

I Am Inspired

The most frequently used phrase in *This Week in Palestine*'s articles is probably "Despite the occupation..." I sometimes even catch myself rolling my eyes when I read it! But you know what? This phrase should not be taken lightly since every Palestinian success story is indeed "Despite the occupation." This month's column is not about Israeli restrictions that hamper Palestinian development (they would fill *Encyclopedia Britannica*!), it is about the inspiring elements in Palestine that compel anyone to look in awe at Palestinians.

However self-critical I am, I certainly do not subscribe to the popular school of self-flagellation. In fact, I stubbornly believe that the de-development of Palestine due to the occupation is the single-most important reason for just about everything that Palestinians do wrong; even for their bad driving manners at Qalandiya checkpoint! Simultaneously though, I am inspired when Yabous Productions is finally able to inaugurate its aptly named Faisal Hussein Hall in Jerusalem after years of effort to realize this dream. What a proud moment that was for Yabous and for Jerusalem. I am inspired when I see over three hundred schoolchildren as they dance the traditional *dabka* after a six-month training course. I am equally – if perhaps less patriotically – inspired when I visit a new zesty restaurant in Ramallah (which, I must say, is no longer a novelty) that is truly top-notch and on par with high international standards. The list of inspirational projects in just about every field, the huge number of inspiring people who create in us a spirit of hope and pride, the rousing ideas that are valued and being implemented in our institutions, and even the uplifting plans by various Palestinian ministries are in fact endless. Having said that, however, I am particularly inspired by the people of Gaza who put all of us to shame with their resilience and steadfastness. Despite an eleven-year siege and a dire economic situation, Gazans are far from throwing in the towel.

Yes, "Despite the occupation" can become a cliché, but we need to constantly remind ourselves that we are *not* living in normal conditions, and so we are forced to put extra effort into achieving even the simplest things in life. The single-most important reason that I persevere in putting out issue after issue of *This Week in Palestine* is the bottomless resource of Palestinian inspirational success stories. The vibrancy of Palestinian society is simply amazing.



Sani Meo
Publisher