



Safiya Khalid Al-Ali

By Rawan Mana'

An ultra-committed changemaker who dedicates her life to leading positive social change.

A strong sense of self-reliance and responsibility – to both her family and her community – have shaped Safiya Khalid Al-Ali's character and given her the strength that helped her direct the course of her career. Safiya grew up in the United Arab Emirates. Upon returning to Palestine as a young woman, she volunteered in various fields as an active member of her community.

Safiya was only seventeen years old when she was diagnosed with Friedreich Ataxia, a condition that affects the nervous system and causes movement problems. This experience has made her more mature and more determined to reach her potential despite her challenging condition. Five years later, with the support of her loving family, Safiya graduated university with a BS in computer science.

In light of her disability, she has been an ultra-committed changemaker who has inspired people in her community to defend the rights of persons with disabilities and provide them with the needed safe space. She has invested most of her time in actively participating in various local, regional, and even international trainings on such topics that include but are not limited to the convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, institutional development, promoting political participation of women with disabilities, promoting the rights of marginalized persons with disabilities, international measures of protecting women's rights, gender equality and advocacy, and general policy and disability laws.

Safiya stands for what she believes in, even if it means defying the social norms and the male-dominated culture. In an unprecedented move, she took it upon herself to report to police any taxi driver who refused to transport persons with disabilities; she further took up the issue with the Ministry of Transportation as well.

In 2010, she became head of the Lobbying and Advocacy Unit at Stars of Hope organization for the empowerment of women with disabilities. Safiya's leadership was called upon one more time. In 2014, she

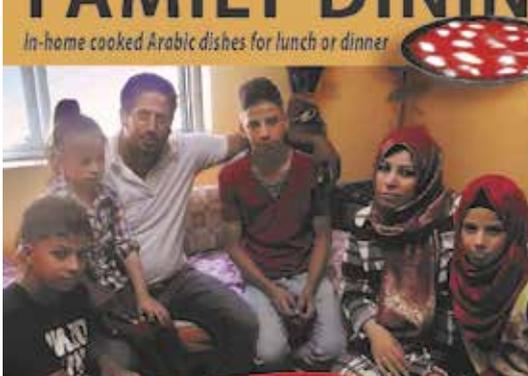
became a board member and treasurer of Stars of Hope. From 2014 to 2017 her commitment to social change empowered many persons with disabilities to overcome various challenges.

In 2015, she published a study titled "Violence Against Women with Disabilities: Causes and Effects." In 2016, she published "Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities in Palestine." In 2017, she published a research survey on access to justice for women with disabilities who are victims of violence in the governorate of Jenin. Parallel to her research, Safiya has conducted dozens of workshops to empower persons with disabilities, especially women, with the skills needed to mainstream them into society and prepare them to enter the labor market on a strong footing.

In November 2017, Safiya was elected by members of the General Assembly of Stars of Hope to become the chairwoman of the board of directors. Guided by her unlimited ambition, and being the changemaker she is, Safiya further seeks to represent women with disabilities and make their voices heard in the regional and international arenas. To that end, she has recently become a research coordinator and member of the Women's Regional Committee of the Arab Organization for Persons with Disabilities. Safiya has set the record straight about the potential of women with disability; she stands tall against all odds.

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