between Jerusalemites and the political, educational, commercial, cultural, and touristic publications printed in their city (in Arabic). An English tour is available upon prior request. The Palestinian Museum. To participate, please register at activities@palmuseum.org.

Wednesday 25
18:00 Virtual Tour Printed in Jerusalem: Mustamloun is organized by the Palestinian Museum to highlight the blank gaps in newspapers that marked the Israeli military censors in the 1960s and 1970s to suppress any material of which they disapproved, and which left readers with a space to imagine and wonder about the censored item and about novel ways to maneuver around censorship (in Arabic with English subtitles). English Palestinian Museum social media platforms.

GAZA

CHILDREN’S EVENTS

Sunday 1 – Wednesday 4

Visit thisweekinpalestine.com and enjoy the wonders of the Church of the Nativity.

THE TREASURES OF THE NATIVITY

BEITHEM ST. PALESTINE

HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

In addition to the regular distribution points, it can be found at https://www.thisweekinpalestine.com/issue/issue-260-5/ or by scanning the attached QR code.
**Cultural Centers**

**Al Ma'mal Foundation for Contemporary Art**
Jerusalem
Al-Jawalda St.#8, New Gate, P.O.Box 14644, Jerusalem 91146
Tel: 02-6283457, Fax: 02-6272312
Email: info@almamalfoundation.org, www.almamalfoundation.org

**Palestinian Heritage Museum**
Jerusalem
Abu Obaida St, P.O.Box 19377, Jerusalem.
Tel: +972 2 6272531, Fax: +972 2 6272341
Email: info@dta-museum.org
Website: www.dta-museum.org

**The Edward Said National Conservatory of Music (ESNCM)**
Jerusalem
11 Azzahra St, Shihabi Building
Tel: +972 (02) 626-3230, Fax: +972 (02) 627-1711
PO Box 66666, Jerusalem, 91666
Email: info@ncm.birzeit.edu, http://ncm.birzeit.edu
https://www.facebook.com/ESNCM/

**Birzeit University**
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Ramallah: Tel: 02-2959070-1, Fax: 02-2959071
Beit Sahour Tel & Fax: 02-2748704
Tchaikovsky Musical School Tel & Fax: 022778606
Nablus Tel & Fax: 09-2387773
Gaza Tel & Fax: 08-2628903

Photo courtesy of ESNCM

**Palestine Museum of Natural History**
Mar Andrea, Antonya Street, Bethlehem
Tel: 972-22773553 info@palestinianature.org
www.palestinianature.org/visit

**A.M. Qattan Foundation**
27 An-Nahda Women Association Street, Al-Tira, Ramallah – Palestine, P.O. Box 2276, Postal Code 90606
Telephone: +970 2 296 0544/+970 2 296 3280, Fax: +970 2 296 0544
Email: info@qattanfoundation.org, www.qattanfoundation.org

**Popular Art Centre**
Al -AIN Street, Box 3627, El-Bireh, Palestine
Tel: +970 2 240389, Fax: +970 2 2402851, Mob: +970 559849797
Email: info@popularartcentre.org, www.popularartcentre.org
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PopularArtCentre
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**Sareyyet Ramallah - First Ramallah Group**
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Jawwal: +970 597 777 096, Fax: +970 2 296 05 83
E-mail: sareyyet@sareyyet.ps / art@sareyyet.ps, www.sareyyet.ps
Facebook: SareyyetRamallah

**The Palestinian Circus School**
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Facebook: The Palestinian Circus School

**The Palestinian Museum**
Museum Street, PO Box 48, Birzeit, Palestine
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Facebook: The Palestinian Museum
Instagram: @palmuseum
ACCOMMODATIONS

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Email: office@austrianhospice.com, Website: www.austrianhospice.org

Casa Nova - Jerusalem Hospice Guesthouse
Casanova Street, New Gate
P.O.Box 1321 Jerusalem 9101301 Israel
Tel: 02 627 1441, 02 626 2974, Fax: 02 626 4370
Email: casanovaj@custodia.org, https://casanovaj.custodia.org/

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gloria@netvision.net.

Jerusalem Hotel
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E-mail: info@stgeorgehoteljerusalem.com

Tantur Hills Hotel
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reservations@tanturhills.com, www.tanturhills.com

Caesar Hotel
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reservation@lavenderboutiquehotel.com, www.lavenderboutiquehotel.com

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Tel: +970 2 298588 Fax: +970 2 298533
reservations.mhpa@millenniumhotels.com, www.millenniumhotels.com

Taybeh Golden Hotel
Main Street 100, Taybeh (Ramallah District)
Tel: 289-9440
info@taybehgoldenhotel.com, www.taybehgoldenhotel.com
**ACCOMMODATIONS**

**Bethlehem**

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  Tel: +972 2 275 6400, Fax: +972 2 276 3736
  Email: city@ambassadorcollection.com

- **Ibda'a Cultural Center Guesthouse**
  Dheisheh Refugee Camp, Bab al-Mohayem, Bethlehem
  Tel: +970 02 277 6444, info@ibdaa48.org
  www.ibdaa48.org
  Facebook: Ibda’a Cultural Center

- **Jacir Palace Hotel**
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  Tel: 0097222766777, Fax: 0097222766770
  reservation@jacirpalace.ps, www.jacirpalace.ps
  Facebook: jacirpalacehotel, Twitter: JacirPalace

- **Manger Square Hotel**
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  info@mangersquarehotel.com, www.mangersquarehotel.com

- **Nativity Bells Hotel**
  City Center - Manger Street
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  Email: nativitybells@palnet.com, www.nativitybellshotel.ps
  https://www.facebook.com/NativityBellsHotel/

- **Saint Gabriel Hotel**
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  Tel: +970 2 275 9990, Fax + 970 2 275 9991
  Email: info@stg-hotel.com, www.stg-hotel.com

- **Al Yasmeen Hotel**
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  Info@alyasmeen.com, www.alyasmeen.com

- **Jericho Resorts ******
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- **Oasis Hotel – Jericho**
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  Email: info@oasis- jericho.ps, website: http://www.oasis- jericho.ps
  www.facebook.com/OasisJericho, Snapchat: oasis.hotel

- **Rawabi Hotel Rental Apartments**
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  Mobile: 059 420 4378
  rent@rawabi.ps

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  Tel: 02 627 1441, 02 626 2974, Fax: 02 626 4370
  Email: casanova@custodia.org, https://casanova@custodia.org/

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- **La Collina Bistro and Restaurant**
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  17:30 - 23:00
**RESTAURANTS**

**Meejana Lounge** (at St. George Hotel)
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Tel: +972 2 627 7232, Fax: +972 2 627 7233
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**Al-Jisser Pub**
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**Zest**
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**Artoos**
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Current exhibition: "Silent Garden" by Bashar Alhroub.
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facebook - البيت العلمي والتكنولوجيا
A Lesson from History

In 31 BC, Augustus Caesar founded the Roman Empire and proclaimed himself the first emperor of Rome. The first two centuries of the empire saw a period of unprecedented stability and prosperity known as the Pax Romana (“Roman Peace”). During the reign of Emperor Trajan (98–117 AD), Rome reached its greatest territorial expanse. The Roman Empire came to an end in 476 AD, when Romulus, the last of the Western Roman emperors, was overthrown by the Germanic leader Odoacer, who became the first Barbarian to rule in Rome. The other half of the empire, the Byzantine Empire, survived until the fall of Constantinople in 1453 AD. There’s your history lesson for the day.

Historians pretty much agree on the reasons behind the fall of the Roman Empire which can be summarized as follows: invasions by Barbarian tribes; economic troubles and overreliance on slave labor; the rise of the Eastern Empire; overexpansion and military overspending; government corruption and political instability; the arrival of the Huns and the migration of the Barbarian tribes; the spread of Christianity and the loss of the traditional Roman value system; and the weakening of the Roman legions.

In general, however, one of the main reasons for the decline of an empire is its becoming overextended or overstretched, whether by reaching too far, too fast or by being forced, oftentimes through economic need (sometimes greed), to keep on capturing land. In Paul Kennedy’s book The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, we read, “[M]ilitary overstretch and a concomitant relative decline are the consistent threats facing powers whose ambitions and security requirements are greater than their resource base can provide.” Incidentally, some researchers suggest that overconfidence can also be a contributing factor to the downfall of an empire.

It is interesting to see that, in particular, economic troubles and overreliance on “slave” labor, the rise of the Eastern Empire, overexpansion and military overspending, and government corruption and political instability all contributed in a major way to the downfall of the Roman Empire. Yes, I’m still writing about the Roman Empire, but I can’t prevent you from making a modern-day comparison and connecting the dots. That’s the second lesson today. But who’s listening?

Long live Palestine!

Sani Meo
Publisher