A FACE FROM JERUSALEM

Betty Dagher Majaj

The Lebanese Who Became Palestinian



Betty Dagher Majaj was born in 1926 in the city of Sidon, Lebanon, where her early awareness was shaped by simple yet profound values: Show kindness, be modest, and serve those in need of a helping hand and a compassionate heart. She studied nursing at the American University of Beirut, where she realized that caring for human beings is not merely a profession but rather a calling and a destiny. In 1947, she married the Jerusalemite physician Amin Majaj and moved with him to Jerusalem, a city that would later become the central stage of her life's work.

With the outbreak of the 1948 *Nakba*, Betty stood in the front lines. Together with her husband, she transformed one of the monasteries in Al-Eizariya into an emergency hospital, confronting wounds, tears, and fear. Yet she firmly believed that saving even a single life was, in itself, an act of resistance. She later became director of nursing at Augusta Victoria Hospital, and in 1983 she assumed leadership of the Princess Basma Center. Over the following decades, Betty transformed it from a small institution into a comprehensive center that integrates medical treatment and rehabilitation with an inclusive education for children with disabilities. Under her leadership, the center became a home, a school, and a space for hope.

In 2021, Betty published her memoir, A War Without Chocolate, in which she offers an honest account of a woman's journey through war, borders, and the weight of responsibility.

Her message to young people remains unmistakably clear: Renewal begins with the weakest among us; compassion is not weakness but courage; and quiet, dedicated work is what leaves the most enduring impact.

To Jerusalem and its people, she says: "Elevate the value of the human being ... and the city itself will rise."